

Wildlife Late Summer Update

SNAKES: There have been recent reports regarding rattlesnakes in Superior. Snakes are more active now during dawn and dusk. They can be found on trails, in prairies, parks, open spaces and yards. Just a little information can help you avoid conflicts with snakes. Snakes are pretty fragile, have delicate skeletons with lots of tiny ribs and heal extremely slowly. Snakes are "cold blooded" which means they are faster when warm. They have a limited ability to move fast any way; at full speed the typical snake averages less than 5 mph! It is always in a snake's best interest to avoid people and pets. If you encounter a snake, give it 10 feet of space, clap your hands and stomp your feet loudly and it will typically go in the opposite direction. Due to their lack of speed or if they are cool, they may just freeze at first trying to rely on camouflage to protect themselves. The more space they have, the faster they'll be able to move away from you. Stay on the hiking trail to keep snakes visible and keep your eyes peeled. If you are in high grass with lower ground visibility wear closed shoes and long pants. All dogs should be on leash to help keep curious dogs from being bitten. The following two snakes are common encounters in this area.

The **Bullsnake** is one of the largest snake species in Colorado. They can grow up to 6 feet in length, are nonvenomous, but tend to act more aggressively than other species when threatened. They may shake their tails in dry grass, flatten heads and hiss, "pretending" to be rattlesnakes. They are likely to strike at overly inquisitive pets and people. Their spots are ringed in BLACK and have a thick orange/tan body. Bullsnares are great mousers!



Prairie Rattlesnake's are one of the only two venomous snake species that exist in Colorado. They are the only venomous snake known to this area. They are smaller snakes and only grow to about 12 inches. They tend to be shyer and may not even rattle when approached in order to hide from danger. They have smaller territories and are much more likely to be seen in natural areas and not neighborhoods or yards (unless your yard is adjacent to open space). Their spots are ringed in WHITE and they have distinctive white stripes on their heads.

SNAKE BITE Dos and Don'ts

If you sustain a bite stay calm and make sure the snake has left the area. There are 27 species of snakes in Colorado, only one is venomous in this area as shown above.

DO:

- Try to take a picture of the snake or try to remember its color and shape to help with identification (this can be helpful if your dog has been bitten as well)
- Keep the bitten area below your heart if possible
- Have someone go and get help rather than walking
- Try to keep your pulse and circulation down which slows the venoms movement to your heart
- Remove jewelry and tight clothing before the area swells
- If rescue is not far away, sit tight and let them come for you
- If you are far from help, clean the wound if you can and cover it with a clean, dry dressing but don't flush the wound with water

DON'T:

- Cut the bite area or use your mouth to try and extract the venom
- Use a tourniquet
- Apply ice
- Drink caffeine or alcohol

BEARS: Bears are starting to search for and eat vast amounts of food in preparation for winter's hibernation. Bears can easily find rich food in neighborhood trash cans and yards. Since bears that continuously raid trash cans can become a problem and increase encounters with humans, storing your trash can in your garage is an easy solution. Also, keep in mind that attractants in your yard like bird seed, pet food, hummingbird feeders and compost can lure bears. Since there's an abundance of food in the wild from the wet weather this year bears should quickly realize that your neighborhood isn't the best place to find food and move back to a more natural habitat. When you're hiking, talking and/or singing while walking or biking can warn bears you're coming and mitigate a potential encounter before it happens. If you do encounter a black bear and it hasn't seen you yet just calmly walk away. If the bear has seen you stop and back away slowly, don't run or make sudden movements. Also, make yourself look bigger, avoid eye contact and fight back if you're attacked.

COYOTES: This time of year is usually a less frequent time for coyote encounters, except for unattended pets. Right now small dogs and cats can be prime targets at night for young coyotes that are being taken out by their parents to learn how to hunt. Breeding and mating season is over and pups are big enough now that they can run fast to get out of trouble. So, they don't need the protection from adults they needed when they were really little. In late September or early October the older adults will kick the juveniles out of the group. Sometimes this movement increases conflict because they will be exploring different areas, including roads, so watch out for these animals when driving. If you encounter a coyote act big and make a lot of noise. Coyotes range from 20-35 pounds so they are no match for adult humans. Coyotes are built to run and are much more likely to run than to fight. Remember, don't corner them and give them a way to escape.

Teach your children to be **SMART:**

Stop, do not run or turn your back on an animal;

Make yourself look bigger by lifting up your arms or pulling you jacket above your shoulders;

Announce your presence loudly and firmly;

Retreat by backing away slowly; and then

Tell an adult about your encounter.

WASPS: Most wasps will not cause any problems, except for yellow jackets who are insect eaters. As it gets hotter insect populations decline and yellow jackets become more interested in people and pet food. Large numbers of these insects can be a nuisance when eating outside. The frequent removal of garbage around eating areas and covering food and beverages until they are served will help to reduce problems with yellow jackets. Open soda containers should always be checked carefully prior to consumption.

RABBITS: Populations are high right now but tend to drop very quickly as it gets hotter and grass dries out. Most rabbit life spans are only about 2 months. In the fall food becomes scarcer and predators focus on the rabbit population bringing their numbers down. Vinegar on hardscapes, cayenne pepper on plants and rabbit wire can be useful deterrents for short term protection of landscaping.