

# Redwood

National and State Parks

National Park Service  
US Department of the Interior

Department of Parks and Recreation  
State of California

## BLACK BEAR MANAGEMENT

2011 Annual Report

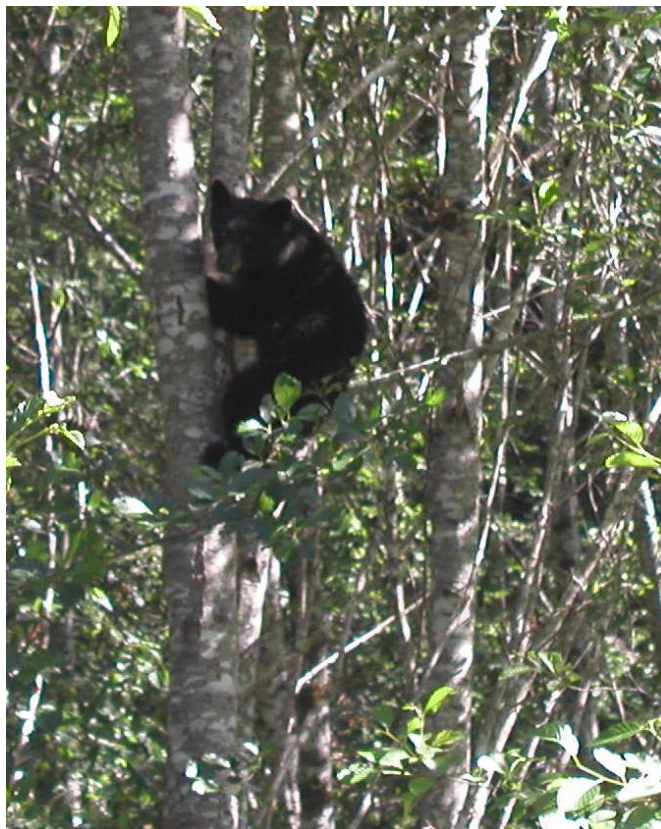


*Photo: Redwood National Park*

February 27, 2012



## **INTRODUCTION**

This report summarizes black bear management activities that occurred within Redwood National and State Parks (RNSP or “parks”) during 2011. The report also summarizes all important bear observations and incidents, bear related meetings and education efforts, funding, known mortalities, and 2012 priorities for black bear management within RNSP.

Redwood National and State Parks is a partnership between Redwood National Park and three California State Parks, (Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park, and Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park). Though these parks are cooperatively managed under a MOU, each agency maintains management authority for their lands based on their respective regulations, policies, and guidelines.

## **BEAR OBSERVATIONS AND INCIDENTS**

### ***Wildlife Observation Data***

There were 73 observations of 88 black bears reported on RNSP wildlife observation cards or bear observation logs during 2011 (see Appendix A), including one known mortality. Three of these observations were outside the parks, one near Stone Lagoon and 2 near Big Lagoon. In addition to observations of actual bears, there were 9 reports of bear tracks and 2 scat reports. The numbers of bear observations and individual bears was just slightly more than half of those reported in 2010 (136 observations of 162 bears). Instead, numbers were closer to those of the period from 2004-2009 (average  $72.5 \pm 12.7$  observations of  $90.3 \pm 12.3$  bears). With the exception of 2010, bear observation numbers have not approached the record high average of 195 reported from 1996 to 2000.

The majority of reported observations were in May, June, and July with 12, 14, and 18 reports in each month, respectively, accounting for 62% of the annual total (Fig. 1). There was at least one observation in every month of the year except March. The majority of observations (82%) were of single bears, there were 12 observations of 2 bears, and 1 observation of 3 bears.

