

Loose bear eludes capture in Phoenix suburb

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Authorities called off the search Monday for a black bear that caused a stir when it was spotted running through an alfalfa field on the eastern edge of metropolitan Phoenix. © 2014 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Still, officials plan to relocate the young bear to a more suitable habitat if they come across it in the future. "The best-case scenario is that we tranquilize it and move it," said Amy Burnett, a spokeswoman for the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

The encounter in Mesa marks a rarity for a metro area that officials say has a bear sighting reported once every two years. Phoenix and its suburbs are considered a poor food source for bears.

TV news helicopters that captured video of the bear running across rows of green fields had helped push the animal toward a game warden bearing a tranquilizer gun. The warden wasn't able to get a good shot.

In the end, the animal proved elusive. He ran into a former General Motors test site that contained fields, shrubbery and trees and is too big of an area to track.

Wildlife officials cautioned that the bear is a wild animal but also said that it wasn't acting aggressively. Instead, it was running away from people.

"It's not an aggressive bear. It seems to want to run away from people, so that's good," said Mesa Police Department spokesman Steve Flores.

It wasn't known where the bear came from or how long it has been in the area. Though the bear's coat is light brown, wildlife officials say the animal is a black bear, the only species of bear that lives in the state. An estimated 3,000 to 5,000 black bears live in Arizona.

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