

WOMAN RESCUES 5-YEAR-OLD SON FROM MOUNTAIN LION'S JAWS

DENVER: Summoned by the sound of screams, a Colorado woman raced to her front yard to find a terrifying sight: A mountain lion was hunched over her 5-year-old son, biting him.

The woman charged the animal, yanked away one of its paws and discovered her son's whole head was in its mouth. She didn't back down. "She was able to pry the cat's jaws open," Pitkin County Sheriff's Deputy Michael Buglione said. "She's a hero." The boy suffered deep cuts to his head, face and neck and was flown to a Denver hospital. His mother, who also was scratched and bitten, is credited with saving his life.

The ordeal started Friday evening when the 5-year-old and his older brother were playing outside their home near the resort town of Aspen,

Buglione said. When the woman ran outside, she found the lion crouched over her younger son, who was struggling to get free. "The boy was completely under the cat," Buglione told The Aspen Times.

The mother pried open the lion's mouth with her hands, scooped up the child and ran away, the deputy said. The boy's father had just returned from a run when the attack occurred. He jumped in the car with his wife and son and called 911 as they sped to the Aspen hospital.

From there, the child was flown to Children's Hospital in Denver in fair condition. On Saturday, a hospital spokeswoman told the Times she was not authorized to release any details on his condition. The mother suffered bite marks on her hand and

scratches on her leg, authorities said. She was treated and released. The family members' names were not released.

The mountain lion was estimated to be about 2 years old and not fully grown. "It wasn't a big cat," Buglione said. "Had it been a 110-pound lion - which I've seen around here - this would have been a much different story." Wildlife officials killed two mountain lions in the area within several hours of the attack. Both were being examined to determine if they were hungry, diseased or just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Colorado is home to up to 4,500 mountain lions, and they sometimes wander into urban areas looking for food, according to state wildlife officials. Since 1990, mountain lions have killed

three people and injured 18 in the state. "They're wild animals. They find habitat where they can forage for food," Colorado Parks and Wildlife spokesman Matt Robbins said. "When you have bunnies, you're likely to find foxes or coyotes. If you have deer, there is a good chance you'll find mountain lions."

The last known lion attack on a human in Colorado occurred in July 2015, wildlife officials said. A young lion attacked a man as he fished north of Dotsero, about 60 miles from where Friday's attack occurred. The man suffered scratches and bites on his back and was treated at a local clinic and released. The lion in that incident, described as a small, yearling male, was tracked and killed. — AP

WELL-TIMED EXERCISE MIGHT IMPROVE LEARNING

NEW YORK: Aerobic exercise four hours after a memorization task, but not exercise right afterwards, was linked to improved recall in a series of Dutch experiments.

Newly-learned information turns into long-term knowledge through a process of stabilization and integration of memories, the study team writes in *Current Biology*. This requires certain brain chemicals that are also released during physical exercise, including dopamine, norepinephrine and a growth factor called BDNF, they explain.

"The brain processes new memories for a while after learning. Physical exercise is able to improve these post-learning processes," senior author Guillen Fernandez, director of the Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition, and Behavior in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, told Reuters Health by email.

To explore when exercise would most improve learning, researchers recruited 72 participants and tasked them with learning to match a series of 90 locations with pictures over a 40-minute period.

The participants were split into three groups: one group exercised immediately after learning, one group exercised four hours later and one group did not exercise at all. The exercise groups did interval training for 35 minutes on a stationary bike, including spurts at maximum intensity.

Two days later, the participants returned to the lab to test how much of what they'd memorized they could recall. During the recall test, the each subject was in a MRI scanner so researchers could monitor activity in different areas of the brain.

The group that had exercised four hours after learning remembered significantly more information on the follow-up test, while the immediate-exercise group did no better than the group that did not exercise.

Activity in the hippocampus, a part of the brain associated with forming memories, was very similar among people in the delayed-exercise group during the recall task, but less consistent in the other participants, the researchers note.



BRONX: People work out in an outdoor exercise area at Macombs Dam Park. — AFP

They speculate that the consistency of activation in the hippocampus in the delayed-exercise group could indicate greater "efficiency or coherence" in the way the brain pulls up the memory and "might relate to differences in memory strength."

While strong memories will be remembered no matter what, Fernandez said, weaker memories that would normally be forgotten within a day may last longer if the brain releases more dopamine and norepinephrine.

People looking to improve their learning should perform fairly intense exercise to make sure that enough of the critical brain chemicals are released, he said, but cautioned against taking this too far. "Very intensive exercise might also have negative effects."

The authors note that more research is needed to determine if exercise will help memories last beyond the two-day period they studied.

They add that the type of memory may be important, and that procedural or "body" memo-

ry of activities like tying a shoe may be better helped by immediate exercise than other kinds of memories.

