

SANDIA MOUNTAIN BEARWATCH
NEWSLETTER MARCH 2010

Dear BearWatch Members,

I wish we had good news for 2010, but after spending some eight months in meetings with NMG&F early last year, we were unable to convince NMG&F management to stop their large bear hunt limit increase for 2009. There has been a blizzard of numbers bandied about. The following is a summary. All numbers are hunt kills plus depredation for the season:

2008 Actual: 318 bears. We used this as a baseline for our discussions.

2009 NMG&F Target 403 bears. We objected to this large increase from 2008 after the fact and made alternative proposals, but our proposals were rejected. Game and Fish assured us that they would keep the hunt plus depredation around 360 in spite of the 403 legal maximum, by cutting off the hunts in each zone early.

2009 Actual: 409 bears

The story is even worse because of how the 403 limit came to pass. The 2009/403 limit was slipped into the Commission Big Game meeting approval package, we are almost sure at the last minute, without our knowledge. I had personally been assured well before the Commission Big Game meeting that the proposal would be for approximately 350 bears in 2009. Not ideal, but the result of a hard-fought compromise with Game & Fish officials that I had agreed to. The final insult was that when during the meeting, some Commissioners asked and were told that BearWatch knew about the proposed 2009/403 limit and had approved. That was not true.

So in early 2009 we were in a catch-up position, having been snookered by the process but were unsuccessful at turning around this shady deal.

I am not sure where this leaves our relationship with Game & Fish. Ten to fifteen years ago we fought with Op-Eds in newspapers and on TV as well as with letter writing and Commission meeting presentations and personal interactions with Commissioners, in order to change the system. The system responded and for some five years we seemed to be on the path of good bear management. BearWatch was a good friend to Game & Fish making sure that everyone in the public, media and in government (including the Governor) knew of the good job they were doing. But the old ways are reappearing. The priorities of Game and Fish are slipping away from balancing hunting with conservation, with hunter opportunity again beginning to dominate.

While BearWatch does the bulk of bear education in New Mexico, the NMG&F is busy enabling killing off the very bears that we are trying to protect by that education. BW stats show that this kind of irresponsible management endangers New Mexico's future bear population. But the mindset of people at the NMG&F is retroactive. In fact, NMG&F Director Stevens told me at one meeting that if the bear population started to show stress, they would back off. What kind of statement is that from Management? By the time a bear population shows stress, good bear biology tells us that it could take decades, if ever, to bring a bear population back to a healthy, viable number.

In the meantime BearWatch has spent some 20 years trying to get good bear management in place in New Mexico. We did succeed for five years from 2003 to 2008, only to see it begin unraveling in 2009.

Do all Wildlife Agencies treat hard working conservation groups with such contempt as the New Mexico Game and Fish has shown BearWatch?

So...where do we go from here? Bear-Watch is at a crossroads. Do we continue to save bears on our end for the Outfitters to profit from on the other end? Do we just concentrate on trying to save the vulnerable population of bears in the Sandia and Manzano Mountains and fight to the end to protect this small population? We have people in Raton and Ruidoso that are calling BearWatch, concerned about the future for their bears too.

Comparisons of Statewide Bear Hunt Statistics for 2007-2009

Bears killed statewide by hunters including depredation.

2007 324 + 37 depredation = 361

2008 273 + 45 depredation = 318

2009 366 + 43 depredation = 409

Sandia Hunt and Depredation - Unit 8

2007 Hunt: 2

(males)...depredation/destroyed: 2 males, 2 females relocated

2008 Hunt: 2 (1 male) (1 female)

...depredation/destroyed: 1 male, 1 female... 2 males relocated, 2 females relocated.

2009 Hunt: See manzano Hunt below...NMG&F combined hunt numbers...Total hunt number: 12 bears.

Manzano Hunt and Depredation - Unit 14

2007 Hunt: 3 (fe-

males)...depredation/destroyed: 2 males...1 female relocated and later killed by hunter in GMU38...3 males relocated.

2008 Hunt: 1 (male) 2 (females)...depredation/relocated 14...2 road kills.

2009 Hunt: 1 (female) 7 (males)...depredation/destroyed: 2 males...road kill: 1 male, 1 female. Total bears killed: 12, including the Sandias

If you examine these stats you will see that there are at least several East Mountain

bears being destroyed yearly by NMG&F officers or residents. You will also see that East Mountain bears are being relocated to other mountain ranges...which, in reality is nothing but a slow death sentence since the bear is put into unknown territory and must find water and forage to survive along with fending off attacks from resident bears. These stats show that we all need to do more to protect our resident bears by bear proofing our garbage and bird feeders and informing friends and neighbors how to co-exist with bears and in the process protect themselves and our East Mountain bear population.



