

IDNR, Godfrey Look For Bear Tracks Tuesday, Provide Info On What To Do If One Is Spotted

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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GODFREY - An Illinois Department of Natural Resources biologist and Godfrey Animal Control Officer Susie Stephan checked for tracks and signs of a black bear after one was spotted in the LaVista Park grass Tuesday morning, but no signs were discovered.

Stephan said the area was a difficult one to find tracks because of the slope of the terrain and conditions.

“We followed the creek but didn’t find any tracks,” she said. “We were kind of up on top and everything is sloped. We were looking for prints or feces. IDNR said they are thinking about putting out some trail cams in the area and see if they can see anything.”

Stephan said unfortunately there have been multiple bear sightings in Southern Illinois and the wooded areas of Godfrey, and the bluffs are areas that would be conducive for them.

“There are some nice fields where the bear was spotted, and there are a lot of berries back there along a tree line,” she said. “The fields are nice for one to graze in. We want to keep everyone informed and safe, that is our goal.”

Tim Schweizer, a media spokesperson for the IDNR, provided some information about the bear sighting:

“While Illinois does not currently have an active breeding bear population, our neighboring states of Missouri and Wisconsin do,” Schweizer said. “It is not uncommon to see bears from these neighboring states cross briefly into Illinois before returning to their permanent habitat, especially as they look for food and potential mates. If Illinoisans do spot a bear, they should report sightings to local law enforcement or Conservation Police Officers. A full listing of Illinois Conservation Police Officers can be found at <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/LawEnforcement/Documents/DistrictCPOPhonesAndEmails.pdf>.”

Additionally, Schweizer said it is important to remember:

Bears are a protected species in Illinois.

Give bears plenty of space and admire them from afar; do not feed them, and do not approach them. You can find additional information at <https://bearwise.org/six-outdoor-bearwise-basics/>

Contact your local IDNR District Wildlife Biologist. Find contact information at <https://www.wildlifeillinois.org/sightings/report/>

Stephan stressed that the Madison County Sheriff's Office in Godfrey also knows to contact IDNR Conservation Police with any sighting and how to handle the situation.

What to Do If You See a Black Bear

If you see a black bear, do not run. Do not surprise the bear. Make noise to ensure that the bear is aware of your presence. A black bear is not likely to attack a person unless it

feels trapped or provoked. Respect the bear's space, and do not approach the animal. If the bear sees you, stand your ground; look as large as possible by standing up straight and putting your arms up in the air, and slowly back away.

If possible, go inside a building or get into a vehicle. Black bears display two types of behavior — defensive and offensive. A bear may swat at the ground or surrounding vegetation, lunge toward you, vocalize, blow air out of its mouth, or pop its jaws. These defensive behaviors are used to warn you to move away. Slowly back away from the bear. With offensive behavior, the bear will move towards you quickly. If you have food with you, drop the food, and keep moving away from the bear. If a black bear makes contact with you, always try to fight it off. Do not play dead.