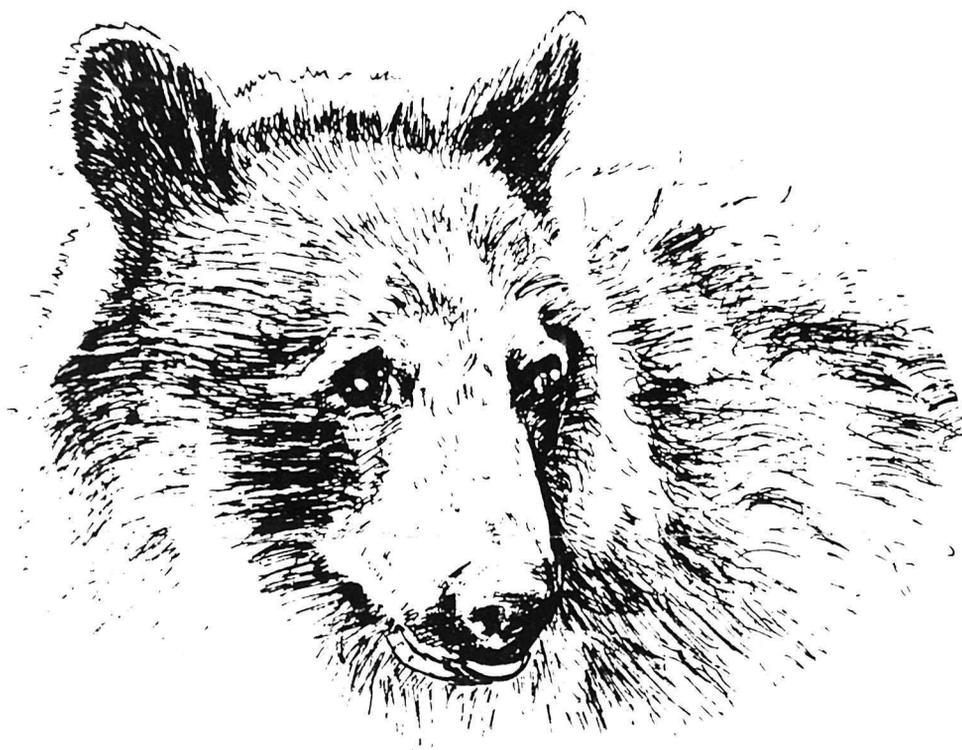


Black Bears and their Management



Sophisticated Bears



Lassen Volcanic National Park is home to a sizable black bear population. Their natural behavior, foraging habits, distribution and numbers have been altered by a long history of available human foods in the park. Bears habituated to these unnatural foods will often lose their instinctive fear of humans. They become aggressive and can cause extensive damage to motor vehicles, trailers, tents and other camping equipment in their search for human food.

In 1993, there were 33 reported incidents, totalling approximately \$7080 in property damage. Almost all of these incidents occurred in Warner Valley. When bears become this destructive and aggressive they may have to be killed.

Management Plan

Careless food storage can spell death for bears. In order to restore and maintain the natural distribution, abundance and behavior of black bears, and to provide greater safety for park visitors, Lassen has implemented a human/bear management program. The program has five basic elements.

- (1) removal of all unnatural food sources;
- (2) public information and education;
- (3) enforcement of regulations regarding feeding wild animals and improper food storage;
- (4) control of habituated bears;
- (5) research and monitoring.

The major emphasis of this program is to break the link between bears and human food sources and to restore the natural foraging habits of bears. By eliminating all sources of garbage, groceries and handouts to bears, potentially dangerous confrontations between humans and bears can be reduced and fewer bears will need to be killed. To accomplish this, the Park Service is making all outdoor refuse containers bear-resistant, and requests that all visitors comply with special food storage policies.

How You Can Help

When visiting Lassen Volcanic, you can be part of the solution by adhering to the following regulations:

(1) While in **frontcountry** areas, campers should store their food in lockers, if provided. Where lockers are not available or when food amounts exceed the locker's capacity, guidelines have been developed to help decrease the likelihood of personal injury or property damage. All food not secured in lockers should be stored as odor-free as possible in a vehicle trunk. In vehicles without a trunk, food should be stored out of sight in the vehicle, covered with a blanket, sleeping bag or

tarp because bears have learned to visually recognize ice chests, grocery bags, canned goods, food wrappers, soda cans and boxes. All vehicle windows must be tightly closed and foods should be kept in sealed containers to minimize odors.

(2) While in the **backcountry**, all food supplies not stored in canisters or lockers should be suspended out of reach of bears by using the counter-balance method (see the wilderness brochure issued with wilderness permits).

(3) When leaving your car at a **trailhead parking lot**, never leave any food in the vehicle. Place all garbage in bear-resistant trash bins and keep the interior of vehicle clean and odor free.



These precautions are the best methods for minimizing conflicts between humans and bears, but bear damage and confrontations are still possible, even when all guidelines are followed.

Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, §2.10(d), permits the superintendent to implement mandatory food storage regulations

Conditioned Bears

Bears that frequent campgrounds and other developed areas causing property damage may be captured by the Park Service and relocated to areas of suitable habitat.

All relocations are made within the park, as far as possible from areas of concentrated visitor use. Bears that have become highly destructive or aggressive from habituation to human food may have to be humanely killed in the interest of human safety.

Research



Though there have been no studies of the bear population in Lassen, biologists in parks such as Yosemite and Redwoods have been studying bears since the 1970s. The information gathered by these parks was helpful in the development of a bear management plan, but does not negate the need for research in this park. The major goals of the plan are to maintain a healthy bear population while allowing visitors opportunities to understand and appreciate them in their natural habitat, and to minimize the number of negative human-bear interactions.

Research has shown that bears have very good memories. When they learn to get human food in campgrounds and from garbage cans, they will return again and again. Bears are very strong and can easily tear open coolers, car doors, and windows when searching for food. In the process of seeking out

additional human foods they may lose their fear of people and become dangerous.

Bears that cause serious property damage or threaten human safety unfortunately may have to be destroyed. Because most bear problems are a direct result of bears becoming habituated to human foods, the responsibility for keeping bears from acquiring a taste for human food rests with all of us. **NEVER FEED BEARS OR LEAVE GARBAGE, OR ANY FOOD SOURCE, ACCESSIBLE TO THEM.** If you see people feeding bears, or a bear which appears aggressive or is loitering near garbage cans, please report the incident to a Park Ranger immediately.