Night visitor to Hayes' home in Tijeras



Jan Hayes, Deb Stephan at Bear Fair

DO YOU HAVE A FIELD MOUSE AND PACK RAT PROBLEM?

I have a solution to that mouse and pack rat problem that everyone who live in the East Mountains constantly contend with.

Get yourself a handy, dandy mouse and rat-eliminating machine called a Ringtail.

Last summer, during the night, I would hear the soft pitter patter of an animal on the roof, then the sound of it jumping down to the deck railing and then the floor of the deck. Some mornings there would be small pile of scat in the corner of my bedroom's glass double door. The scat was apparently its calling card. After looking at the scat, I thought I might have a visiting fox.

We decided to put a wildlife motion sensor camera in the area the animal was visiting. And, to our surprise, our camera produced the photo of a beautiful Ringtail. We were thrilled to have Ringtails in residence... hunting our once abundant population of mice and rats. And, it has worked wonderfully well. We are seeing no mice or rats in our live traps, nor mouse droppings in our shed. Either, our resident Ringtail is catching them or they have departed to safer places.

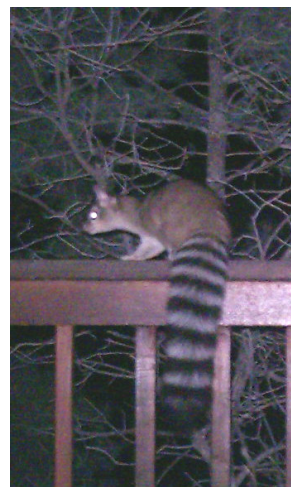
The only drawback I can see to having a resident Ringtail is that I hope it doesn't hunt my chipmunks that are just now rebounding after some eight years of being killed off by a neighbor's cat. Chipmunks are day creatures. Mice, rats and ringtails are out at night, I hope it will help protect our chipmunks from this voracious hunter.

So, if you are fortunate enough to have a Ringtail nesting in or under a shed (like mine) or the rafters of your barn, thank your lucky stars for this beautiful efficient rodent eliminator.

Ringtail



"Our" Ringtail



BEARWATCH'S STATEWIDE NEWS-PAPER CAMPAIGN GEARS DOWN

Since NMG&F has essentially no statewide bear conservation education, Bear-Watch has tried to fill this void by purchasing weekly ads in fourteen bear-country newspapers plus radio ads during the summer months of June, July and August for the past three years.

BearWatch, with the help of three Charitable Foundations conducted a successful 3-year statewide newspaper and radio advertising campaign aimed at informing mountain residents how to co-exist with bears. With the help of our talented wildlife artist, Vicki Wemple, we designed and updated over a dozen eye-catching ads that addressed garbage, birdseed, unprotected small livestock and chickens, barbecues, purposeful feeding, unnecessary calls to NMG&F to trap, to name a few. Over 7-million newspaper ads were printed and delivered to NM homes.

Our Foundation contracts have now run out. We recently applied for monetary help for a much-reduced ad campaign to encompass the East Mountains, Raton and Ruidoso and will let you know when we hear from these Foundations. Without these Foundations help, BW will only be able to purchase ads, using membership dues, for our East Mountains bear population.

With all the discouraging news about increased statewide bear hunting, we believe it is necessary to continue our work to save as many bears in the troubled areas of the Sandia Mountains, Manzano Mountains, Raton and Ruidoso as possible.

YOU TOO, CAN BEAR PROOF!

Since purchasing our bear-proof Garbage Container five years ago, we've not had a single bear access our garbage. What a relief to know that I'm not guilty of habituating cubs to follow in the footsteps of their 'garbage ruined' mother bears. And what a relief not to have to pick up smelly garbage strewn all over a wooded

hillside. Year before last, we had several bear visitors testing our bear proof garbage container to now avail. They turned it over, rolled it down the hill, and wedged it into surrounding trees trying to access the garbage inside. But, the bear proof can was really bear proof. And...bears are really intelligent...they learn fast. We didn't have a single bear turning over our bear proof garbage container last summer.

Our 'Bear friendly' local Davis Hardware has approximately 15 bear-proof containers available. Now is the time to buy one before they are gone and you have to wait for the next order, that sometimes takes months because of nationwide back orders.

The prices are: \$250 for a 64 gallon container and \$275 for a 95 gallon container.

BEAR AT HAYES' SHED --- TIJERAS



BEARPROOF GARBAGE CAN FOILS BEAR



A SQUIRRELY MYSTERY

I've lived in the Sandia Mountain 28 years next summer and I have a mystery.

When we built our mountain home, I was happy to see that we had a nice squirrel population. I initially called them Tasseled-eared squirrels, because they had beautiful tassels on their ears during the winter months. Our squirrels were all dark gray with a rust streak down their back, with white under-tails that were usually curled over their backs with ear tassels in the winter that they lost in the summertime. Upon checking the Audubon Mammal Field Guide and checking out the photos, I found I had what looked like a population of Kaibab Squirrels.

