

Wildlife-Human Interaction

387.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The University Police Department is responsible for the safety of lands and resources under its jurisdiction. The department is responsible for public safety at Cal Poly, including all agricultural and undeveloped lands. The Department of Fish and Game has statutory responsibility for wildlife in the State of California, including authority for removal of wildlife. Therefore, both departments have a shared role and responsibility in dealing with and managing wild animals at Cal Poly. Cooperation is essential to fully meet these responsibilities.

It is important for department personnel to recognize that wild animals are unpredictable and many are capable of causing severe injury and death to humans. When responding to investigate a report of a wildlife-human interaction, department personnel are encouraged to exercise extra caution and vigilance, recognizing and being prepared to address risks to themselves and others. Furthermore, the department recognizes the importance of wild animals and the responsibility of humankind to protect and preserve these animals and their habitats. Where department personnel are authorized to destroy wild animals to safeguard humans, the decision to do so should include (when possible and reasonable) consideration of other possible non-lethal options that may be made available.

387.2 WILD ANIMALS (GENERAL)

The following are guidelines on managing and dealing with wild animals on Cal Poly property.

Roles and Responsibilities

University Police

The University Police personnel and management will be responsible for the following:

- Provide for public safety
- Verify, document and review reported wildlife-human interactions to develop the appropriate response
- When appropriate, notifying Department of fish and Game of reported wildlife-human interactions
- Preparing response strategies
- Secure site of wildlife-human interactions, if needed
- Provide ongoing community information and education
- Coordinating release of information with the Department of Fish and Game

Department of Fish and Game

The Department of Fish and Game can assist the University Police in the following ways:

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- Provide expertise and assistance in determining the appropriate response to wildlife-human interaction
- Provide educational material

387.3 WILDLIFE AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Aggressive behavior exhibited by various wild animals may be presented in different ways.

Acceptable vs Unacceptable Wild Animal Behavior

For the purposes of establishing general guidelines, wild animal behavior relevant to humans can be categorized as acceptable or unacceptable.

Acceptable Behavior - defined as any wildlife-human interaction where there is an absence of unprovoked aggression from the animal toward the human. Examples of acceptable (or normal) wild animal behavior include:

- The animal retreats at the sight of a human
- The animal takes an aggressive posture, followed by retreating or no further aggression
- The animal stays put while humans show no aggression
- The animal shows signs of curiosity while humans show no aggression

Unacceptable behavior - defined as an animal that displays unprovoked aggression, stalking that would likely result in an attack if not averted, or an actual attack. Examples of unacceptable (or abnormal) animal behavior include:

- The animal displays unprovoked aggression
- The animal does not retreat when aggressive actions are taken by humans
- The animal exhibits staling or other forms of predatory behavior toward humans

Not every wildlife-human interaction will fit into one of the two behavior patterns described above. Each observation needs to be judged on the particular circumstances of that interaction. Particular consideration should be given to signs a wild animal is displaying little fear of or an unusual interest in humans.

387.4 HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Unintentional Provocation by Humans

In some instances, humans may intentionally provoke unacceptable behavior on the part of a wild animal by:

- Immediately running away on sighting (especially children), triggering the natural instinct of some animals to chase
- Remaining in a location that does not provide the animal an escape route

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- Approaching a wild animal that is feeding or with young off spring

Intentional aggressive actions by humans

Aggressive actions on the part of humans that would tend to cause a wild animal to retreat would include:

- Making loud noises
- Throwing objects like stones
- Moving toward the animal with a walking stick

387.5 DEPARTMENT ACTIONS TO WILD ANIMAL-HUMAN INTERACTIONS

The department actions focus on providing public information and education and procedures for responding to wildlife-human interactions that might occur. Standard approaches for public safety and information, and response to wild animal interactions are described below:

Sightings

A sighting is a visual observation of a wild animal. Since many outlying areas of campus provide good habitats for wildlife, a sighting may not normally be a cause for action. Exceptions of this would be instances where the animal appears to be sick or injured, is in a developed or frequently visited area by humans, or displays some abnormal behavior or condition.

When a wild life sighting is reported, department personnel are responsible for:

- When and where necessary, investigate the accuracy of the report or sighting
- Document the sighting and any reported or observed categorical behaviors exhibited by the animal
- Check department records for other recent sightings in the reported area
- When and where necessary, provide notification to the Department of Fish and Game of the sighting
- When and where necessary, provide notification to the community of the sighting by the most applicable means, which may include:
 - Posting of prepared flyer's in the area of the sighting
 - Published department activity log
 - Telephonic Safety News report
 - Notification to campus public information department
 - Transmission of flyer's and information to local media
 - Campus-wide email distribution
 - Campus emergency alert distribution

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Absent reports of risk or threat to human safety or issues of injured, ill or strangely behaved wild animals, the following wildlife will not generally result in department response beyond documentation of reported sighting:

- Opossum, raccoon, deer, fox, squirrel, tarantula, owls, vultures, hawk, coyotes

Recurrent Sightings

Recurrent sightings are repeated sighting in a given area over a period of time.

