

Alaska Colonists Warned Against Vicious Brownies

Biggest, Meanest Bear Living, Oldtimer Tells Hunters of Matanuska

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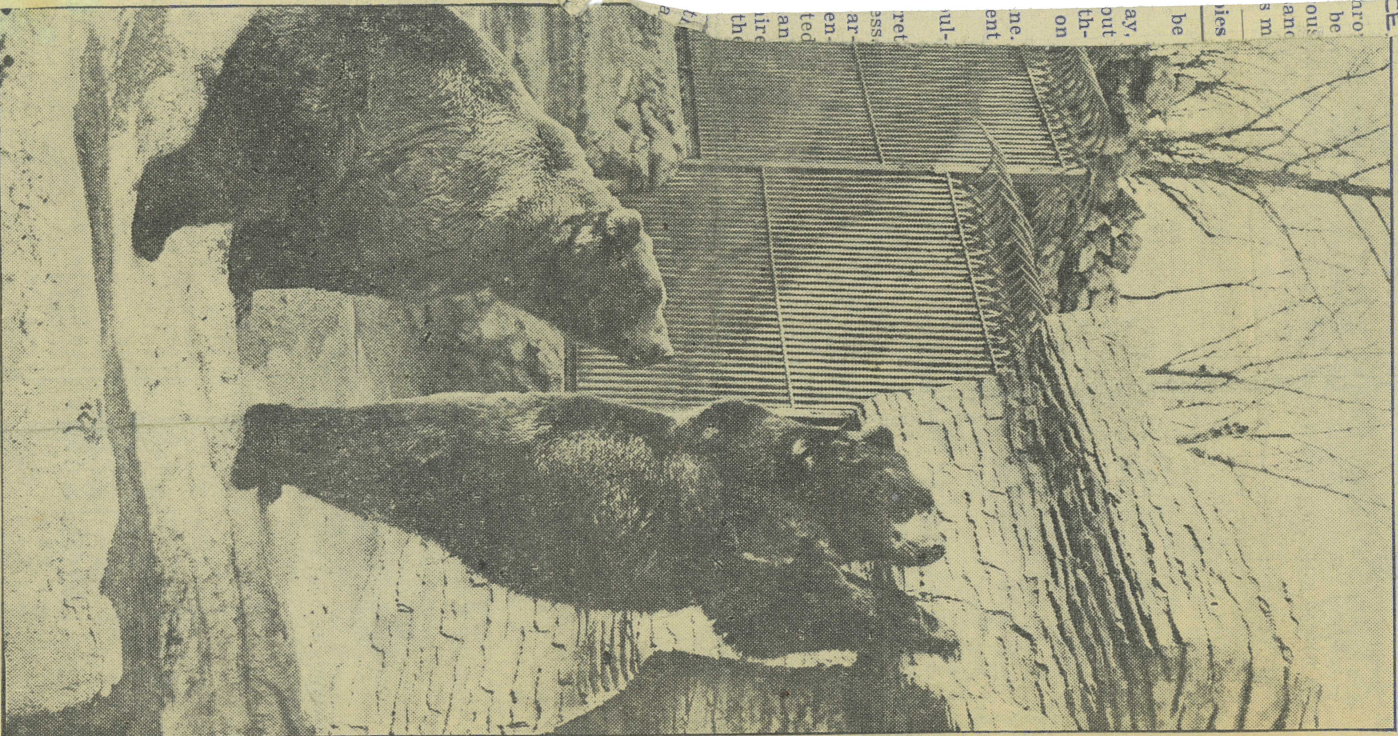
OF THE JOURNAL STAFF

PALMER, Alaska—(By Mail)—Bears 14 feet from nose to tail tip roam the southeast edge of this valley. Some Matanuska colonists are

Doll Bed Is Traced
to Lincoln's Father
Ashland, Ky.—(U.P.)—A doll bed, said to be an example of the handcraft of Abraham Lincoln's father, is in possession of Mrs. C. L. Jones, of

the bed, presumed to have been made about 1818, by Thomas Lincoln, a child of whom he was fond, is now popular.

Beware of Big Brown Bruin



THE biggest, meanest, toughest bear on earth is the Kodiak or Alaska brown bear, naturalists say, and colonists of the Matanuska valley have been warned against them by W. W. Wade, an oldtimer of the district. He says the brownies are thick in the Chugach mountains, not far from the valley. This picture of two of the huge brown bears was made at the Washington park zoo. One is showing how far he can reach. Many of them measure 14 feet from nose tip to tail tip, and they are not afraid of anything living.

(Journal Staff Photo)

talking about going after them. The colonists better watch out, oldtimers warn. Brown bears fear no man.

"There's plenty of those big fellows over in the Chugach mountains," says old W. W. Wade, who talks easily through his missing teeth. "There's fellows there can stand on their back legs and hick the top of a railroad crossing danger sign."

