
BROWN BEAR AND HUMAN RECREATIONAL USE OF TRAILS IN ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

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The Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska, has 301,000 human residents and hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. Anchorage also supports a viable population of brown bears (*Ursus arctos alascensis*). As a result, human-bear encounters are common. We monitored recreational trails near salmon spawning streams at 3 study sites with camera traps during the summers of 2009 – 2012 to better understand daily and seasonal activity patterns of bears and humans on these trails. We found that the more remote study sites had the least human activity and the most bear activity, and human-bear encounters were most likely to occur from July through early September due to a higher degree of overlap between human and bear activity during this timeframe. Most brown bears at our study sites appeared to have adopted a crepuscular and nocturnal activity pattern, which was more pronounced at the site with the most human use. More people used trails Friday through Sunday, while there was no difference in bear activity among days of week. Recreational activities and user groups differed among sites. Based on our data, areas should be assessed individually to mitigate adverse human-bear encounters. However, one potential solution for avoiding dangerous bear encounters at all study sites is to restrict human access or types of recreational activity. When human access is controlled in important bear habitat, distribution of visitors becomes spatially

and temporally more predictable, allowing bears an opportunity to adjust activity patterns to avoid people while still using the resource.