



News Release

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ADF&G Responds to Bells Flats Bear Attack

(Kodiak) – On Tuesday, August 18, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) staff responded to a reported brown bear attack near Bells Flats in Kodiak. A woman was injured while walking her dog after encountering a brown bear sow with two cubs. The victim and her dog were hiking on a densely vegetated trail adjacent to a salmon stream when they observed two cubs approximately 40 yards away. Moments later, a sow emerged from the brush and chased the dog back toward the victim and attacked her. The dog bit and barked at the bear diverting its attention long enough for her to move a short distance away and play dead. After the sow and cubs left the area, she called 911 and walked to the nearest residence for help. She sustained nonlife-threatening injuries and was transported to a local hospital for treatment. The dog was uninjured. Biologists conducted interviews, went to the site of the attack to look for the bears or any other signs of bear activity, and collected samples. Any wildlife behaving unusually or aggressively should be reported to the Kodiak ADF&G office at 907-486-1880, or by using the online reporting tool:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=reportwildlifeencounter.main>

Thick, dense, summer foliage can block sightlines making surprise encounters more likely. Keeping dogs on leash can prevent them from chasing wildlife or bringing a bear back to you.

ADF&G recommends the following tips when in bear country:

- Always carry a deterrent, such as bear spray or a firearm.
- Travel in groups and stay together on trails.
- Make noise so you don't surprise a bear. Stay alert and look for signs of bears.
- Never approach or crowd bears; respect their "personal space."
- Keep pets on leash when possible to avoid unwanted wildlife interactions.

If you surprise a bear, especially one with cubs or on a food cache, it may react in a threatened or defensive manner. The bear may be agitated and may huff, stomp, make a popping sound with its teeth, salivate, or lay its ears back against its head and charge.

- Stay calm during a bear encounter. Ready your deterrent. Stand your ground, group up with others and alert the bear by talking calmly. Don't run.
- If the bear is stationary, move away slowly while keeping your eyes on the bear.
- If the bear starts to move toward you or charges, stop and stand your ground.
- Let the bear know you are not a threat. Behaving calmly, moving slowly, and speaking in a low calm voice will help de-escalate the situation.
- If the bear continues to approach, use your deterrent when the bear is within range.

When purchasing bear spray, look for canisters marked “bear spray” or “bear deterrent” with an EPA registration, a 25-foot (8m) or greater range, and at least 1–2% capsaicin and capsaicinoids with higher concentrations (2%) recommended. Unlike pepper spray designed for other uses, bear spray deploys in a wider “fog” pattern and comes in larger canisters to allow for multiple sprays and longer spray duration. It is important to rehearse using bear spray before you need it, particularly removing the safety and being sure any additional shipping zip-ties are cut away. Practice canisters with inert ingredients are available from local and online retailers. Spray should be carried in such a way that it is both secure and accessible. Expired bear spray may lose pressurization and not deploy as originally intended; check for expiration dates and replace cans as needed.

For more information from ADF&G about bear behavior and wildlife safety, including videos on what to do if you encounter a bear and bear spray demonstrations, visit:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=livingwithbears.main>

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