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Sheriff Lou Vallario
Garfield County, Colorado

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: June 8, 2018

Time: 11:20 AM

Title: More Bears Possible in Our Towns and Cities

IMPORTANT: Please direct any media requests to the contact above. Do not contact the Garfield County Emergency Communications Center or Patrol staff for media requests.

GARFIELD COUNTY, CO. –

We build our homes in the mountains and we interface with many species of wildlife including the black bear. As noted in a brochure from Colorado Parks and Wildlife; "Black" is a species, not a color. In Colorado many black bears are blond, cinnamon or brown.

Problems arise when bears learn that there are easily attainable food sources ("trash cans, bird feeders, pet food, etc.) in residential areas. Bears have an acute sense of smell and in their pursuit of food might break into buildings or homes as they become more comfortable in residential environments. Unfortunately many of these bears will ultimately have to be euthanized if they keep returning to residential areas.

The Garfield County Sheriff's Office and CPW are concerned with the coming season and the potential for more frequent encounters with bears in non-traditional and unexpected areas. Due to dry conditions in many areas of Colorado, the early spring food sources are diminishing for the bears. In the summer months much of their food comes from mountain nuts and berries. If these items are in low supply they will turn to the valley floors in search of food for their long winter hibernation.

There are many tips provided by Colorado Parks and Wildlife the average homeowner can follow to minimize the possibility of a direct encounter with a bear, available on their website at <http://cpw.state.co.us/bears>

- NEVER intentionally feed a bear! It is illegal, unethical and can lead to human injuries and the death of the bear.
- Keep garbage secured; put it out only the morning of pick-up
- Bears can smell food miles away. Freeze items that might become smelly until trash day.
- Keep trash in a secure building or in bear-resistant trash cans, available from your trash hauler or on the internet. Note: An open dumpster is not a "bear secure" trash container.
- If bears are present, remove all bird feeders, including hummingbird feeders.

- Secure odorous compost piles in an enclosure. Do not put fruit and vegetables in compost piles.
- Pick fruit early; don't allow it to fall and rot on the ground.
- Clean up after picnics in the yard or on the deck. Don't allow food odors to linger.
- If you attract bears to your residence, that will cause problems for the whole neighborhood.
- Do not keep food in your vehicle. Keep your vehicle windows rolled up and doors locked.
- Don't leave pet food outside; don't leave pet dishes outside.
- Do not feed wildlife such as deer, turkeys, raccoons or chipmunks-that can eventually attract larger predators, including lions and bears.
- Talk to your neighbors and kids about being bear aware.
- Lock doors and close bottom floor windows when you're not at home. Keep garage doors closed.
- If a bear enters your house, open doors and do not get between the bear and its escape route.
- If you see a bear in your neighborhood, immediately make it feel uncomfortable by shouting, banging pots and pans or other hazing methods, from a distance. Never tolerate a bear in residential areas.
- If the bear does not show fear of people, call Colorado Parks and Wildlife immediately-waiting too long can lead to the further habituation of that bear, making a successful relocation more difficult.

In Garfield County you can call CPW at 970-647-2920, or 970-255-6100. In an emergency, you can contact Colorado State Patrol or call 911.

Remember, if you feed a bear, or allow it to find food around your home, you are essentially sentencing that bear to death.

We encourage everyone to keep bears, themselves and their neighborhood safe this summer. Be educated about bears and share that education with your neighbors. Deputies will be assisting other law enforcement officers in providing education and, when necessary, issuing tickets with associated fines. Make sure you are complying with the laws and follow proper procedures; if in doubt, ask.

Additional information will be released as it becomes available.

The mission of the Garfield County Sheriff's Office is to provide solutions for the people through professional, ethical and compassionate conduct.

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