

Applegater

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Photo by Teya Jacobi

SPRING 2011
Volume 4, No. 2

Applegate Valley Community Newspaper
Serving Jackson and Josephine Counties — Circulation: 9,000

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Photography provided by Alana Starkweather

Bear sightings on the rise: What you need to know

BY TAMARA ROUSSO

Last summer, returning from a long day in town doing errands, my mind running through the things I needed to get done once home, a large black object ran in front of my vehicle a short distance from the gate leading to my property. It took my mind a few seconds to comprehend that it was a bear. Just as I was contemplating that bears must be smaller than I thought, I noticed a small black figure zipping down the neighbor's plum tree. A cub! And as I was congratulating myself on the good luck to have seen a mama and cub I became aware of cub #2 trying to get down from the tree and join his family. In desperation he flung himself from a branch a good ten feet off the ground, picked himself up, and scurried off to join his family.

As I started recounting my story (of what I considered a Wild Animal Kingdom moment) to others it became apparent that lots of folks saw bears last year. Some considered it good fortune also, but others were not as amused. I heard stories of bears being hit by vehicles, and bears raiding barns. What was going on?

It turns out the number of bear sightings did indeed increase in 2010 from years past. In 2010 the Rogue Watershed office (Central Point, OR) had received 477 bear complaints, as compared to an average of 203 complaints per year over the course of the last seven years—over a two-fold increase! Also in 2010, 43 bears



Photo by Teri Young.

were killed on damage, 6 on safety, and 5 on nuisance issues in the Rogue Watershed (Jackson and Josephine Counties), considerably more than in past years. In 2009, 23 bears were killed on damage, 2 on safety, and 1 on nuisance. In 2008 5 bears were killed on damage, 4 on safety, and 2 on nuisance. Prior to 2008, numbers were even lower, but formal records were not kept (Information provided

by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife [ODFW]).

So why was 2010 such a bad year for bears? According to Rosemary Stussy of ODFW the strange weather was a big factor. Bears came out of their hibernation late. Bears in southwestern Oregon don't hibernate in the classic sense of the word, but they do sleep and rest a lot in winter and very few complaints are received in cold

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The Pacific Fisher

BY DAVID CLAYTON



The Pacific Fisher is a rare forest carnivore native to our neck of the woods here in the Applegate. It is a mammal, in the family *mustelidea*, related to the weasel, marten, and wolverine. Fisher are sleek animals up to three feet long with luxurious pelts. Males can weigh up to 12 pounds in our area and females about half that. The Pacific Fisher was recently petitioned for listing

under the Endangered Species Act, it is currently listed as a sensitive species in California and Oregon, as well as by Forest Service and BLM. The fisher was once widely distributed in North America and Canada, but now due to trapping and habitat loss it is only found in northern California and extreme southern Oregon, primarily the Applegate, Ashland, Illinois and Chetco Valleys as well a reintroduced population in the Southern Oregon Cascades. This Cascade population was reintroduced in the hopes that fisher, widely known for

hunting porcupines, would control that species, which at the time was damaging young conifer plantations.

Fisher are associated with older, complex forests with snags, large down wood, cavities or platforms for denning and rest sites. Fisher have large home ranges, up to four square miles for females and twice that for males. They are generalist predators, eating small mammals, birds, porcupines and whatever they can catch and eat.

The Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest has recently been monitoring fisher in the Ashland watershed adjacent to the Applegate watershed in association with the Ashland Forest Resiliency (AFR)



USFS biologist Greg Colligan and a female fisher. Photo by Kelli Van Norman.

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MEET THE NATIVES

Siskiyou Mountains Salamander—page 13

The Snakefly—page 9

WEB EXCLUSIVE

The Postman column, "Can you go gridless for 30 days? Part 2, Food off the grid" by Dr. Richard Alan Miller and Yvonne-Marie Zancanaro can be found on the Applegater website: www.applegater.org.