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## NEWSLETTER

Featuring updates on grizzly bear conservation activities,  
and the latest *Grizzly Times* Blog  
from [Louisa Willcox and David Mattson, PhD.](#)  
Co-Founders of *Grizzly Times*.

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June 8, 2020

***Dear Friend of the Grizzly,***

Yellowstone's summer is in full swing and the parks are open again. The emergence of Grand Teton's grizzly bear matriarch 399 with quadruplets gives us much to celebrate and is the focus of Louisa's blog.

**NEW BLOG:**

**C**

By Louisa Willcox

Grizzly 399's feat is remarkable because she is an ancient bear and quadruplets among Yellowstone grizzlies are super rare. In this blog, Louisa explores the magic of an incredible grizzly bear mom and the tragic deaths of four of her previous offspring that illuminate some of the biggest threats to grizzlies in the Yellowstone ecosystem: poaching, cars, livestock-related conflicts, and managers' gaffes.

She concludes: *"Just as Grizzly 399 is busy teaching her four little ones how to navigate the toposide world, she has much to teach us – about tolerance, equanimity and being a good mom. Watching this Olympian bear mother and her family graze sedges or nap in the shade of cottonwoods – magical in the ordinariness of it all – we can feel reconnected with the natural world and ourselves.*

*"Grizzly 399 reminds us that a reciprocal relationship with nature – even with a large carnivore – is still possible. In making the risky choice to trust us with her fate and those of her cubs, she is also challenging us to return the favor with a spirit of generosity. The lives and deaths of Grizzly 399's clan remind us too how far we have to go to reform the institutions that govern their fate – and that of hundreds of grizzlies that define the wild heart of the Northern Rockies."*

Click on the photo below to read the blog:



*Grizzly 399 and her four cubs, photo by Steve Franklin*

Must Watch Videos of 399 and her Four Cubs:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUa6Yz5mB5Q>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1SosmFmdbko>

Also, we have compiled a huge amount of information on 399 and her clan here: <https://www.grizzlytimes.org/399-s-story>

**David Mattson Column in the Missoulian:  
*Please, FWP, No More Just So Stories***



*David and his shadow Tashi*

In a recent opinion piece published in the Missoulian, David rebuts the “just so” stories deployed by officials in Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) to justify dismissing mounting death rates of grizzlies in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE). David challenges managers’ failure to monitor any aspect of grizzly bear habitat or diet, and an approach to managing mortality that is “tantamount to driving with your eyes fixed on an out-of-focus rearview mirror.”

He offers an alternative explanation for what we're seeing: *"There is good reason to think that habitat productivity has declined in portions of the population's core, partly because of escalating wildfires and the transient unproductive conditions that follow. We also lost whitebark pine to white pine blister rust..."*

*"Bears have plausibly spread out in search of alternative foods, especially east from the Rocky Mountain Front. And the spread of bears onto the plains has predictably been accelerated by the attenuation of habitats along riparian corridors. Changes in foods and habitats are almost certainly driving increased conflicts and sightings every bit as much as are increasing bear numbers."*

[https://missoulian.com/opinion/columnists/please-fwp-no-more-just-so-stories/article\\_5dff6050-4532-558b-b607-1434dc1ef386.html](https://missoulian.com/opinion/columnists/please-fwp-no-more-just-so-stories/article_5dff6050-4532-558b-b607-1434dc1ef386.html)

**Louisa Willcox Column in Idaho State Journal:  
*Grizzly Deaths: Time to Admit to Yellowstone's Killing Crisis***

In a recent column in the Idaho State Journal, Louisa highlights the excessive and unsustainable killing of Yellowstone grizzlies. She notes that from 2015 through 2018, grizzly bear deaths shattered previous records – in a population that has been flatlined for nearly 20 years. In each of these four years, bear deaths exceeded the government's thresholds for allowable mortality – but the government has not even admitted to a problem.