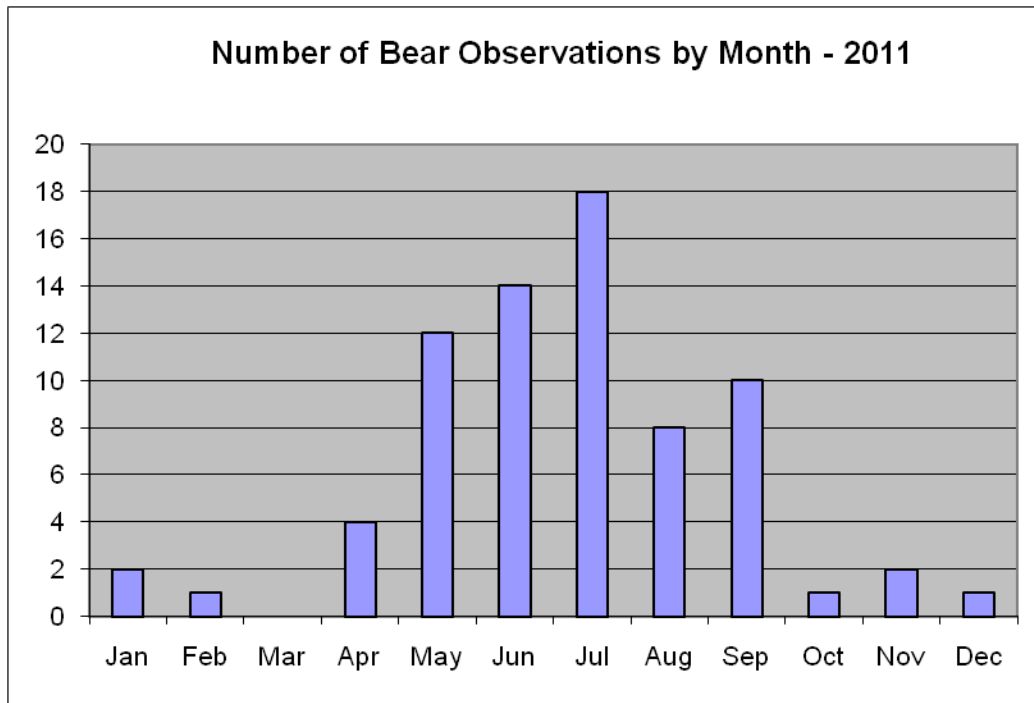


**Figure 1.** Number of bear observations reported on RNSP wildlife observation cards and by park employees, and month that the observations occurred, during 2011 (total =73).

Fifty-nine observations, including the 3 outside the parks, were south of the Klamath River, and 14 were north of the river. Observations in the south were mainly along Tall Trees Access Road (over 25% of all observations were along this road), Bald Hills Road, West Side Access Road and other roads off of the West Side. In the northern section of RNSP bears were observed in various locations including the Mill Creek area of Del Norte Coast Redwoods State Park, near the Klamath River overlook, in the Little Bald Hills, and near Crescent Beach among other locations (see Fig. 2 at the end of the document).

Three-quarters of the reports (56) consisted of bears seen crossing, or alongside, a road by people traveling in vehicles. There were 6 reports from people hiking on trails or along Redwood Creek, and staff observed a bear on 2 occasions in the Bald Hills prairies. A bear watched one of the maintenance staff cutting brush at the Crescent Beach parking area; the staff member believed this to be the same bear that has been frequenting that area over the past few years. As in previous years, there were 2 bears at the Espa Lagoon Office (former Gold Bluffs Beach Ranger Residence facility; see *Incidents* below), and as last year, there was a report of 2 bears that entered the Gold Bluffs Beach environmental camp (possibly the same bears that appeared at the Espa Office). One bear was observed from the Klamath River Overlook, a bear was seen wandering around the Howland Hill Outdoor School, and 2 bears were observed on separate occasions in Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park Campground and near the footbridge crossing the Smith River in the campground.

## ***Incidents***

*Espa Lagoon/Gold Bluffs Beach:* On May 24 a seasonal park ranger closing up the Espa office at the former Gold Bluffs Beach ranger residence noticed 2 bears. He clapped his hands and the smaller bear ran into the brush. The larger bear stared at the employee for about 30 seconds then followed the other bear. On May 27, a different employee left the Espa office to take supplies to the kiosk and left the entrance to the office (a large sliding door) open. In the approximately 3 minutes he was away a bear entered the building and when he returned the bear “barreled out of the office, knocking the door”. The bear stayed nearby and eventually “rose its posture” and stepped toward the employee, who backed up and yelled. Apparently the bear just looked at him and began nibbling vegetation between “glances” at the employee. After approximately 10 minutes the bear retreated into the woods.

