



Dear resident of La Plata County:

We are reaching out to you to provide the following information compiled by the La Plata County Living with Wildlife Advisory Board (LWAB) in hopes that it will be beneficial in avoiding conflicts with wildlife in your area and our community. LWAB consists of qualified volunteers who serve in an advisory role for the La Plata County Board of County Commissioners on issues involving wildlife in La Plata County. The goal of LWAB is to reduce conflict between residents and wildlife in La Plata County and utilizes this annual letter to call on residents to assist in this effort.

LWAB recognizes that abundant wildlife adds to our quality of life while contributing to our local economy in tourist dollars. Predators such as bears, coyotes, and mountain lions are vital to maintaining healthy ecosystems in our area. However, as La Plata County's wildland/urban interface increases, so does the potential for wildlife conflicts. LWAB addresses this challenge with a "WildSmart" approach that involves working pro-actively with residents and area land managers.

The concept of "WildSmart" can be realized in La Plata County by residents applying our '*Avoiding Conflicts with Wildlife*' strategy at their homes and while recreating outdoors. Please consider this strategy's five main topics and related suggestions listed below which support our countywide effort to avoid conflicts with wildlife:

1. NEVER FEED WILDLIFE

It is illegal and harmful to feed deer, elk, or bears. To prevent wildlife from accessing food sources on your property, harvest fruits from fruit trees promptly (utilizing gleaning with fallen fruit); use bear resistant garbage containers or keep containers secured until trash pick-up day; remove bird feeders during bear season (March-November); keep barbecue grills out of reach from wildlife; and keep pet food inside a secure structure.

2. KEEP DOGS AND CATS UNDER CONTROL

Do not let dogs roam when they are outside. **Always** keep your dog on leash while hiking or walking to prevent wildlife conflicts. Wildlife raise their young in the summer and dogs off leash may create fatal interference. Winter greatly decreases the ability of wildlife to maintain energy and dogs off leash can exacerbate the situation. Please keep cats indoors to protect them from predators and also to prevent them from predation on small wildlife. Songbirds are very susceptible to domestic cat predation.

3. MANAGE HUMAN CONTACT WITH WILDLIFE

Supervise children when outside; turn on outside lights during early morning or at dusk; always leave young wildlife alone (contact Colorado Parks and Wildlife with questions at 970-247-0855); avoid directly touching wildlife; carry a whistle or bear spray when hiking; and learn the safest response actions for the rare direct encounters with a bear or a mountain lion:

<https://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/Education/LivingWithWildlife/LivingWithBears.pdf>

<https://cpw.state.co.us/Documents/Education/LivingWithWildlife/LivingWithLions.pdf>

4. CREATE RESPONSIBLE HUMAN/WILDLIFE ENVIRONMENTS

Use appropriate landscaping or fencing to inhibit wildlife/human interface; incorporate wildlife space into landscaping; and secure all openings into homes or outbuildings.

5. AVOID WILDLIFE DISEASE TRANSMISSION

Report animals exhibiting odd appearance or behavior to Colorado Parks and Wildlife (970-247-0855); use flea, tick, or mosquito repellent on yourself and pets; prevent pets from roaming and interacting with wildlife; keep wildlife out of homes and outbuildings; and keep apprised of wildlife-borne diseases that may be reported in your area, such as rabies, plague, hantavirus, or West Nile virus.

The members of LWAB hope this information is useful to you and we encourage you to obtain additional information on how you and our wildlife can live together without conflict by visiting our website:

www.wildsmart.org or our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Livingwithwildlifeadvisoryboard/>

Thank you!