Wade has been in the valley 15 years. He knows its brown bear and its black bear, its rabbits and beaver and ptarmigan and spruce hens. He knows its rainbow trout and its salmon, too.

'It's You or the Bear'

"You can go after the brownies, mister, but not me," he warns. "They ain't afraid of nobody. They won't give the trail to anything. When you get a brownie mad, it's you or the brownie—and you better kill him quick or it's you.

"There's a lot of guys claim the best place to shoot a brownie is across the back. Then he can't 'rare' up on his hind legs and come at you. Some guys say, 'Shoot 'em in the heart,' but some guys do and the old brownie gets them just like they got him. I've heard tell of brownies swimming a river with a bullet in their heart. Jes, they get mad!

"Once you wound 'em they wheel right on you and just about nothing can stop 'em. You can keep punning the heavy lead at a brownie that's been hit and he just keeps a coming! When he gets within about 15 feet he stands up on his hind legs and shakes his hips. Then is when

you better kill him dead. One more step and he smacks you down.

"Mister, I tell you them devils is dangerous—just as big and just as mean as a Kodiak. Fact is, they're just the same animal as the Kodiak, only they got over to the mainland and all us hunters calls 'em brownies. Somebody ought t' tell these cocky colonists to practise on black bear before they go back there in the Chugach range where the brown bear rules."

Woman Hid in Ditch

Many colonists have plenty of black bears right on their own hand. In some places they're so thick they are a nuisance. They break into cached food supplies, lick the grease off tools and occasionally attack livestock. They have scared the wits out of some of the new settlers. One fellow was riding horseback out toward the Matanuska river. A

bear ran into the trail. "Whoa!" cried the rider. The horse didn't need instructions. Instead it swung so sharply that it hurled rider and saddle to the ground. Mrs. Bernard Gulberg saw a bear near her place when returning home from a berry picking jaunt. She threw herself into a ditch and lay there trembling until the bear sauntered off in the bushes.

A construction crew truck driver came upon a bear on a highway. The bear wouldn't give room to pass, so he nudged it in the rear with his front bumper. Wham! Mr. Bear twisted around and clawed a fender. Then he shook his head and looked at the driver. That's when the truck made tracks!

Almost every colonist has encountered or sighted a black bear. They're not supposed to be vicious, but the newcomers have learned to watch out when cubs are around. Russell

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 3, COLUMN 8)

Brown Bruin Meanest Bear

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11)

Pakonen, who with Harry Nichols killed a bear from his front porch, thinks all of them are bad actors. He carries a revolver and a big bolt of shells every time he goes into his woods.

Hunt in "Self-Defense"

"I won't be satisfied till I've killed every bear on my 40," he says resolutely.

"The black bears are thicker this year than they've been for years," Wade explains. "Colonists have been seeing them when they come down out of the hills to fish in the creeks."

According to Alaska game laws, colonists are not allowed to shoot any game during their first year here without a non-resident license costing \$50. However, the game officials quietly pass the word around that nobody in Alaska ever got fined for shooting a bear "in self-defense," and it's pretty hard for the bear to deny any allegations made against him.

Many colonists have also seen moose, and John Wilding had a run-in with two of them. Wilding is a lone hunter. He likes to take a blanket, a little food and a rifle and spend three or four days exploring game country.

"One day I found a moose calf and thought I'd catch it and carry it home," Wilding said. "Just then the old mother moose came from somewhere and took after me. I ducked behind a tree.

"Tread" by Moose

"I figured I could keep running around that tree faster than she could. She stood on the other side and snorted. She pawed in the ground and threw dirt over her head like a bull does. Then the old bull moose came and I thought they'd come after me from both sides.

"I took a bead right between the eyes of the cow and I was thinking, 'Gee, but it would be easy to get a winter supply of meat. But I didn't had a light rifle then and I didn't shoot. When the old bull walked away without getting mad, the cow and calf did, too, and I beat it out of there."

There are no fishing laws in Alaska except for commercial fishermen and those regulating the use of nets. Trout are abundant. In fact, in some areas there is a bounty on the Dolly Varden trout, which eats the eggs and the young of the commercially valuable salmon.

Catch Spruce Hens by Hand

Parmigan and spruce hens are much more numerous than barnyard chickens. Spruce hens are aptly nicknamed "fool's hens," for they haven't sense enough to fly out of danger. They squat in dusty roads and laze in the sun. A few men have rushed up on them and captured them with their hands. Also, some colonists have shot them out of season. That's why a game warden has made several visits to the colony.

"Every hen you shoot when they've got chicks means about nine less in the fall," the warden complains. "Alaska's got all kinds of goats and mountain sheep and game now, but if you fellows poach, it won't have in 10 years around here. Lay off and we'll get along fine, and so will the game."

Most of the colonists say he's got a sensible slant on things. But now and then guns still bark in the woods—and all these boys aren't target shooters.