*Gold Bluffs Beach Residence:* On or about July 11, a seasonal worker at the Gold Bluffs Beach entrance kiosk living in the residence there noticed that his barbecue grill had been turned over and “scattered”. While two or more people were barbecuing the next night, a bear came out of the woods and attempted to grab the food cooking on the grill. The bear was chased off for a short distance with a bongo drum, but then stopped running and turned around and approached them. The people went inside while the bear crawled onto a car and “scratched it up pretty bad”. Parks staff followed up on this report a few days later and spoke with a person working in the kiosk who said he had a paint ball gun and that a pit bull had chased a bear up a tree near the residence. It was clarified that the pit bull did not live at the residence, it belonged to another worker who brought it to work with him, and inadvertently got away. Apparently the bear was not seen after the event with the dog took place. The worker was cautioned regarding use of the paintball gun, that it could be very dangerous if the bear charged, and any hazing should be done by law enforcement. It was also made clear that the dog not be allowed to run on the property.

*Gold Bluffs Beach Environmental Camp:* On July 11 campers went to the Gold Bluffs Beach kiosk and stated to the person working that they “were scared” by 2 bears at the camp. They had apparently abandoned camp until they could get someone to accompany them to remove their camping gear. There is no other information relative to this “incident”, i.e., whether or not the bears received food or in some other way actually disturbed the visitors. These could have been the same bears that were a nuisance at the ranger residence, as bears have appeared to go back and forth between these two locations in recent years past.

*Wolf Creek Fire Cache:* On November 4 a bear got into trash that was left outside the overly-full bear-proof garbage cans after the fire crew vacated the facility. It ripped open trash bags full of food, garbage, etc. and strewed it around. This area was thoroughly cleaned up and the bear did not return.

## ***Confrontations***

*Howland Hill Outdoor School:* On May 19 a bear followed a group of school kids on a trail at the Howland Hill Outdoor School. The group leader described this behavior as “curious”, and apparently nothing else occurred.

## ***Tree Stripping***

For the first time in recent years, there were direct observations of bears in the process of stripping bark from trees. Along Davison Road on June 21 a bear was seen stripping bark and appeared to be eating insects. On June 26 two bears were observed stripping trees about 100 yards west of the June 21 location. Then on June 29 the same observer, again on Davison Road, watched a bear stripping and eating bark approximately 40 feet up in a redwood tree. Although not directly observed, a bear seen on May 13 on the M-Line Road was in an area with many recently stripped trees.

## **MEETINGS**

The annual Bear/Lion Panel meeting did not take place in 2011. The meeting was not held in part due to dwindling attendance in the past few years, and an apparent lack of interest. Parks staff will assess whether or not this panel needs to resume meeting. The panel was originally established under the *Bear Management Guidelines* (RNSP 1997), prior to the parks being bear-proofed, and at a time with more problem bears, etc. It needs to be determined whether this group’s purpose is still relevant.

## **EDUCATION**

Bear safety and reporting orientations were given to seasonal RNSP interpreters, Youth Conservation Corps crews, and Native American youth work crews. 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 walks at RNSP. A presentation and field trip on bears in the parks was conducted for a class with the Osher Life-long Learning Institute.

On July 21 two citations were issued to 2 separate parties at Jedediah Smith Redwood State Parks Campground, educating those involved about “proper food storage”.

## **FUNDING**

Oil spill mitigation funds were again made available to replace worn out animal-proof garbage cans and campground food storage lockers. In 2011, 8 new food lockers were installed at the Flint Ridge back-country camp. Six additional trash and recycling receptacles and 12 additional food storage lockers were purchased.

## MORTALITIES

There was one bear cub killed, perhaps by a vehicle collision, near the Hwy 101/Bald Hills Road intersection in late July. It was located under the bridge over Prairie Creek on Bald Hills Road.

## FY 2011 PRIORITIES

- ❖ Investigate all reports of “nuisance” bears immediately.
- ❖ Continue use of the RNSP Intranet (InsideREDW) for effective communication regarding bear management issues.
- ❖ All employees, contractors, etc., will be encouraged to turn in bear observations immediately.
- ❖ **Natural Resource staff will complete work with Interpretation staff on consistent bear information for bulletin boards throughout the parks.**
- ❖ Install new bear-proof food storage lockers at the Little Bald Hills Horse Camp and assess the condition of lockers and trash receptacles at other back-country camps, front-country campgrounds, and picnic areas.

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Reference: Redwood National and State Parks. 1997. Bear management guidelines. 26 pp. + appendices.



Figure 2. 2011 black bear observation locations in Redwood National and State Parks.