When a recurrent animal sighting is determined, department personnel are responsible for:

- All provisions included in response for sighting (above)
- Notification to the Department of Fish and Game of the recurrent sighting
- When and where necessary, increased community notification of the recurrent sightings.

Encounter

An encounter is an unexpected, direct meeting between a human and a wild animal without incident. The animal displayed acceptable (normal) behavior.

- All applicable provisions included in responses for sighting and recurrent sightings (above)
- Investigation of the encounter site
- Obtain the best possible physical description of the animal and its behavior from witness(es)
- When and where necessary, prohibit further access to the area by humans
- Document the encounter as a case report
- Notification to the Department of Fish and Game of the encounter
- When and where necessary, provide notification to the community of the encounter by the most applicable means.

Incident

An incident is a conflict between a human and a wild animal that could have had serious results or any incident where a domestic animal is attacked. typically incidents include the animal displayed unacceptable (abnormal) behavior and the person involved believed his/her safety was threatened.

When an incident is reported, department personnel are responsible for:

- All applicable provisions included in responses for sighting, recurrent sightings, and encounters (above)

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- Determined from witness statement(s) and examination of the site if the wild animal demonstrated lack of fear toward humans. Special attention should be made to the description of the animal and its behavior toward people, including:
 - Was the animal feeding, with Young or appear cornered or injured?
 - What attempts were made to scare the animal away?
 - Did the animal follow, chase or stalk the person?
 - What was the appearance of the animal? (physical mannerisms, coat, position of ears and tail, stances, etc.)
- Department officer should attempt to destroy a wild animal when it is reasonably believed the animal has been involved in unprovoked aggression toward a human and is a threat to public safety. However, if circumstances allow and there is no immediate threat to the safety of persons, department personnel should consider consultation with the Department of Fish and Game on alternative options to the destruction of the wild animal.
 - If the animal is destroyed, notify a department supervisor immediately. When some animals are destroyed, the Department of Fish and Game must be notified.
 - If the animal is not immediately destroyed, the Department of Fish and Game will be notified immediately for the purposes of tracking and destroying the wild animal.
 - The area should be secured as best possible to prohibit human access where the incident occurred and where the other humans visiting nearby areas may be at risk
- Document the incident as a case report
- When and where necessary, provide immediate notification to the community of an incident - especially, when the wild animal has been determined to pose a threat to public safety.

Attack

An attack is when a human is injured or killed by contact with a wild animal. When an incident of attack is reported, department personnel are responsible for:

- The safety and medical needs of the victim(s)
- Department of Fish and Game will be notified immediately
- All applicable provisions included in responses for sighting, recurrent sightings, encounters, and incident (above)
- Department officers should destroy the offending wild animal under the circumstances of an attack

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- If the animal is not destroyed, the area of the attack will need to be secured
 - Department of Fish and Game will be responsible for the tracking and destruction of the wild animal
- When and where necessary, prohibit further access to the surrounding area by humans
- In cases of fatal attack,
 - The scene must be maintained as a crime scene, even if the animal is destroyed
 - The San Luis Obispo Sheriff's Office must be notified and will be responsible for the human remains
 - UPD is responsible for the investigation and scene, however a joint investigation with the Sheriff's Office and/or the Department of Fish and Game may be appropriate.
- Department personnel will conduct an investigation of the attack and complete a report
 - Determine from victim/witness statements and examination of the site the following:
 - Did the victim run prior to the attack?
 - Was the animal injured by the victim or others in fending off the attack?
 - Determine if the animal's behavior was defensive in nature or an attempt to prey upon a person
 - Any other information that may identify the reasons for the attack
- When and where necessary, provide notification to the community of an attack - especially, when the animal has not been destroyed
 - Questions concerning the wild animal (specific and in general) are to be referred to the Department of Fish and Game
 - Questions concerning the closure of normally public accessible areas should be referred to Cal Poly Public Affairs
 - Questions concerning department policy should be referred to department management
 - Questions concerning the fact or circumstance surrounding the attack should be referred to department management

387.6 MOUNTAIN LIONS

The following are guidelines on managing and dealing with mountain lions on Cal Poly property.

