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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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Dear Friend of the Grizzly,

As snow buries the mountains, grizzlies are slowing down and heading into dens. This comes in the nick of time as deaths mount. But we still have an opportunity – and urgent need – to re-examine why grizzly bears are dying and to redouble our coexistence efforts.

Louisa's guest column in the Missoulian (below) highlights the tragedy of this year's grizzly bear deaths in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE), where a total of 44 grizzlies died in a population of about 800 bears. All but one of these deaths were human-caused, and many were avoidable.

She concludes: "As grizzlies dream this winter, let us dream a better world for these magnificent animals to wake up to."

<https://mtstandard.com/opinion/columnists/guest-view-too-many-grizzlies-killed-again>

**New *Grizzly Times* Podcast
Features Young, Inspiring Climate Activist Adelle Welch**



Livingston, Montana, Climate Activist Adelle Welch on the Yellowstone River

Adelle Welch, a high school student from Livingston, Montana, speaks with *Grizzly Times* about leading a student climate protest last month – and about her activism and aspirations for the future. Adelle brings contagious passion to the daunting climate crisis. Here are a few excerpts, but you need to listen to her voice yourself!

“Yes, the facts about climate change are super sad and can get you down, but I try to use it as a jumping point – to kind of flip it around like: hey, no, we can stop this. There are cool people out there doing cool things, and I can be one of those cool people – and it’s going to be okay.

I think it’s so easy to forget how connected we are as a world. We only have this world, that’s all we really know.

I think that in order to put an end to the rapidly approaching climate crisis, it requires a drastic change in the way we live, and our lifestyle as humans... I think we have to totally reimagine everything from what we eat, to what our houses look like, to what our buildings look like. And that kind of change is really hard. And I think that it’s going to be hard for this generation, it’s going to be hard for future generations, and of course it was hard for past generations. And we’re all living together as multigenerational society, which makes it even harder...”

Listen on Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC05_dT9GhLLuRosj-uZKCvQ/
Or here, and read the transcript (Episode 40): <https://www.grizzlytimes.org/the-grizzly-times-podcast>

IN THE NEWS:

“Terror Entrepreneur” Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon Lashes Out Against Grizzlies, Again

We regularly write about “Terror Entrepreneurs,” a term taken from studies of the early modern Witch Craze to characterize people who incite violence against innocent and defenseless people as a way to accumulate and hold power. Back then they mostly

burned women who were healers, but now their targets include immigrants, minorities, grizzlies, wolves, and more who are relatively defenseless.

Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon deserves this honorific this week after he again used the grizzly bear as a whipping boy at a recent talk to a livestock group in Powell. He pledged that his administration will not relent “at all” on the grizzly delisting issue and urged voters to reelect Trump in 2020 to ensure that delisting happened. He also listed the grizzly in his list of Wyoming’s ills, saying “We’ve got grizzly bears, we’ve got wolves, we’ve got bad commodity prices, we’ve got coal that’s on the decline.” Really?

Gordon also said: “So we are working on a new [delisting] rule now, which we are not going to make sort of generally public – but we are wanting to see this appeals process work its way out.” Here he refers to the 2018 court ruling, now on appeal, that relisted Yellowstone grizzlies. If grizzlies are delisted, Wyoming plans to allow trophy hunting to kill more bears.

Gordon’s statements reinforce how politicized grizzly bear management has become, and why Wyoming should never be given primary authority over the fate of our grizzlies. <https://powelltribune.com/stories/want-the-grizzly-bear-delisted-re-elect-trump-governor-says,22024>

Fortunately, Kristin Combs of Wyoming Wildlife Advocates and Eric Molvar of Western Watershed Project wrote powerful rebuttals:

- https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/opinion/guest_shot/playing-politics-with-grizzly-extinction
- <https://www.powelltribune.com/stories/governor-ignored-economics-and-science-on-grizzlies,22141>

Federal/State Researchers Tell Only Part of the Story about Status of Yellowstone Grizzlies

At a recent grizzly bear managers’ meeting in Cody, WY, Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST) Leader Frank Van Manen reported that using current counting methods, an estimated 728 grizzlies live in and around Yellowstone Park, up from a total of 714 animals last year. Even as reporters seized on the trivial increase as if it were significant, Van Manen did little to dissuade them, let alone acknowledge serious biases in the counting methods. Nor did he admit that the recently released IGBST 2018 annual report showed that mortality thresholds for males were breached last year – a signal that rates of killing are excessive.

