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## **Recent wildlife sightings in Aspen lead police to step up education**

Erica Robbie, Aspen Daily News Staff Writer

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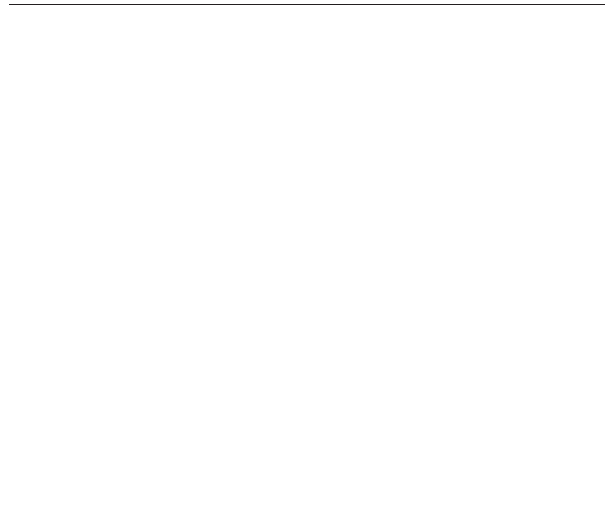
With recent wildlife sightings — including moose on the loose downtown on April 22 — Aspen Police Department is trying to educate not only the public at large, but also the valley's newest wave of residents, most of whom have relocated to the area from major cities.

Kristin Sabel/Special to the Aspen Daily News

While six feet of distance may fly with CDC guidelines, a ski's length won't suffice with local wildlife officials.

With recent wildlife sightings — including moose on the loose downtown on April 22 — Aspen Police Department is seeking to educate not only the public at large, but in particular the valley's newest wave of residents, most of whom relocated to the area from major cities.

“As the snow melts and temperatures continue to increase, we’re starting to see more wildlife activity in the Aspen area, which includes bear and moose activity,” Ginna Gordon, a community response officer with Aspen Police Department, said Monday. “Another thing we’d like to recognize is that our community has seen a lot of newcomers over the past year, so we really want to be proactive and educate them on how to live alongside our wildlife.”



The conversation followed Monday’s news of a black bear attacking and killing a 39-year-old woman outside Durango.

Although seemingly basic to tenured Aspenites, the importance of securing trash in a bear-resistant container and locking said container are not to be underestimated, Gordon said.

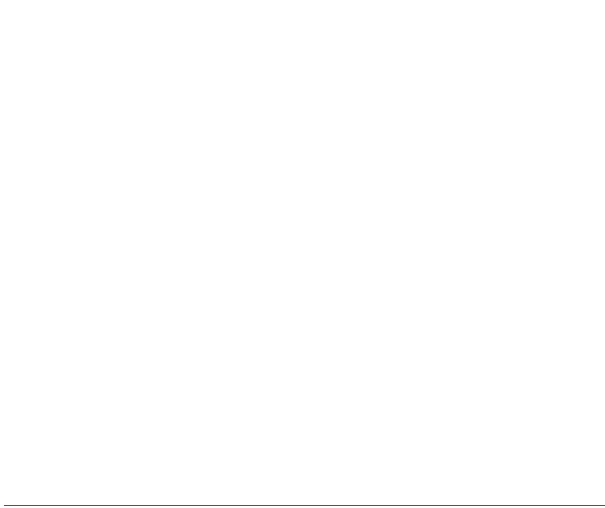
“This is first and foremost,” she said, adding that the requirements are required by law and that not following the protocols could result in deadly outcomes for wildlife.

Locking vehicles and ground-floor windows is No. 2, according to Gordon. Keeping a safe distance — which everyone should be adept at by now — from wildlife also is critical. Gordon noted this also applies to pets, which is why best practices in the area include keeping dogs on leashes. This is especially important as it pertains to moose.

“Moose are protective of their young as well as their territory, and they see dogs as a potential threat,” Gordon said. “Taking that extra step to make sure a dog is leashed when out and about is a smart thing to do.”

Many people do not realize that moose, in fact, can be dangerous and have been known locally to attack people in the past. In March 2019, for instance, Colorado Parks and Wildlife euthanized an aggressive bull moose after it attacked a local man up on Independence Pass.

CPW anticipates moose activity in the area to increase, Gordon said. The moose roaming through downtown Aspen on April 22, which happened to be Earth Day, was a rare sighting. The ungulates were first spotted in a yard on 3rd Street and Hopkins Avenue and traveled to Paepcke Park and Wagner Park, all the while casually strolling through residential and commercial areas, Gordon said. The moose were last seen heading up Aspen Mountain.



“That’s very uncommon, to see a moose in downtown Aspen,” she said, “However, a lot of the trends show that the moose population in this area is growing, so it might become something that we see more often.”

As Aspen bears start to wake up from hibernating, Gordon urged the local community — and in particular Aspen’s newest crop of residents — to be bear aware, and to do its part to help protect local wildlife.

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