



BLACK BEAR MANAGEMENT

2015 Annual Report



Photo: Redwood National Park – subadult black bear, Tall Trees Road, May 2015

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes black bear management activities in Redwood National and State Parks (RNSP or “parks”) in 2015. The report also summarizes important bear observations and incidents, bear-related education efforts, funds expended on bear management, known mortalities, and priorities for black bear management in RNSP.

BEAR OBSERVATIONS AND INCIDENTS

Wildlife Observation Data

There were 197 observations, totaling 247 black bears, reported on RNSP wildlife observation cards, bear observation logs, photo stations, or directly to wildlife staff in 2015. The number of bears reported reflects, in some cases, repeated observations of the same bear, or bears (i.e., when a bear was repeatedly reported from an area with high visibility to humans). To gain the best estimate of the number of individual bears observed in the parks in 2015, the reports were evaluated relative to the timing and location of observations along with any descriptive information provided (e.g., estimated weight or size and color). Table 1 shows reported and estimated actual numbers of bears in certain locations within RNSP.

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Table 1. Locations in RNSP with repeated observations of the same bear or bears.

Location	Number of Bear Observations Reported	Estimated Maximum Number of Bears	Comment
K & K Road	40	7	Multiple bears recorded on remote automatic camera between 19 April and 30 August
Tall Trees Access Road	28	3	Subadult, see cover photo, recorded by visitors and staff between 10 May and 21 June
Coyote and Schoolhouse Prairies	22	7	At least 7 different bears based on size, age class, color descriptions and dates. Six different bears were seen in short span of time on same day in area.
Redwood Creek Trailhead and Lady Bird Johnson Grove areas	20	4	At least 4 different bears based on size and age class descriptions and dates.
Trillium Falls Trailhead	8	2	Assumed 2 adult(s) based on descriptions feeding on berries near trailhead between 14 July and 24 August
Total Observations	247	152	Total bear observations versus estimated maximum number of bears observed in all of RNSP

If the known repeat observations of bears are taken into account, 152 bears represents a more accurate estimate. Note that some unknown percentage of those 152 bear observations were also likely repeat observations of the same bear. Therefore the number of bear observations, even taking into account known repeat observations, cannot be assumed to be an accurate estimate of the RNSP bear population.

Although the majority of observations were of single bears, two adult bears were observed together two times. Based on physical characteristics and time of year, these two adult bears were assumed to be together for breeding. Three bears were reported together 14 times; 10 of these sightings were the same sow and two cubs in the area around Lady Bird Johnson Trailhead and Redwood Creek Trailhead. The other groups were also sows with cubs.

At least one bear was reported in every month of the year but January. As in all previous years, most of the reports (82%) were from May - August.

All but two observations were of bears within the parks. The majority of reports (>90%) were of bears south of the Klamath River (see Figure 1 at end).

Approximately two-thirds of all observations were of bears crossing a road or near a road or parking lot while the remaining third were in “back-country” areas including along trails, along the Redwood Creek gravel bar, or in prairies away from roads.

Incidents

There were no major bear incidents in RNSP in 2015. Major incidents are those that require management to prevent property loss and/or personal injury by problem bears. Problem bears are defined in the 2013 RNSP bear management guidelines as a bear that interferes with human activity, damages property, or becomes a safety hazard. Chapter IV E and F of the 2013 bear management guidelines outline the levels of human/bear interaction or incidents that can be considered major.

Confrontations

There were no major bear confrontations in RNSP in 2015.

Noteworthy Observations

There was one notable encounter between a bear and visitors along Tall Trees Road (see cover photo). In May and June there were 28 reports (Table 1) of a subadult bear hanging around the edge of the road and not fleeing when approached by visitor or staff vehicles. Park visitor center staff was instructed to provide detailed information regarding the importance of not feeding or interacting with this subadult bear to park visitors obtaining a Tall Trees Road gate lock combination and permit. No sightings of the bear were made after 21 June, indicating that this bear eventually abandoned its pursuit of a food handout.

MEETINGS

The Bear Panel was convened once in 2015. Meeting notes are attached to this report as Appendix A.

