



# Be Bear Aware

Spring 2003

## A Guide to Living with Wildlife in the Sandia and Manzano Mountains

The Sandia/Manzano Mountains are home to black bears, cougars, bobcat and many other species of wildlife. With more people residing in habitat traditionally occupied by these species and more people visiting the mountains for recreation, encounters with wildlife are becoming more common. When visiting or living in bear and cougar country familiarize yourself with the latest safety precautions to avoid encounters.

To coexist, we must minimize our impact on bears, predators and their habitat. Please visit bear country with respect, caution and courtesy. Help keep our black bears wild. Remember, bears should never be approached or fed!

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### How to Feed Birds, Not Bears

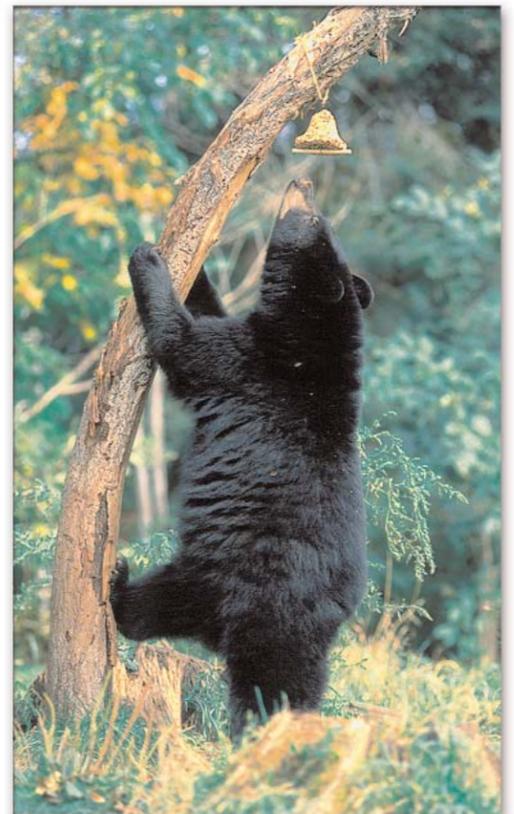
*Some tips for feeding birds, not bears*

**Tip One:** Hang your seed feeders and hummingbird feeders 10 feet up on a sturdy metal line suspended on poles or tree branches. Position your feeders 10 feet from each end of the poles/limbs. Stop feeding for a time if seed is accumulating on the ground.

**Tip Two:** If you have high eaves, or second story eaves, you can hang feeders from them.

**Tip Three:** Feed small amounts of seed that will last only several hours in the morning. This will work only if you've had no bear visitors. If a bear is in your feeders, you will need to stop feeding for a time and go to tip one, two, or four.

**Tip Four:** Stop feeding birds from July 1 thru Oct. 1. Last summer many people called NMG&F to complain or ask for trapping of bears for being in their bird feeders. Those folks were told to stop feeding birds during these recommended dates.



BW believes that if birdfeeders are hung and maintained properly, you can enjoy your feathered friends and in the process help protect our dwindling bear population.

For more information on how to co-exist with bears, please feel free to call BW Founder Jan Hayes at 281-9282.



Center For Wildlife Information

BEAR FAIR TEACHES TOLERANCE



Paco Gonzalez, 9, left, and Juan Julian Quinones, 10, are hugged by a friendly bear at the first-ever Sandia Mountain Bear Fair at Sandia Peak Ski Area on Saturday.

## Coexisting With Nature

Hundreds of people escaped the heat Saturday with a trip to the Sandia Mountain Bear Fair at Sandia Peak Ski Area.

The event included informational and educational exhibits on living, hiking and camping in bear country, as well as displays from numerous wildlife advocacy groups. A variety of live animals including hawks, owls, snakes, a prairie dog, a baby miniature donkey and more drew crowds of curious onlookers.

Periodic talks by officials from Sandia

Mountain BearWatch, the U.S. Forest Service and others, along with a humorous puppet show, informed visitors about the dangers of feeding the bears that live in the East Mountains, and ways to avoid attracting the bears. Feeding the bears can cause them to become habituated to people and become nuisance bears that must be relocated or destroyed.

Plenty of giveaways like posters, stickers and animal figures kept kids entertained, and a friendly bear gave out hugs to children brave enough to get close.



