

Bear gets into car for peanut butter and jelly sandwich, honks horn, goes on short joyride

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This photo provided by Ben Story shows a bear inside Story's car early morning on Friday, July 23, 2010, in Larkspur, Colorado. (AP Photo/Ben Story) (Ben Story)



Ralph Story doesn't hold anything against bears, even though one broke into his car early Friday morning in Larkspur, Colorado and totaled it.

"He was just looking for something to eat; that's what bears do," Story said.

"Anyone who lives out here knows there's going to be wildlife here. We learn to live with it."

His 17-year-old son Ben, who usually drives the car, had left a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and a deodorant in the car, which is probably what attracted the bear, according to officials who talked to Story.

Early in the morning a black bear opened an unlocked car door. After he got in, the door closed behind him, Story said.

The Storys believe that as the bear shuffled around the car looking for a way out, he bumped into the gear shift and put the automatic transmission into neutral, sending the car rolling 125 feet back down a hill. It hit a few trees before coming to a stop in some brush.

The 2008 Toyota Corolla is being called a total loss, Story said. The interior is ripped up, the dashboard was torn out, the windshield is broken, and the airbags went off, he said.

"It was a big bear, full grown. It took up both front seats in the car," Story said.

The insurance company will cover the damage.

The bear's joy ride started at approximately 2:30 a.m., when Story's neighbors began hearing strange noises from the home.

After hearing honking from a car for about 45 minutes, a neighbor decided to go see what the noise was.

"She thought we weren't here so she figured our teens were the ones making the racket," Story said.

As she got close she noticed something seemingly violent happening in a car, so she called the Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Story said.

A sergent and two deputies responded to the call that was supposed to be a check on a suspicious vehicle.

"The deputies were really surprised, they had thought it was maybe kids," said Michelle Rademacher, a spokeswoman for the sheriff's office.

"We got the call at about 4:15 a.m., it was one of those 'oh my God' calls," Story said.

Of the five family members in the house, only Story's wife Stacey, had heard some noises, but had ignored them, not knowing they were coming from their own car.

The bear was freed at about 5 a.m. when deputies used a long rope to open the car from a distance, allowing the bear to run off.

Story said the adventure will be a fond memory, and he plans to blow up and frame one of the pictures taken Friday morning.

"When you have teenage kids, it's kind of hard to get your whole family together," Story said. "Last night we were all out there laughing."

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