

February 24, 2010

Wildlife official: 600-pound bear killed Tuesday was nuisance, would have been euthanized

INCLINE VILLAGE, Nev. —The 600-pound male black bear shot and killed Tuesday after it apparently charged a law enforcement officer was a nuisance bear that would have been euthanized, a wildlife official said.

It was not the 700-pound bruin who reportedly broke into homes and garages last year and caused \$70,000 in damage, said Nevada Department of Wildlife Biologist Carl Lackey, but the bear was a “trash bear,” accustomed to eating out of trash cans. That behavior, Lackey said, leads to breaking into homes looking for food.

“This is why we stress bearproof trash containers, so bears won’t get to this point,” Lackey said.

According to Lackey and the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office, two officers arrived around 3:30 p.m. to a condominium at 400 Fairview Way, after an NDOW request to assist in removing a bear hiding beneath the residence.

Lackey said that when he saw the bear, he knew it was one of the bears that had been breaking into homes, and would have to be euthanized once caught.

“He’s a huge bear. He’s very, very big, twice the size of your average black bear,” he said.

He tried sending dogs into the cave to move the bear, but that was unsuccessful. Then he shot tranquilizing darts at the bear and used pepper spray, which caused the bear to rush out of the hiding place and, within three seconds, move toward a sheriff's deputy, he said. The bear's large body overshadowed the deputy's, Lackey said.

"When I looked at where the deputy was standing, all I saw was a bear butt and two boots," Lackey said.

According to WCSO, the deputy then shot the bear, killing it. The bear then rolled down the hill and onto the road.

WCSO Capt. Wayne Yarbrough said dealing with wild animals is risky, and killing an animal is the sheriff's department's last resort.

"The last thing we want to do is euthanize a bear," he said. "Ultimately, that deputy was protecting himself,"

The incident was strained, Lackey said, but resolved quickly, within 20 minutes.

"It's always tense," he said.

Ann Bryant, director of the Bear League, said the bear's killing was unnecessary and unethical. The league, based in Homewood, has freed numerous bears from enclosed spaces and never needed to harm one, Bryant said. She also disagreed with Lackey's assessment the bear needed to be killed.

"It sounds like it was a fiasco, and it was a totally unnecessary killing," Bryant said.

Bryant also said human behavior in areas where bears live is the most important aspect in dealing correctly with bruins.

"Bears pay with their lives for our mistakes," she said. "How many more do we have to sacrifice before people get it?"

The bear's carcass has been kept in a locked cage, and Lackey said he expects to skin it and look for wounds sometime Thursday.