Kiley Rell, 3, looks through a magnifying glass at molds of bear paws at the Sandia Mountain Bear Fair at Sandia Peak Ski Area on Saturday.

# Sandia Bear Fair A Big Success

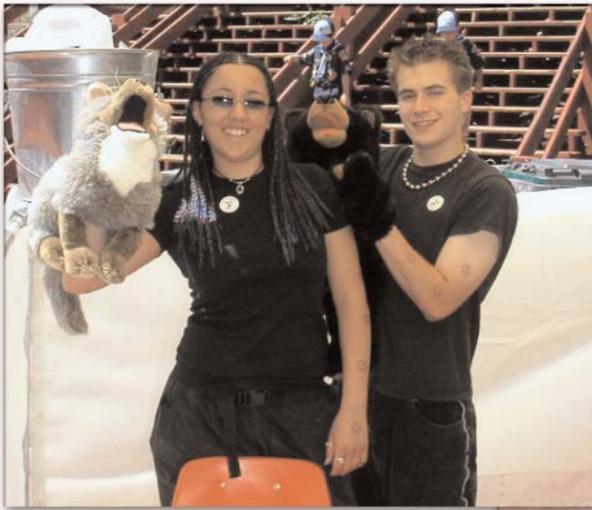


recognize there is a growing number of human/wildlife conflicts caused by misinformation. The public is bombarded with television programs, videos, and books that give a false impression that it is okay to approach, interact with, feed and even touch wild animals. The goal of programs such as Sandia Mountain Bear Fair is to help keep New Mexico's wildlife wild. By involving communities, future generations of New Mexicans will be able to safely enjoy our great wildlife treasures.

The Sandia Mountains provided a beautiful backdrop for a day of fun and learning about New Mexico's black bears and other wildlife at the first ever Sandia Mountain Bear Fair. The June event sponsored by Sandia Mountain BearWatch was attended by about 600 people where participants enjoyed hands-on activities for the whole family.

The U.S. Forest Service demonstrated how to hike and camp safely in Bear Country with a short "hiking trail" with stations set up to show how to recognize that a bear is in the area and how to store and cook food while camping. BearWatch produced a funny and informative puppet show with messages about keeping bears away from human foods and garbage in the East Mountains. Groups like Talking Talons, Wildlife Rescue, The Rattlesnake Museum, Prairie Dog Pals and the Wild Sprit Wolf Sanctuary brought live animals including snakes, hawks, wolfs, and prairie dogs to show the types of animals with whom we share our natural landscape.

Sandia Mountain BearWatch, the Forest Service and New Mexico Department of Game and Fish



# BEAR FAIR



# East Mountain Residents Cooperating To Save Our Bears

By Jan Hayes

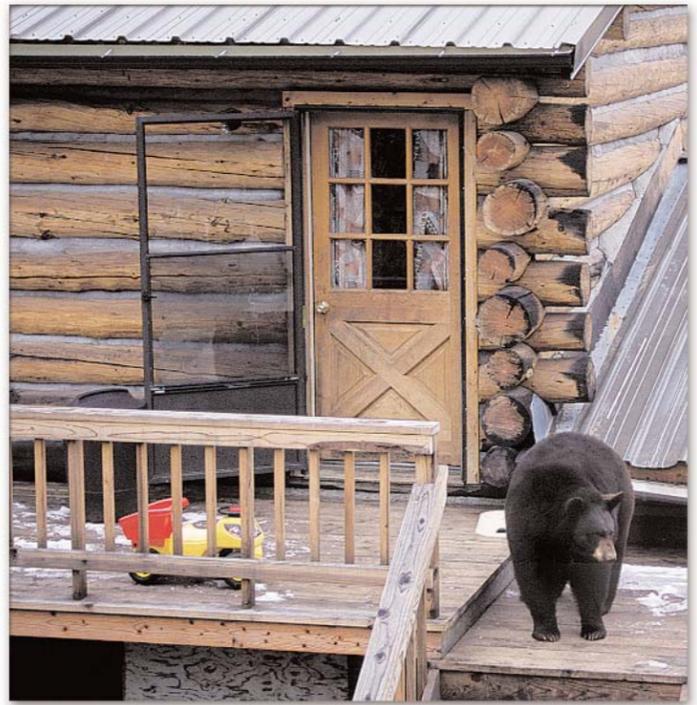
Founder of Sandia Mountain BearWatch, a 10 year old wildlife conservation group with over 500 statewide members