Roles and Responsibilities

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Department of Fish and Game

Can assist the University Police Department in the following ways:

- Same as in wild animals (General)
- Monitor and provide information on mountain lion-human interactions on regional, statewide, and national levels

University Police

- Same as in Wild Animals (General)

Mountain Lion and Human Behavior

Aggressive behavior for a mountain lion is demonstrated by snarling, hissing, or the bearing of teeth. This can be done from a sitting or standing position. The tail may also be twitching, and the ears may be laid back. These responses may also be observed when the mountain lion is exhibiting defensive behavior.

A stalking mountain lion will be walking in a slightly crouched position with the head held low. This walk can be at a fairly rapid pace, punctuated by numerous stops or pauses. The tail may also be twitching. Normal prey pursuit behavior is a stalking action, where the lion will have an alert face with ears upright and teeth not bared.

Mountain lion researchers have observed that it is common for a mountain lion to follow people waling or on horseback from a distance. This may be curiosity on the part of the mountain lion and, in itself, does not constitute unacceptable behavior. Through radio collar tracking a visual sightings, researchers have also observed mountains lions remaining in very close proximity to urban areas without notice from nearby people.

Other Mountain Lion information and response to sightings, recurrent sightings, encounter, incidents, or attacks, as well as information on human behavior and interactions can be found in 387.3, 387.4, and 387.5, above.

387.7 BEARS

The following are guidelines on managing and dealing with bears on Cal Poly Property.

Roles and Responsibilities

Department of Fish and Game

Can assist the University Police Department in the following ways:

- Same as in Wild Animals (General)
- Monitor and provide information on bear-human interactions on regional, statewide, and national levels

University Police

Personnel and management will be responsible for the following:

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- Same as in Wild Animals (General)

Bear and Human Behavior

Encounters with aggressive bears are extremely rare. Attacks are even rarer. Bears are characteristically solitary animals. To maintain their personal space bears use different types of communication and behaviors. At the same time, one must take into account the broad and common meaning in its specific context.

Posturing

- Standing - a bear standing on his hind legs is typically not expressing aggression. Bears generally stand on their hind legs to gain more information visually and through smell
- Stationary Orientation - a bear may stand broadside to assert itself in some instances. In encounters with humans, it has usually been interpreted as a demonstration of size.
- Stationary Facing Human - if a bear is standing and facing you it is likely an aggressive position and may signal a charge. It is likely waiting for you to withdraw.

Vocalizations

- Huffs - when a bear is tense, it may forcible exhale a series of several sharp, rasping huffs. A mother may also huff in order to gain the attention of her young.
- Woofing - a startled bear may emit a single sharp exhale called a woof which lacks the harsh quality of a huff. If her cubs woof, a mother will become alert to the situation.
- Popping Sounds - females with young often emit a throaty popping sound, apparently to beckon their cubs when danger is sensed. A mother vocalizing in this manner should be considered nervous and extremely stressed. Bears other than sows also Jaw-pop.
- Growling - a clear indication of intolerance and possible aggression is coming when growls, snarls, and roars are heard.
- Yawn - indicates tension. this behavior may result from the close proximity of another bear or human presence.

Salivation

- A clear sign of tension, excessive salivation may appear as white foam around the Bear's mouth. Only severely distressed bears exhibit this characteristic.

Acceptable vs Unacceptable Bear Behavior

See section 387.3, above.

Human Behavior

In some instances, humans may unintentional provoke unacceptable behavior on the part of a bear by:

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- Surprising a sleeping/resting bear
- Feeding bears
- Immediately running away on sighting (especially children), triggering the natural instinct of a bear to chase
- Crowding or remaining in a location that does not provide the bear an escape route
- Approaching a bear that is feeding or with cubs
- Moving into a position between a bear and its cubs or attempting to pet or pickup bear cubs

Intentional Aggressive Actions by Humans

Aggressive actions on the part of humans that would tend to cause a bear to retreat would include

- Speaking aloud (not shouting) has shown to help bears recognize humans, causing them to leave the area
- Standing tall, making oneself to appear bigger
- Use of pepper spray and fighting with any available tools or weapons in the event of an attack

Department Actions to Bear-Human Interactions

Other bear information and response to sightings, recurrent sightings, encounter, incidents, or attacks, can be found in 387.5, above.

387.8 CLOSURE PROTOCOL

A campus area or area of campus property should be closed whenever necessary for public safety, for investigative purposes, or for tracking an offending wild animal. Department police officers may immediately close an area for these reasons. As soon as possible, the Chief of Police or designee should be notified to issue a close order indicating the scope of the closure.

387.9 PUBLIC EDUCATION

The department's efforts to educate the community on the role of wild animals in the campus environment and what people can do to avoid a potentially dangerous interaction with a wild animal should be given special attention where wildlife-human interaction has occurred historically. General information on mountain lions (such as signs or pamphlets) should be made available in areas where there have been recent and/or recurrent sightings.