



DFW-027
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**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
BUREAU OF LAW ENFORCEMENT**

OPERATION REPORT

1. Nature of Incident Bear-Human Interaction		2. Date 09/21/14	3. Time 1600 hrs	4. Classification	5. Complaint Number 45-115-14
6. Victim - Complaint - Accused Patel, Darsh [DOB [REDACTED]]				Age 22	Sex Male
				Race Indian	
7. Address [REDACTED]				8. Phone	
9. Location of Incident Aphawa Preserve, West Milford Twp., Passaic County					
10. Reported By NJFW Wildlife Control			Radio	Phone X	View
			Other		
11. Address				12. Phone	
13				Weather	
14					
<p>Witnesses: Patel, Vishal [DOB [REDACTED]] Patel, Prashant [DOB [REDACTED]] Suh, David [DOB [REDACTED]] Lee, Zenas [REDACTED]</p> <p>On Sunday, September 21, 2014, at 1849 hours, I was contacted via cell phone, by Wildlife Control Biologist Mike Madonia, who informed me that West Milford Township Police had contacted Trenton Dispatch informing him that a bear had attacked and possibly killed a hiker in the area of 581 Macopin Road, West Milford Township. Mike Madonia provided me with contact information for Sgt. Walker of the West Milford Police Department. I immediately contacted CO Robert Driscoll and instructed him to contact Sgt. Walker regarding the incident. I contacted CO Joseph Kuechler and advised him to respond to 581 Macopin Road. I then contacted Captain Frank Panico, Deputy Chief Matt Brown and Chief Mark Chicketano to inform them of the situation.</p> <p>At 1930 hours, CO Driscoll picked me up at my station and we responded to the area of 581 Macopin Road, West Milford Township, arriving at 1949 hours. CO Kuechler was already on scene when we arrived. We were informed by West Milford Search and Rescue that a body believed to be that of Darsh Patel was found in the area of the missing hiker and the body exhibited signs of trauma consistent with injuries inflicted by a black bear. West Milford Police encountered an aggressive black bear circling the area where the body was found. The bear refused to leave the area and West Milford Police shot and killed the bear.</p> <p>We drove to Battle Creek paintball located at 625 Macopin Road and entered the Aphawa Preserve by going through the paintball field. We were escorted to the scene located approximately one half (1/2) mile into the preserve by Detective Frank Elia and Detective Sgt. Steven Singerline from the West Milford Police Department. We then walked through and observed the scene and CO Driscoll took photographs.</p> <p>At 2230 hours, CO Driscoll and I proceeded to the West Milford Police Station to interview the other hikers. Prior to the interviews, I spoke with Biologist Tony McBride regarding information that he would like me to focus on during the interviews. T. McBride advised that he wanted to know about the bear's behavior prior to the attack. Specifically; how long the bear follow the group, how close the bear got to them, if the bear bluff charged or popped its jaws.</p> <p>I interviewed each witness separately, beginning at 2300 hours. I asked each witness to detail how they first came in contact with the bear and what occurred after that contact. The first witness I interviewed was David M. Suh (DOB-[REDACTED]). D. Suh advised that the group encountered a man and woman on the trail. The couple advised that a bear was following them and that they should turn around. He described the couple as being scared and that they were walking at a fast pace. Suh said that he initially hesitated, but the rest of the group wanted to go see the bear and he followed.</p> <p>Continued on page 2.</p>					
16. Lt. Steven Sutton, CO II Signature 		17. Badge No. 141	18. Hours	19. Date 09/24/14	20. Received 
		21. Badge No.	22. Completed X		

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He advised that the bear was approximately three hundred (300) feet from them when they first saw it. The group began to take photographs of the bear with their cellphones and the bear began walking towards them. Once the bear approached within approximately 100 feet, the group began to back away. The bear continued toward them. They turned and began to quickly walk away. The bear continued to follow them. He described the bear as being curious and very interested. The group began to run and the bear also began to run. When the bear began to run after them, it approached to within approximately ten (10) feet of them and the group scattered in different directions. David Suh said that he turned and saw Darsh Patel and the bear was approximately five (5) feet away from him. David Suh continued to run and became separated from the rest of the group. I asked him how much time had elapsed from the time they encountered the bear, to the time it began to chase them, but he could not remember. I asked him if the bear had acted aggressively, by bluff charging them or popping its jaws. He advised that it did not act aggressively, bluff charge or pop its jaws. David Suh advised that he eventually was able to find the rest of the group, but Darsh Patel was missing. The group yelled for him and looked for him, but there was no response and they could not locate him. The group then hiked out to 581 Macopin Road and called 911. I asked him how much time had elapsed between when the group was separated and when they were reunited, but he could not remember. I asked him if he heard any yelling or screaming and he advised that he did not hear anything.

The second witness interviewed was Vishal Patel (DOB- [REDACTED]). Vishal Patel advised that he and his friends were hiking and they encountered a man and woman, who warned them that a bear was following them. He and his friends decided to go look for the bear and proceeded down the trail. He advised that when they observed the bear, it was approximately one hundred (100) feet from them. They stopped and took photographs of the bear with their cell phones and the bear began walking towards them. He said they began to walk away from the bear and the bear continued to follow them. I asked him if the bear displayed any signs of aggression, charged them or popped its jaws. He advised that it did not act aggressive, charge them or pop its jaws. He said it just followed them and as they moved faster, so did the bear. He advised that the group eventually ran and split up in different directions once the bear got within fifteen (15) feet of them. He said that the group was able to reunite, but Darsh Patel was missing. I asked if he heard any yelling or screaming while he was running away, but he did not hear anything. He advised that the group looked for Darsh Patel and called for him, but they could not locate him and then hiked out to Macopin Road, where they called 911.

The third witness interviewed was Prashant Patel (DOB- [REDACTED]). Prashant Patel gave the same account that Vishal Patel gave. The only additional information that he had, was that when the group scattered and began to run, he turned around and observed Darsh Patel carrying a shoe in his hand. When asked about the bear's behavior, he advised that the bear did not act aggressively, charge them or pop its jaws. He stated that the bear only followed them and seemed curious.


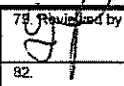
The final witness interviewed was Zenas S. Lee (DOB- [REDACTED]). Zenas Lee gave the same account that Vishal Patel gave and relayed the same behavior exhibited by the bear. The bear showed no signs of aggression, it did not charge them and it never popped its jaws. He advised that the bear followed them and seemed curious.

None of the witnesses were able to give a timeline of how long the bear followed them or how long they were separated before reuniting. None of them witnessed the bear making contact with Darsh Patel, but they all observed the bear within five to ten feet of him before losing sight.

The interviews were concluded at 2330 hours.

CO Driscoll and I returned to Battle Creek Paintball as CO Kuechler, Mike Madonia and Tony McBride were exiting the woods with the deceased bear. The bear was loaded into Mike Madonia's truck and taken to the Clinton Wildlife Management Area office for storage.

CO Driscoll and I cleared the scene at 0000 hours.

75. Lt. Steven Sutton, CO-II Signature 	76. Badge No. 141	77. Page 2	78. Date Report 09/24/14	79. Reviewed by 
		80.	81.	82.