

# **WILD ANIMALS AND WILD IDEAS DESERVE RESPECT AND CAUTION**

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In this third of a series about wildlife young, I come to wild mothers who may resort to outright attack to defend their offspring. It is not always the larger mothers who reinforce the threat by their size.

I can still see friend Hank Blessing fending off a determined mother weasel with a surveying compass jake staff. We were classmates, doing a timber cruise at the ranger school and got too close to a mother weasel's nest site.

Gary Lee mentioned another determined defender a while back with which I have had my differences. The Goshawk really gets your attention if she thinks you are a threat to her young and she is hard to ignore.

Mamma bear is our most potentially dangerous protector of her cubs. If you come upon one unexpectedly that rises up out of the briars, hair up on her back and clacking her teeth loudly, pay attention. Keep moving in an oblique direction assuring her by voice and manner that you are not interested in her young. A quick truce should follow.

I had one old sow call my bluff when I challenged her near the safety of my car. My bravado to impress a companion soon faded when she put us in the car in no uncertain terms.

Fellow ranger Rank Mang suffered a bear attack that was documented in an issue of *National Geographic*. Frank was pulled from a tree he had taken refuge in by the foot. A friend in another tree, realizing he was no safer, descended and proceeded to pummel the bear with rocks. They drove the bear off and Frank was treated and for a bite to the ankle and foot.

Small children in particular should not be left unsupervised. Most predators know the young of all species are easy prey and humans are no exception.

The media has been doing a better job of informing the public of the dangers possible from wild animals. I began work with the forest service in Idaho with an orientation that included the danger of moose attacks.

It is becoming ever more prevalent to learn of attacks from animals that were never considered a threat in the past. With man and wildlife living in closer proximity to one another, one adage is brought to my mind: "Familiarity breeds contempt."

Much has been in the news lately about reintroducing wolves to the Adirondacks. Most of the clamor is from people who will not share our so-called wilderness with them.

My opinion is that it would be a disservice to the wolf and a waste of money. Most of the rationale is a thinly veiled attempt to further more stringent land use controls or other ulterior motives.

An article in the July 1997 *Readers Digest* about a wolf attack reinforces my views on the changing relationship between people and animals.

To make a long story short, treat all wild animals with respect and caution. The same goes for people with Chicken Little attitudes and ulterior motives.