



CHICO POLICE DEPARTMENT

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Increased Bear and Mountain Lion Activity Expected Due to Dry Winter Conditions – How to Avoid Conflict and Stay Safe

The City of Chico Animal Services and Chico Parks Department, along with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife would like to make residents aware that there is expected to be a larger than usual number of bear and mountain lion sightings and encounters this year due to the dry winter season. Sightings alone are not a cause for concern because most wildlife naturally fears humans, keep their distance and will not bother you – as long as they remain fully wild. But wildlife that has become conditioned to humans - especially when it comes to food sources – can become a nuisance, and may eventually have to be destroyed to ensure public safety.

It's everyone's responsibility to know how to prevent situations that could lead to conflicts with wildlife. Something as simple as a bag of garbage, bowl of pet food, or feeding other wildlife may attract bears or mountain lions to your property. It's also important to know what to do if there is an encounter with wildlife.

Prevention is the first step to keeping wildlife alive and people and pets safe. For both bears and mountain lions, it's important to remove food sources, including keeping pets and pet food inside, and not feeding other wildlife. Mountain lions are attracted by deer, so landscape your yard with plants deer don't eat, and don't feed deer, which is illegal in California. Wildlife such as raccoons and opossums will also attract mountain lions, so do not feed them; eliminate food sources like garbage, and close up crawl spaces where they might live. Provide sturdy, covered shelters for sheep, goats and other vulnerable animals, and don't allow pets out at dusk, dawn and at night when mountain lions are most active. Keep brush trimmed to reduce hiding places, and don't leave small children or pets unattended outside.

Bears are attracted to anything edible or smelly. Besides not feeding pets outside or feeding other wildlife, how you handle your trash is especially important. Wait to put trash out until the morning of collection, keep cans clean and deodorized with ammonia or bleach, and if bears are a real problem, purchase a bear-proof garbage container. Only feed birds from November through March with feeders

Supervisor:

Watch Commander:

Prepared By: Tracy Mohr

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inaccessible to bears, harvest fruit off trees as soon as it is ripe and remove fallen fruit promptly, keep barbecue grills clean, and don't store trash, groceries or animal feed in your vehicles or in cabins that will be unoccupied for an extended period of time.

Although mountain lion attacks on people are extremely rare, do not hike, bike or job alone, especially during dusk, dawn and at night. If you do encounter a mountain lion, never approach it, and do not run. Instead, face the animal, make noise, and throw rocks or other objects toward it. Pick up small children or pets. If attacked, fight back. If you see a mountain lion in your yard, bring children and animals inside, but avoid confrontation if possible. For your dog's safety, do not allow your dog to chase a mountain lion.

If you encounter a bear in your yard, do not approach the bear, and give the bear plenty of room to pass or withdraw. For your dog's safety, do not allow your dog to chase a bear. Bring pets and children inside, and once you are a safe distance away, you may encourage the bear to leave by banging pots and pans or making other loud noises. If the bear is in your home, retreat to a safe location and do not block exits that the bear may use to escape.

Sightings of mountain lions or bears are not a cause for concern, and most animals will move on if there is no food source. For more information, or to report a sighting, contact Chico Animal Control at 530-897-4960. To report any encounters with, or damage done by a mountain lion or bear, contact California Department of Fish and Wildlife at 530-225-2300, or visit their website at www.keepmewild.org for additional information.

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