

# Natural Resources Activity Notice

National Park Service  
U. S. Department of the Interior  
Shenandoah National Park



## Parkwide Nuisance Wildlife Management

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**Notice:** 2009-{14}

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**Fish & Wildlife**



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### What is occurring?

Once again, the NCR Division is implementing a human-wildlife interaction program. Much like in 2008, we'll have two temporary wildlife technicians focusing on parkwide nuisance wildlife problems throughout the field season. Note: There is specialized "aversive conditioning" training required for these positions.

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### Why is this occurring?

The park experiences recurring nuisance wildlife problems (primarily bear, raccoon and some deer) that are unacceptable in developed areas. By having dedicated wildlife technicians working on wildlife habituation and food-conditioned animal issues, we are able to head off many nuisance animal problems in these areas (e.g. nuisance bear-caused property damage and eventual capture/relocation). The wildlife technicians will be involved with educating visitors and concessioners about proper food storage, conduct, and trash management behaviors. Additionally, the technicians will use a variety of "aversive conditioning" interventions on habituated wildlife when appropriate. Aversive conditioning helps to instill a proper fear of humans and works best when employed early on. Wildlife habituation refers to an animal's loss of fear of humans (this can range from mild to strong). Food-conditioning refers to an animal that associates humans with food and has become accustomed to foraging for human food in human-use areas.

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### When will this occur?

The wildlife technicians will be working a "4-10", Friday-Monday schedule (including holidays) that concentrates their time on the most problematic human/wildlife conflict periods. Their field season is from May 22 through September 7, 2009.

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### Where will this occur?

Most of their patrol and monitoring efforts will be focused around potential trouble spots such as Big Meadows Campground, Big Meadows Lodge, Skyland Resort, Skyland Dormitories, Mathews Arm Campground, Lewis Mountain Campground, and Loft Mountain Area.

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### What methods will be employed?

The technicians rely on working cooperatively with field employees of all divisions to be successful. In addition to aversive conditioning duties, the technicians will track nuisance wildlife incidents and patterns, take nuisance wildlife reports, perform visitor and employee education, deal with food storage and wildlife feeding issues, communicate with concession staff, deal with overflowing trash problems, deploy bear traps if needed, assist with capture/relocation operations, and transcribe nuisance wildlife information from the nuisance wildlife hotline (x3744) and enter it into the park's Sharepoint Wildlife

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2009-{14} (continued...)

Incident Reporting database.

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## What we have learned so far?

Thanks to the cooperation from field staff in all divisions, our aversive conditioning and nuisance wildlife management program is working and is reducing the number of park bears that have to be captured and relocated. One of the most important components of the program was how well the wildlife technicians communicated with visitors and concessioners about human/bear conflicts, trash management and food storage issues. Another benefit was how well the wildlife technicians worked with and supported campground staff (e.g. campground patrols and visitor contacts), law enforcement (e.g. food storage compliance), interpretation (e.g. reinforcing the human-wildlife interaction message), and maintenance staff (e.g. cleaning up many spilled bags of trash on weekends) throughout the park's developed areas.

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## What are the potential impacts to visitors and other park operations?

During nuisance wildlife and aversive conditioning operations, two technicians are essential to maintain visitor, employee, and wildlife safety in these settings. Additionally, when conducting aversive conditioning in human-use areas, a wildlife technician will always be available to explain the purpose of aversive conditioning and nuisance wildlife management to the visitor. Visitors and concession employees will be better educated about potential human-wildlife conflicts, proper food storage, and trash management issues.

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## What's in store?

Continuation of this program in 2010.

Note: To report a habituated animal sighting (e.g. lingering bear in a picnic area) or a nuisance wildlife incident that already happened (e.g. a bear destroyed a camper's cooler overnight) you should call the Park's Nuisance Wildlife Hotline at x3744 and leave a detailed message on the voicemail.

If there is an ongoing nuisance wildlife incident occurring... Please immediately call the Communications Center as 999-3500 x3422.

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