



ISSUE #293

SEPTEMBER 2026

BEARS ARE THE BEAT

ED NOTE: For obvious reasons, bears are the focus of this issue. We'll hear from those who had or saw close encounters and those who offer advice and information. Hang on to this issue for the next bear season.

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It was a long, hard summer for Galisteo bears and those who care about them. By June there were daily sightings of two different mothers with cubs, desperate for food and water. The bears were not aggressive, but havoc did ensue thanks to human carelessness. The village managed to live in cautious harmony—until August.

On August 21st, at dusk, a small bear entered Lucy Lippard's kitchen through an open screened window. The house sitters had walked up the driveway to catch the sunset. Lucy's dog Tana barked and alerted them and they saw the bear flee to the bosque. Damage was minimal, but a mess was made. The attraction was most likely the smell of a sausage dinner.

The same day a bear broke into another resident's home on the bosque and with a bear at the window a second night, she called NM Department of Wildlife (formerly Game and Fish.) NMDW takes such calls seriously, and a trap was set near the Bosque bridge. Two days later, on a Sunday morning at 3AM, a bear cub was trapped. Its cries lasted for hours and were heard as far away as The Hill.

A group of distraught and angry villagers met the NMDOW agent who arrived. By mid-morning, eight NM State Police and a second wildlife agent had been called in. Pleas for the cub to be released were ignored, and the protest escalated when one of the NMDOW agents became physically rough with a protestor and threatened the group with arrest.

The cub was hauled off. Agents and police left. But the mother bear refused to leave the spot where the trap had stood, just feet from and in full view of Via La Puente. With the situation more dangerous than ever, Matthew McQueen contacted NMDW Chief Biologist, Stewart Liley, who agreed to come to Galisteo immediately. That afternoon Liley enacted a new plan. The mother bear was tranquilized, and protestors were told that she and her cub would be relocated to a safe area. Not exactly a happy ending, Liley admitted, since relocation is often unsuccessful, but two live bears left the village.

* STUDIO TOUR: OCT. 10-11 *

Matthew McQueen reports that mother and cub were released in Gila National Park. Rumor has it that a second bear mother and her two cubs were shot and killed on a nearby ranch, based on Facebook reports.

The takeaway: this is the norm from now on, thanks to climate change. We must get serious about ursine presence in the village. One successful raid of garbage, bird feeders, or kitchen leftovers endangers us all. The GCA must explore new ways to better educate and protect villagers, including those who are new, temporary, and/or those who prefer to live outside community outreach, so that all of us, including wildlife, can live safely together.



CUTE, CUDDLY, AND DANGEROUS

URSUS AMERICANUS

Jan Saunders/Catherine Ferguson

I hear the word, B E A R, and remember all those of my childhood: Historic: TEDDY of Roosevelt's Western adventures, Literary: WINNIE THE POOH of Christopher Robin's Hundred Acre Wood and BALOO the beloved teacher of Mowgli of the Jungle Book. Children growing up in New Mexico in the 1950s remember the real live SMOKEY BEAR, a small cub with burned paws, rescued from a fire in Lincoln National Forest, treated in Santa Fe by the founder of Smith Veterinary, dubbed Smokey, and sent to the National (Cont.p.2)

Zoo in Washington, DC as a cuddly reminder to protect our forests. These images rest soft in our collective memory until a hungry 180 lb mama bear of claw and tooth crashes through our kitchen window reminding us that we live in Bear Country.

Black Bears, also found in shades of brown, red or blond, hold a special place in our state as the official mammal and symbol of New Mexico Wildlife. In spite of the shifting climate, conservation efforts insure a robust bear population (more than 6,000) state wide, many now facing starvation. In their desperate search for food and water, bears leave their mountain homes to amble down dry arroyos into the Galisteo Basin, only to find no grass, no fruit, no piñon nuts and none of their *bear necessities*. So, they follow their super sense of smell (seven times stronger than a bloodhound's) right to our bird seed and hummingbird feeders, pet food, and trash. This summer more than 130 bears were captured and removed by wildlife officials. Fortunately, orphaned small cubs go to Cottonwood Rehab Center where they learn the foraging skills necessary for release back into the wild.

As The Great She-Bear of the constellation Ursa Major prowls the night sky over our Galisteo Basin, we continue to be Bear Aware in the effort to keep ourselves safe and *Ursus Americus* present and thriving in our wild places.

*The mountains have always been here,
and in them, the bears—Rick Bass*

TO THE VILLAGE AT LARGE ON 8/23

Mare Tomaski

Our wildlife is suffering! There is open season on mother bears and their cubs. Sadly, if humans are not educated on how to steward this land and the wildlife that has lived and roamed upon it, we put the wildlife and ourselves in danger.

