

Ride and Hike with Safety and Caution

By: Bob Schattschneider

Ginny and I have been blessed with the good fortune to have toured all continental 48 states, and parts of Canada and Mexico on our Gold Wing. I estimate that we camped 90% of the time, weather permitting, and made sparse use of motels when the weather would not cooperate. Our experiences have been positive for the most part, but only because we made diligent use of safety practices and adopted a strategy of being well prepared for the unexpected.

With the coming of autumn, many of us will be participating in fall color rides, which are usually a combination of riding, hiking, camping, and viewing the myriad colors of nature in all of its splendor. We share these activities, not only with our friends and co-riders, but with the forest creatures as well.

Recently, I spoke on the decision of braking in an effort to avoid a collision with a moving obstacle (deer, horse, dog) versus swerving to avoid a fixed obstacle (pothole, gravel, road kill). Our safety consciousness should not end when we put down the kickstand. We must maintain a cautious awareness of our surroundings even while on foot (hiking, camping, strolling through the woods).

Due to the frequency of human-bear encounters, the Wisconsin Fish and Wildlife branch advises hikers, hunters, fishermen and any people that use the outdoors in a recreational or work related function to take extra precautions while in the field.

The advice to outdoorsmen is to wear little noisy bells on clothing so as to give advance warning to any bears that might be close by so that you don't take them by surprise. It is also advised that anyone using the outdoors carry "Pepper Spray" with them in case of an encounter with a bear.

Outdoorsmen should also be on the watch for fresh bear activity, and be able to tell the difference between black bear feces and grizzly bear feces. Black bear feces are smaller and contain lots of berries and squirrel fur. Grizzly bear feces contain bells and smells like pepper.

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