Then several years ago, I spotted a different squirrel. I called her Noel because she came on a cold Christmas morning to feed in my birdfeeder. Noel looked a lot like our Kaibab squirrels, but she was slightly larger with a longer, more defined face and had a stark white belly extending into the undersides of her front and back legs. She also had a white under-tail and winter ear tassels like my Kaibab squirrels.

I again went to my Audubon Field Guide and discovered that Noel was an Abert's Squirrel. I then concluded that we had several resident Abert squirrels along with our more populous resident Kaibabs.

There are two more species of squirrels, the ever-present, birdseed-thieving rock squirrel and the tiny red squirrel that lives at the higher altitudes in the Sandia Mountains. Skiers know this squirrel by its constant fussing chatter.

We do know that the Forest Service introduced several pairs of Arizona squirrels into the Sandia and Manzano Mountains in the 1940s since there were no Abert/Kaibab squirrels in either mountain range. Did the Forest Service introduce two different species or are we seeing two sub-species. After talking to wildlife biologists at the Forest Service, it still remains a mystery.

KAIBAB



Kaibab Squirrel, 18¼–23"

ABERT'S



Abert's Squirrel, 18¼–23"

**PLEASE HELP BEARWATCH BY
PAYING YOUR 2010 DUES!!!**

FINALLY...SOME GOOD NEWS!

Last summer, only 2 East Mountain bears were destroyed along with several yearling bears being relocated. This number has drastically improved from 2007 when 12 EM bears were either destroyed or relocated.

BearWatch is seeing that all of our hard work is bearing results. But, it takes money to continue to inform mountain residents how to co-exist with bears. We hope to continue to purchase 'How to Co-exist with Bear' summer newspaper ads in the Mountain View Telegraph and Independent along with other outreach projects. But, we can't do the work that needs to be done without your monetary help.

BW has the smallest budget of any wildlife organization in the state. We keep our dues small to encourage a large membership, which is important in the political area of wildlife conservation. No one in BW is paid for their time or

expenses: we spend the money you send on printing informational material for distribution, BW Wildlife Steward books, BW Newsletter printings, mailings, advertising, ad designs and if needed, expert's advice.

**Renewal/New member FOR 2010
\$5/person**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____
(change or new member only)

TOWN/ZIP _____

EMAIL (please) _____

\$'s ENCLOSED _____

**Mail to: Sandia Mountain BearWatch
P.O. Box 591
Tijeras NM 87059**

*Many thanks to all of you who continue
to support BW over the past years!*

IN MEMORY

We recently learned that BearWatch and New Mexico's bears lost a good friend when E. A. "Swede" Scholer passed away on June 5, 2007. Swede and his wife Aleatha have been enthusiastic supporters of BearWatch for many years. Right before Swede passed away, he and Aleatha had signed up to spend a day with other BearWatch members touring Ted Turner's Armendaris Ranch.

Swede had a full and interesting life and was a kind 'giver' throughout his eighty-four years. Our condolences go out to Aleatha and their families.



BearWatch Financial Statement (two years)

FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2008 - 2009 (two years)

STARTING BALANCE	3463.03
business (stamps, internet, bank fees)	400.80
printing/copies (newsletters, books)	358.53
newspaper ads	1777.29
stencilling campaign	368.84
bearproofing	600.00
consulting	250.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	3755.46
TOTAL INCOME	4822.80
ENDING BALANCE	4530.37

BEARWATCH MEMBERS JOIN IN TO PAINT 'FEED A BEAR, KILL A BEAR' SIGNS FOR FOREST SERVICE

Summer before last, members of BearWatch joined several Cibola Forest Service officers and one Game and Fish volunteer for two full days to paint signs using stencils designed by BW's talented wildlife artist, Vicki Wemple. This happy crew painted 'Feed a Bear, Kill a Bear, Don't Leave Food Unattended' signs on hundreds of picnic tables, garbage containers and bathroom doors in every picnic area in Cibola National Forest Service's Sandia Mountains.

We had beautiful weather with BearWatch providing picnic lunches, drinks and treats. We also saved a young female Chihuahua dog that had been lost for several days that would not have survived much longer. 'Chole' had a phone number on her dog tag and was reunited with her thankful owner that very afternoon.

Many thanks to the wonderful BearWatch, Forest Service and NMG&F volunteers for their hard work doing good for Sandia's bears.

SOME OF THE STENCILING CREW



GARY & MARILYN EVANS APPLY STENCIL





SandiaMountainBearWatch.org
P.O. Box 591
Tijeras NM 87059



Photos courtesy of Don & Mina Carnicom, Sandia Park NM