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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Biologist Captures Stunning New Black Bear Footage at Sugarloaf Ridge State Park

Aug. 16, 2015 (Sonoma, CA) – Amazing new video footage of a large black bear in Sugarloaf Ridge State Park has ecologists wondering if the animals have moved back into Sonoma Valley for good – and underscores the crucial role our park system plays in supporting California wildlife.

“If this doesn’t show the importance of Sugarloaf as part of a wildlife corridor, then I don’t know what does,” said California State Parks biologist Bill Miller, whose motion-activated video camera captured footage of the wandering bear just after 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 2.

Miller and other biologists have known for years that Sugarloaf and the protected areas surrounding it, such as Annadel State Park and Hood Mountain Regional Park, are significant enough to support a great diversity of native plants and animals, including bears. Sugarloaf alone contains more than 40 rare species.

Black bears have always inhabited the large wooded regions north of Sonoma County, but for decades Sonoma Valley has been the far southern edge of their range. Sightings have occurred here on occasion – such as that of a younger bear spotted in Sugarloaf three years ago – but lately they seem to be more and more frequent. In fact, late last year Miller’s camera caught fleeting nighttime images of a black bear moving through the park. It’s not known if the more recent images are of the same bear.

“We’re excited by these bear sightings, because they show how rich and diverse Sugarloaf really is,” said Richard Dale, executive director of Sonoma Ecology Center, which manages Sugarloaf Ridge State Park through a consortium of nonprofits (“Team Sugarloaf”) in partnership with California State Parks. “All of us at Team Sugarloaf, and our partners at State Parks, are working to make these lands fully supportive of both humans and wildlife – and it looks like that goal is being met.”

The new video footage can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQMWRImh4fc>. A screenshot of the video has been included below.

Black bears are generally shy and are not dangerous to humans. However, it is always best to keep food away and out of the reach of bears. For more information visit: <https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Keep-Me-Wild/Bear>.

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About California State Parks

The mission of California State Parks is to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high quality outdoor recreation. Learn more at www.parks.ca.gov.

About Sonoma Ecology Center

Sonoma Ecology Center was established in 1990 with a mission to work with our community to enhance and sustain ecological health in Sonoma Valley through science-based research, restoration and education. Its programs and initiatives – which include the management of Sugarloaf Ridge State Park – increase appreciation and stewardship of our natural heritage and create measurable benefits in the areas of water, resources, biodiversity, energy and land use. More information about Sonoma Ecology Center can be found at www.sonomaecologycenter.org.



Screenshot of video taken by Bill Miller, courtesy California State Parks