

BLACK BEAR RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT

1998 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 1998.

BEAR MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Black bear management in 1998 focused on:

- 1) Two meetings of the RNSP Bear Panel (April and November), 1998 (minutes attached).
- 2) Placing signs created with the updated Bear Guidelines on food lockers, picnic tables at campgrounds and day-use areas, and dumpsters. Total signs placed were: 23 ABear Country site bulletins were placed on kiosks, primarily at the Freshwater spit area; 141 day-use notices were placed on picnic tables at visitor sites (excluding campsites); 444 campsite notices were placed on tables within the parks campgrounds; 11 locker stickers were placed at walk-in backcountry camps; 5 locker stickers were placed at backcountry horse camps; 19 stickers were placed on bear-proof dumpsters throughout RNSP; and 8 APack Out Trash signs with posts were installed at trailheads and sites without trash facilities. All signs will need site checks to determine if they are being vandalized or are standing up to the elements. A bumper magnet was made for placement on park vehicles with a bear graphic and the words AGarbage Kills Bears, providing a concise message to educate visitors and staff. 48 were made, and 39 were placed on park vehicles.

The picnic table notice material has proven to be brittle, easily scratched, and heat sensitive (signs are becoming illegible as campers and picnickers place lanterns and stoves directly on them). Additionally, at heavy use areas such as Freshwater Spit and some day use areas signs are being vandalized (50-75% average loss; a few sites 100% loss)

- 3) Continuing bear/lion general wildlife orientations for new California Conservation Corps (CCC) members. Eight orientations have been given to date. Also, staff inspects the grounds for food and garbage compliance opportunistically. There are still problems, which points out the need to continue orientations and inspections. Branch attempted to get ranger patrols to the site on a regular basis but were unsuccessful. The site has showed noticeable improvement since we began providing orientations: less trash on the grounds, improving overall site cleanliness; less dumpster problems, since there is now sufficient trash capacity, and lockbars are being used properly most of the time; and reduced occurrence of non-bearproof cans in the stairwells of the dormitories. Some problems still exist at the site: picnic table signs are being defaced and removed; lockbar latches are being removed; trash is present around the new firepit area; food items are still being left in butt cans; and food trash has been left out on picnic tables (soda cans, dirty dishes, orange peels, etc.).

A bear/lion general wildlife orientation was given to the YCC crewmembers, and their spike camp was inspected for compliance with food and garbage storage regulations. Compliance with food and garbage regulations was good, and no further bear incidents were reported even though the spike camp was adjacent to the Tall Trees trail head.

4) Further placement of new bear-proof trash containers (McClintock brand) at visitor use sites throughout RNSP. Unfortunately, a new shipment of McClintocks (seven total) planned for installation proved to be the wrong design (can recycling as opposed to general trash containers). These cans will be utilized by the State Parks. Two double containers were placed this year: one at the Tall Trees Trail head, and the other at LBJ picnic area. When the remaining 7 McClintocks arrive, their priority placement will be:

- 1 at LBJ picnic area
- 1 at Howland Hill Outdoor School
- 1 at Lostman Trail head
- 1 at Redwood Cr overlook on Bald Hills Rd.
- 1 at Crescent Beach vista point on Hwy. 101
- 2 at the Hiouchi administrative housing

Remaining needs for bear-proofing throughout RNSP are tabulated on a Microsoft Excel database (Q:\Data\Users\Fwl\Wildlife\beartrs2.xls). The bear panel notes for 4/13/98 identify remaining needs for National Park (NPS) lands only, not in priority order (NPS needs were identified only because the waste management federal funding has been used solely on NPS facilities to date).

5) Continuing effort was made to keep the latches on the leased bear-proof dumpsters in working order. Problems have occurred with latches being broken through normal dumpster pick-up, and missing latches due to theft or vandalism. Wording was provided by the branch to insert into the contract stipulations requiring the operators to maintain the latches in working order at all times. Additionally, the 3 dumpsters at SOC and the NPS housing dumpster at Requa have had their drain pipes modified so that raccoons cannot reach the contents of the dumpsters through the pipe.

Bear Incidents and responses

Bears were frequenting the Tall Trees trail head area, and caused damage to vehicles on 4/22/98. A culvert trap was placed at the site for ten days in an attempt to capture and mark the offending animal(s). The trap proved unsuccessful. A small bear was seen on numerous later visits and air horn blasts were tried as well as rocks thrown at it for aversive conditioning. Litter had been accumulating at the trail head (and attracting wildlife) since the existing mailbox-lid can had been removed. The new McClintock seems to have solved this.

A cub was reportedly being fed by personnel at the Orick Mill and the Wildlife Biologist visited with them to explain the reasons why feeding the animal would later prove harmful. Personnel at the mill had called California Dept. of Fish & Game (CDFG) and were told the bear would be

euthanized. Consequently, they did not want CDFG personnel to respond, and they had continued feeding the bear. To our knowledge, the bear was not seen again.

F & W Branch staff assisted the Hoopa tribe with tranquilizing and collaring the first captured bear of their new black bear demographic/food habits study. Additionally, we loaned them two culvert traps, a tooth extractor, and two vials of Telazol (animal immobilization drug).

On April 7, a bear entered the Jed Smith Campground and obtained food from a careless camper=s site (#85). No citation was issued, and the bear did not return.

In July, Chief Ranger Bob Martin noted an increase in bear activity in Del Norte county along Highway 101, and at Crescent and Endert=s beaches. A sick or emaciated bear was shot behind the Crescent Beach Motel by Del Norte County Sheriffs Dept. On July 6.

Wolf Creek Outdoor School (WCOS)

Observations at the WCOS and adjacent housing area were frequent and increasing throughout the summer. Reports varied in their description of the size of the bears (potentially, different individuals were becoming habituated). Rick Wallen trained the outdoor school staff to use the CO2 paint ball pistol for marking individual bears. The goal was to determine the number of bears frequenting the area as well as aversive conditioning of the bear(s). One animal was marked on the right rump with a yellow paint ball. No other bear observations were reported after this bear was marked.

FY 99 Priorities

- Employ dumpster drain modification to all remaining RNSP dumpsters. These are located at WCOS (2), WC Residences (1), Requa-CCC complex (3), Crescent City (1), and CBEC (1).

- Repair lockbar cables on dumpsters at SOC.

- Replace picnic table signs at campgrounds with more durable, heat resistant type. Place them in the center of the tables.

- Replace picnic table notices at FW Spit and heavily visited day-use areas with vandal resistant type; the possibility exists to reduce the message somewhat and utilize a stencil to mark the tables with paint.

- Develop a method to replace all signing when vandalized or worn; and reporting/repairing damaged dumpster latches.

- Assign an employee at the CCC camp to police the grounds (this has been attempted many times in the past); and failing that, attempt to have RNSP Rangers inspect the grounds occasionally. Attempt to open lines of communication with the camp director.

-Research on where to obtain sign type 1 (You Are Entering Bear Country!). There seems to be no standard design for these CA Dept. of Parks and Rec (CDPR) entrance signs. They may not meet the standards set forth in the RNSP Sign Plan.