She concludes: *"As bear deaths mount, the population is at a tipping point. Continued climate warming will produce additional unwelcomed changes, including loss of army cutworm moths, another staple of Yellowstone grizzlies that has, for now, picked up some of the slack left by dead whitebark pine..."*

*"More needs to be done by state and federal agencies outside national park boundaries to ensure that grizzlies and people can peacefully coexist in a rapidly changing world. Admitting that too many bears are dying from human causes is the first step."*

[https://www.idahostatejournal.com/opinion/columns/grizzly-deaths-time-to-admit-to-yellowstone-s-killing-crisis/article\\_ae98b222-40bd-55b0-be02-9c0cf461ee51.html](https://www.idahostatejournal.com/opinion/columns/grizzly-deaths-time-to-admit-to-yellowstone-s-killing-crisis/article_ae98b222-40bd-55b0-be02-9c0cf461ee51.html)

**Now You Can Find All *Grizzly Times* Reports and Videos in One Place**



We finally assembled all the *Grizzly Times* reports and videos in one place.  
(Thank you David!)

It is a trove of interesting information and insights about grizzlies and conservation. Hope you enjoy!

Grizzly Times Reports: <https://www.grizzlytimes.org/grizzly-times-reports>

Grizzly Times Videos: <https://www.grizzlytimes.org/grizzly-times-videos>

## IN THE NEWS:

### 15 Grizzlies Have Been Killed in Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem

So far, 15 grizzlies have been killed in the NCDE. This is an extraordinarily high number of deaths – more than double the average number of deaths for this time of year. This comes after two back-to-back years of record-breaking grizzly mortality in the ecosystem. This year is on course to be another record shattering year.

Recently one female appears to have been poached on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, and two grizzlies were killed by black bear hunters, supposedly in cases where the hunter misidentified his target. Other grizzlies were killed after becoming conditioned to eating unsecured garbage or in conflicts with ranchers.

It should be noted that neither the state of Montana nor the Fish and Wildlife Service maintains an up-to-date publicly-available database on grizzly bear deaths as is done in Greater Yellowstone by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team. This means that the only way to keep up with bear deaths is from newspaper clips. This approach highlights the government's disregard for grizzly bear deaths – indeed, grizzlies are seen to be disposable, as David points out in his Missoulian column. And the lack of transparency on the part of Montana in a matter that lies at the heart of grizzly bear recovery is profoundly disturbing, and calls into question the readiness of this state to take on full responsibility for grizzly bear management.

- <https://www.kpax.com/news/montana-news/reward-offered-for-info-about-the-illegal-shooting-of-a-mt-grizzly-bear>
- <https://www.mtpr.org/post/three-grizzlies-killed-nw-montana-last-week>
- <https://www.mtpr.org/post/wildlife-officials-discuss-covid-19s-impact-grizzly-bears>

## Two Tales of Orphan Grizzly Cubs



*Rocky Mountain Front, Montana & Crowsnest orphans (Alberta)*

News in Alberta and Montana has recently featured the tragic plight of two sets of orphan grizzly bear cubs. The Alberta cubs were orphaned when their mom was shot by a black bear hunter last month. In Montana, a hiker on the Rocky Mountain Front who was not carrying bear spray recently shot the mom when she acted defensively to protect her cubs. The injured mom was killed by state officials.

The three Montana cubs had been at a wildlife facility and are now on their way to Bearizona Wildlife Park, located in Williams, AZ. Many thanks go to Laurie Wolf of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, who worked hard to make these arrangements in a challenging time.

But the fate could be different for the three Alberta orphans that are now in the Calgary Zoo. Approximately 100 scientists and wildlife advocates have called for the provincial government to lift the ban on rehabilitating and releasing orphaned grizzly bear cubs back into the wild. (David Mattson and Louisa Willcox are among the signators.)

Grizzly bears have been successfully rehabilitated and released by Northern Lights Wildlife Shelter in British Columbia. And construction is currently underway on a grizzly bear enclosure at the well-known wildlife rehabilitation center maintained by the Cochrane Ecological Institute in Cochrane, Alberta.

As Banff's Reno Sommerhalder, a longtime bear specialist, observed: "Humans killed the mother of these cubs, therefore, we have the responsibility to do whatever we can to give the surviving cubs a chance at life in the wild."

Needless to say, orphaned grizzlies in the lower-48 states also deserve to be rehabilitated and returned to the wild.

