

## **Bear encounters down as warm season nears the end**

Aspen Daily News Staff Writer

As the Aspen leaves change from green to gold and night temperatures dip into the 30s, this year's bear season is wrapping up with little human conflict over the last several months.

"It's been a very quiet season," said Dan Glidden, wildlife enforcement officer for the Aspen Police Department.

Overall, the APD has received fewer calls about bears and only one mischievous bear on Meadowood Drive has been relocated this summer, said Glidden.

There have been approximately 40 tickets handed out by the APD, which include warnings, citations and fines to people who have violated the city's trash container ordinance.

Glidden attributes the lack of bruin-human encounters to the abundance of berries and food in the natural environment, which has kept most bears in the high country, as well as last year's removal of problem bears.

"Last season there were 20 bears euthanized and 35 transplanted; that means there are 55 fewer bears out there to deal with," he said.

The Colorado Department of Wildlife (DOW) has yet to euthanize a single bear this year.

"It has been a remarkable forage year for bears," said Randy Hampton DOW's division spokesman. "Acorns on the oak brush are coming on strong."

Hampton also attributes the lack of bear-human conflict to DOW's proactive approach in educating the community. DOW sent "bear aware" volunteers to potential problem neighborhoods early in the season to educate individuals on how to prevent attracting the animals.

"We have had good cooperation with the community and it really has made a difference," he said.

Last August, the APD received 197 calls with many people reporting bears in houses or encountering them. This August, there were about 90 calls and most were inquiries regarding the new trash container laws, Glidden said.

The new container law, enacted June 1, requires bear-resistant containers to be placed indoors except on the day of trash pick-up. Only bear-proof containers are allowed to remain outdoors.

The APD has been issuing warnings for initial trash violations instead of citations. After a warning, a first-offense citation is issued with a \$250 fine. A second-offense ticket has a \$500 fine and a third offense includes a \$999 fine and a mandatory court appearance.

Glidden said only one individual on Lake Avenue has received a second-offense citation and no one has yet been cited for a third offense.

“The municipal court judge has been very helpful with us and he has required violators to place the fine toward new trash containers,” Glidden said. “The bottom line is we’re trying to achieve compliance.”

With the winter approaching, bears move into hyperphagia, a period when bears consume approximately 20,000 calories a day in order to prepare for hibernation.

“This is the time when we see most bear encounters,” Hampton said. “It’s critically important people stay on top of their game right now. There is plenty of food in the mountains, but if people make human food readily available they will attract bears.”

According to Hampton, sows in the valley traditionally go into hibernation around mid-October, while male bears begin hibernating between late October and early November.

“We’re just waiting on cold weather now,” said Glidden, also known as “Bear Boy,” because he has been specially assigned to patrol the city four days a week looking for bears diving into dumpsters, trash cans and those who are violating the wildlife container ordinance. “I haven’t seen one this year. Haven’t seen a single bear.”

*Dorothy@aspdailynews.com*



Andrew Travers/Aspen Daily News

A bear and her two cubs were spotted in the Hunter Creek Valley recently. The bruins are staying in the high country this year because of an abundance of natural food.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.aspendailynews.com/section/home/142746>