

Why protection of radio-collared bears is needed now

1. The DNR asking hunters not to shoot radio-collared bears has not worked. Last year, 11 (23%) of 48 radio-collared bears were shot. That percentage is no different from the portion of bears that hunters kill in the overall population.
2. Responsible hunters say shooting radio-collared bears should be illegal. They say it is unfair to be asked to pass up a radio-collared trophy only to have the next hunter legally shoot it and be lauded because he turned the collar in.
3. The dozen radio-collared bears near Ely and the 2-3 dozen in the DNR's studies are a tiny fraction of the 20,000 bears in Minnesota.
4. Minnesota's bear studies are now about how bears live—not how they die. Radio-collared bears with data histories are too valuable to science to be shot like any other bear.
5. In the trust-based studies around Ely, the loss of any radio-collared bear in the single bear clan being studied is a huge setback. A collar cannot simply be placed on another bear. This study is providing more data on black bear behavior, ecology, social organization, language, and bear-human relations than any bear study ever has. The data histories on the older bears in that study make them irreplaceable in my lifetime. The data from these bears becomes more valuable each year.
6. The DNR study includes the oldest black bear on record—37 years old and counting.
7. The dozen radio-collared bears around Ely are part of the biggest *public* bear education program ever done. Through social networking, these bears have acquired a following of over a quarter million (over 128 thousand on Facebook alone) that follow them on Den Cams and daily research updates on bear.org.
8. The dozen radio-collared bears around Ely are part of the biggest *classroom* bear education program ever done. Over 500 schools follow these bears daily in their classrooms. Teachers and students watch the live Den Cam and read the daily research updates on bear.org. Individual radio-collared bears are part of their science, reading, and math classes along with the lesson plans, traveling Black Bear Boxes, and other educational materials now available on bear.org (click on Education).
9. The dozen radio-collared bears around Ely have generated a huge amount of good will. Their quarter million followers want to help the area where “their” bears live. They have donated thousands to the Ely Area Food Shelf, voted Ely the “Coolest small town in America,” produced \$20,000 for Ely's Schools, produced \$100,000 for Bear Head State Park as well as \$600,000 to reduce debt for Ely's North American Bear Center.
10. The radio-collared bears around Ely boost Minnesota tourism.
 - A. The annual Lilypad Picnic alone draws hundreds of tourists to Ely for extended vacations.
 - B. Thousands come to Ely specifically to see the North American Bear Center where the radio-collared bears are the basis for most of the exhibits and keeping those exhibits updated. Attendance in 2010 was 33,843.
 - C. The radio-collared bears are the subjects of a continuing series of TV documentaries, each with audiences of over a hundred million. These documentaries (4 in the last two years) advertise the area in a way that could not be bought.
11. In summary, Minnesota's radio-collared bears have become too valuable to science, education, tourism, and regional economics to be killed like any other bears. This feeling is supported by the Ely City Council, 68 of 70 Ely business owners, the Ely Chamber of Commerce, nearly 4,000 petitioners, 679 of 685 people who wrote letters to Governor Pawlenty, ~800 of ~900 people who responded to the Duluth News Tribune's opinion poll, etc.

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