



National Park Service
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Grand Teton
National Park

PO Box 170
Moose, Wyoming 83012

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Jackie Skaggs
307.739.3393

Grand Teton National Park News Release

Female Black Bear Euthanized in Grand Teton National Park

Superintendent Mary Gibson Scott announced today that park biologists euthanized a 6 to 8-year-old female black bear, on Wednesday, September 5, out of concern for public safety. During the past week, the bear had become persistent about getting food from backcountry users in the Garnet Canyon camping zones and campers at Jenny Lake campground. On Monday, September 3, she broke the window of a vehicle parked at the Jenny Lake campground in her efforts to obtain food stored inside the car; and on Tuesday, September 4, she readily investigated tents, bear boxes and fire rings at the campground in search of food. Her increasingly bold behavior forced park officials to make the difficult decision to remove this bear from the population in order to reduce future threats to visitors and their safety.

The 173-pound female black bear was first sighted this year in May. Early reports of her behavior indicated that she was a wild bear, searching for natural foods in and around the Lupine Meadows parking area and along the trails to Garnet Canyon and Surprise/Amphitheater lakes. In early June 2007, park staff started to receive reports that this bear had gotten into backpacks left lying along the trails while hikers were otherwise distracted in taking a rest-stop or snapping photographs. While frequenting the Lupine Meadows parking lot, the bear eventually got a stuff sack filled with food; she also obtained food left in the back of a pickup truck parked at the trailhead. Most recently, she began to boldly approach cars—even crawling on top of a few—and put her head into both the open trunk and front seat of a vehicle.

In addition to the incidents involving food rewards at the Lupine Meadows parking lot, the bear was also reported to be wandering around the Surprise Lake area. On one occasion, she obtained and ate a tube of sunscreen. She also investigated unoccupied tents in that area.

The bear shifted her focus to Garnet Canyon, prompting park staff to initiate a mandatory bear-canister food storage requirement for backcountry users—in part because there are no trees in which to effectively hang food and other bear attractants. Additional effort was also given to informing backcountry hikers and campers that they should never leave their packs unattended at any time. Regardless of these efforts, the female black bear received food rewards in Garnet Canyon.

On August 18, this bear was trapped, radio-collared, and relocated to the Grassy Lake Road in the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway. In four days time, she returned to the Lupine Meadows trailhead. She also returned to the Surprise Lake area where she ripped into a tent and got into several backpacks, causing a temporary closure of the Surprise Lake backcountry site out of concern for visitor safety.

Superintendent Scott said, “The decision to euthanize this bear follows the same pattern, as the previous two incidents, involving repeated food rewards where bears needed to be removed for visitor safety concerns. Park staff, as well as myself, are discouraged that so many bears have received food rewards, especially when increased efforts have been made to educate visitors about their responsibilities for hiking and camping in bear country.”

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Superintendent Scott further stated, “Area residents and visitors alike need to realize that their failure to follow a food storage regulation often leads to this very situation where a bear has to be euthanized out of concern for human safety.”

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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