Case in point: A baby bear was caught in a trap last night for over seven hours with no food or water while her mother was frantically pacing around outside the trap getting more scared and agitated by the minute. There was no way to free the baby so the authorities were called.

The authorities often do the wrong thing to appease uneducated scared humans. Which is what happened. NM Wildlife took the cub and left the mother bear frantically looking for her cub in that location, which makes no one safe.

There is no need for this if we all do the right thing for the land and her inhabitants. [See list below]

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Ed note: On 7/30 two adult bears and two cubs were killed on I-25 south of Santa Fe. On 7/31 Don Hiscock's camera caught a mama bear and two cubs roaming under the portal behind his shop on Camino San Cristobal at 2:30AM.

On 8/23 Galisteans were advised to stay out of the bosque, to avoid La Puente, La Vega, and Avenida Vieja and not to walk their dogs until the Mama was caught.

Someone put a note on the door of Janice Griscom's renter saying that she should leave the village because she called NM Wildlife. This is offensive. She called after two encounters and had every right to be scared. But if you call the authorities, please understand what you set in motion. Game wardens will either euthanize the bear or relocate it to an area where it may well die from lack of familiarity with the territory. 129 bears have been euthanized in New Mexico this year. Chief Liley says 2026 has been "an extraordinary year." [See graph pg.3]

From *Galisteo Community News* (email 8/23): "Thank you Margaret Wrinkle for liaising with the Sheriff's Department and NM Wildlife this morning. Matthew McQueen for organizing the meeting with Chief Liley, and Alex Finlayson for alerting the community." Later communication noted that bear and cub had been relocated to the Gila. We wish them luck.

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The official view: "Bears are smart, quick learners and may be active at any time of day. In normal times, 999 times out of a thousand, a black bear would run away from humans, as they are shy critters. But we are not in normal times: Human-caused climate change has created extreme conditions, drought and heat, that stress wildlife as much as they stress us. Bears will likely come down from the Ortiz Mountains -- and there are a lot of bears up there -- due to a dearth of water and food sources. Conditions are serious. Their habitat is shrinking daily. The bears are starving. **Secure garbage cans, bird feeders, composts—and secure your house. Be aware of open windows and doors when there is food around. If you see a bear, particularly one close to your home (bird feeders are irresistible), call the NM Dept. of Wildlife, 505-222-4700.**



Bear Trap (Photo: Margaret Wrinkle)

BLACK BEARS' VERY BAD YEAR

Ted Alcorn

Galisteo's recent up-close brush with a bear and her cub was one of hundreds of such encounters across New Mexico this summer. They have generally gone badly for the bears. From April 1 to September 8, the New Mexico Department of Wildlife or residents killed at least 254 bears after "conflicts" with people, typically after they broke into homes, killed livestock, or otherwise discomfited humans. That five-month toll is already nearly four times the annual average of the last 25 years of record-keeping, and it has surpassed the previous record of 242 killed over a full twelve-month period in 2011-12, with nearly seven months of the season still to go.

But set against the state's overall bear population and the booms and busts of history, the toll is less dire than it sounds. Nick Forman, who runs the department's bear and cougar program, estimates New Mexico is home to 9,000 black bears, a population that has been stable, if not growing, over the last decade.

The last two winters when his team checked on a sample of bears in their dens, a routine scientific practice, they were "super, super fat" thanks to an earlier bumper piñon crop, and every female had cubs. But this aberrantly hot and dry year brought a string of shortfalls, even for bears well-adapted to drought and a range of food sources. With almost no winter precipitation, (Cont.p.3)

there was little green grass to greet bears leaving their dens. A late monsoon delayed the prickly pears that bears count on in July. And chokecherries, currants, and huckleberries are only coming in now, almost two months late. People played a role in sparking conflict, too, leaving bird feeders and unsecured trash that attracted hungry animals.

Galisteo is not a hotspot for bear encounters, but it's near parts of the state where humans and bears most frequently collide. The bears that wildlife officials killed or relocated this year were clustered overwhelmingly in the high country running from Santa Fe through the Pecos Wilderness to Mora. Forman chalked that up to the human settlements in the foothills and the aftermath of the Hermit's Peak/Calf Canyon fire, where vegetation is still recovering.

Humans may be hurt, but it is exceedingly rare. On August 20, a bear killed a man near Crystal, NM, on the Navajo Nation, the state's first fatal attack in 25 years. It's usually the bear that winds up dead. Galisteo was an exception thanks to the outcry by villagers. (See above).

