

Russian Ski Resort Shuts Runs After Bears Spotted on Slopes

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A ski resort was forced to close three of its runs after several bears were spotted wandering on its slopes.

A ski resort on Sakhalin Island in far eastern Russia was forced to close three of its runs over the weekend after several bears were spotted wandering on its slopes, a news report said Monday.

Vacationers said Sunday that they saw a female bear and her cubs wandering on one of the southern slopes of the Gorny Vozdukh (Mountain Air) resort on Sakhalin Island, local news site SakhalinMedia.ru reported.

The resort's safety officers conducted checks and decided to close three runs as a precaution after finding animal tracks in the snow, the report said. The resort was operating as normal on Monday, though a local gamesman was brought in to provide further safety recommendations, the report added.

In what appeared to be a separate incident, a group of people came across a mother bear and two cubs while out riding snowmobiles in Sakhalin Island's southern Sokol district on Sunday, ASTV.ru reported. The group did not approach the animals, which did not show any aggression toward them.

A spokesman for the regional Ministry of Forestry and Hunting tied the sightings to the unusually warm weather on Sakhalin this spring, which has brought local bears out of hibernation earlier than usual.

"Usually the bears in southern Sakhalin wake up at the end of April. This year, due to the abnormally warm weather, they have woken up a month earlier," the spokesman said, according to the Interfax news agency.

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