

BLACK BEAR RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT
1997 Annual Progress Report
Redwood National and State Parks (RNSP)
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BEAR RESEARCH

No research activities for black bear biology were proposed or initiated in 1997.

BEAR MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Black bear management in 1997 focused on:

- (1) completion of the updated ABear Management Guidelines for Redwood National and State Parks with input from all branches; public, employee, and contractor education.
- (2) trash and signing assessment and future needs were analyzed by: mapping visitor use sites to allow for consistent inventory of trash and signing in the field, and creating an accurate inventory of signing and trash needs at all visitor and employee facilities in RNSP to facilitate planning.
- (3) Development of Informational & Educational material.
- (4) Resolution of food and garbage storage issues at the California Conservation Corps (CCC) camp in Requa by continuing to provide bear/wildlife orientations for new crewmembers, and working with CCC staff members.

Updated ABear Management Guidelines

In 1996, F&W Branch staff began the process of updating the park's bear management plan, which had been last revised in 1991. This was the highest priority bear management objective for the Branch in 1997. The purpose of the update was to include the state parks (as per a Memorandum of Understanding between NPS and CDPR). Extensive input and review was required of all the branches and park divisions, and the updated guidelines were completed in September, 1997 (see attached RNSP Bear Guidelines). The revised guidelines resulted in a new conflict resolution strategy placing less reliance on the Bear Management Evaluation Team (BMET) for day to day direction and implementation of a ABear Panel composed of NPS and CDPR employees to deal w/trash and signing needs. The following summary identifies how bear management responsibilities are distributed throughout the park's staff:

! Bear Panel

- Resolve operational problems with garbage management and food storage structures.
- Ensure educational media (site bulletins, bulletin board presentations, home page, campfire programs, and informational signs) are appropriate and available to employees and visitors.
- Develop recommendation and priorities for funding of trash cans, dumpsters and sign materials.

! Bear Management Evaluation Team

- Review and endorse management guidelines.
- Resolve conflicts with how individual work units interpret and implement the Bear Management Guidelines.
- Ensure funding requests are prioritized within park budget.

! Cooperative Effort between Chief of RM&S and Chief VS&RP or CDPR Chief Ranger

- Approve area closures.
- Recommend to superintendents when to destroy a problem bear.
- Resolve bear/human incidents with recommendations from Fish and Wildlife Branch.

Bear Panel

Most bear management in RNSP deals with bear-proofing trash containers and signing to educate the public about food and garbage handling. To this end, a panel of the park's state and federal employees was created to deal quickly and effectively when bear-proofing or signing need immediate action. The following staff are members of the panel:

Supervisory Ecologist-H.Sakai	State Parks Liaison (Ecologist)-V.Gizinski
Fish and Wildlife Biologist-R.Wallen	NPS Operations Supervisor-C.Farley
Wildlife Biologist-B.Falvey	CDPR Ranger-J.Melvin
Interpreter (NPS)-L.Mealue	Facility Manager (State)-J.Bomke
CDFG rep.-K.Kovacs	Support staff member-L.Seufert

The panel agreed to meet twice yearly, once before the visitor season to make recommendations for the coming year, and once after the visitor season to assess the effectiveness of these recommendations. Two meetings were held in 1997 (see attached Bear Panel minutes for April 9 and November 12, 1997).

Trash (Bear-proofing) at visitor and employee sites

Most of the existing cans at Wolf Creek Outdoor School were replaced with a bear-proof dumpster at a central location, which has facilitated trash pickup, as well as kept the grounds cleaner. On an experimental basis, all the bear-proof dumpsters were removed (for winter only) from the Freshwater Spit camping area, and one dumpster was placed at the Redwood Information Center parking area. Much unauthorized dumping of trash from local residents occurs at the spit, and removing the dumpsters on a temporary basis reduced this considerably, while trash from winter users was handled without any undue problems. A new bear-proof trash container adjacent to the Prairie Creek Visitor Center replaced non bear-proof cans which had been placed on the porch.

A volunteer technician completed the process of mapping visitor and employee facilities with their existing trash and bear informational signing. These maps allow Branch employees to determine if any changes have been made at field sites (both beneficial and detrimental) since the sites were mapped. Additions or deletions can be added to the maps as necessary. A copy of one of the site maps is attached as an example. The remainder of the maps are stored in the lower left drawer of the wildlife biologist's (B.Falvey) desk (along with photos of trash containers and bear info at each site). Data explaining type and location of existing garbage storage facilities were compiled in spreadsheet format. This led to a prioritization of both trash needs and signing needs (attached Microsoft Excel worksheets). These have proved useful in implementation of new signs and bear-proof containers, as well as estimating the costs of obtaining signs and containers in the future.

