

Read the selection and choose the best answer to each question.

Hungry Bears Prefer Minivans

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- 1 Black bears at Yosemite National Park break into minivans more than any other type of vehicle to find munchies, according to a new study published in the October 2009 *Journal of Mammalogy*. If this sounds like one of the elaborate faux studies cooked up by the *Journal of Irreproducible Results*, rest assured that actual, trained mammalogists are behind this one—albeit mammalogists who have a sense of humor about their Jellystone-esque research. The press release announcing the study is titled “Yosemite Black Bears Select Minivan as ‘Car of the Year’” and begins:

For a seven-year period, the top choice of vehicle by black bears in Yosemite National Park has been the minivan. The bears seem to base this decision on “fuel efficiency”—that is, which vehicle offers the best opportunity of finding a meal. As a result, black bears have shown a strong preference for breaking into minivans over other types of vehicles.

- 2 Between 2001 and 2007, bears broke into vehicles at the following rates: minivans, 26 percent; sport-utility vehicles, 22.5 percent; small cars, 17.1 percent; sedans, 13.7 percent; trucks, 11.9 percent; vans, 4.2 percent; sports cars, 1.7 percent; coupes, 1.7 percent; and station wagons, 1.4 percent.

- 3 Why is the minivan the vehicle of choice? Not simply because there are more minivans—many other types of vehicles were more often left overnight in the park, or “available” in the researchers’ parlance. The scientists from the U.S. Wildlife Service’s National Wildlife Research Center offer four possible reasons:

- *Minivans are more likely to emit food odors, based on the fact that minivans are*

Facts About Black Bears



Type—Mammal

Diet—Omnivorous; mostly eats grasses, roots, berries, and insects; can easily develop a taste for human foods and garbage

Average life span in the wild—20 years

Size—5 to 6 feet long

Weight—200 to 600 pounds

Home—Creates dens in caves, burrows, brush piles, or other sheltered spots

Habitat—Lives in diverse climates, from Canada to northern Mexico

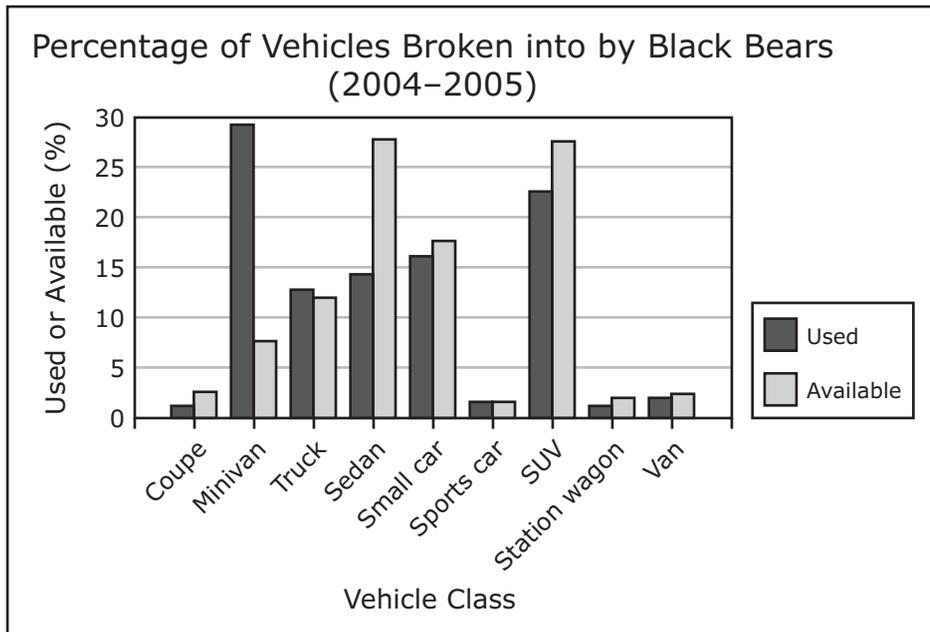
Photograph courtesy of Norbert Buchholz/Dreamstime.com

designed for families with children—who are more likely to spill food and drink in a vehicle.

- Passengers of minivans are more prone to leave large amounts of food in a vehicle parked overnight.
- Minivans may be structurally easier to break into than other types of vehicles. Bears most often gained access to minivans by popping open a rear side window.
- A few individual bears could be responsible for all the break-ins, and they are displaying a learned behavior for choosing minivans.

