



Critters & Crawlers

WEEK 10: 20 JULY, 2020

WHAT'S IN MY BACKYARD?

Camp Pendleton's 125,000 acres is home to a variety of wildlife, most of which avoid contact with humans as much as possible. But with base residents and wildlife sharing the same backyard, it is inevitable residents will encounter an animal or two while living or training aboard the base. Residents should treat the animals with respect, keeping in mind that they can be potentially dangerous.

Coyotes and snakes are two of the most commonly seen critters here, but residents might also get the rare opportunity to see a bobcat or mountain lion.



Most active at night, coyotes can be found in a wide range of habitats. This medium - sized animal from the canine family eats mice, rats, ground squirrels, gophers and rabbits, as well as insects, reptiles, fruit and occasionally birds and eggs. No strangers to residential areas, coyotes can eat garbage, pet food, and sometimes the dogs and cats it is intended for, even though they are equipped with the speed, endurance, and strength necessary to tackle prey as large as deer.

Camp Pendleton is also home to 17 species of snakes, only three of which are venomous: the Speckled rattlesnake, the Red Diamond rattlesnake, and the most aggressive and abundant of the three, the South Pacific



rattlesnake. Snakes are proficient predators, primarily lying and waiting for prey. Depending on the size of the snake, they possess enough strength and agility to eat a variety of foods. In the spring, snake sightings are the most common call to the base game warden's office since springtime brings the snakes out of hibernation and affords them the opportunity to search for food over much larger distances than they normally would, to include housing areas where they can find rodents.

Residents can also see bobcats aboard Camp Pendleton. The black-spotted, 10 to 25 pound animal, with a two to three inch tail, doesn't show up in housing areas much. Residents shouldn't be concerned if they see these wildcats, but can notify the base game warden office.



Although mountain lions have also been sighted aboard base, they are very elusive. The tan or light brown animal can weigh 70 to 150 pounds, stand two or three feet high at the shoulders and be three to eight feet long, including the tail, which is black tipped, along with its ears. Between five and ten Mountain Lions inhabit Camp Pendleton's undeveloped land.

One of the most common animals to enter housing areas is the raccoon. Raccoons are round, fuzzy creatures with bushy tails and a black mask of fur that covers their eye area. These animals may look like cute, cuddly bandits, but they can be quite fearsome when approached. They are very adaptable, so they live in a wide range of climates and habitats. When food is scarce, raccoons aren't above scavenging human trash or eating roadkill.



Though raccoons are more than happy to make human areas their homes, they can be vicious when approached. Humans should be particularly cautious of raccoons because they are common carriers of rabies, roundworms and leptospirosis.

It is important for base residents to understand that they have to share the land they live and train on with the animals around them. Most animals prefer to stay away from humans but there are always environmental factors that can push the range of wildlife closer to us. While base civilization does cross into animal territory now and then, residents can minimize their chances of encountering base wildlife with just a few precautions.

- ◆ Residents should never attempt to feed the animals or leave food for them. This includes birdfeeders.
- ◆ Small pets should not be left out at night and should be fed during daylight hours whenever possible.
- ◆ Make sure your pet is vaccinated.
- ◆ Residents can cut the grass 50 ft. back from their homes and keep yards clear of toys and trash to prevent animals from hiding in them.
- ◆ Trash should be secured and grills cleaned to prevent the scent of food from attracting animals.
- ◆ Residents should never attempt to remove animals themselves.

If you have questions or concerns about wild animals spotted in Camp Pendleton housing areas or training areas, call the Camp Pendleton Game Warden at 760-725-3360.

VENOMOUS SPIDERS

Spiders eat insects like flies, ants and crickets. Many people are scared of them, but they can be helpful. Most spiders are not a threat to humans, but some contain venom that is harmful. Spiders rarely bite humans, and usually do not break the skin. Some poisonous spider bites can cause swelling, tissue damage and disturb the function between nerves and muscles that can lead to paralysis. The only poisonous spiders in San Diego County are the Black Widow, Brown Widow and the Desert Recluse. Please note that we do not have the Brown Recluse in San Diego County.

Black Widow. The adult female Black Widow spider has a shiny, black, round abdomen with a red hourglass figure on the underside of its abdomen. Adult females are about 1/2-inch long, not including the legs.



Common symptoms from a Black Widow spider bite include:

- Sweating
- Nausea
- Rapid heartbeat
- Muscle spasms
- Blurred vision
- Trouble breathing and swallowing

Brown Widow. The Brown Widow is mottled tan and brown in appearance. Like the black widow, they also have an hourglass figure on the underside of their abdomen, however it is orange in appearance rather than red. A bite from this spider will generally cause pain and discomfort around the spider bite.



Desert Recluse. The Desert Recluse is not the same as the Brown Recluse. It is found in the Sonoran and Mojave deserts, the foothills of lower Joaquin Valley and areas close to the Mexican border. They prefer to live in remote unpopulated areas. They are nocturnal spiders, meaning they only come out at night and they live under rocks and in old animal burrows. A bite from this spider may cause tissue damage.



Treatment of Spider Bites

Wash the bite mark with soap and water to help prevent infection. You can rub ice cubes on the bite to numb and reduce the pain. Seek medical attention right away for Black Widow, Brown Widow and Desert Recluse spider bites.

How To Avoid Spider Bites

- Wear shoes outdoors.
- Watch where you put your hands.
- Shake out clothing, towels, shoes, gloves and boots before each use.
- Use caution when using outdoor toilets, as they are favorite places for spiders to hide.

Controlling Spiders. To keep spiders out of your home, you can take the following steps:

- Clean up woodpiles and leaves around the home.
- Seal cracks on the house foundation, and around windows and doors.
- Use a high-pressure hose to spray spiders on outside walls.
- Make sure you are not carrying them in your home on plants and in boxes.
- Vacuum or sweep windows, corners of rooms, storage areas, garages and basements to help remove spiders and their webs.

Vacuuming spiders can be an effective control technique because their soft bodies usually do not survive this process. Webs that are gathering dust are old and no longer being used by a spider. Spraying insecticide may also keep spiders under control. Make sure that the product is right for your home and be sure to follow the label instructions carefully.

Points of Contact

FMD Pest Control
760-763-5942

Animal Control
760-725-8120

Game Warden
760-725-3360



CAMP PENDLETON SAFETY CENTER

We provide a wide range of safety support services aimed at preserving combat readiness by identifying hazards and reducing risk to people and resources. We perform inspections, provide technical support, assist with safety program implementation, conduct mishap investigations, and offer safety training opportunities for all base personnel to include tenant commands. We want to empower all Sailors, Marines, civilians, and their families to embrace a proactive culture of risk identification and management to achieve zero preventable mishaps.

Have a question? Email us at: Cpen_safety_help@usmc.mil

Commanding General's Safety Hotline: 760.763.7233