



## **PETA** Factsheet

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### **Bear Incidents in the United States**

The following is a partial listing of incidents involving captive bears in the United States since 1990. These incidents have resulted in four human deaths and 38 human injuries. Contact PETA for documentation.

**December 7, 2009/Cherokee, North Carolina:** A 75-year-old caretaker at Chief Saunooke Bear Park was attacked by a bear as she was giving the animals water. The bear reached out of the cage and grabbed the woman, inflicting a serious injury to her right wrist and arm and lacerating her skin near her mouth and hairline. The victim was airlifted to a hospital for treatment.

**October 4, 2009/Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania:** Kelly Ann Walz was attacked and killed by her 350-pound "pet" black bear while she cleaned the cage. A neighbor shot and killed the bear as the animal was about to leave the cage. The victim's two young children and the neighbor's children witnessed the attack. Walz was pronounced dead at the scene.

**November 24, 2008/Marengo, Ohio:** A 300- to 400-pound "pet" black bear escaped the chain-link enclosure in which the animal was being kept and went to the home of a neighbor, who encountered the bear on his porch. When the bear's owner, Harry Wilson, came to retrieve the bear, the animal reared up and charged him. Wilson shot the bear with a .22 caliber rifle. The bear was hit above the eye and fled into the woods. Deputies and an Ohio Division of Wildlife officer using night-vision goggles searched for the bear, who was shot and killed approximately an hour and a half later.

**September 19, 2008/Mount Gilead, Ohio:** A nearly 500-pound "pet" black bear owned by Shane Mayberry was shot and killed by a sheriff's deputy after the animal attacked and bit the officer in the leg. The bear had a history of escapes and aggressive behavior. The deputy was treated at a local hospital for two puncture wounds to the leg.

**June 24, 2008/Rising Sun, Maryland:** Two black bears escaped from an enclosure at the Plumpton Park Zoo when a zookeeper failed to secure two latches and lock a door to the enclosure. One of the bears was euthanized because she became aggressive and the zoo did not have adequate safety equipment, trained personnel, and tranquilization equipment to safely recapture her.

**April 28, 2008/Muskegon, Michigan:** A bear escaped from the West Michigan Society for the Protection and Care of Animals shelter and was tranquilized and recaptured eight days later.

**April 22, 2008/Big Bear City, California:** A 7½-foot-tall, 700-pound male grizzly bear named Rocky attacked and killed one of three men who were working with the animal at Predators in Action, a facility that trains animals for use in movies and television. The victim was bitten on the neck, could not be revived by paramedics, and was pronounced dead at the scene. Pepper spray was used to subdue and contain the bear, who had recently been featured in the movie *Semi-Pro*.

**November 17, 2007/Farmington, Pennsylvania:** A young woman was attacked by a bear at Woodland Zoo & More when she approached the animal's cage during a "behind-the-scenes" tour. The bear swiped at her and then tried to

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drag her hand further into the cage. She was flown via medical helicopter to a hospital. The man who had stepped in to release her from the bear's grip required stitches for a severe laceration.

**November 2, 2007/Coram, Montana:** An employee at the Great Bear Adventure drive-through park was attacked by a brown bear and flown to a hospital to be treated for multiple bite wounds.

**September 27, 2007/West Palm Beach, Florida:** Two 100-pound bear cubs escaped from an enclosure at the Palm Beach Zoo by squeezing through a gap that they had created before being tranquilized and recaptured.

**September 15, 2007/Pigeon Forge, Tennessee:** An employee at the Smoky Mountain Zoological Park was attacked by an Asian sloth bear as she cleaned the animal's pen. A malfunctioning gate allowed the bear to reenter the pen and maul the woman, tearing away most of the ligaments and tissues above her right hip and causing permanent injuries and disfigurement.

**December 2, 2006/Uhrichsville, Ohio:** A 4-year-old boy was airlifted to the hospital after one of his fingers was bitten off at the first knuckle by a black bear. The boy had stuck his hand into a cage housing two bears at the Patterson Wildlife Ranch, which is owned by his grandfather.

**October 2006/Branson, Missouri:** A grizzly bear at Predator World escaped from an enclosure, gained access to an adjoining enclosure, and killed an adult female tiger.

**May 22, 2006/Ashtabula County, Ohio:** A woman was mauled by a 500-pound black bear who had escaped from a nearby animal compound known as Grand River Fur Exchange. The bear forced his way into the woman's home, knocked her to the floor, and attacked her. The woman's daughter hit and tugged at the animal but was unable to stop the attack until she lured the bear away with food. The woman was flown by emergency medical helicopter to the hospital and taken into surgery. She sustained a bruised lung, a broken rib, a severe laceration on her head, significant damage to one ear, and lacerations and bites from the top of her head to her feet. The bear was shot through the lung and killed at the scene.