Appendix A. Date, number of bears, activity, and general location of bears reported to RNSP during 2011.

| Date      | No. | Activity                                                 | Location                                                          |
|-----------|-----|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1/24/2011 | 1   | Ran across Hwy 101.                                      | Above Stone Lagoon.                                               |
| 1/26/2011 | 1   | Watching the employee cut brush.                         | Crescent Beach Picnic Area.                                       |
| 2/3/2011  | 1   | Running down road.                                       | Bridge Ridge.                                                     |
| 4/6/2011  | 1   | Crossing road.                                           | Wolf Creek Outdoor School access road.                            |
| 4/9/2011  | 1   | Ran away from vehicle.                                   | Hamilton Road near picnic area- Mill Creek.                       |
| 4/27/2011 | 1   | Very young, clumsy.                                      | Tall Trees Access Road                                            |
| 4/27/2011 | 1   | Trying to run from car- can barely run or walk!          | Tall Trees Access Road.                                           |
| 5/1/2011  | 1   | Running down road.                                       | 2-3 miles from Westside Access Road gate.                         |
| 5/10/2011 | 1   | None provided.                                           | Tall Trees Grove gravel bar.                                      |
| 5/12/2011 | 1   | Ran across the road and disappeared in the forest.       | On road to Tall Trees, 1 mile behind access gate.                 |
| 5/12/2011 | 1   | Ran across road.                                         | Tall Trees Access Road.                                           |
| 5/13/2011 | 1   | Ran off into woods from M-Line.                          | Approximately 5 miles down M-Line from gate.                      |
| 5/18/2011 | 1   | Walking on road.                                         | Westside Access Road near A -9 deck.                              |
| 5/18/2011 | 1   | Bear ran down road and into vegetation.                  | Hamilton Road.                                                    |
| 5/19/2011 | 1   | Following group of kids.                                 | Howland Hill Outdoor School, 200 yards north on Mill Creek Trail. |
| 5/24/2011 | 2   | Came out of woods, foraging.                             | Espa Lagoon office (Gold Bluffs Beach).                           |
| 5/27/2011 | 1   | Exiting office building.                                 | Espa Lagoon office (Gold Bluffs Beach).                           |
| 5/27/2011 | 2   | Walking around.                                          | Howland Hill Outdoor School.                                      |
| 5/30/2011 | 1   | Crossing Hwy 101.                                        | North of Big Lagoon.                                              |
| 6/2/2011  | 3   | Walking down slope.                                      | Bald Hills Prairie.                                               |
| 6/2/2011  | 1   | Crossing road quickly.                                   | Tall Trees Access Road.                                           |
| 6/5/2011  | 1   | Crossing road.                                           | Tall Trees Access Road.                                           |
| 6/9/2011  | 1   | Came down hill and onto road. Stopped on road.           | Tall Trees Access Road.                                           |
| 6/9/2011  | 1   | None provided.                                           | Tall Trees Access Road.                                           |
| 6/13/2011 | 1   | Startled baby bear while hiking, it ran into the woods.  | Bottom of Emerald Creek Trail.                                    |
| 6/18/2011 | 1   | Running away.                                            | Half mile east of 44 Camp.                                        |
| 6/21/2011 | 1   | Up a tree stripping bark, appeared to be eating insects. | Davison Road.                                                     |
| 6/22/2011 | 1   | Running up road.                                         | Lost Man Creek Road entrance (Geneva Road).                       |
| 6/22/2011 | 1   | None provided.                                           | Before High Bluff on Coastal Drive.                               |
| 6/26/2011 | 2   | Stripping bark off trees.                                | Davison Road.                                                     |

