

Bear Attack: Officials urge awareness after woman, dog attacked in Medford

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It's not unusual to hear of bear sightings in rural areas of Oregon. Reports of bear attacks are rare, but they do happen.

In Medford, police responded to the 900 block of N Ross Lane Sept. 5, to a report of a woman who was attacked by a bear. Upon arrival, officers learned the woman was in her backyard when a bear, estimated to be 150-200 pounds, rushed her and attacked her.

The woman sustained non-life-threatening injuries to her left arm and left leg. The woman's dog intervened and was also attacked, but together, the woman and her dog were able to chase the bear off. After the bear fled, it ran in front of a vehicle on N. Ross Lane and was struck and likely injured, but it fled from there.

Oregon State Police (OSP) troopers and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) representatives assisted in searching for the bear who was not located. Several additional calls came into police dispatch throughout the night with sightings in that area.

On Sept. 6, police responded to a bear in a tree in the 1100 block of Picecroft Avenue. Upon arrival, officers set up a perimeter and called OSP and ODFW for assistance. The bear was in the general area of the prior night's attack incident.

As officers were waiting for assistance from OSP and ODFW, the bear started to climb out of the tree to flee. Officers on scene shot and killed the bear for the safety of the community.

Under the ODFW policy, a bear that is a threat to human life is not eligible for any relocation program. OSP and ODFW collected the bear for inspection and confirmed it was the bear from the prior night's attack based on the investigative evidence.

If you happen to encounter a bear, here are some safety tips from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife:

Make Noise - Raise your voice and speak firmly, yell and clap your hands.

Don't Run - Do not run or make sudden movements. Back away slowly as you face the bear.

Fight back - in the rare event of an attack. Keep bear spray handy for quick access and practice using it. Be aggressive, shout, and throw tools, sticks, and rocks.

Bear history

Oregon is home to about 25,000 to 30,000 black bears, North America's most common bear species, according to the ODFW website.

Generally black in color, they can also be brown, cinnamon or blond. Fast and agile, they are good swimmers and climbers who prefer forests, trails and streams. At home throughout Oregon, black bears are omnivorous and have a diverse diet including berries, fruit, grasses and plants. Although they will consume small mammals, insects and amphibians, these bears are not usually active predators.

Bears should never be allowed access to human food or garbage; it habituates them to people and increases the chance of conflict, the ODFW website states. Once habituated to finding food near homes or campgrounds, bears can become a threat to human safety and must often be destroyed.

For more information, visit the ODFW webpage.