Having a regular exercise routine may be helpful as well said Marc Roig, an assistant professor at McGill University in Montreal who studies the effect of cardiovascular exercise on memory. Several weeks of cardio exercise, such as jogging, can make the hippocampus larger and improve people's memory, he told Reuters Health.

The type of exercise may not be important, though, added Roig, who was not involved in the new study. "Most studies have looked into aerobic exercise but recent data shows that resistance training and high intensity interval training may also be beneficial." "When thinking about how to maximize your training regimen to improve/maintain memory do not ask yourself only what type of exercise, intensity or frequency is the best. Ask yourself when to train to achieve the best results," Roig said. — Reuters

LARGE ALLIGATOR CAPTURED ON GEORGIA COAST; BEACHES REOPENED

ATLANTA: Authorities have reopened beaches along the Georgia coast after a large alligator spotted in the Atlantic Ocean was captured at a popular tourist spot near Savannah.

The gator, estimated to be 8 to 10 feet long, was caught about 2:30 p.m. Friday and relocated to the Savannah River, Tybee Island Fire Chief Ashley Fields said. Lifeguards on personal watercrafts ran patterns around the gator, pushing him toward the shore, before he was eventually reeled in as about 100 onlookers cheered, Fields said.

"It was a relief for everybody," he said by phone. "People were very happy to get back in the water." The gator was spotted early Friday morning in the water off the beaches on the south end of Tybee Island. Fields said the gator stayed about 20 to 30 feet away from the beach. All beaches were then closed but have now been reopened.

An alligator swimming in the ocean off Tybee Island "is a very rare occurrence," Fields said, adding that he's talked to people who have been around the island for 30 to 40 years who had never seen one off Tybee's beach. "He might have come out of the Savannah River channel is the only thing I could figure, but I wouldn't bet money on that," Fields said.

Though rare, alligator sightings in the ocean have led to beaches being closed elsewhere in the Southeast, so it's not unprecedented to find one in the Atlantic, Tybee Island Mayor Jason Buelterman said. Gators in the South are typically found in freshwater such as ponds, rivers, streams and swamps, but they're able to swim through saltwater in the ocean to get from one place to another, the mayor said.

There are an estimated 200,000 alligators in Georgia, according to the state Department of Natural Resources. They're typically found south of what's known as the "fall line" - a line that connects the cities of Columbus, Macon and Augusta.

In Florida, beaches at Walt Disney World resorts remained closed Friday after an alligator killed a 2-year-old Nebraska boy after dragging him from shallow water in a lake at a Disney hotel Tuesday.

"Even if Disney World wouldn't have happened, we still would have closed the beach just to be safe and take care of people," Fields said. Tybee Island, once known as Savannah Beach, is a popular tourist destination for people from across the nation. With about 3,000 full-time residents, its population swells to several times that number during weekends in the summer season, Buelterman said. — AP

JUDGE ORDERS NEW HOMES FOR ENDANGERED MANCHESTER ZOO ANIMALS

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA: A federal judge has ordered endangered lemur and tigers housed at a private northeast Iowa zoo to be moved within 30 days.

The order signed Friday by Chief Magistrate Judge Jon Stuart Scoles directs owners of Cricket Hollow Zoo near Manchester to move its lemurs to Special Memories Zoo in Hortonville, Wisconsin, and its tigers to the Exotic Feline Rescue Center in Center Point, Indiana.

The decision stems from a 2014 lawsuit filed by the Animal Legal Defense Fund, which alleged the zoo maintained deplorable living conditions. The fund's executive director, Stephen Wells, said he's disappointed about the decision. The group had recommended other locations for the animals. Wells said the group is evaluating legal options. Cricket Hollow Zoo owners Pamela and Tom Sellner didn't immediately respond to a message. — AP



Ottawa: Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau receives a standing ovation while speaking during the Liberal caucus holiday party. — AFP

AFTER WRANGLING, CANADA PARLIAMENT ADOPTS LAW ON ASSISTED DEATH

TORONTO: Canada's Parliament on Friday adopted a law allowing medically-assisted death for the terminally ill, brushing aside critics who wanted the legislation to cover people with degenerative diseases.

After weeks of political wrangling, the upper Senate chamber voted in favor of a law which makes Canada one of the few nations where doctors can legally help sick people die. Some Senators complained the scope of the law - initially passed by the House of Commons elected chamber - was too narrow and should not be restricted to those facing imminent death.

The law, drafted after Canada's Supreme Court last year overturned a ban on physician-assisted suicide, must

receive formal approval from Governor General David Johnston, the acting head of state. That process is a formality.