EDUCATION

Bear safety and reporting procedures were given to seasonal RNSP interpreters, Redwood Parks Conservancy and entrance kiosk staff, campground hosts and volunteers. Numerous informal contacts were made with RNSP personnel regarding bear-garbage and bear-human issues. The RNSP Interpretation staff also informed visitors about basic bear safety during campfire programs and at the beginning of various interpretive programs and hikes at RNSP.

Newly redesigned “Keep It Crumb Clean” picnic table top signs that included a bear and corvid message were produced and installed on every picnic area and campsite picnic table in 2015. “Keep Bears Out, Store All Food Inside Locker” and “Keep It Crumb Clean” stickers to be placed on all campsite food storage lockers were manufactured in 2015 and will be installed in 2016 (see Appendix B for examples).

FUNDING

Oil spill mitigation funds (\$3,833) used to produce and install new “don’t feed the bears and corvids” signs and stickers on every picnic table and food storage locker within RNSP.

An additional \$10,014 of oil spill mitigation funds were spent in 2015 to purchase wildlife proof trash cans and \$20,065 were spent on a wildlife proof trash compactor.

MORTALITIES AND HARVEST

There was one known bear mortality within RNSP in 2015, an adult apparently killed by a vehicle strike on Bald Hills Road. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) *2014 California Black Bear Take Report* (CDFW 2016) indicated 1,439 bears harvested under permit or license in the state in that year. This number represents a 33% increase in the number of bears taken in 2013 but comparable to previous years. Humboldt County ranked first among 58 counties in the state for numbers of bears taken, with almost 10% of all bears harvested in the state.

PRIORITIES

- ❖ Meet with seasonal and permanent staff working in campgrounds and visitor centers and present information on bear safety and the importance of proper food storage.
- ❖ Continue use of the RNSP Intranet (RNSP News and InsideREDW) for NPS park staff as well as hand delivered reporting guidelines for CDPR entrance kiosk and Redwood Parks Conservancy staff as well as all types of volunteers in the partnership for effective communication regarding bear management issues.
- ❖ Complete work with California State Parks and California Department of Fish and Wildlife on an MOU for bear management on state land within RNSP.
- ❖ Install picnic table top signs and food storage locker educational stickers throughout RNSP.
- ❖ Encourage use of the “Bear Interaction Report” form when a bear problem arises.
- ❖ Develop a system for keeping track of new bear proof equipment in storage and the number, type, and location of new replacement equipment installed in the field.
- ❖ Hold two Bear Panel meetings, one pre high visitor season and one post high visitor season.

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Selected References:

