

# Extra enforcement of move over law set for today

## Statewide DWI crackdown continues

BY MNDOT STAFF REPORT

Motorists who fail to move over for a stopped emergency or maintenance vehicle with its emergency lights on may soon be seeing another set of flashing lights in their mirror.

Law enforcement agencies around the state will be increasing enforcement of the Ted Foss Move Over law today to remind motorists that emergency responders need room on the road to conduct their work safely.

The move over law is named after State Patrol Trooper Ted Foss, who was killed 13 years ago by a passing vehicle as he was making a traffic stop on the shoulder of Interstate 90 in Winona.

Minnesota’s “move over” law means:

■ When traveling on a road with two or more lanes, motorists must keep over one full lane away from stopped emergency vehicles with flashing lights activated — ambulance, fire, law

enforcement, maintenance and construction vehicles.

■ Motorists must reduce speed if they are unable to safely move over a lane.

■ Failing to take these actions endangers personnel who provide critical and life-saving services. Fines can exceed \$100.

“The side of any road can be a very dangerous place, especially for emergency and maintenance personnel who are there to provide a service that helps keep our roads safe for everyone,” says Donna Berger, Office of Traffic Safety director. “We ask all motorists to do their part by safely moving over one lane to help ensure everyone’s safety.

In addition to the one-day move over enforcement effort, law enforcement will be continuing a statewide DWI crackdown scheduled to run through today. The enforcement campaigns are being coordinated by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety.

# Wolf believed to have bitten teen tests negative for rabies

DNR STAFF REPORT

A gray wolf that wildlife experts suspect bit a 16-year-old boy during the early hours of Aug. 24 at the U.S. Forest Service West Winnie Campground at Lake Winnibigoshish has tested negative for rabies.

The confirmation was made Wednesday by the Minnesota Department of Health laboratory, ac-

cording to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. The wolf that was tested had been trapped Monday at the campground and sent to the lab for rabies testing.

The agency also reported:

■ It is premature to say with 100 percent confidence that the wolf that tested negative for rabies is the wolf that inflicted

the bites. That won’t be known – or may never be known – until DNA testing is complete. The youth’s shirt (a potential source of wolf saliva DNA) and wolf muscle tissue have been sent to a laboratory at the University of California – Davis for forensic analysis. The analysis expected to take several weeks. The DNR will release the results when they are available.

■ The U.S. Forest Service has reopened the West Winnie Campground, which had been closed since Saturday.

■ The University of Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory has conducted an initial examination of the wolf. The results of additional tests will take several weeks at which time a final necropsy report will be issued.

# World’s oldest-known wild black bear dies at 39

DNR STAFF REPORT

The world’s oldest-known wild bear has died of old age in northern Minnesota at the age of 39½, according to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Known to DNR researchers as Bear No. 56, the female American black bear was first captured and radio-collared in July 1981 by DNR scientists during the first summer of a long-term research project on bear population ecology. The bear was 7 years old at the time and was accompanied by three female cubs.

Bear No. 56 became a significant animal in the DNR research project. During a 32-year study period, she and her many offspring provided an almost uninterrupted record of reproduction, survival, movements and, eventually, senescence (aging), within a single matriarchal lineage. Data from this bear and her offspring have contributed significantly to the scientific literature on black bear biology.

From 1981-1995, Bear No. 56 produced eight litters of cubs and successfully reared

a remarkable 21 of the 22 cubs to 1½ years of age. In 1997, at age 23, she uncharacteristically lost two of her three cubs before weaning. In 1999, at age 25, she bore and raised her last cub. In 2001, when she was next expected to give birth, researchers found her healthy in her den and producing milk but without cubs.

Bear No. 56 outlived by 19 years all of the 360 other radio-collared black bears that DNR researchers have followed since 1981. She also outlived any radio-collared bear of any species in the world. Only a very few individual study bears have been reported to reach age 30. The second-oldest was a brown bear that lived to 34.

Researchers suspect Bear No. 56’s longevity probably is best attributed to a combination of factors, including the location of her home range in a forested area with few people or major roads; a more reticent nature than that of many bears, in terms of her avoidance of people; and luck.

“Getting this information about this bear has taken a lot of effort. This

really attests to the value of a long-term study with a large sample of bears,” said Dave Garshelis, DNR bear project leader. “Had we not studied so many bears, we likely would not have encountered this intriguing outlier. It was not just documenting that she lived to be so old, but understanding how she was able to live to be so much older than other bears that made this incredibly interesting and useful.”

In the last few years of her life, Bear No. 56 began to visit some hunters’ baits, but hunters passed up shooting her, abiding by a DNR request that hunters not shoot collared bears.

When last handled in March 2010, Bear No. 56 was a healthy weight but her teeth showed excessive wear and her eyes were clouding. Since then, her hearing and eyesight continued to deteriorate. Rarely observed through most of her life, Bear No. 56 had been observed by people during the past two summers with increasing frequency, foraging along trails and traveling dirt roads, likely because of the greater ease

of travel than in the woods.

Sometime in July, Bear No. 56 left her normal home range, as bears often do in late summer, to explore other areas for rich food sources on which to fatten for winter. After locating her radio signal several miles from her typical home area, DNR bear researcher Karen Noyce found her decomposed body in a secluded wooded location. From all indications, she died a quiet death, with no sign of struggle at the site and no evidence of broken bones or traumatic injury.

“This is the first bear in our study to die of old age, and there is something satisfying in that,” said Noyce, who, along with Ken Soring, DNR’s current enforcement director, conducted the first capture of Bear No. 56 as a rookie biologist in 1981.

“We knew she was getting feeble,” Noyce said. “It would have been sad to find her on the side of the road somewhere, hit by a car. After following her all these years, I’m glad to know she died peacefully. It was a fitting death for a fine old bear.”

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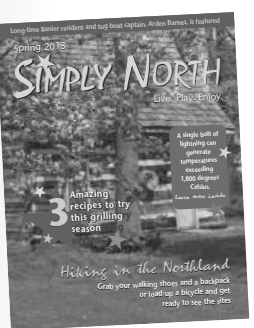
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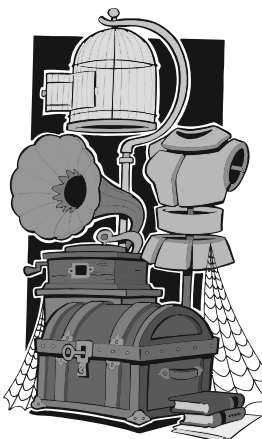
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