We are all extremely fortunate to live on the green eastern slopes of the Sandia and Manzano Mountains, rich with a large variety of wild birds and animals. In the twenty years we've lived in our mountain home we have seen over 60 species of birds, plus bear, cougar, fox, coyote, raccoon, ringtail, bobcat, deer, skunk and the ubiquitous squirrels, chipmunk and rabbits. Many years ago we had a guest for breakfast. As we ate on our back deck and looked at the natural beauty she commented that she thought we lived in a kind of paradise and we do. With the knowledge that we live in a special place,



we decided to do whatever possible to protect these mountains and the wildlife that live in them. We have focused on the bear because it is the most vulnerable animal in New Mexico's forests.

Here in the East Mountains I have seen a growing awareness, over the last several years, of the need to protect the unique environment that we all live in. Many East Mountain residents have become Wildlife Stewards of one flavor or another. A large number of Sandia Mountain BearWatch (SMBW) members are Wildlife Stewards for their subdivisions. They inform their mountain neighbors how to co-exist with our diverse wildlife. Other wildlife stewards include United States Forest Service Beverly wildlife biologist deGruyter who has worked for 8 years to bear-proof the Sandia and Mountainair Ranger District's garbage containers. The Forest Service will finish that pursuit this summer. East Mountain newspapers have generously written numerous articles to help educate residents on how to safely co-exist with bears. Retired State Representative Ron Godbey has supported us in many ways. He joined SMBW in stopping the spring bear hunt and summer pursuit by inform-



ing New Mexico Game & Fish Commissioners that his constituents were against these destructive hunts/activities. He also was instrumental in working with Bernalillo County Commissioner Michael Brachar to get funding for 36,000 "Keep Bears Alive & You Safe" brochures to be mailed to residents on the eastern and western slopes of the Sandia and Manzano Mountains. Chuck Bartlebaugh of the Center for Wildlife Information is working with USFS Beverly deGruyter to educate our mountain neighbors on how to "Be Bear Aware" this summer. This newsletter is part of that endeavor. You can help the bears too! Read and use the "Living with Bear" Tips included on this publication. Share this information with you friends and neighbors. If you follow our tips, you could be responsible for saving a bear from being trapped and relocated. If you have an encounter with a bear, apply common sense. Use our tips to discourage him from returning. More than likely, he is just passing through looking for food and if he finds none will leave and not be back. Remember, there is no nirvana waiting for a relocated bear as a disturbingly high number die after being released into another bear's territory. Our East Mountain bears had to survive several years of drought; every remaining bear is now precious. Please take the time to ensure that you have a bear-proof home site. Do your part to ensure that we will always have bears in the Sandia and Manzano Mountains.

For more information about Sandia Mountain BearWatch, wildlife stewardship, or to schedule a presentation, contact Jan at 281-9282.



## Communities Becoming Wildlife Smart

Throughout North America, wildlife management specialists and police officers respond to thousands of calls and complaints about wildlife. Most of these problems are a direct result of wild animals obtaining food rewards throughout a community. Unfortunately these animals are often destroyed in order to protect people and property.

Establishing a wildlife stewardship campaign the whole community can cooperatively help reduce human/wildlife conflicts. Student youth groups, along with city and county agencies and neighborhood groups can partner efforts to distribute educational and public awareness materials to visitors and new residents.

As the population in the Sandia Mountains area continues to grow, new residents may lack basic information about avoiding conflicts with wild animals. Sandia Mountain BearWatch designed a program to help New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and the Forest Service respond to wildlife questions. The program called "Wildlife Stewards" trains residents to share life history information about critters often found in the urban interface, offer safety tips to avoid conflicts with wildlife, and provide non-lethal control methods. To set up a Wildlife Steward program in your neighborhood, contact Sandia Mountain BearWatch.



Be Bear Aware Spring 2003

# Sandia Mountain BearWatch's Tips for Living with Bears

 **DON'T FEED A BEAR- EVER... A FED BEAR IS A DEAD BEAR!**

 Keep trash in a clean, closed container, stored in a sturdy metal shed, closed garage or bear-proof garbage can. Bear resistant garbage cans can be purchased in Cedar Crest at Davis Hardware. If necessary, double bag garbage. Put out garbage only on morning of pickup.

