



Bear death highlights rift between wildlife, residents

Kevin MacMillan
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NORTH LAKE TAHOE - The slaying of a 660-pound black bear in a North Shore neighborhood has turned a summer full of bear sightings in Incline Village into a more serious matter. Not only does it heighten the awareness that there is a potential for danger, but it should teach residents a valuable lesson, officials said.

People should start being more responsible when it comes to ensuring that bears stay away from homes in Incline Village, said Carl Lackey, a biologist for the Nevada Department of Wildlife.

"Let's hope we never have someone injured or killed and that's what starts people to care and be more aware," he said. "Then people will be scrambling for a bear-proof containers only because someone had to get hurt."

With streams going dry in the backcountry, bears have been coming into neighborhoods in record numbers. The BEAR League has been receiving 150-200 calls per day, compared to about 50 two years ago, said Ann Bryant, executive director of the Lake Tahoe-based BEAR League.

Twenty bears had been hit by cars by the end of July, Bryant said. Washoe County Sheriff's deputies reported another one killed by a car on Friday on the Mount Rose Highway. That number has already surpassed the record 19 bears hit in 2005.

Sgt. Carl Barnett of the Incline Village Substation said, on average, his office receives about 12- to-15 bear-related calls per day. Eighty percent of those calls result in actual bear sightings, he said.

The Tahoe Basin has the second highest density of black bears in North America, with several bears per square mile at times, according to the Nevada Department of Wildlife Web site.

However, despite the number of bear sightings this year, some question whether the slaying Aug. 2 could and should have been handled differently.

Sgt. Erik Frederickson responded with deputies Jason Wood and Randy Vawters to a bear call at 130 Rubicon Peak Lane at about 5:30 a.m.

Capt. Steve Kelly, commander at the Incline Village Substation, said the homeowner called the sheriff's office, saying a bear was in his house. He then locked himself and his family in the master bedroom, waiting for authorities to arrive.

Once the deputies arrived, Kelly said they opened the garage door to provide the bear an escape route.

However, when Frederickson looked through the open dining room window Kelly said the bear spotted him. The animal growled and charged through the window at Frederickson, who shot the bear with a shotgun at close

Nevada Appeal News Service A 660-pound black bear that was shot after charging a deputy in Incline Village last week. The number of bear sightings around Lake Tahoe and calls has more than tripled from previous years, creating a sharp divide between protecting the animals and residents.



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range in self defense.

After being wounded, the bear fled to 843 Freels Peak Drive, where it hid under a deck. Lackey said a NDOW "bear dog" was used to rouse the bear from underneath the deck.

When it came out, NDOW and Incline deputies shot the animal numerous times with shotguns, killing it at about 8:30 a.m.

"We will back up the sheriff's department all the time, 100 percent on this situation. (Frederickson) did what he had to do given the situation," Lackey said. "I mean, the bear was two feet away from him. He can't wait to find out what the bear's going to do. When you've got a VW Bug with fur coming at you, your heart's going to beat a bit faster."

Bryant disagreed, saying it couldn't have been the bear's intention to attack Frederickson because black bears aren't mean-spirited.

Another argument she made was the family never should have locked itself in a bedroom.

"The thing that gets me is the family was too afraid to approach the bear - they were scared, so they hid in the bedroom. It's shameful," Bryant said. "That's what is happening in the basin. People are being kept in fear by (NDOW and the California Department of Fish and Game) because they're telling them it's OK to be afraid. It's just shameful.

"That's why this bear was needlessly shot. Because the family was too afraid to yell at the bear to 'get out' and stand its territory."

Bryant said residents need to be further educated that it is OK to stand up to a bear. Throwing rocks, pounding on walls and yelling loudly at the bear all are effective measures to solve a bear situation without forcing the animal to be killed.

Kelly said whenever a bear is killed, there always will be people who don't approve. He said there always will be "people who feel animals have more rights than humans."

"It's always going to be a big political issue. But I can tell you this - I've trained a lot of deputies that your top priority is to go home at the end of your shift, to be able to see your family and kids at the end of your shift," Kelly said. "I don't train them to get mauled or chewed up by a bear because they're afraid of public opinion."

Of 74 bear cases last year, four were euthanized, Lackey said. So far in 2007, three bears have been killed by the Nevada Department of Wildlife, this was the first killed in Incline Village.

For information

For tips on bears, go to:

www.ndow.org

To report a bear problem, call:

688-1331

For information about bear-proof garbage bins contact the BEAR League:

Call (530) 525-PAWS (7297)

On the Net

www.savebears.org

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