

# Opinion: Change of seasons brings out wildlife

By Toogee Sielsch

As we've seen over the last couple of weeks the weather in the High Sierra has been all across the board with early summer temps in mid-February giving way to a major winter storm in early March. And as we all know living here in the basin and how it pertains to weather it can be unpredictable at best this time of year. But what is predictable this time of year is the emerging activity of our local wildlife.

In the last month there has been multiple bobcat sightings and even talk of a mountain lion being seen around the South Shore. Coyotes are on the go seven days a week, 12 months a year. I've even been hearing of multiple bear sightings throughout the winter as well. Is any of this unusual? Absolutely not. Bobcats, mountain lions, and coyotes don't hibernate, and not all black bears may hibernate in mid winter when food sources like trash are readily available and close at hand.

But as we actually segue into spring, one thing is for sure, and that is we will see almost daily an ever increasing number of wild animals making their presence known as they become more and more openly active. Over the last eight or so weeks black bear sows have been busy giving birth to their cubs of the year and will soon be allowing those cubs to experience a new world beyond the den. And sows that have yearlings that have spent the winter denning with her will very soon be dispersing them to find a place for themselves in this big world.

Also just around the corner is when many species of birds making their migration North for the summer via the Pacific

Flyway will be passing overhead and resting on many area lakes and reservoirs along their journey.

And each and every year at this time I anticipate hearing my first "Cheeeeeeeese-Burger" whistle from a mountain chickadee.

So what does all of this mean to we human residents of and visitors to the Tahoe basin? Aside from meaning we will once again be blessed with the chance to see wildlife up close and personal. It also means that we humans have not only the capability, but the responsibility to do all we can to mitigate any negative impacts that we may have on wildlife, and to prevent any unwanted wildlife/human interactions. The best part is that it's a relatively easy goal to achieve by following a few easy steps:

- Never leave any food or drinks in your vehicle. Black bears have the strength and smarts to get into your vehicle, so please don't tempt them.
- Always keep your trash stored where wildlife cannot access it, and if you don't have a bear box trash bin please don't put it outside until the morning of collection.
- Do your best to deny access to your home or out buildings by wildlife. Keeping doors and floor level windows closed and locked is a good idea. Also keep your garage door closed and try to make sure wildlife has no access to walls or crawl spaces by securely covering any openings into those areas large or small.
- If you put out bird feeders please bring them in at night, because they often attract more than just birds.

It is my personal goal, and the main part of the missions of the three wildlife rescue/advocacy groups that I belong to, to find coexistence between we humans and the wildlife we share this planet with. If you have any issues, questions, or need suggestions on how to bear/wildlife proof your home please call us at the BEAR League at 530.525.7297. If you know of or

have encountered an injured or sick wild animal you can call us at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care at 530.577.2273. I hope to put on a South Shore BEAR League training along with Ann Bryant sometime in May and would love to hear from anyone interested in attending. I can be reached at toognian@gmail.com.

I view having the chance to see wildlife in it's natural environment as a gift. I hope that all of you, like me, relish each and every encounter you have with the wildlife we live among and will do all you can to insure that future generations are able to derive that same pleasure. Let's do our best to make it a great year for ourselves and our forest friends.

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