 Don't feed pets outdoors, leave pet dishes outdoors or store pet food outdoors. Don't put pet dishes near doors or store pet food near doors leading outside.

 Hang seed feeders from wires between trees high enough off the ground that a bear can't reach it (at least ten feet from the ground!). Hang a seed tray underneath to catch excess seeds or stop feeding for several days until birds eat extra fallen seed. Bring in hummingbird feeders at night or hang from a high wire between trees. Feed suet and peanut butter only in winter when bears are in hibernation. Store birdseed in a closed container in a sturdy shed or the garage.

 Keep barbeque grills stored indoors.

 Keep kitchen windows and doors closed on summer nights. In drought years, keep kitchen clean, and put all food away and out of sight of windows.

 For small livestock and chickens, a shed or fence will not stop a hungry bear. You will need a very sturdy metal shed and/or a 5-strand electric fence using an approved fence charger with alternating current. This is an inexpensive alternative to lost pets/livestock. Be sure to check with the county inspector for guidelines and limitations.

 Be responsible. Put an electric fence around beehives.

 Don't plant fruit trees or berry bushes near your home. If you have older trees that produce fruit, you may have wild visitors at night. Be compassionate and know that this comes with living near or in the mountains. In drought years, to protect your trees, remove fruit before it ripens to stop damage to trees from bears climbing and breaking branches. Remove fruit from under trees or bushes.



 Don't add food items such as melon rinds or fruit to compost pile except in winter.

 Don't leave food, groceries, pet food or birdseed in you car overnight. Bears have a keen sense of smell and will break into a car and do a lot of damage.

 Don't feed other wildlife, a bear is an opportunistic feeder and will go wherever food is available.

 If a bear is drinking from your swimming pool or hot tub, put water out as far from your house as possible. This can stop some expensive damage happening.

 Keep all poisons inside your house, many bears (including sows with cubs) died in the past from ingesting poisons from sheds. Also, many bears die from ingesting plastic and other household garbage.

 Keep woodpiles and junk away from the house. Rodents live in woodpiles, junked cars, etc., and bears eat rodents.



 If you have followed all of the above suggestions and still have a bear problem, try to eliminate food source or reason that a bear would be near your home.

 Please understand that a trapped bear does not transplant well. There are no pristine, unpopulated areas left in New Mexico to relocate these animals to. A very large percentage of deaths occur from being relocated.



Call Sandia Mountain BearWatch's **Jan Hayes** for advice at **281-9282** or **Jeff Davis** at **286-6185**.





# Black Bears of New Mexico

Adapted from the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Spring 1999 Black Bear brochure



## Description

Black bears are found throughout most of North America. It is the only bear now found in New Mexico. Black bears actually come in a variety of color phases ranging from black and brown, to cinnamon, red and blonde. No matter what the color, the black bear is New Mexico's state mammal.



## Food and Water:

Being omnivorous and opportunistic, the black bear has a diet that varies according to seasonal availability of foods. In the spring the diet is mostly one of succulent young fobs, grass shoots, roots, insects and carrion. In summer, insects, berries, and fruit are added to the diet. Bears often overturn rocks and stumps in search of grubs and ants, and may invade yellowjacket nests. By late August, bears begin to forage on the foods that enable them to gain weight rapidly so they can go through the denning period without eating. They eat a great deal of acorns, pinyon nuts, and juniper berries in the fall to store fat for the approaching winter. If necessary, they will feed on small rodents, maggots, and anthills. True to popular belief, bears do sometimes raid commercial beehives and extract honey, as well as the bees! An occasional bear will take livestock. Male bears may kill and eat cubs. Such behavior may not fit our image of Pooh or Smokey, but it does maintain a balance between populations and available habitat.

Riparian areas (streamside zones) are important to black bears. They provide valuable cover for travel and foraging as well as water for drinking, fishing, and play. On warm days you may see bears wallowing in springs and creeks.



## Denning:

Black bears do not officially hibernate but enter a state of "torpor" which is a modified form of hibernation. The black bear's metabolic rate and digestive processes undergo an amazing transformation during its stay in the den. Rather than excreting, the black bear has evolved the capacity to reabsorb its waste products and convert them into useful proteins and other nutrients. Since urination and defecation don't occur, odor is not produced. This significantly decreases the bear's chances of being found by mountain lions, bobcats or coyotes, which may prey upon bears, especially cubs in dens.

