

Tahoe man kills 500 lb. bear in self-defense

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TAHOE CITY — Wildlife officials confirmed this week that a Lake Tahoe man was legally acting in self defense when he used a shotgun to kill a 500-pound bear after the bruin allegedly attacked him 10 days ago inside his Lake Forest restaurant.

On the morning of Friday, Nov. 20, at 8 a.m., William Hunter, co-owner of Bacchi's Inn Restaurant, encountered the large bruin sleeping on the floor of the dining room.

H.H. Hunter, William's wife and restaurant co-owner, said the bear had repeatedly broken into the restaurant, causing more than \$800 damage in broken windows over the course of the previous week.

H.H. Hunter said it was lucky her husband had a loaded shotgun he kept at the store due to the recent break-ins. When her husband shouted at the bear to ward him off the premises, the bear allegedly became aggressive and charged William, who was forced to discharge his weapon, killing the bruin.

"He so hated to kill the bear," said H.H. Hunter. "It was a case of either him or the bear."

Jason Holley, wildlife biologist supervisor for the North Central Region for the California Department of Fish and Game, confirmed the Hunters were well within their legal rights when shooting the bear.

"The business owner was defending himself," said Holley. "I'm sure seeing an angry 500-pound wild animal was an intimidating sight."

Holley said the Hunters had been in discussions with the agency prior to the final break-in and were seeking help with mitigation measures, such as installing electric bear wires around the windows and doors of the property.

Holley said the investigating officer reported nothing improper about the restaurant's trash storage. H.H. said the restaurant has been in her family for 78 years.

"For the most part, securing trash will prevent bears from breaking in, but sometimes there is nothing you can do," Holley said.

Despite the life or death scenario, Hunter regrets the bear had to be killed.

"Bears are such magnificent animals," she said.

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