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MZardus:vmb 7/16/75

BEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR

SEQUOIA AND KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

INTRODUCTION

Black bears (Ursus americanus) are an important wildlife resource widely distributed over these Parks. Their habitat requirements are broad enough for bears to occur from the lowest Park elevations to some distance in the back country. The majority of bears live natural lives remote from human developed areas and chance encounters result in a brief glimpse of a wild animal. Bears, in developed areas, with a large appetite for a variety of foods, occasionally come into conflict with man. In the vicinity of developed areas availability of human food has permitted unnatural habits to develop in wild bear populations and some bears raid garbage cans, enter autos, or damage dwellings, searching for food.

Legislation establishing the National Park Service states that the ". . . purpose is to conserve the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

It is the objective of these Parks to perpetuate black bears in a natural environment and to protect Park visitors from harmful depredations by

bears. Troublesome bears are removed by live-trapping and relocation to other Park areas. Some problem bears must be destroyed. The most important management effort must be directed at improving solid waste handling procedures. Secondly, information must be disseminated to visitors and employees so that the availability of unnatural foodstuffs (human foods) are at an absolute minimum. Some bears persistently break into campers, autos, tents and buildings for food. Relocation of these animals is not always successful and they continue their destructive habits in a new environment. Such bears must be destroyed to avoid perpetuating destructive behavior.

MANAGEMENT PROBLEM

The problem is conflict between man and bears. Conflict situations range from the mere sight of a bear roaming through a campground, to invasion of occupied quarters by a marauding bear. The greatest number of bear situations occur as garbage can raids and damage to food coolers at campsites.

CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM

Although some incidents arise from intentional feeding by visitors, most of the problems center around ready access to human food. Garbage cans with easily removable lids have been an open invitation to hungry bears. With garbage collection each morning, an accumulation from the entire

day was available at night when bears visited the campground. Visitors have not been aware of the necessity to store food properly, nor of the proper method for storing food. Employees were not completely aware of the best methods for storing food or other items. In the past, because of ready availability of human foods to bears, bear management was involved primarily with removing problem bears and thus treated the symptom rather than the cause of the problems.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

1. To maintain populations of black bears at levels that are sustainable under natural conditions as part of the native fauna of these Parks.
2. To plan development and use of these Parks so as to minimize conflicts and unpleasant or dangerous incidents with bears.
3. To help insure that bears will lead their natural lives with minimum interference by humans.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

1. Elimination of availability of unnatural food sources.
2. Identification of problem bears and determination of procedures to cope with them.
3. Education of visitors about the problem, cause, and solution.

4. Education of employees about the problem, cause, and solution.
5. Integration of Bear Management Plan with other Park plans.
6. Revision of this Plan as often as new information becomes available.

DETAILS OF THE PLAN

Solid Waste Handling

Garbage collection will be scheduled so that pickup commences at the residences, then the campgrounds, and ends with collection at the concessioner lodging facilities and restaurant units. Pickup at the latter units in Giant Forest will be scheduled as late as possible, preferably after 5:00 p.m. Employees will be cautioned to avoid garbage disposal in outside containers at night until bear-proofed garbage cans are installed. All solid waste containers in Giant Forest Lodgepole, and Dorst Campground will be brought to an acceptable standard by early summer, 1975. Bearproofing of waste containers in the Grant Grove - Cedar Grove areas is scheduled and should be completed by the start of the main visitor-use season in 1976; when this phase is completed all waste containers in the Parks will have been bear-proofed. Dumpster waste containers will be modified to keep bears out. Visitors will be cautioned to refrain from leaving food unattended and to promptly place waste in bear-proof containers.

Regulations

The section of regulations dealing with feeding animals will be brought to visitors' attention. A camper food storage special regulation has been proposed so as to be effective in the 1975 visitor-use season. Briefly summarized, visitors are under the obligation to safeguard food from bears' depredations.