Black bears select a surprisingly small den, which has one or more openings. In New Mexico, dens are frequently located under outcroppings of large rocks or tree roots. It is believed that small dens are chosen for their thermal properties.



## Reproduction:

Bear breeding in New Mexico, generally doesn't begin until an animal is five years old, and a female who successfully raises cubs will mate only once every two years. For this reason, wildlife management policies must take care to prevent over-hunting of black bears. In New Mexico, black bears breed between mid-May and July. Delayed implantation of the egg enables the female to breed in the summer and give birth in the winter. Though fertilized, the egg remains a cluster of cells and doesn't implant itself into the uterine wall until mid November. Embryos may not develop at all if food is in short supply during the fall

Females give birth in January or February with a litter size of one to two cubs. Newborns are about the size of a mouse and weigh just six to eight ounces. The newborn bears are blind and helpless and purr while they nurse. Within a month, they will weigh between 1 to 2 pounds. By late fall they will tip the scales at 40 to 70 pounds! Cubs are weaned at about seven months but remain with their mother until late into their second spring. Climbing is one of the first and most important skills the cubs learn.



## Bear Management:

Today an increasing number of people in the West are expressing an interest in bear hunting. At the same time, bear habitats continue to be developed for other uses, while supporters for conserving healthy bear populations are becoming increasingly vocal. For this reason, it is essential for wildlife agencies to maintain an accurate database to help balance hunting and other forms of bear-related recreation with competing interests for bears and bear habitat. To help find this balance, the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish has just completed a long term research project to determine population trends of bears in New Mexico, and what factors are the main influences on these trends. The importance of management practices, such as building and closures of roads, hunting and managing nuisance bears were evaluated. In addition, the Department of Game and Fish is placing radio collars on bears trapped for relocation in the Sandia and Manzano Mountains to determine survival of those bears.

For more information about New Mexico's black bear, visit the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish web site: [www.wildlife.state.nm](http://www.wildlife.state.nm)





# Visiting Bear Country

Whether you hike, mountain bike, hunt, fish or ride horses, there are precautions you should take while recreating in the Sandia and Manzano Mountains. Following the suggestions below will help make the journey safer for you, your companions, and wildlife. Remember, all wildlife can be dangerous. Please do not approach or feed wild animals, especially bears.

Bear country can also be home to cougars, snakes, and other wildlife. Always maintain a safe and respectful distance from wildlife.

## Bear Sign



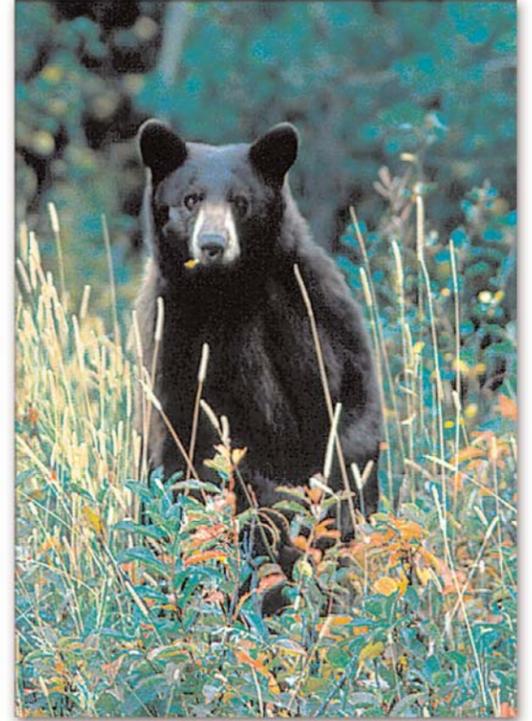
Tracks



Diggings



Claw Marks



**Taking Pets on Hiking Trails is Not Advised.** Pets may attract bears and cougars. Where pets are allowed, keep them on a leash to avoid conflicts with wildlife.



**View and Photograph from Established Observation Areas** or the trail. If an animal approaches, back away to maintain a safe distance.



**Use Binoculars, Spotting Scopes or a Telephoto Lens** to view and photograph an animal to avoid stressing the animal.



**Bicyclists and runners** should carefully select the areas they are recreating in and be extra alert in cougar, bear and rattlesnake country. Speed and quietness increases risks of sudden encounters.



