

Black bears spotted near Sleepy Eye

Fritz Busch

SLEEPY EYE - Joe Hoffmann got up to make some coffee at about 6:30 a.m. Friday and got a big surprise when he looked out the window.

"It was pretty surprising to see a black bear walking through the yard," said Hoffmann who farms about a mile west of the Sleepy Eye Lake Trail.

"The dog started barking and the bear ran away through a bean field. It was heading towards Sleepy Eye," he said. "I took a photo of it and sent a text to Sleepy Eye Police Chief Andres."

Hoffmann's wife Karri described the early morning scene.

"It was shocking. The bear tried to climb a tree but couldn't do it and left down a driveway to a field," she said. "We have chickens. Maybe the bear was looking for them. It didn't get any chickens that we know of. It was a pretty big black bear, bigger than our Black Lab/German Shepherd mix dog."

Karri Hoffmann said their young children weren't scared.

"The bear got within a few feet of the house but the kids were more worried about what might happen to the bear," she said.

Sleepy Eye Police officer Amber Meyer said the only other call about a bear happened about an hour earlier than the Hoffmann's encounter.

The Brown County Sheriff's Office said they got a call at 5:39 a.m. Friday about a bear seen in Home Township near Highway 14 and Country Road 10. The report was forwarded to the Minnesota State Patrol who referred it to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Several calls and emails to DNR wildlife managers were not returned Friday.

The DNR website includes information on living with bears and living with wildlife.

"If you live in Minnesota, you live in bear country," reads the DNR website.

Black bears are naturally cautious animals that avoid human contact for their safety, but conflicts between people and bears can arise. Prevent conflict and stay safe by reducing the availability of bear attractants. Once a bear finds a food source, it will return repeatedly, according to the DNR.

For more information call the DNR at 888-646-6367. Visit
https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/livingwith_wildlife/bears/index/html.