**May 2006/Pocahontas County, West Virginia:** A 400-pound Asian brown bear belonging to David Cassell escaped from an enclosure and was never found.

**February 18, 2006/Richmond, Virginia:** A 4-year-old boy was bitten by a black bear at Maymont Park when he climbed a 4-foot wooden fence and stuck his hand into a cage housing two bears. The boy was treated at a nearby hospital, and both bears were killed to be tested for rabies.

**February 1, 2006/Flora, Illinois:** An 80-year-old man was killed by a black bear who had escaped from a cage at a defunct petting zoo. The bear was shot and killed by a sheriff's deputy during the attack. Later, another bear at the zoo was killed by an off-duty deputy at the owner's request.

**December 19, 2005/Chanute, Kansas:** A "pet" bear, who had repeatedly escaped from captivity, followed a sheriff's deputy to his patrol car and climbed on top of the car. When the animal grabbed the driver's side mirror, the deputy beat the bear's nose with a flashlight. The bear let go and then went missing again shortly thereafter.

**November 6, 2004/Sarasota, Florida:** A trainer was bitten by a bear at the Rosaire Big Cat Habitat and flown to the hospital to be treated for injuries.

**September 11, 2004/Hanna City, Illinois:** An employee at Wildlife Prairie State Park was attacked by a 300-pound black bear who had escaped from an unlocked cage. The man suffered bites to his right shoulder and left leg, and the flesh and muscle were torn from his right leg below the hip and above the knee, resulting in nerve and artery damage.

**July 21, 2004/Coram, Montana:** A grizzly bear at the Great Bear Adventure drive-through park swatted at a visitor's car window, breaking it. The driver sustained multiple cuts to her arm from broken glass.

**July 10, 2004/Coram, Montana:** An employee at the Great Bear Adventure drive-through park was attacked by a 600-pound grizzly bear. The man was knocked to the ground by the bear and sustained numerous puncture wounds and a punctured lung.

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**May 1, 2004/Silver Springs, Florida:** A worker at the World of Bears theme park was attacked by a Kodiak bear who gnawed on her arm and caused severe injuries requiring extensive reconstructive surgery and physical therapy.

**February 5, 2004/St. Louis, Missouri:** A keeper at the Saint Louis Zoo was attacked by a 6-year-old Malayan sun bear while cleaning the pen. The man suffered bites to his arms and legs and was treated at a hospital for cuts and puncture wounds.

**2004/Queensbury, New York:** A bear cub who was on exhibit at a AAA office by the Ashville Game Farm and Exotic Zoo bit a person in the face.

**2004/Perrysburg, Ohio:** Kenneth Hetrick, owner of a roadside zoo called Tiger Ridge Exotics, was mauled by two grizzly bears while he was cleaning the cage. As a female bear grabbed him and tried to drag him into her den box, a 700-pound male bear attacked him from behind. The male bear hit Hetrick on the head, almost knocking him unconscious, then picked him up, threw him, and shook him multiple times. Hetrick stated, "I looked like I had been in a hatchet fight," and said that it had taken hours for the doctor to stitch up his many wounds.

**December 11, 2003/Natural Bridge, Virginia:** Two Asiatic bears escaped from an enclosure at the Natural Bridge Zoo when a worker failed to latch a gate properly. One of the bears broke into a residential home through a window, "stood up and growled" when he encountered the homeowner, and then was shot dead by the zoo owner and a sheriff's deputy. The second bear took a swipe at the man as he ran from his home, was shot twice, and then ran into nearby woods where she was shot and killed by a hunter two days later.

**August 26, 2003/Rainier, Washington:** A black bear escaped for the fourth time from a private exotic animal menagerie and was on the loose for an hour before being lured back into a cage by neighbors and a sheriff's deputy.

**June 14, 2003/Idaville, Indiana:** A woman on a tour of Great Cats of Indiana had part of her left index finger bitten off by a bear when she reached into the cage.

**March 7, 2003/Golconda, Illinois:** The Pope County sheriff's department warned residents to beware of a 7-foot, 500-pound "pet" black bear who had escaped from a man's home.

**November 8, 2002/Omaha, Nebraska:** A 5-foot black bear at Kipling's Animal Refuge escaped by digging his way out of an enclosure. The bear was spotted on the road by a passerby and recaptured by deputies.

**December 11, 2001/Racine, Minnesota:** A 10-month-old bear cub escaped from Bearcat Hollow animal park and damaged a neighboring farmhouse.

