

Avoid conflicts with potentially dangerous wildlife

Recent bear sightings in the community serve as a reminder that coyotes, cougars, bears, bobcats, and other species of wildlife can be dangerous. It's important to remind children that they are in the presence of wildlife every time they walk to and from school or play outside their home or in the community.

To learn more about how to avoid contact and what to do in a potentially dangerous situation, visit this Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife website. http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/crossing_paths/spring2009/cross_04.html

Here are safety tips to keep in mind:

- Students: Always walk to and from school in groups, preferably with at least one adult.
- Students: Never make direct eye-contact with a threatening animal.
- Students: Never turn and run away from a wild animal; slowly back away from the animal and make yourself appear as big as possible.
- Students: Never feed or interact with any unknown animal.
- Students: Report any unknown animal sighting to an adult.
- Families: Keep garbage and compost piles securely covered.
- Families: Keep pet food and water inside and keep pets indoors or confined in a kennel or covered exercise yard.
- Families: Do not feed wildlife on the ground, keep wild bird seed in elevated feeders designed for birds, and clean up spilled seed from the ground.
- Families: Do not feed feral cats; coyotes prey on the cats and feed on cat food left out for them.
- Families: Minimize ground cover vegetation near children's play areas to avoid attracting rodents and small mammals that in turn attract predators.
- Families: Use noise-making devices when coyotes are seen. Check with local authorities regarding noise and weapons ordinances.
- Families: Report a potentially dangerous wild animal to the Washington State Dept of Fish and Wildlife Dangerous Animal Hotline at 1-800-477-6224. Call 911 for all emergencies.