

**From:** Wildlife CDFWNews

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**Subject:** CDFW Releases a Snapshot of Stories and Accomplishments of 2014

## **California Department of Fish and Wildlife News Release**

**Jan. 30, 2015**

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### **CDFW Releases a Snapshot of Stories and Accomplishments of 2014**

Multiple wildlife encounters, bears in Bakersfield, fish rescues, elk captures, marijuana eradication, newly established sheep herds, a centennial celebration and the drought were among the many issues that engaged staff at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) in 2014.

“Each year, we are faced with new challenges that require swift action and a thoughtful, science-based approach. This year, many of our concerns were connected to this historic drought,” said CDFW Director Charlton H. Bonham. “I am so impressed by the continued dedication of our staff and volunteers in their efforts to protect and preserve our natural resources. They make me extremely proud of who we all are as a family and what we’re accomplishing as a department.”

While the list of issues, top priorities and stories is much longer, the following stories are a snapshot of what was accomplished, watched and widely covered in 2014.

#### **The Impact of the Drought on Fish and Wildlife**

As California faced one of the most severe droughts on record, Governor Brown declared a drought State of Emergency in January 2014 and directed state officials to conserve water. Caught in the middle of this unprecedented water shortage were the state’s fish and wildlife. Numerous stories covering fishing closures, increased wildlife sightings, animals in unusual places and fish rescues appeared in local, state and national media outlets. Wildlife experts explained that plants and animals have for generations adapted to an array of environmental conditions. Under these circumstances, some species will flourish while others decline. Some expand their habitat range in search of food, while others may experience decreased birth rates as a form of adaption. For more information on California’s drought, please visit <http://ca.gov/drought/>.

#### **Wildlife Encounters and Attacks**

The rare wildlife attack that occurs in California typically gains national attention. In 2014, there were more incidents than usual, for reasons unknown: a bear in Carpinteria knocked a woman down and bit her, an emaciated bobcat in Solvang attacked a woman and bit her hand and the first-ever incident of a wild boar making contact with a hiker in Solano County was reported. Most notably, a child was attacked by a mountain lion in the hills above Cupertino. The six-year-old was walking with his family on a marked trail when the cougar pounced on him from behind. Trackers and CDFW personnel located the cat – just 100 yards from the attack site – after three days of searching. DNA tests from the necropsy proved it was the same cat that

attacked the boy. The 65-pound male is believed to have been a young adult traveling through the area. For more information about preventing wildlife/human encounters, please visit [www.keepmewild.org](http://www.keepmewild.org).

### **Bears in Bakersfield**

Kern County saw a dramatic spike in bear activity this past year. CDFW staff responded to 108 black bear sightings within the Bakersfield city limits. In just a two-month period, (September through November), biologists and wildlife officers relocated eight Bakersfield bears to more appropriate habitat in nearby wilderness. Typically bear sightings in the city of Bakersfield are only reported once or twice a year. In addition, more than 1,300 bear calls were made to CDFW in other parts of Kern County, and another seven bears were captured. While the causes of the increase in black bear activity are myriad, the drought likely had an impact, as the lack of water forced them to roam further in search of food sources. For more information on sharing habitat with black bears, please visit [www.dfg.ca.gov/keepmewild/bear.html](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/keepmewild/bear.html).

### **Endangered Bighorn Sheep Moved Across Mountain Range**

In March, biologists from CDFW, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and volunteer groups came together to capture, tag and relocate more than a dozen Sierra Nevada Bighorn Sheep from the southern end of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The sheep were flown by a helicopter net from Inyo County into Kings Canyon – Sequoia National Park to establish the first herd of these sheep in more than 100 years. State and federal agencies have been collaborating on this project for the last three years in an attempt to create multiple small herds in the Sierras. They hope that eventually the sheep will be plentiful enough to de-list as an endangered species. See video of the relocation at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KOMCxxTL6U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KOMCxxTL6U).

