

BLACK BEAR POSTING FOR DFW WEBSITE

11/4/15

In response to continued public interest in a black bear that has been seen walking upright in parts of Passaic and Morris counties, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection issued the following update today:

DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife continues to seek accurate and timely information regarding the location of the bear in order to assess its current condition. We encourage residents who see the bear to call 1-877-WARN-DEP immediately upon its sighting. Reporting information about the location, time of day and frequency of sightings is critically important.

There has not been a residential sighting of this upright bear reported to the Division in three weeks, indicating that it is not living in the neighborhoods where it has been seen. The Division believes this bear is likely in its natural habitat preparing for winter by taking advantage of this year's enormous acorn crop.

If the bear is located, biologists will respond to the scene to observe the animal. If it is determined the bear has injuries that will prevent it from surviving in its natural habitat, it will be brought to a New Jersey-licensed rehabilitator for care. If it is determined the bear's condition will impede its long-term survival, the Division will seek a New Jersey-based animal facility for the bear to stay. If the bear is determined to be able to care for itself, it will be returned to its natural habitat.

Based on video footage of the bear, interviews with residents who have seen the bear and the animal's survival through last winter's very cold and snowy weather, the bear appears to have been able to find adequate food resources in an area of high-bear density.

The Division understands that many people are concerned about the bear's well-being. However, in the professional judgement of Division experts and biologists, wild bears should not live in captivity. Black bears are very adaptable animals. The fact that this bear made it through last year's harsh winter is a strong indicator of its ability to survive without human intervention. In fact, many bears in northern New Jersey have survived collisions and have adapted to life with their injuries. They are able to survive on natural foods within the reach of the ground.

The ability to climb is also not necessary for a bear's survival, as some have said. In fact, many larger and older black bears actually lose their ability or willingness to climb. It also has been stated that this bear will not be able to "dig" a den because of injuries to its front paws. This is not an issue, as black bears in New Jersey typically den on the open ground in a surface nest, under fallen trees or within rock outcroppings.

More information about New Jersey's black bears can be found at www.njfishandwildlife.com. Residents are reminded to never approach bears and the intentional feeding of any black bear is dangerous and is illegal in New Jersey.