



National Park Service
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Grand Teton
National Park

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Grand Teton National Park News Release

Black Bear Euthanized for Public Safety Concern in Grand Teton National Park

Superintendent Mary Gibson Scott announced today that park rangers euthanized a 6-year-old female black bear, on Wednesday, August 29, out of concern for public safety. During the past week, the bear has exhibited bold and persistent behavior toward campers and their food sources in the Colter Bay Campground. Repeated food rewards, habituation to people, and its increasingly bold behavior led park officials to make the difficult decision to remove this black bear from the population, thereby eliminating future threats to visitors' safety.

The 200-pound female bear was first captured in July of 2005 near Leek's Marina in a research trap set out by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team; then she weighed just 75 pounds. She was recaptured in research traps on two separate occasions in 2006. During that time, she exhibited wild bear behavior, foraging on natural food sources and avoiding people. However by mid summer 2006, she and a companion bear—a male black bear—began to receive repeated food rewards at the Colter Bay Campground due to campers who left coolers, food items and other attractants easily available. The male bear that accompanied her during 2006 was euthanized after it reportedly nipped a young boy while he was lying in his tent. The female bear left shortly after this time and was not seen again until early summer 2007.

Since returning to the Colter Bay Campground this summer, the 6-year-old sow has received numerous food rewards. Park employees and campground staff repeatedly hazed this bear away from the campground in an effort to discourage her from becoming a nuisance bear. A concerted "bear aware" campaign has also been in place to educate campers about the importance of proper food storage in bear country. Multiple posters, educational literature, and table cards alert campers and picnickers to their responsibilities while visiting bear country. Park rangers patrol the campgrounds to monitor food storage compliance, and to educate and/or cite people for food storage violations. Nonetheless, visitors have continued to violate food storage requirements; as a consequence, this bear became completely food-conditioned and eventually aggressive in her persistence to obtain food from people.

Superintendent Scott said, "The decision to euthanize a bear in this park is never one that we take lightly. We came to this conclusion only after it became apparent that visitor safety may be in jeopardy. Area residents and visitors alike need to realize that their failure to follow food storage requirements can lead to this very unfortunate situation where a bear has to be euthanized."

Park officials remind visitors that disposing of garbage and storing food properly is extremely important – often a life or death situation. Human carelessness doesn't just endanger people; it can also result in a bear's death. Once a bear acquires human food, it often loses its fear of people and can become habituated and sometimes dangerous.

Bears are active in areas of high visitor use, as well as in the backcountry. For the health and safety of bears, as well as that of park visitors, please adhere to the following rules: Never leave food or backpacks unattended, even for a minute; use available storage facilities when camping, or secure food in your car; dispose of garbage in bear-proof garbage cans, provided at all campgrounds; when camping in the backcountry, hang food and scented items using the counter-balance method; never run from a bear, and do not drop your backpack if a bear charges you.

Detailed information about how to behave in bear country is available at park visitor centers and ranger stations. Please take the time to educate yourself about bear safety before enjoying the park.

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