



Sightings, Relocation, Game!

There are fewer animals that are sighted along roadways, while walking along the "Paw Paths" in the forest, or even in your own backyard, which leave more of a lasting impression than the Black Bear. "As human populations grow and expand into areas traditionally inhabited by bears, or as bears wander into human territory in search of food, conflicts may arise and bears are seen as a threat or a nuisance," says Wildlife Resources Division (WRD) Assistant Chief of Game Management Dan Forster.

It is with thanks to wildlife management practices that more than two thousand bears currently exist in Georgia. They once were almost eradicated from the area due to the combination of habitat loss, unregulated killing, and overall demolition of habitat due to human development. Young male bear on their own for the first time often will roam large areas until they establish their own territory. All bears will roam out of their traditional areas in search of food, especially when their natural diet sources are scarce and especially in the spring when their natural food supply is lowest.

According to the WRD, they receive numerous calls each year regarding bear sightings and the need to relocate them. "Bears that are relocated into a new territory, especially young males, often are killed by adult male bears de-

fending their territory. Relocation only should be considered in cases of severe crop depredation, or if the life of people or the bear is threatened."

RIVERDALE, Ga. (AP) - "Clayton County Police Assistant Chief Jeff Turner says an officer shot and wounded a two hundred pound bear that was in a fenced in backyard of a Riverdale residence. As it began coming down the tree, to protect the dogs that were at the foot of the tree, the bear was shot and wounded." The Officer is under investigation for the possibly unlawful shooting of the bear.

"The bear climbed



higher into the tree and was killed by a state wildlife biologist who shot it with a rifle."

"It's not the outcome officials would have liked to have seen."

"If at all possible - take pets and food inside and give bears some space and some time to move on."

"We probably had more than two-hundred people stop to look at it. They even brought their kids to see the bear," said Brenda Bullock, whose property the bear was found on. Meanwhile, a second bear was found dead last weekend in Hall County. "It was a young male, probably a yearling, weighing about one hundred and ten pounds," a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Spokesperson said. DNR believes the bear was hit and killed by a car. On May 14th, a black bear found wandering in south Richmond County was tranquilized, captured, and relocated after people reported

seeing him near a convenience store. Another bear was captured in April in Cherokee County after being caught in the backyard of a home near downtown Woodstock. It also was released in a remote area of North Georgia.

A man reported to Cobb County Police what he described as "a large black bear that crossed Powers Ferry Road in front of his car near Terrell Mill Road in Marietta." "We have received more calls after the Tennessee attack," said Scott Frazier, wildlife biologist with the Georgia DNR. "Now people want something done about it if they just see a bear, even if it's not causing any problems." Black bears normally avoid humans, and biologists still do not know why the bear in the Tennessee attack behaved so aggressively. "We think our advice is pretty sound," he said. "We've always told people it's a wild animal and a dangerous animal. If there's anything good to come out of the Tennessee attack, it's that people are treating bears with more respect."

The DNR recently has trapped and relocated to the North Georgia Mountains, bears in Dawson, Stephens, Fulton, Cherokee and Habersham counties. "We try not to trap bears if we don't have to because it's stressful for them." "We first work with the homeowners to eliminate what's attracting the bear." "Most bear complaints come from new subdivisions, where residents are not used to dealing with wildlife. In rural areas where farms have existed for generations, people usually know how to coexist with bears."

This all boils down to a couple questions I have. Why are bears relocated to our area, where they in turn become game? Is it to increase the chance of a hunter killing their prize count for the year?

I believe in the relocation process, but am opposed to the killing of such a beautiful creature for game, monetary gain and sporting purposes.