California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2016. *2014 California Black Bear Take Report*. Online report accessed August 25, 2016.
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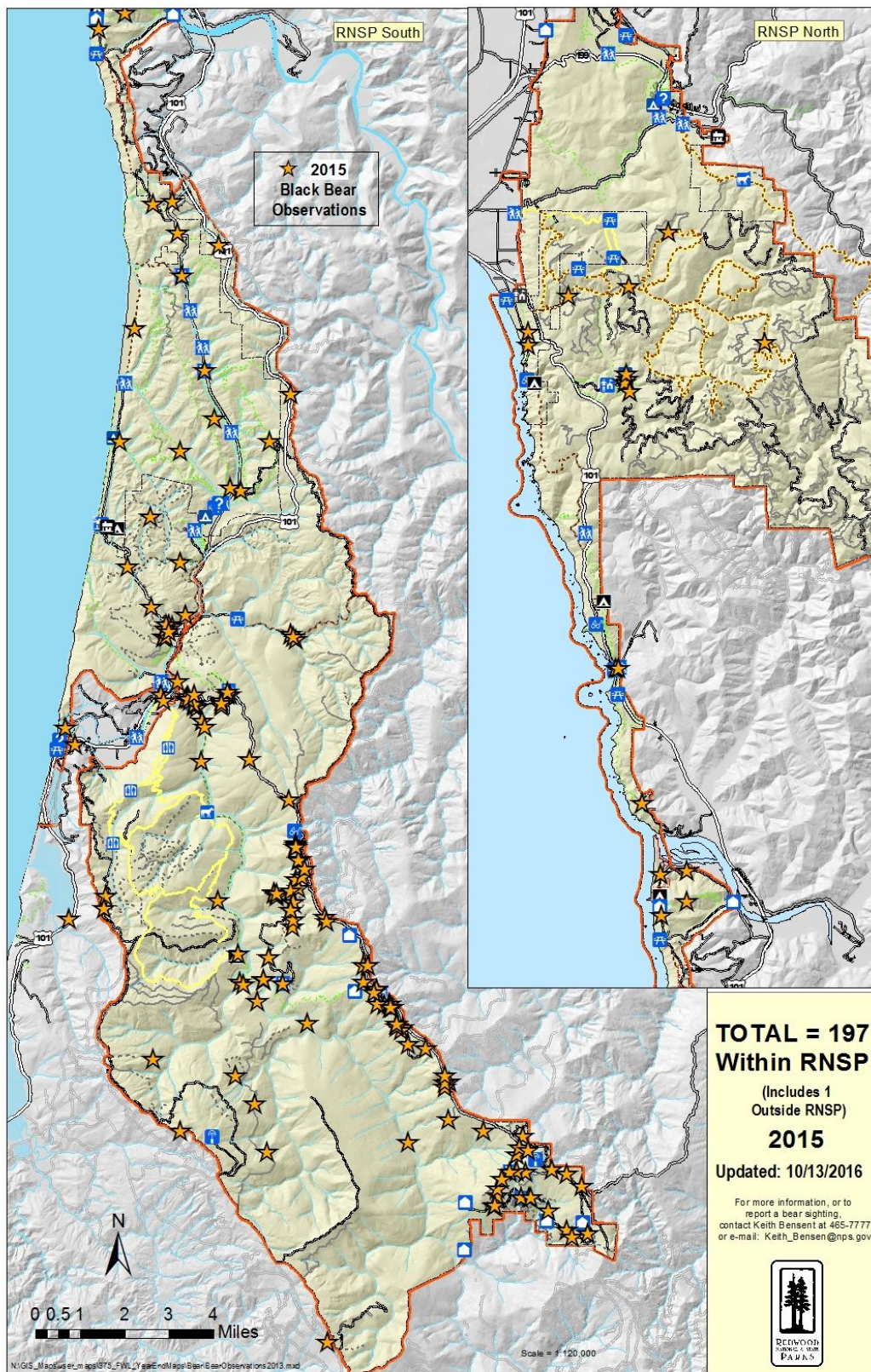


Figure 1. 2015 black bear observation locations in Redwood National and State Parks.

Appendix A

Bear Panel Meeting Notes

SPRING 2015 BEAR PANEL MEETING NOTES

April 20, 2015

Present: Terry Hines (facilitator), Keith Bensen (notes), Ben Littlefield, Robert Toler, Kyle Max, Liam Carey-Rand, Maunda Hagen.

Missing: Aida Parkinson, Amber Transou, Carol Wilson, Colleen Wendt, Jim Wheeler, Lynn Levi-Erickson, Adam Freidrich

Agenda:

- 1) Great Smoky Mountains Bear Report Form- Now RNSP Bear Report Form
 - a) Review form, re-familiarize, discuss its use by VC and other front line staff
 - 2) New Signs:
 - a) Update from Adam on picnic table sign production
 - b) Discuss deployment of new signs, who, when, and where
 - c) Food locker “Keep Bears Out” sticker and “Crumb Clean” sticker- status of deployment
 - 3) Bear-proof Equipment
 - a) From last fall’s meeting: replacing double barrel containers with side by side singles and replacing small hole recyclers with barrels
 - b) Update from CSP re their purchase of bear-proof containers
 - c) New model from Bear Saver- horizontal opening back versus vertical opening back
 - 4) MOU with CDFW
 - a) Where are we going with this? Has CSP staff had any further correspondence with Karen Kovacs and/or Jesse Garcia in Sacramento?
 - 5) Hazing: What is the status of rubber bullets or other non-lethal ammunition
 - 6) Information Sheets (Review and discuss)
 - a) For park housing residents
 - b) Camp hosts
 - c) New Employees
 - 7) Communication between NPS and CSP:
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- b) How to better communicate about bear observations, potential incidents, taking action, and follow-up in a timely manner
 - c) Discuss suggestion of a simple protocol that spells out a step-by-step process to ensure we are all kept in the loop.
- 8) Trash compactors at Wolf Creek EC and Mill Creek Campground
- 9) Update regarding recent meeting with NPS Wildlife and Mill Creek CG workers
- 10) Purchases in 2014: 8 *Backpackers' Cache* Bear Resistant Containers, Nylon Carriers, Replacement Lids, and 100 Poly Liner Bags **Cost: \$382.00**

NOTES

1) Bear Report Form

Terry presented a draft "Bear Management Report" form modified by Kristin Schmidt using an existing form from Smokey Mountains National Park. The form is intended to be available to all RNSP visitor center and entrance kiosk staff.