**August 26, 2001/Marshallville, Ohio:** A 4-year-old black bear attacked a 2-year-old boy who was climbing around the bear cage. After being bitten and clawed, the boy was rushed to the hospital, where he was admitted for reconstructive surgery to his calf. The bear was his grandfather's "pet," and the family disposed of the bear after the incident.

**April 10, 2001/Verndale, Minnesota:** A man was hospitalized in stable condition after he was mauled by a "pet" bear kept by his family in a backyard corncrib as he was repairing the cage.

**June 11, 2000/Natural Bridge, Virginia:** A visitor to the Natural Bridge Zoo was bitten and/or scratched by one of a group of three Asiatic bear cubs.

**June 6, 2000/Broken Arrow, Oklahoma:** A 3-year-old black bear at Safari's Exotic Animal Sanctuary who had been spayed and declawed attacked a handler when he entered the cage for feeding. The handler was hospitalized with bite wounds to his arms and legs as well as a severed artery. One gash was 4 inches long, a half-inch wide, and a half-inch deep. Handlers routinely enter bear cages to "hug" the animals at this facility. This was the same bear who attacked a different handler on June 1. The bear was euthanized.

**June 1, 2000/Broken Arrow, Oklahoma:** A 3-year-old black bear at Safari's Exotic Animal Sanctuary attacked a handler, who required 20 stitches after being bitten on both wrists.

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**December 13, 1999/Ellijay, Georgia:** A 500-pound, 7-foot Himalayan bear attacked a man who was feeding the bear at a roadside zoo called Ellijay Wildlife Rehabilitation Sanctuary. The man was hospitalized in serious condition and underwent surgery to his arm. The bear was shot and killed.

**April 2, 1998/Reform, Missouri:** A 600-pound "pet" black bear, who had been kept in a 15-foot-by-15-foot cage for a decade, bit and nearly severed the hand of a 6-year-old boy who tried to pet him on his grandfather's farm. Doctors reattached the boy's hand, which was connected by 1½ inches of skin. The bear was killed.

**March 18, 1997/Grand Rapids, Michigan:** A bear with Tarzan Zerbini Circus performing for Shriners bit off the tip of a 2-year-old child's finger. The child had to undergo surgery to repair her finger. There were no safety barriers around the bear cages, and 30 other children had been petting the bear.

**December 29, 1996/Coal County, Oklahoma:** An 8-year-old girl was clawed by a neighbor's 6-foot-tall, 300-pound "pet" black bear when she tried to pet the animal. The girl suffered a broken arm and deep gashes or bites.

**September 28, 1996/Whitmire, South Carolina:** An 8-year-old boy lost part of his finger when he was slashed by his great-grandmother's "pet" bear while helping to feed the animals.

**May 21, 1995/Spring Hill, Kansas:** A woman was hospitalized after she was bitten on the thigh by her "pet" black bear when she entered the cage.

**September 12, 1994/Anchorage, Alaska:** A polar bear at the Alaska Zoo mauled a teenager who got too close to his cage. The 19-year-old was hospitalized in serious condition with leg injuries. This is the same bear who had mauled a woman in July.

**July 30, 1994/Anchorage, Alaska:** A polar bear at the Alaska Zoo badly mauled a woman who got too close to the cage in order to take photos.

**September 30, 1993/Prophetstown, Illinois:** A trained "circus" bear inflicted bite wounds on a man's arm and legs when the man tried to pet him through the cage. The bear was later killed. This is the same bear who had mauled a person in October 1992.

**September 22, 1993/Newberg Township, Michigan:** A man was fatally mauled by his brother-in-law's "pet" black bear when he entered the pen for feeding. Police killed the bear.

**July 28, 1993/Patterson, New York:** A declawed and defanged 23-year-old Himalayan black bear who had been used in circuses escaped from an enclosure and disappeared into nearby woods.

**October 1992/Prophetstown, Illinois:** A trained "circus" bear mauled a man.

**February 25, 1992/Dane County, Wisconsin:** A man underwent surgery to repair torn tendons in his ankle after he was attacked by a bear while participating in a bear "wrestling" event sponsored by Jungleworld Animal Rental Agency.

**October 29, 1990/Galesburg, Michigan:** A 10-year-old boy, his mother, and his grandfather were mauled by one of the family's "pet" bears while cleaning the cages.

**March 28, 1990/Cincinnati, Ohio:** A keeper at the Cincinnati Zoo had her right arm bitten off by a polar bear as she was feeding the animal. A jury later awarded the keeper nearly \$3.5 million. The keeper charged that the zoo had made the 800-pound bear hostile by keeping him in a 10-foot cage without lighting, recreation, or ventilation.

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