Bear Control Procedures

All of these procedures depend upon ^{the best available} ~~total~~ identification of individual bears. Older, trapwise bears will avoid traps and trappers' sample will be biased to show young, easily trapped bears. When action is required in a bear incident the bear may be trapped or placed in a mobile trap and relocated or the dangerous bear may be dispatched with an appropriate weapon. A summary of management actions follows:

I. Bears exhibiting the following behavior will be observed and each case judged individually:

- A. Bears that on rare occasions forage in non-bear-proof solid waste containers or take unattended food chests or other food are merely following natural behavior and cannot be classed as problem animals. If frequency of such behavior ^{is verified} ~~increases~~, such bears can be live-trapped and relocated to remote areas of these Parks.

B. Bears that walk through campgrounds and other developed areas without threatening people, begging, taking food from occupied sites, or destroying property constitute a potential problem. If the pattern develops into a threat to human safety or property damage the bear can be live-trapped and relocated.

II. Bears exhibiting the following behavior will be trapped and released at some remote site identified in this Plan:

- A. Bears that enter occupied campgrounds and campsites and search for and/or take food even though people take action to drive it away such as shouting, beating pots, and throwing articles.
- B. Bears that regularly break windows in vehicles and break into closed trailers, campers, and buildings.

When trapping is unsuccessful the bear should be taken with the Cap-Chur gun and the immobilized animal carefully placed manually in the trap.

III. Bears whose behavior falls in one of the following categories will be considered for destruction: (See METHODS OF HANDLING BEARS, Destruction)

- A. Bears that attack and/or injure people without provocation.

B. Bears that growl at, rush, chase or otherwise threaten people without provocation.

C. Bears whose behavior is described above in Part II, B., and return to developed areas after relocation to resume their destructive habits (provided relocation was of sufficient distance to challenge the bears' return capability).

IV. When female bears with cubs are trapped and the cubs remain outside the trap:

A. Attempts should be made to take the cub or cubs:

1. Small cubs will enter the trap to be with their mother if the door is propped open a small amount.

2. Cubs may be taken with the Cap-Chur gun and drug if trapping is impossible.

B. If the parent bear must be destroyed, the District Ranger or his designee will decide if the cubs are old enough to wean. If they are old enough they should be relocated. If they are too young:

1. The California Department of Fish and Game should be contacted for an outlet; or,

2. The cubs should be destroyed and disposed of by approved methods.

- C. Harmless bears inadvertently trapped, having cubs may be released at the same location.

METHODS OF HANDLING BEARS

Trapping

The culvert trap will be set in the cocked position in the evening and the door closed in the morning before 6:00 a.m. Adequate blocking will be used to insure that the trap is neither a safety hazard nor so loose as to discourage a wary bear. Traps must be marked "DANGEROUS" in six inch letters on all sides. Trapped bears must not be kept in traps longer than 24 hours. If longer incarceration is necessary consult with Fish and Wildlife Specialist for special procedures to follow.

Immobilization

Bears will be immobilized as a last resort measure in effecting their capture, using the "Cap-Chur" projector and the appropriate drug.

All bears trapped for the first time will be immobilized while in the trap to allow for safe tagging and gathering of biological statistics as listed in the Bear Field Data Form (see appendix). This will normally be accomplished with the drug phencyclidine hydrochloride.

Drugs are obtained by the Fish and Wildlife Specialist and are available to qualified personnel through the Resources Management Office. The Fish

and Wildlife Specialist will coordinate procurement of drugs and maintain records of inventory and distribution to field areas. Training sessions will be given to familiarize field employees with equipment and its use. Procedures for inventory and controlling distribution of drugs are provided for (see attachments). Accountability will be maintained for all drug use and distribution.

Release Sites for Trapped Bears

Only the following release sites are approved in these Parks. Scatter releases along the North Fork of the Kaweah River road from Yucca Creek to the West Boundary Patrol Cabin site. When conditions permit access, Redwood Canyon is an acceptable release site. Bears should be taken one mile down in the Canyon beyond the locked gate at Redwood Saddle.