### **Marijuana Cultivation**

Known for committing some of California's worst poaching and environmental crimes, illegal marijuana growers were unfortunately plentiful in 2014. Wildlife officers arrested 240 illegal growers, many of whom constructed illegal operations in hidden locations ranging from local ecological reserves to Indian Reservations and deep inside several northern California forests. Grow sites produce pollution and garbage and often result in highly toxic pesticides being dumped into the environment. In addition, each grow site had diverted natural water resources, making it difficult for surrounding wildlife to survive during an unprecedented drought year. In 2014, the Department and the California State Water Resources Control Board launched a new coordinated effort to address these problems. Read more about CDFW's enforcement efforts at <http://goo.gl/XjOoC9>.

### **Saving Salmon**

The historic drought in California forced CDFW and USFWS to take drastic action to truck juvenile salmon from five northern California hatcheries to the San Francisco Bay. For only the second time in department history, CDFW transported nearly every state and federal hatchery salmon to salt water during April, May and June – a total of nearly 30 million individual fish. Sacramento fall-run Chinook salmon are the primary driver of ocean commercial and recreational fisheries. Trucking of smolts from inland hatcheries to net pen sites at Jersey Point and San Pablo Bay helped minimize in-river losses to unsuitable water quality conditions, predation and entrainment due to during drought conditions. Find out more at <http://goo.gl/5NY3QJ>.

### **Tule Elk Capture**

California iconic tule elk were once on the brink of extinction. Through CDFW's wildlife management protocols and collaborative efforts, California now has healthy and thriving herds

across the state. In March, CDFW and USFWS successfully captured 36 tule elk from the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge in the San Joaquin Valley and relocated them throughout the state. A total of 15 bulls, 16 cows and five calves were captured using helicopters with net guns at the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge. They were released in San Luis Obispo County, Kern County and Santa Clara County. As a result of our continued efforts, California's tule elk population has increased from three herds totaling 500 elk in the 1970s, to 22 herds with approximately 4,200 elk today, marking one of the most successful wildlife comeback stories of the last century. For photos and more information, please visit <http://goo.gl/rO3GX7>.

### **Endangered Coho Capture and Relocation**

In 2014, high temperatures and low water flows put endangered Coho salmon at risk. Many were stranded in the Scott River in Siskiyou County and were in danger of being lost. The recovery and relocation effort was two-pronged. First, Iron Gate Fish Hatchery employees captured more than 100,000 juvenile fish in the low and cool parts of the river then released them into suitable habitat, on private lands with the cooperation of the land owners. Secondly, drought funds from the federal government purchased emergency cold water and stable holding tanks, where another several hundred fish taken from the Scott were placed into as an emergency measure in case the river system collapsed. After several weeks of effort, the captured fish were released back into the river to continue on their journey. More about Coho Salmon recovery efforts can be found at [www.dfg.ca.gov/fish/Resources/Coho/CohoRecovery.asp](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/fish/Resources/Coho/CohoRecovery.asp).

### **Abalone and Shark fin Enforcement**

Several repeat offenders were caught poaching abalone again despite steep fines and penalties from past convictions. In October, a series of convictions for these repeat offenders included steep fines totaling \$139,000 in addition to lifetime revocation of fishing privileges and prison sentences. In San Francisco, an investigation into illegal shark fin sales uncovered almost 2,000 pounds of shark fin product destined for California's black market. Prosecution and pre-trial preparation for the case is ongoing. More details on the above abalone arrests can be found at <http://goo.gl/6xpV2H>.

### **CDFW's Scientific Journal Celebrates 100-year Anniversary**

In 2014, *California Fish and Game* celebrated 100 years as California's longest-running, continuously published scientific journal. Published quarterly, this peer-reviewed scientific journal is devoted to the conservation and understanding of the flora and fauna of California and surrounding areas, including the eastern Pacific Ocean. In an effort to make *California Fish and Game* accessible to a wider audience, CDFW eliminated subscription fees in 2014 and began to publish new issues electronically on its website. Back issues are also being added, with the intention of eventually making all 100 years' worth of issues available for download at no charge. Print copies of the four commemorative anniversary issues will also be available to order on a "print on demand" basis later in 2015. To view issues currently available online or to find out more about how to order a print copy, please visit [www.dfg.ca.gov/publications/journal/](http://www.dfg.ca.gov/publications/journal/).

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