|           |   |                                                             |                                                             |
|-----------|---|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6/27/2011 | 1 | Crossing road.                                              | Tall Trees Access Road.                                     |
| 6/28/2011 | 1 | On road.                                                    | Half mile from Fern Canyon Kiosk.                           |
| 6/29/2011 | 1 | Peeling bark approximately 40 feet up a tree.               | Davison Road.                                               |
| 7/2/2011  | 2 | Feeding on grass/vegetation.                                | South side of Hwy 101 opposite Kuchel Visitor Center.       |
| 7/4/2011  | 1 | Walking on the road.                                        | Klamath River Overlook.                                     |
| 7/7/2011  | 1 | Running across Bald Hills Road.                             | Approximately one mile up Bald Hills Road from Highway 101. |
| 7/9/2011  | 2 | Baby climbing tree, mom walked away.                        | Bald Hills Road.                                            |
| 7/11/2011 | 2 | None provided.                                              | Environmental Camp at Gold Bluffs Beach.                    |
| 7/12/2011 | 1 | Annoying staff at housing.                                  | Gold Bluffs Beach residence.                                |
| 7/13/2011 | 1 | None provided.                                              | Tall Trees Access Road.                                     |
| 7/14/2011 | 1 | None provided.                                              | Big Lagoon.                                                 |
| 7/15/2011 | 1 | Climbed Tree.                                               | Tall Trees Access Road.                                     |
| 7/16/2011 | 1 | Bear cub crossing road by itself.                           | Bald Hills Road.                                            |
| 7/18/2011 | 1 | Ran across road.                                            | Westside Access Road.                                       |
| 7/19/2011 | 2 | Ran across road.                                            | Road to Redwood Creek Trailhead.                            |
| 7/21/2011 | 1 | Eating grass on road verge, meandering.                     | Tall Trees Access Road.                                     |
| 7/23/2011 | 1 | Calm.                                                       | Tall Trees Access Road.                                     |
| 7/24/2011 | 1 | Crossed road, then sat and observed us for a few minutes.   | Tall Trees Access Road.                                     |
| 7/25/2011 | 1 | Ran away from road into woods.                              | Tall Trees Access Road.                                     |
| 7/27/2011 | 2 | Entered road and then ambled off into the shrubbery.        | Parking lot at Redwood Creek Trailhead.                     |
| 7/28/2011 | 1 | Dead- assumed hit by vehicle.                               | Under Bald Hills Road bridge over Prairie Creek.            |
| 7/29/2011 | 1 | Climbing a tree.                                            | Tall Trees Access Road gate.                                |
| 8/1/2011  | 1 | Running across road.                                        | Bald Hills Road, mile 9, Elk Camp Prairie.                  |
| 8/1/2011  | 1 | Ran across the road.                                        | Westside Road near Mill Creek Horse Trail.                  |
| 8/5/2011  | 1 | Jumped into water, swam, then got out and went into forest. | Jed Smith Campground near Smith River footbridge.           |
| 8/7/2011  | 1 | Calm.                                                       | Redwood Creek edge.                                         |
| 8/9/2011  | 1 | None provided.                                              | Jed Smith Campground between sites 79 & 84.                 |
| 8/18/2011 | 1 | Grazing on blackberries.                                    | School House Peak, east lookout road.                       |
| 8/21/2011 | 1 | Feeding along roadside.                                     | Elk Valley Road.                                            |
| 8/25/2011 | 2 | Climbing down tree then eating berries.                     | Mill Creek Trail at creek.                                  |
| 9/7/2011  | 2 | Standing in road.                                           | 2 miles up Bald Hills Rd.                                   |
| 9/7/2011  | 1 | Walking on the road, scared.                                | Beginning of Bald Hills Road near Orick.                    |
| 9/19/2011 | 1 | Running away from vehicle.                                  | West Side Access Road before A-9 Deck.                      |

|            |   |                                                          |                                                                       |
|------------|---|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9/19/2011  | 1 | Crossing road east to west, upslope, paused in road.     | West Side Access Road.                                                |
| 9/19/2011  | 1 | Running across road.                                     | Tall Trees Access Road.                                               |
| 9/19/2011  | 1 | Standing on trail looking at us, then wandered off.      | Little Bald Hills.                                                    |
| 9/20/2011  | 1 | In road.                                                 | Mill Creek Campground Road approximately 1/2 mile from entrance gate. |
| 9/26/2011  | 2 | Crossing road, quickly, no mother visible.               | Bald Hills Road.                                                      |
| 9/29/2011  | 2 | Crossing the road.                                       | Redwood Creek Trailhead Access Road.                                  |
| 9/30/2011  | 1 | On the road.                                             | Bald Hills Road, near Holter Ridge Road intersection.                 |
| 10/2/2011  | 1 | Running across road in a hurry.                          | Tall Trees Access Road.                                               |
| 11/10/2011 | 1 | Ran along road in front of car before diving into brush. | Childs Hill Road and Howards Spur Road.                               |
| 11/14/2011 | 1 | On side of road and walked into forest.                  | Bald Hills Road, 1 mile east of Lady Bird Johnson.                    |
| 12/7/2011  | 1 | In road.                                                 | Bald Hilld Road 1/2 mile east of Lady Bird Johnson.                   |