4 In short, to campground bears who’ve learned bad behavior, vehicles are simply hard shells encasing many types of treats, whether it’s raw bacon and Bud Lite or goldfish crackers, dog food, and Juicy Juice. And minivans offer the best promise of treats and the easiest wrapper to open. The researchers noted that they “commonly saw car doors bent open, windows on all sides of the vehicle broken, and seats ripped out, all of which appeared effortless for bears.”

5 Amid the ursine humor in all this, let’s not forget that for bears, developing a taste for human food is often one of the worst things that can happen to them—“a fed bear is a dead bear,” as the saying goes. The researchers’ ultimate hope is to help resolve “bear-human conflicts” as people all around the world expand *their* range and more frequently come into contact with large carnivores.



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- 1** In paragraph 5, the scientific term *ursine* describes something related to —
- A** jokes
 - B** habitats
 - C** bears
 - D** automobiles
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- 2** The author organizes the article by —
- A** offering statistics from various studies, presenting conflicting opinions about the studies, and ending with his personal view
 - B** presenting the results of a study, offering some ideas about what the study shows, and then stating what researchers hope to achieve in the future
 - C** describing the reasons why Yosemite National Park has such a large number of bears and then explaining how minivans have made the problem worse
 - D** referring to phony research studies that claim bears prefer some kinds of vehicles over others and then dismissing these studies with conclusions from mammalogists
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- 3** What does the author mean when he writes in paragraph 4 that “vehicles are simply hard shells”?
- A** Minivan owners should just leave their vehicle doors open if they don’t want bears to damage them.
 - B** If bears can break into a minivan, they must be very strong.
 - C** Bears really don’t know the difference between a minivan and any other type of box containing food.
 - D** If minivans were built to be more sturdy, it wouldn’t be as easy for bears to break into them.

- 4 Which line best argues against the idea that most bears in Yosemite National Park have learned how to break into minivans?
- A *As a result, black bears have shown a strong preference for breaking into minivans over other types of vehicles.*
 - B *Bears most often gained access to minivans by popping open a rear side window.*
 - C *The researchers noted that they "commonly saw car doors bent open, windows on all sides of the vehicle broken, and seats ripped out, all of which appeared effortless for bears."*
 - D *A few individual bears could be responsible for all the break-ins, and they are displaying a learned behavior for choosing minivans.*
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- 5 The author mentions that the minivan has been selected as "Car of the Year" by bears in order to —
- A warn campers not to park minivans in Yosemite National Park
 - B describe the type of work published in the *Journal of Mammalogy*
 - C imply that the study lacks credibility
 - D highlight that the results of the study are somewhat humorous
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- 6 Read this line from paragraph 5.

Amid the ursine humor in all this, let's not forget that for bears, developing a taste for human food is often one of the worst things that can happen to them—"a fed bear is a dead bear," as the saying goes.

The author's tone in this line can best be described as —

- A cautionary
- B angry
- C threatening
- D pessimistic

- 7 Which of these best summarizes the article?
- A Black bears at Yosemite National Park have grown used to obtaining food from sources provided by humans, including locked cars. The bears find it relatively easy to break into vehicles, such as minivans. The more bears depend on humans for food, however, the more contact they have with humans, which is ultimately dangerous to both parties.
 - B Minivans may be the top choice of black bears in Yosemite National Park because they are relatively easy to break into and because minivans tend to emit food odors or contain large amounts of food. Bears seem to have learned from one another which type of vehicle to target and the best way to break in.
 - C Scientists conducting a study at Yosemite National Park have found that bears are more likely to break into minivans than any other type of vehicle. Several possible explanations for this behavior have been offered, including the structure of the minivan and the increased likelihood that minivans hold food. Researchers stress the danger of bears depending on humans for food.
 - D In a study conducted for the *Journal of Mammalogy*, scientists found that black bears break into different types of vehicles with varying frequency. The bears are capable of breaking windows, bending doors open, and ripping out seats, all in search of food. Their favorite vehicle, the minivan, was not necessarily the most available.
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- 8 Readers of the article might draw which conclusion if they drove by a sign like the one shown in the box titled "Facts About Black Bears"?
- A Camping is too dangerous for most people.
 - B Vehicles should not be left unattended.
 - C Extra food should be shared with bears.
 - D Food should not be left in vehicles.
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- 9 The information in the graph supports the article by showing —
- A the preference black bears have for a certain kind of vehicle
 - B the bears' intelligence in determining which vehicles to invade
 - C exactly how many vehicles were broken into by black bears
 - D the availability of vehicles parked overnight in certain locations