- The panel recommended the following changes to the draft form:
- Change the form title from "Bear Management Report" to "Bear Interaction Report."
- Move #18 "Heading" and following text to top of next column, so everything is together.
- #22 – change "(continue on back if needed)" to "(use additional pages as needed)".
- #26 – change "(see contacts next page)" to "(see contacts below)".
- #27 – reformat to make clear (separate line after "...TO BE...PERSONNEL) and add "by whom" after Management Actions Taken.
- Clarify only to communicate with NORCOM during an emergency and Resource Management for non-emergencies. Also, change the contacts section to prioritize who is to be contacted, in what order, and emphasize mandatory contacted persons. The panel felt too many numbers were listed and very confusing.
- Emphasize that any bear sighting within a campground should have an Interaction form filled out. Any normal bear sightings outside of the campground should use Wildlife Observation Form or Bear Log.

Action: Terry will incorporate recommendations and send out to panel for review before finalizing.

Action Taken: Kristin made changes to the form; some of the above comments were due to a formatting problem. Form is corrected to reflect the relevant comments. The form will be routed for the panel to review.

2) New Signs

Ben reported we have approximately 250 of the newly re-designed picnic table signs.

Action: Panel decided that the new signs should go in now because of their much superior graphics and messaging. We should not to wait until existing picnic table signs have deteriorated. Ben will confirm that the “airtight containers” was removed from the final version.

Ben reported food locker stickers have not been produced yet. Terry mentioned that the locker surface needs to be specially cleaned before stickers are applied.

Action: Panel agreed that food locker stickers stating “Keep Bears Out, Store All Food Inside Locker” should be made now with a reflective surface (so visitors arriving at campsites at night can see them); should be placed on the locker doors (not top) and above the latches (close to the middle). Additionally, weather proof “Keep It Crumb Clean” circle stickers need to be produced and will be placed next to the “Keep Bears Out...” stickers per CDPR request. Finally, the backcountry campground food locker sticker stating “Pack Out All Trash” should also be produced now and be installed. They also need to be installed on old bear canisters. Keith said that oil spill restoration funds can be used to produce all the food locker stickers. Terry will follow up with Kristin Schmidt on how many stickers are needed; Ben will follow up on bear sticker work request with Adam and Keith will follow on the production of “Keep It Crumb Clean” sticker.

Action Taken: Kristin checked the “Master List” of picnic tables in campgrounds to gauge how many food lockers are out in campgrounds. In both state and national parks the number is 405. Kristin recommended printing 500 stickers first round.

3) Bear Proof Equipment

Inventory of all trash and recycle cans within RNSP has been completed. For the new, larger opening recycle containers, the funding (oil spill restoration funds) will arrive soon.

Outside of RNSP, CDPR is in process of installing new wildlife proof garbage and recycling bins with a side-opening rear access door as an improvement over the vertical-opening access door that has caused employee injuries. Ben reported another accident occurred where an employee was hit on the head from a heavy, vertical trash lid that failed to stay propped open. We will wait to see how that new design works before deciding on how to replace existing RNSP vertical-opening bins. In the meantime, Mark Webberly is working on a fix-it solution to make vertical-opening bins safer (possibly some sort of door prop).

A question was asked “How long of a shelf-life do the bear canisters have? Where are the nylon carriers and poly liner bags for the canisters?”

Action: Terry will ask Lynn about information regarding whether two single bins will fit on one double can concrete pad to address the heavy back door issue of the double can at Wolf Creek housing. Terry will ask Kristin about canister shelf life and supplies.

Action Taken: The “shelf life” is more based on how many get returned to the VC via the “honor system”. Eight were purchased in 2010 and 8 more in 2014. The additional supplies (liners, lids, etc.) were not ordered, only the canisters. A note to get those items next time has been made!

4) MOU with CDFW

No new information on this process. We are waiting on CDFW and CDPR bear management MOU status before moving forward. Until then, we will continue to work with CDFW as we have in the past.