This year the department killed more than four bears for each one it moved. A relocated bear's chances are still slim. Forman said the department tries to give bears the best odds, moving them as much as 100 miles away. Any closer, and within days they are often "right back to where they were." This summer the department has been trucking bears west, where the monsoon came earlier and forage likely more plentiful, and into zones already closed to hunting.

Forman expects encounters to slow now as acorns and juniper berries ripen and the bears head back to the mountains to hibernate by November. An optimist, and a self-professed member of "Team Bear," he's pinning his hopes on winter forecasts of a powerful El Niño and heavy snow. "When they come out of the dens in spring, they're going to come out to mountains that have a bunch of green grass out there for them, and a bunch of foods, and they're going to just completely forget about the grocery stores that they found in town."

A FED BEAR IS A DEAD BEAR

Sarah Rogers

"A fed bear is a dead bear" may sound like a threat, but this slogan promoted by the BearWise educational program of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies is an evidence-based prognosis, meant to snap our attention to best practices that "keep people, pets and property safe and bears wild."

Bears that learn to associate neighborhoods with accessible and high-quality food may lose their wariness and become aggressive or unpredictable, and may wander near dangerous roads. The BearWise At Home Checklist, forwarded to the Galisteo community Google group by Greg Salustro (8/24), offers many coexistence tactics, including:

Grills. Scrub your grill and store it in a bear-proof place.

Birdfeeders. Take birdfeeders down until winter.

Fruit trees. Collect fallen fruit daily.

Compost. Use electric fencing or odor-holding containers, or skip composting until winter.

Trash. Bear-proofing your trash is necessary. Using bear-resistant containers is recommended. Go to the dump frequently or, if you have a garbage collection service, do not put your garbage out the night before pickup.

Talk to your neighbors. Letting your neighbors know bear when, where, and what keeps everyone safer.

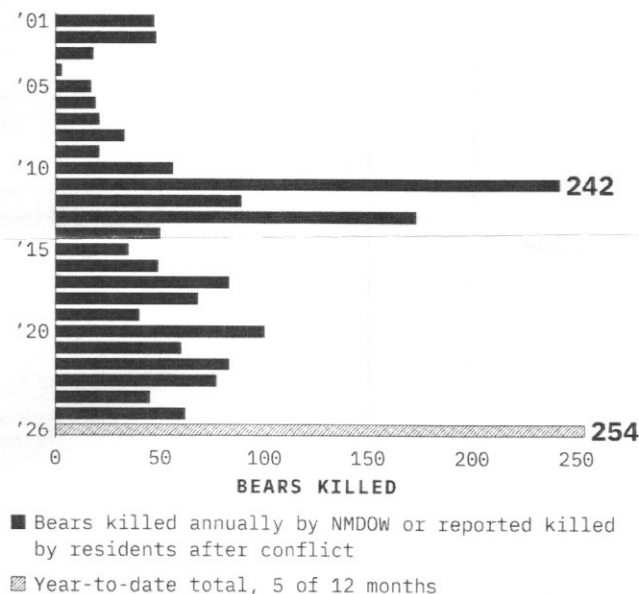
Consider a communitywide approach. Bear ordinances are encouraged.

Learn about black bears. Respect bears and learn about their behavior and ecology. **Other tricky situations.** Click away at <https://bearwise.org/>

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And a couple more from El Puente: Some communities require **bear-proof trash cans**. Home-made and cheaper options include locks or locked boxes around your cans. **Mapping tools** are a potential asset. A new study in *The Journal of Wildlife Management* analyzed **bear-dog conflicts**; the results challenge the idea that dogs make people safer in bear country.

Not even mid-season, more bears have been killed after conflicts with humans than in any prior year



Data source: N.M. Dept. of Wildlife, as of 9/8/26 - Annual Black Bear Mortality Statistics 2001-2025/26 and 2026-27 Bear Depredation and Roadkill Update

PEDACITOS/BITS AND PIECES

A Ranchitos resident reports **3 young men and a woman, carrying a ladder peering into windows.**

From **Maria Ortiz y Pino**: Due to the low participation in this fall's community yard sale, I am sorry to announce that it is **CANCELLED**. Only six were interested in doing it. Maybe we can do it in the Spring.

• On 8/5, the SF Reporter published "The Cider House Rules," a 2-page interview with Craig Moya about his trajectory from firefighter to owner of a "mini empire" of taprooms and a restaurant. And his devotion to the "neighborhood hang" -- where people can talk and community is formed.

A **herd of thirsty cattle** made their way from Cerro Pelon Ranch, under the highway 41 bridge, through the fence, and into the bosque on 8/3. Lucy's house-sitters enjoyed the sight without a clue that it was out of the ordinary. A sheriff arrived after dark and alerted the ranch to their mavericks, who were herded back home.