**Hike at a pace** everyone can maintain and stay together. Cougars and some bears behave in a predatory manner and will seek the easiest target. Don't hike ahead or allow someone to fall behind.



**Running** to a tree may provoke a bear or cougar to chase you. Bears can run up to 30 mph, up and downhill, while cougars are known for their powerful sprints and jumps. Climb a tree only if it is near and the animal is far away. Keep in mind that all black bears climb trees.

## Reduce the Risk of Close Encounters:



**Inform yourself** by reading trailhead signs.



**Let someone know** where you are going and when you plan to return.



**Keep Children Close** to you and within your immediate sight at all times.



**Make Noise:** Talk, sing or clap your hands to let a bear know your presence. Don't rely on bells; usually they are too quiet. Shout often, especially when traveling upwind, near streams and waterfalls, or when you cannot see the path ahead. (Avoid thick brush.)



**Don't hike Alone or at Night:** Bears and cougars are most active at dawn, dusk and night, but can be encountered any time. Groups make more noise and appear more formidable than a solo hiker.



**Stay on Trails** for your safety and to protect the habitat.



**Avoid Carcasses:** Report dead animals to the nearest Ranger Station or Game and Fish Office. It is very risky to approach a carcass; a cougar or bear may be just out of sight, guarding its food.



**Stay with Your Gear:** Don't leave packs, food or beverages unattended; even food or beverages stored under water may attract bears.



# Bear and Cougar Attacks are Extremely Rare •

However, in the rare instance you are attacked most wildlife experts offer the following advice:



- All cougar close encounters should be considered confrontational and predatory. Be prepared to aggressively fight back with a stick, rock or other available weapon. Stand tall and face the lion.
- Don't panic! Group together, pick up small children and assess the situation.

Do not run or make sudden movements, it may instinctively cause the bear or cougar to charge you.

- Give bears a chance to identify you as human, and not a threat. If the bear stands up, it is trying to see, hear and smell you better. Talk firmly in a low-pitched voice while backing away. Avoid direct eye contact as bear may perceive that as a challenge or threat.
- Continue to back away slowly and cautiously, retreating to a place of safety. Monitor the animal's response, and adjust your actions accordingly.
- If a bear attacks at night while you're in a tent, fight back aggressively.



