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Commissioner



Department of
Fish and Game

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Division of Wildlife Conservation

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Fish & Game Investigates Bear Attack On JBER

May 12, 2022 (Anchorage) - Employees of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) responded to the location of a fatal bear attack that occurred Tuesday, May 10, in Anchorage on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER). A U.S. Army Alaska soldier, Staff Sgt. Seth Michael Plant, died of injuries sustained in the attack while working in a JBER training area. A fellow soldier also received minor injuries in the same incident.

Following the initial attack and U.S. Army personnel extraction, a brown bear approached the area. Bear spray was deployed by responding personnel and the bear left the immediate area. A den was nearby with two brown bear cubs of the year present. The area where the attack occurred is in a remote portion of JBER, with limited access. JBER has closed the area of the attack to the public for all recreational activity.

"Our deepest sympathies go out to Staff Sgt. Plant's family, friends, and fellow military members during this very sad time," said Cyndi Wardlow, Southcentral Regional Supervisor.

"From everything we know so far, based on the scene investigation and information from other responding agencies, this appears to be a defensive attack by a female bear protecting her cubs. We are trying to learn everything we can about what happened to increase public safety around wildlife in Alaska."

Hair collected during the initial investigation was consistent with a brown bear. DNA analysis of collected samples will be performed by the ADF&G Gene Conservation Lab in Anchorage, and samples from the attack will be analyzed and saved to determine if they match any materials collected in future research or management activities.

Since the attack, efforts have continued to locate the bear. A bear that is considered a public safety threat or involved in a fatal attack may be killed by the Department. Game cameras placed by ADF&G during their investigation indicated that an adult bear had returned to the area after nightfall and left the den site accompanied by the cubs. Cubs are born in the den during January and February. Twins are most common, but litter sizes can range from 1 to 4. Female bears are especially fierce defenders of their young and may respond aggressively if they perceive a threat to their cubs. At this time, the location of the bear involved in Tuesday's attack is unknown.

The Department of Fish & Game asks that anyone who sees a brown bear in Anchorage, or any wild animal behaving aggressively or unusually, report it immediately using the online reporting tool at: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=reportwildlifeencounter.main> or by calling 9-1-1 for emergencies.

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