# Tips to avoid dangerous wildlife encounters

by DECAM

With warmer weather approaching, so is the concern about wildlife encounters. All wildlife species on Fort Carson are protected, however, many species may be legally hunted during state-approved seasons with proper licensing, permitting and by proper means. Most of the wildlife species on the installation are rather harmless, but the best policy is to never approach any wildlife. Just admire them from a distance and then leave them alone.

## General Species Information:

The following is information about specific species that might prove dangerous under certain circumstances.

### Black Bear

**Size** – Adults will reach 400 – 500 pounds and a standing height of 6 feet.
**Coloration** – May be black, brown, cinnamon, or a variation of those colors.
**Habitat** – Prefer wooded and open natural areas.
**Diet** – Prefer to eat nuts, berries, tubers, insects, small mammals and meat (often dead animals).
**Disposition** – Normally found alone (although sows and cubs are often together) and reclusive, but can become very aggressive.
**Problems associated** – Bears are being displaced from their natural environment, due to encroachment of people and construction. As a result bears attempt to find food sources, which require little effort. Residential areas and areas frequented by humans then become a viable opportunity. This process results in bear/human interactions and a potential for conflict.
**Comment** – Bears should be viewed from a distance and should never be approached. Food and trash around building and homes should be cleaned daily. Pet food and pets should be brought inside at night. Citizens should learn more about bears, their behavior and how to protect themselves and stay safe.

### Mountain Lion

**Size** – Adults will reach a body length of up to 5 feet, with a 3 foot tail, and will weigh up to 200 pounds.
**Coloration** – Tan to brownish.
**Habitat** – In or near mountains and forests.
**Diet** – Feeds on live animals (wild or domestic).
**Disposition** – Very secretive, reclusive and rarely seen.
**Problems associated** – Lions may become problematic concerning domestic animals (such as cattle and pets). May also become a threat to humans.
**Comment** – Lions, like bears, should be viewed from a distance and never approached. Pets and pet food should be brought indoors at night. It is in the best interest of everyone to learn more about lions because of their potential to exacerbate interaction conflicts.

### Coyote

**Size** – Adults will range up to about 3 feet in body length with an 18-inch tail and weigh about 50 pounds.
**Coloration** – Mottled grayish fur in winter and mottled brownish fur in summer.
**Habitat** – Prairies, grasslands, wooded areas and brush-covered areas.
**Diet** – Feeds on small mammals, and will kill larger animals when the opportunity is present. Coyotes also will feed on a variety of meat or vegetable sources.
**Disposition** – Shy and illusive for the most part, however, may become bold as it acclimates to human surroundings.
**Problems associated** – Coyotes are displaced by human encroachment and adapt quickly to new surroundings. As a result, they frequent residential areas and may become problematic over pets, pet food and trash. Coyotes should not be trusted and may become aggressive when provoked.
**Comment** – Coyotes are a remarkable species and experts at adaptability. They are easily viewed from a distance, but should never be approached. Coyotes may become aggressive, especially when in packs. There have been cases of adults and children getting mauled by coyotes – with quite negative results, including death.

## Raccoon

**Size –** Adults will reach about 30 inches of body size with a 12 inch tail and may weigh up to 40 pounds.
**Coloration –** Mixed black and white/grey overall color, with a black mask over eyes and a stripped tail.
**Habitat –** Streams, wooded areas and sometimes in residential areas.
**Diet –** Omnivorous feeders, which means they will eat about anything.
**Disposition –** Usually seclusive and nocturnal. Raccoons will become very aggressive when provoked or frightened.
**Problems associated –** Raccoons often are found living in attics, etc. and can become very problematic with trash containers. Raccoons sometimes carry disease such as rabies and can transmit the disease through a bite or scratch.
**Comment –** Residential areas must be kept clean and free from trash or waste food. Trash container lids need to be locked or kept inside so that raccoons cannot get inside. Due to their potential to transmit disease, no one should attempt to feed or get near raccoons.

## Prairie Rattlesnake

**Size –** Adults will reach 5 feet in length.
**Coloration –** Greenish/brownish background color with dark brown or black-blotched bands across back.
**Habitat –** Prefers brushy, grassy open areas, rocky ground or rock outcroppings.
**Diet –** Small mammals
**Disposition –** Illusive and secretive. May become very aggressive when encroached upon or provoked.
**Problems associated –** Venom injected into bites may lead to death if not treated properly and speedily. Rattlesnakes are often hard to see and may strike without warning.
**Comment –** Rattlesnakes are our allies because they prey on rodents and small mammals that could cause humans disease. However they are allies that deserve a great deal of respect, because of their ability to transfer poison into a bite that could lead to death. People should learn more about snakes in general and how to protect themselves and stay safe.

*One of the main things to remember is **never feed wildlife**. If you feed one species, such as rabbits and foxes commonly found on Fort Carson, all you are doing is drawing larger, more dangerous animals to your area that feed on these smaller prey.*

Call the Fort Carson Wildlife Office at 576-8074 for more information.