Information & Education

In cooperation with the Chief of Interpretation, who provided assistance with text, graphics, and layout, F&W Branch staff created a pamphlet *A Living and Working in Bear Country*

specifically for employees of RNSP. It is intended to be included in all new employee packets sent out to future employees prior to their arrival in the parks. F & W Branch also assisted Interpretive Div. with a revision of the ABear Country site bulletin, as well as bear informational signing for the kiosk at the Hiouchi Visitor center. The Fish & Wildlife Biologist presented a bear/lion talk at seasonal orientation, and the Biologists presented bear information to the seasonal interpreters during their intensive field orientation. Field camps of contractors, employees, and YCC crews were inspected and recommendations made to avoid attracting bears. The Wildlife Biologist assisted the Computer Information Specialist with updating the section on bear management on the RNSP Home Page on the World Wide Web. The Fish & Wildlife Biologist and Supervisory Ecologist (Wallen & Sakai) met with the Alder Camp facility Director of the grounds and recommended procedures to avoid attracting bears and raccoons. As part of the updated bear guidelines, F&W Branch staff created informational notices for: picnic tables at day-use sites; picnic tables at overnight campgrounds; food lockers at backcountry walk-in camps; food lockers at backcountry horse camps; all dumpsters at frontcountry sites; and a pack out all trash sign for visitor sites without trash facilities. Purpose of these notices is to provide concise information to visitors on proper food and garbage handling and storage on an easily readable format. See attached Bear Management Guidelines for samples of the signs. The Interpretive Division with assistance from the Fish & Wildlife branch, initiated a user survey to determine visitor awareness of bear-proofing procedures at the two outdoor schools. The thrust of the survey was to discover if present interpretive methods, handouts, and signature forms were getting the message across to outdoor school users, and, if so, how much and what type of information was retained? Some highlights of the survey were (see attachment for the entire survey report):

- X approximately 50% of outdoor school visitors that were mailed the survey responded (not a good return rate).
- X Most visitors to both schools had prior knowledge of what to do in encounters w/wildlife; but also stated they were informed during the programs as well; a good response.
- X **Problem:** How to inform late arriving visitors about proper food/garbage storage? (There were differences between schools in the responses, with WCOS visitors seeming to have a better handle on this). **Recommendations were:** 1) parents receive (and sign) a packet beforehand; 2) teacher gives hand-out to late arrivals and they sign.
- X Most visitors felt prepared and knew what to do in encounters (obviously, this refers to the parents who responded to the survey, and not the kids-no attempt to gauge the students response to this was made.).
- X Most visitors knew what constitutes bear attractants and proper food storage.
- X Some respondents indicated they felt the message was too intense for young kids-they suggested making it more Visitor friendly e.g., this is the bear's home, they're more scared of us, with proper behavior, no worries, etc.

- X If trash cans were full, visitors at HHOS said they'd take trash with them, visitors at WCOS had a wider range of responses, including some incorrect.

CCC Orientations and coordination

The wildlife biologist continued bear/lion orientations for all new corpsmembers (10 presentations, one per month, January-October); The video, AForever Wild detailing bear problems in Sierra parks was shown, and specific measures were discussed on food/garbage handling at the CCC facility, as well as what to do in event of a bear/lion encounter. Branch staff met w/CCC staff to improve food and garbage storage (both through mechanical improvements to dumpsters and trash containers, and recommendations for closer supervision of corpsmembers while at the living quarters).

Bear Incidents and responses

- Two dead bears (vehicle collisions) were recovered from the bypass (one with a front paw missing).
- One dead bear that had been shot was recovered from the Marshall Pond area (necropsy report attached).
- A dead bear (hit by a vehicle) was recovered at Stone Lagoon.
- One bear was trapped on a farm adjacent to the park boundary in Orick and was euthanized by CDFG.
- The YCC camp at Tall Trees access was raided by a bear during the summer; the wildlife biologist and technician responded and informed the crewmembers of proper food and garbage storage requirements. The bear did not return afterwards, and a follow-up visit by the bio.tech. showed that the camp was clean.