On a deathly hot and smoky Sunday afternoon, villagers gathered at the 2nd Annual Ice Cream Social hosted by **Gregory Hart and Katheryne Gatehouse-Hart** at the GCC to celebrate the day they moved to Galisteo with Gregory's homemade artisanal ice cream. (Cont. p.4)

From Water Board President Gregory Hart: Currently the **Galisteo MDWCA** is working on understanding the system's water pressure. In the process of fixing recent water leaks, **Antonio Chavez** measured the water pressure at his home, he was surprised to find it was over 80 psi (pounds per square inch). The suggested pressure for pvc pipes installed in the 1980's or earlier is 60 psi. I have contacted our water operator as well as the New Mexico Rural Water Association to help us understand the situation. To be continued when more information becomes known.

Jean Moya has been tapped as the featured artist for next year's 2027 Spanish Market poster. And the Fall issue of *El Palacio* includes an essay on Jean by Lucy Lippard.

Renovation has begun at Quartermill Farm by new owners, **Clayton Brandt** and **Sofia Zubi**. Those who want to follow along can tune into @galisteodaily on Instagram

This year's **Rodeo teeshirts** were so popular they ran out early. The family had more reprinted, and if there are any left, you can get one at Rodeo de Galisteo on Facebook.

Susie Shanklin has just reported seeing her first tarantula in Galisteo. **Angie Beauchamp** had an encounter several years ago: "It walked into the living room under the screen door - and walked out again to get away from the screaming person (ie me). I was imagining a bad b-movie tarantula attacking my face!"

On 8/15 **Ted Alcorn** published a story on the front page of the *New York Times* headlined "Health fears are fueling bans on pesticides Farmers Rely On".

The Center for Contemporary Arts has named **Jaime Herrell** Artistic Director as the organization rebuilds after a 2023 near-closure and a 2025 contentious unionization drive. "It's a total rewrite," Herrell told the *SF Reporter*. "We are very much interested in delegating and empowering the staff."

Patrick Briggs sells beautiful braids of organic heirloom garlic, descended from cloves brought from Italy by Kelly's ancestors. 10 cloves, \$25. Text Patrick: 505-690-2004.

The **GVFR Annual Breakfast** was a great success. Report and pix in next issue as this one probably had more about bears than you could bear.

And the crucial question: Does a Bear Shit in the Woods?

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FOR SALE

Amanecer Gallery offers oil paintings by Freddie Cárdenas and micaceous pottery by Anna Cárdenas, 505-466-8967.

Talus Wind Heritage Meats. Local New Mexico lamb and pork. Contact info@taluswindranch.com.

SERVICE

Tractor Work: Driveways, Culverts, Septic, Leach Fields, Excavation, Demolition, Brush Removal: Arlan Collatz: 970-901-2468.

Native Land Reparation Pledge Project: give back 1% of the sale of your home to indigenous people. Contact Mare at marenlrp@gmail.com

Rancho Bueno: gifts, grocery bags from feed sacks, tarragon vinegar, aprons, napkins, and potholders. By appointment: Deirdre 505-670-5198 ranchobuenonm@gmail.com

Radio Free Galisteo @ www.radiofreegalisteo.com Music and Information from the Galisteo Basin. Support the Station: https://www.patreon.com/radiofreegalisteo.

Dave's Auto Repair: restoring, minor repairs, painting. Local references. Free estimates: David Montoya, 505-577-1720.

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Linda Vista Stables: I can take care of your local horses in the comfort of their own barn. Call Maria, 466-8930.

Pet, House, and Garden Care: Janet Pfeiffer, 399-9238.

Yoga Zoom classes with Julia: Every Mon., Wed., and Fri. Gentle Yin, Vinyasa Flow and Yin Yang. Contact 505-670-5478 or julia.c.cairns@gmail.com for more information.

Grow Y'own hooped and covered raised beds for year-round gardening! Ken 490-1849.

JVS will remove (live) rattlesnakes. Call 466-1064.

We build, repair coyote fences; haul trash; yard work, etc. Fair prices, local references, Michael Anaya, 660-2275.

Barbara Holloway Fine Handweaving: scarves, shawls, vests, jackets, handwoven of luxurious chenille. 466-2118.

Carpentry: Custom closets, hand-carved tables, benches, gates, doors; also electrical work. Ted Montoya, 505-470-0562; "text and I will call you back."

Passive Solar Builders: Locally owned general contractor since 1980. Home construction, renovations: 466-2118.

Meditation & Knowings with Chris Griscom via video, the second Sunday of each month, free on YouTube; for info contact thelight@lightinstitute.com

+++ EL PUENTE DE GALISTEO+++

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