

BEARS from page 1A

Kirchner said. "We have had bear safety issues in Florence and Dunes City all summer. A bear went in a house twice in Dunes City, opened sliding glass doors and ate pet food and other food items in the kitchen. Another bear in Dunes City had a confrontation with a Labrador Retriever in the homeowner's yard, then did damage to personal property along the side of the house. The homeowner shot and killed this bear. In the north Florence area, five bears were seen in a resident's yard. These bears were breaking into their garage multiple times, tearing apart the door. The resident attempted to haze the bear away and also shot at the ground near the bear to scare it away, but it showed no fear of humans. The bear also charged at the resident then grabbed the homeowner's small pet dog and carried it off?"

The number of incidents where direct contact between humans and bears occurs infrequently, as bears have a great sense of smell and usually avoid humans. There is, however, a seasonal element to

these meetings, which are often centered around food.

There are some basic strategies suggested by ODFW and the USDA to minimize the chances of a dangerous, or even deadly human/bear interaction.

If you encounter a bear, stop. Never approach a bear at any time for any reason and always give it space. Remember to leave any bear you encounter a way to escape. Walk away slowly and step into the house or garage. Then wait and watch out windows for the bear to leave.

It is also important to stay calm. Do not run or make sudden movements. Face the bear and slowly back away. Don't make eye contact with the bear and don't run, which could encourage the bear to attack you.

In the unlikely event you are attacked, fight back. The best way to scare a bear is to shout and be aggressive, use rocks, sticks and hands. Do not attack the animal. Making noise as you are walking through the woods also reduces the risk of surprising a bear and always keep children close by and in sight.

Perhaps most importantly, never feed a bear. Keep garbage, pet food and barbecues secure, and clean up fruit tree droppings and compost piles to avoid attracting bears. Also, feeding other animals, such as birds and squirrels, will attract bears.

One other tool to consider, in order to make it safely through a bear encounter, is to carry and learn how to properly use bear spray.

"Having bear spray is an effective tool if a bear approaches too close or charges," Kirchner said. "Spray into the mouth, nose and eyes of the bear, then leave the area to a secure structure such as a house or car. Bears are active at all hours of the day, but likely encounters can occur during dawn and dusk and at night."

The public does have the right to protect itself from animal attacks and to avoid property damage from wildlife. The killing of a bear on private property is legal under most circumstances, with permission of the property owner. However, there is some required documentation when this type of culling occurs, and the required information

to be filed can be found at the ODFW website.

There are also reporting requirements for all state employees that find themselves in a situation where they kill a bear, or other dangerous animals, according to applicable Oregon statute.

Any regional office of the State Department of Fish and Wildlife ordering the disposal of an animal under subsection (3) of this section is required to file a report with the State Fish and Wildlife Director within 30 days after the disposal. The report shall include, but need not be limited to, the loss incurred, the financial impact and the disposition of the animal. The director compiles all reports received on a bimonthly basis and these reports are available to the public upon request.

The Florence City code is also clear on this matter.

Florence City Code 6-6-070: Feeding Wild Animals Prohibited:

"No person shall scatter or deposit any food or other attractants on public or private property with or without the intent of attracting and/or feeding wild animals, includ-

ing, but not limited to, bears, seagulls, crows, pigeons, raccoons, feral cats, wild rabbits, rodents, coyotes and deer. Leaving food outside for any purpose, including for the purpose of feeding domestic animals and pets, in a place where wild animals can access it is a violation of this section if the food in fact becomes an attractant for wild animals."

Take the following steps to protect people and bears:

- Remove all food attractants. Don't leave food unattended. Bears are creatures of habit and will return to spots where they have previously found food.
- Do not feed the birds and take down all feeders, including hummingbird feeders, and sweep up any seed on the ground. In areas where bears are a problem, we recommend not feeding birds altogether. There is plenty of natural food for birds at this time of year.
- Do not burn garbage as this is a strong attractant to bears.
- Keep all doors and windows closed and locked where food is stored in permanent structures.
- Keep all garbage inside

your house or closed garage, and only place it outside just before garbage pick-up.

• Use bear-resistant garbage cans. Call your garbage provider which may be able to provide one.

• If bears have previously ransacked garbage cans, clean cans with hot water and bleach or ammonia to remove odors.

• Double bag all garbage. Use of ammonia-soaked rags in and around the cans may repel bears.

• Do not feed your pets outside. Keep all pet food and livestock feed inside the house or garage.

• Clean up barbecue grills and store them inside.

• Use three strands of low-cost electric fencing as an easy way to deter bears from chicken coops, fruit trees, compost piles, beehives and garbage cans.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has a page dedicated to bear safety practices and requirements for filing the necessary paperwork when a bear, or other wild animal is killed, for more information go to www.dfw.state.or.us.

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