Wortman Mill road where it passes through the Park, may be utilized as a release site. If the operator knows Park Boundary locations several bears may be relocated some distance out the Milk Ranch Peak road. No trapped bears will be released outside Park boundaries. Bears to be relocated will be marked with a permanent numbered ear tag and colored ear ribbon. Records of marking will be available in the Resources Management Office for subsequent check-up on bears.

Destruction

When the District Ranger recommends that a bear be destroyed, a lethal dose of drug will be administered with proper immobilization equipment by properly trained personnel. This decision requires concurrence of the Assistant Superintendent, except in situations requiring immediate action.

Only in special situations requiring immediate action will a high powered rifle be used. Rogue bears positively identified for destruction which have demonstrated that they will not enter traps or cannot be approached within the limited working range of the Cap-Chur gun to effect immobilization and disposal must be dealt with before additional property damage and/or personal injury occurs. Discrete, safe use of a high powered rifle by qualified personnel away from developed areas sufficient to be audience-free throughout the disposal operation is absolutely necessary.

Disposal

The presence of a carcass is not unnatural in the forest. Nutrients are recycled by a variety of means. Discretion will be used so that the carcass of a bear killed in an accident or taken as provided by this Plan, is far enough from roads and use areas to be out of sight and to minimize offensive odor. Disposal will be in such places as over a steep embankment

on the Colony Mill road, Redwood Canyon, Deer Ridge, Crystal Cave road, or in the vicinity of Shepherd Saddle. Do not utilize the same area for more than one carcass.

EDUCATION

Visitors

Leaflets concerning good camping practices and safety in black bear country will be given the Park visitor at the Park entrance stations.

The Interpretive Division will publish cautions to visitors and inform them at information stations and in informal contact situations of the danger in exposed food. At campfire talks and in other formal contact situations a clear message will be given explaining to visitors the proper handling of waste and food to prevent bear incidents.

Employees

Training will be given to familiarize all employees with the problems and how to alleviate them by special food handling. Employees will be reminded from time to time by district personnel to keep solid waste containers from overflowing and to practice good management of waste disposal.

INTEGRATION OF ALL PARK OPERATIONS

1. Personnel of the Interpretation Division will inform Park visitors of problems as described above.
2. Personnel of the Maintenance Division will upgrade all solid waste disposal facilities and administer garbage contracts so as to present the least possible opportunity for bears to secure human foodstuffs or wastes of same.
3. Park Rangers will be responsible for informing campers of proper food storage techniques and effecting compliance.
4. Park Rangers will be responsible for trapping, relocations and removal of problem bears, with assistance from the Fish and Wildlife Specialist in special problems.
5. The Bear Management Plan will be made available to all Park personnel. All Park Divisions and functions will coordinate their efforts in bear management through the Resources Management Office. The latter Office will advise the Superintendent and his Staff.
6. As studies on bears provide new information, changes in management philosophy will be expressed in a revised Bear Management Plan. As revisions are approved all Divisions will be advised and new directions in management will be adopted.

Responsibilities

Responsibility for managing field situations rests with the District Rangers. Equipment necessary for capture, immobilization and relocation of bears is on District inventories and provision will be made in District programming for maintenance, replacement, or acquisition of equipment. Training sessions involving District personnel will be conducted annually at the opening of the season by the Fish and Wildlife Specialist to familiarize all concerned with immobilization techniques.

Reporting

The following reporting requirements must be met:

1. All incidents will be reported to the Chief Park Ranger in time for the morning report.
2. All incidents will be reported on the Bear Field Data Form (see attached copy) and all incidents involving personal injury or damage amounting to \$25.00 or more valuation should be reported on the standard DI-134.
3. Form 10-343 Case Incident Record, must be completed and submitted for all incidents.

4. All situations where bears are handled, drugged, measured or found dead, involving either personal injury or property damage, regardless of how slight, present the possibility of a tort claim. The individual suffering the injury or property damage may submit a claim; whether or not it will be allowed is determined by the Field Solicitor. Therefore, in each incident when there has been personal injury or property damage there is possibility for a tort claim, and the Tort Claim's Officer should be notified (by telephone) immediately.

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