#### **TAKE ACTION:**

**Please consider signing this letter** asking the Alberta government to consider rehabilitating and releasing the three orphan cubs currently in the Calgary Zoo into the Alberta wilderness to boost the province's grizzly bear population rather than condemning these bears to long-term captive care: <http://wildaidcanada.org/open-letter>

- <https://newstalkkgvo.com/bearizona-leaves-helena-with-three-orphaned-grizzly-bear-cubs/>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/bears-cubs-letter-scientists-wild-release-banff-zoo-calgary-1.5576915>
- <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/zoo-orphan-bears-grizzly-calgary-1.5559580>
- <https://www.thestar.com/calgary/2019/03/12/why-an-alberta-wildlife-rescue-group-is-going-to-build-an-enclosure-for-orphaned-grizzly-cubs-despite-provincewide-ban.html>

#### **GOOD NEWS:**

##### **Grizzly Bear Sighting in the Southern Wyoming Range**



*Wyoming Range, photo by George Wuerthner*

Wyoming Game and Fish personnel used photos from a game camera to verify the presence of a grizzly bear in the southern Wyoming Range near Kemmerer. This is the furthest south that a grizzly bear has been documented since perhaps the 1950s.

David notes: "This Kemmerer bear is a herald of prospective connectivity between Greater Yellowstone and the Uintas. It's not just a pipe dream."

Predictably, Wyoming Game and Fish Department was quick to use this sighting to claim that Yellowstone grizzlies are recovered. David tackles the complexities and dishonesty of this claim in a piece entitled "Grizzly Twister": <https://www.grizzlytimes.org/single-post/2019/06/29/Grizzly-Twister-and-Other-Games-that-Scientists-Play>

Wyoming officials plan to treat the Wyoming Range as a "Slaughter Zone" if grizzlies are delisted, as David writes here: <https://www.grizzlytimes.org/single-post/2018/03/14/Wyoming-Plans-to-Slaughter-Grizzly-Bears>

- [https://www.einnews.com/pr\\_news/518216128/game-and-fish-verifies-grizzly-bear-sighting-in-southern-wyoming-range](https://www.einnews.com/pr_news/518216128/game-and-fish-verifies-grizzly-bear-sighting-in-southern-wyoming-range)
- <https://cowboystatedaily.com/2020/06/05/grizzly-sighting-near-kemmerer-sign-of-recovered-bear-populations/>

#### COOL VIDEO:

##### Amazing Video of Grizzly Bear Attacking Bison

Check this out – a very unusual predation by a grizzly bear on a bison! Grizzlies mostly scavenge bison that die in the winter or from injuries incurred in the rut, but they do occasionally predate on them outright as this video shows.

Yellowstone is the only place left in the world where you still have an ecologically functioning relationship between grizzlies and bison. For more on this amazing relationship you may be interested in [David's report on ungulate use by grizzly bears](#).

And here is a great talk David gave during 2018 in Missoula entitled *The Epic Shared Journey of Bison and Grizzly Bears*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AXACD8byE>  
<https://buckrail.com/snapped-bear-vs-bison/>



Extracted image of grizzly attacking bison, compared to 1998 illustration by David of giant short-faced bear attacking a young mammoth

**Please Consider a Gift to *Grizzly Times***

We need your help! David and I have retired and are doing this full-time work pretty much gratis – despite the gradual dissolution of our physical bodies!

If you were following the delisting court case, you know that David's role was vital to the litigation success that restored protections to Yellowstone's grizzly bears. The skilled attorneys could not have won the case without David's scientific expertise. David also recently helped with the appeal of this case to the 9th Circuit Court, with implications for delisting of Northern Continental Divide or even all lower-48 grizzlies.

As we do not have our own nonprofit, Conservation Congress, a not-for-profit tax-deductible organization, has agreed to be our fiscal sponsor. (Thank you, Denise!) You can make a one-time contribution or sign up for a monthly donation through this Conservation Congress link:

[Donate](#)

Or, you can mail a donation to:  
Conservation Congress  
2234 Sierra Vista Circle  
Billings, MT 59105

\* Be sure to note that your contribution is for *Grizzly Times* (GT).

Thank you for your continued support - in any way - it is greatly appreciated!

***For the Bears,  
Louisa and David***