5) Hazing

Robert said the rubber bullets, like all ammunition, takes a very long time to order and arrive. He plans to incorporate “Use of Less Lethal Ammunition Guidelines for Wildlife Incidents” into general park-wide “Law Enforcement Use of Less Lethal Ammunition Standard Operating Procedures”. He is waiting to receive the new NPS Law Enforcement Guidelines before he finalizes the RNSP version.

Terry presented Marshall Neeck’s clarification on bear spray use: “Per CFR 2.4, an irritant gas spray (OC Spray or Bear Spray) is illegal in all National Parks unless authorized under section 7. Under CA penal code, you may possess or purchase OC spray if the amount is less than 2.5 oz. Bear spray is usually sold in over 2.5 oz. cans; therefore, bear spray over 2.5 oz. is illegal to possess in Redwood National and State Parks.”

Robert would like a paintball training session to occur this year.

Action: Robert will continue to work on guidelines. Terry will work on setting up paintball training.

6) Information Sheets (bear, elk, mountain lion)

Terry presented elk, bear, and mountain lion information sheets designed by Kristin Schmidt. Sets are available for camp hosts, staff in park housing, and new employees. A recommendation was made to add State Park contacts to the “New Employee Form” so Redwood Park Association and State Park kiosk staff would know who to contact. Terry

also mentioned Appendix 1 in Bear Management Guidelines has been updated. The panel requested that new employee form and updated Appendix 1 be available on Inside REDW.

Action: Keith will send out an all park announcement reminding staff of the danger to visitors presented by elk cows protecting their calves. The Fern Canyon and Coastal Trail area will be highlighted as a traditional trouble spot. He is also planning to communicate with camp hosts, RPA and kiosk staffs that were not available for spring training. Terry will add information to new employee information sheet and make it available to supervisors on Inside REDW, including updated Appendix 1.

Action Taken: Keith sent out announcement and met with camp host, etc... Kristin added State Park contacts to handouts and all three handouts are posted on InsideREDW, Resource Management, Big Mammal Safety.

7) Communication Between NPS and CDPR

Action: Terry and Keith will arrange a meeting with Amber and Carol. Ben and Kristin will sit in, too. Any important outcomes will be sent on to all members on the panel.

8) Trash compactors at Wolf Creek EC and Mill Creek Campground

Ben provided an update on the issues and results of the subcommittee that met at Wolf Creek EC. Notes from this meeting should be available soon. The panel expressed similar concerns with the additional compactor located at Mill Creek Campground maintenance yard; especially, its proximity to the campground. Rob suggested the Mill Creek Acquisition as an alternative sight for Mill Creek compactor.

Action: Ben discussed what he planned to present in June to the Management Team. Ben will also follow up on the history of the old trash compactor that was located at the Mill Creek Campground site (When last operational and any historic problems?).

Action Taken: Ben presented to Management Team and they decided to move trash compactor from Wolf Creek O.S. to Old Soc. Note: the trash compactor at Mill Creek is one solid unit and is taken whole to Del Norte Transfer Station where it is emptied. Terry met with Paul Anderson, Mill Creek Campground Maintenance Supervisor and Paul was alerted to past and present bear situations.

9) Meeting with NPS Wildlife and Mill Creek CG Workers

Terry and Rob gave an update on how the employee meeting went and felt that it was very successful and informative for all parties present. They answered lots of questions and were impressed with the staff's participation.

Action: Terry will send Penny Wagner (Supervisor at Mill Creek Campground) the bear log, Bear SOP, Appendix 1 (updated), and eventually the new Bear Interaction Form.

Action Taken: Terry sent all the forms and handouts.

10) Purchases in 2014

Action: Terry will find out how much oil money was used to purchase sign making material in 2014 and how many stickers are needed for 2015. Ben will work with Adam on purchase request for more vinyl and other materials need to finish stickers. Keith said "...oil spill money is available to cover this cost". Keith said "oil spill money for 2015 was approved for recycle cans, estimated \$30,000". Keith will work with Kristin Schmidt to purchase the new recycling cans.

Action Taken: According to emails between Adam Friedrich and Kristin, about \$3,430 was charged to the oil spill account so far in FY15 for sign-making materials.

Appendix B

New Educational Picnic Table and Food Locker Sticker Examples