## Kids Corner

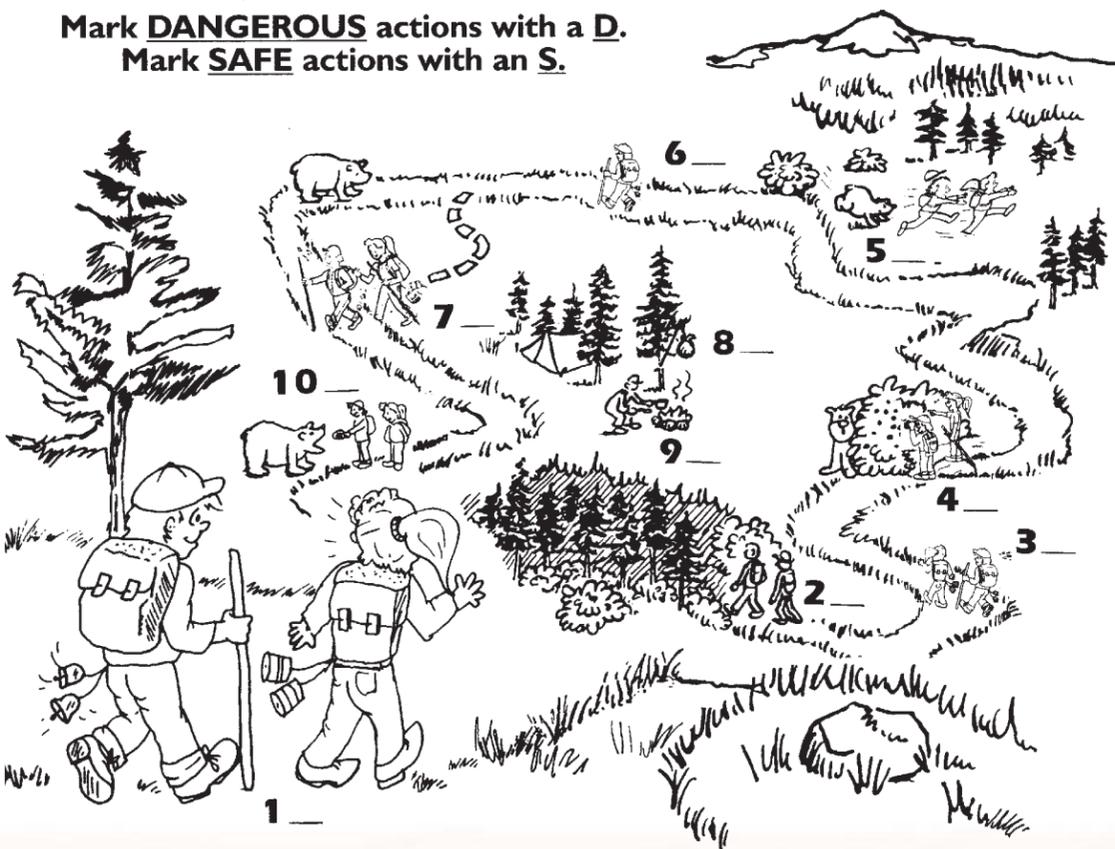


San Antonio students participate in "Be Bear Aware" program.

## Bear Aware Word Find

D E H U C G T B E R T S D M H R  
 M A U Q D B E L I A R T I R S G  
 D E N A S C L A W M A R K S A C  
 A U T E A O Q C N B C A Z T O O  
 I W I F W S E K F N K C I U D E  
 T I N B A R T B N R S N G B N X  
 R L G E C S C E E I D A C I A S  
 S D I A U A L A W T R K R X M I  
 W L R R B N I R M A N Z A N O S  
 N I I S S D M C E S R P I C U T  
 M F P P U I B L X N A D R B N A  
 B E A R F A I R I I M G S H T C  
 C S R A Y S N O C W F O T H A F  
 E O I Y A U G I O R A M U S I A  
 S Z A G B E A R W A T C H M N P  
 R X N C T K M D I G G I N G S R

Mark **DANGEROUS** actions with a **D**.  
Mark **SAFE** actions with an **S**.



- |            |            |               |
|------------|------------|---------------|
| Bear Fair  | Cubs       | Pepper Spray  |
| BearWatch  | Den        | Riparian      |
| Black Bear | Diggings   | Sandia        |
| Clawmarks  | Hunting    | Stewardship   |
| Climbing   | Manzano    | Tracks        |
| Coexist    | Mountains  | Wildlife Bear |
| Cougar     | New Mexico | Fair          |

Answers to Bear Smart Quiz:

1. **S** Making noise when hiking.
2. **D** Hiking into dense trees or bushes.
3. **S** Hiking into open country.
4. **D** Not careful near berries.
5. **D** Turning and running.
6. **D** Hiking alone.
7. **S** Staying away from the bear.
8. **S** Keeping food high in a tree.
9. **S** Cooking away from tent.
10. **D** Feeding a bear.





The U.S. Forest Service, Sandia Mountain BearWatch, the Center for Wildlife Information and New Mexico Department of Game and Fish produce educational materials and programs about bears and wildlife stewardship to inform the public about how to safely and responsibly enjoy our wildlife treasures, especially bears.



## For a complete list of materials and programs contact

Sandia Ranger District  
11776 Hwy. 337, Tijeras, NM 87059  
505-281-3304

Sandia Mountain BearWatch  
P.O. Box 591  
Tijeras, NM 87059  
505-281-9282

New Mexico Department of  
Game and Fish  
3841 Midway Place NE, ABQ, NM 87109  
505-841-8881

The Center for Wildlife Information  
P.O. Box 8289, Missoula, Montana, 59807  
406-523-7750



## A Word About Bear Pepper Spray

Bear pepper spray is not a substitute for following appropriate bear safety techniques. Bear pepper spray has been shown to be a good last line of defense that has been effective in most reported cases. It must be quickly accessible, not in your pack. It is not to be applied to people, tents, equipment or the surrounding areas as a repellent. Read all instructions that accompany your spray. Bear pepper spray is designed to stop an attacking bear. If you use it, leave the area immediately.

### Suggested guidelines for purchasing Bear Pepper Spray:

The spray is...

1. Made of capsaicin and related capsaicinoids.
2. 7.9 ounces of net weight—225 grams.
3. Designed to spray in a shotgun-cloud pattern for at least 6 seconds.
4. Has a minimum range of at least 25 feet.
5. EPA registered.