The Supreme Court ruling covered willing adults facing intolerable physical or psychological suffering from a severe and incurable medical condition. The Liberal government, though, narrowed the scope of the legislation to cover only those people whose death was reasonably foreseeable.

Critics said this would condemn people with degenerative conditions like multiple sclerosis to unbearable suffering. Government officials say the new law is a first attempt to address a highly sensitive and controversial topic and could be broadened in years to come. — Reuters

LIFTING US CURBS ON GAY BLOOD DONORS SEEN YEARS AWAY

ORLANDO: US health regulators are under increasing pressure to remove restrictions keeping most gay and bisexual men from donating blood, but experts say any change would require years of research to guarantee the safety of the blood supply.

The US Food and Drug Administration enacted a lifetime ban for gay and bisexual men in the 1980s to protect against transmitting the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS. The agency reduced the ban in December to a 12-month wait since a man's last sexual encounter with another man.

Following Sunday's mass shooting at a gay nightclub in Orlando, more than a dozen Democratic Party lawmakers called on the FDA to move toward lifting the ban altogether. They argued that it wrongly discriminates on the basis of sexual orientation, rather than determining whether a donor's actual behavior puts them at risk of HIV.

Their call came after members of the gay community tried to donate blood in the aftermath of the Orlando attack but were turned away based on their recent sexual history. "We're still in an inherently contradictory posture of straight men who are having unsafe sex with multiple partners being allowed to give blood. A gay man in a 30-year monogamous relationship, who practices safe sex, is not," Representative Mike Quigley, an Illinois Democrat who serves as vice chair of the congressional LGBT Equality Caucus, told Reuters.

The FDA maintains there is not enough scientific evidence to remove the restrictions. "We empathize with those who might wish to donate, but reiterate that at this time no one who needs blood is doing without it," spokeswoman Tara Goodin said in a statement. "That being said, the FDA is committed to continuing to reevaluate its blood donor deferral policies as new scientific information becomes available."

Blood supply experts say the FDA will need to determine whether the move to a one-year waiting period for gay and bisexual men made the blood supply less, more or just as safe.

That effort will take several years, and only then would the agency be able to consider relaxing its restrictions further, said Brian Custer, who has led a number of studies on the nation's blood supply and is associate director of the Blood Systems Research Institute (BSRI) in San Francisco.

Removing the waiting period altogether

would also likely require a large-scale study that tested blood samples of people who would be banned under current criteria, said Dr. Michael Busch, a co-director of BSRI. Busch helped discover in the 1980s that HIV could be transmitted through blood transfusions. "Those are difficult to design and execute," he said.

Existing risk

HIV disproportionately affects gay and bisexual men. While only about 4 percent of US men have sex with other men, they represent about two-thirds of the country's new infections, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

All blood donated in the United States is screened for HIV, as well as other transmissible diseases such as Hepatitis C and syphilis. Blood supply experts note that such testing cannot detect HIV within the earliest window of exposure, nine to 14 days.

In the past 12 years, as many as six people have been infected with HIV through blood transfusion in the United States, according to Dr. Richard Benjamin, a former chief med-

ical officer of the American Red Cross. "That risk is always going to be there. People who donate blood within two weeks of exposure always will be missed by testing," said Benjamin, now an executive at Cerus Corp, whose technology kills pathogens in blood plasma and blood platelets.

One study by FDA researchers published in January suggested that dropping all donor restrictions on men who have sex with men would result in 31 more units of HIV-infected blood being missed by screening tests and entering the blood supply each year. Nearly 16 million blood donations are collected in the United States each year, according to the American Red Cross.

Groups representing the nation's largest blood centers, including the American Red Cross and America's Blood Centers, said they support the FDA's current rules, which are in line with policies in the UK, France, Australia and the Netherlands.

"Policy at this level moves at a slower pace than people would prefer, but it is years, not decades away," said Custer, one of the blood supply experts, referring to the FDA. — Reuters



ORLANDO: Hundreds of community members line up outside a clinic to donate blood after an early morning shooting attack at a gay nightclub. — AFP

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS THREATEN TO SUE SC, FEDS OVER SEAWALLS

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA: Two environmental groups are threatening to sue South Carolina and the federal government if they don't protect sea turtles from new hard plastic seawalls first installed on beaches a few years ago.

The State newspaper reports that the state Sierra Club and Wildlife Federation sent a notice giving the government 60 days to act. The state Department of Health and

Environmental Control says it is investigating a picture of turtle tracks leading to a wall and other reports the seawalls are blocking turtle nests.

Lawmakers allowed the seawalls as part of an experiment to see if officials could stop erosion and protect turtles. Isle of Palms Republican Sen. Chip Campsen says the walls were put in heavily eroded areas where the sand is too packed for sea turtle nests. — AP