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June 29, 2007

DOW destroys bear that was fed, petted by people

Dennis Webb
Glenwood Springs, CO Colorado
June 22, 2007

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GLENWOOD SPRINGS, Colo. — State wildlife officials shot and killed a bear Thursday night after receiving reports that people had been feeding and petting it this week.

Sonia Marzec, district wildlife manager for the Colorado Division of Wildlife, said the agency wanted to prevent a repeat of what occurred earlier this week when a bear dragged a boy from his tent in Utah and killed him.

"After the Utah thing, I don't want to have any issues like that," she said.

Marzec said the DOW had received reports about people feeding and petting a bear at Ami's Acres Campgrounds in West Glenwood. The reports were from not just witnesses but the participants themselves.

She said area wildlife manager Perry Will approached the bear Wednesday and it didn't walk off, adding to concerns that it was too habituated to humans.

DOW officers staked out Ami's Acres Thursday night to wait for the bear's return, and tried to tranquilize it with the intent of then destroying it. The 3- to 4-year-old female ran over a hill behind the campground and officers were able to shoot it.

DOW officials have become increasingly frustrated by people in West Glenwood failing to secure their trash from bears and in some cases reportedly even intentionally feeding them, which is illegal.


Marzec said one concern with the bear at Ami's Acres was that it might have become bolder and more aggressive with other people after those who had rewarded its presence by feeding it had gone.

Normally, problem bears are tagged and relocated, and put down only if they return to cause more problems, under the DOW's two-strike bear policy. Marzec said the Ami's Acres bear didn't have any strikes against it, but she wasn't willing to take a chance.

"The worst part of my job is to have to kill a bear but I would much rather have to kill a bear than have it injure someone," she said.

She said the operators of Ami's Acres have been cooperating with authorities by trying to secure trash. They have bear-proof trash bins with cables to lock down the tops, but the bear still was getting past the

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"The operators are definitely on board with trying to help us out," she said.

Marzec also is dealing with a bear that has been getting into trash at Glenwood Canyon Resort in No Name. That one will be relocated if it is caught, she said. She said a mother bear with cubs in West Glenwood continues to be spotted but isn't behaving in a way that warrants destroying it at this point.

Meanwhile, Marzec and local authorities are stepping up their focus on the human root of the problem, after weeks of trying to haze bears away from homes and businesses and back into the hills.

"The bear/trash situation is not going away. ... Unfortunately the bears are not learning because the people are not learning," she said.

As a result, Marzec has consulted with the District Attorney's Office and Glenwood Springs police and they have agreed to pursue ticketing of people who refuse to secure trash.

"We are all on the same page at this point," she said.

DOW volunteers will deliver letters to residents in problem areas in West Glenwood and to restaurants, lodges and gas stations all over town, putting them on notice about the ticketing policy. Marzec said the letters are in both English and Spanish.

People who create trash problems would receive a warning, and then a ticket if they don't change their ways. Those living in city limits would be cited under a Glenwood Springs ordinance, and others would be cited under a DOW regulation.

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