Moreover, Van Manen refuses to acknowledge the dynamics afoot related to warming temperatures and the declines of key native foods. Grizzlies are now foraging more widely to compensate – and are being met with hostility, especially in parts of Wyoming. While population numbers have flatlined for nearly 20 years, distribution of bears has tripled, according to IGBST data. But for political reasons, IGBST and other government scientists are invested in perpetuating the false notion that grizzlies are increasing by leaps and bounds, implying that numbers need to be reduced.

<https://www.powelltribune.com/stories/official-grizzly-bear-population-estimate-up-slightly,22148?>

Dan Thompson of Wyoming Game and Fish further exaggerates the “problem” in a Wyoming Public Radio interview, where he claims that a booming population of grizzlies is spilling beyond suitable habitat and causing more property damage. He also says he is seeing “more recidivism” in bears, implying they are criminals.

<https://www.wyomingpublicmedia.org/post/how-grizzly-management-changing-their-population-expands#stream/0>

This deliberate misconstruction, prevalent in the NCDE as well as the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), helps explain why the government is so reluctant to meaningfully address current disputes over cattle grazing and trains, discussed below. In essence, tax-payer funded “experts” are violating the norms of scientific practice to advance the delisting agenda.

Record Number of Grizzlies Killed by Trains, and Groups Sue, Assisted by David Mattson’s Analysis

This year, a record eight grizzlies were killed by trains in the NCDE. This year’s deaths happened because bears were attracted to spilled grain and cows killed by trains. The Fish and Wildlife Service and Burlington Northern Santa Fe have yet to complete a plan that addresses the problems.

According to a report recently completed by Dr. David Mattson, trains killed over 52 grizzly bears in northern Montana and Idaho, most of them between 1990 and 2018.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333865092_Mattson_2019_Effects_of_Trains_and_Railways_on_Grizzly_Bears_v2

WildEarth Guardians and Western Watersheds Project, represented by the Western Environmental Law Center, have announced plans to sue the railroad. Grizzly bear deaths could be reduced by slowing trains in places, running them at different times during the day, and promptly cleaning up carrion and grain.

- <https://flatheadbeacon.com/2019/11/08/conservation-groups-threaten-railway-lawsuit-grizzly-deaths/>
- https://www.dailyinterlake.com/local_news/20191103/groups_threaten_to_sue_bnsf_over_bear_deaths
- <https://missoulian.com/news/local/groups-threaten-lawsuit-over-grizzly-deaths-by-trains>

Similar problems plague British Columbia, where 43 grizzly bears have been killed on railroads since 1982: <https://infotel.ca/newsitem/a-grizzly-end-collisions-between-trains-and-bears-in-bc-a-sad-reality/it67386>

Government Permits Killing 72 Grizzlies on Upper Green River Cattle Allotment

The Bridger Teton National Forest and US Fish and Wildlife Service recently approved killing as many as 72 grizzlies over the next 10 years on the nearly 200,000 acre Upper Green River Cattle Allotment in Wyoming. The area is the single worst mortality sink for grizzlies in Greater Yellowstone, largely due to politically privileged ranchers who have long resisted taking reasonable precautions to avoid conflicts.

The government is rewarding the ranchers' bullying behavior. Shockingly, Forest Service District Ranger Rob Hoelscher defended his decision, saying: "I feel it's very important to maintain the lifestyles and the industry here locally for the permittees" – as if these lands are here only to profit ranchers and maintain their "lifestyles."

- <https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/news/environmental/experts-project-grizzlies-will-die-due-to-cattle-conflicts>
- <https://www.wyomingpublicmedia.org/post/forest-service-allows-livestock-grazing-upper-green-river-rangeland-pushback-due-grizzlies#stream/0>

While Pinedale-based cow apologist Cat Urbigit calls concerns by conservationists "hysterical" and "outrageous," activist George Wuerthner gives a clear-eyed assessment of what is at stake:

- <http://www.thewildlifeneews.com/2019/10/18/final-decision-upper-green-allotment-harms-bears/>
- <https://cowboystatedaily.com/2019/10/21/grizzly-recovery-reflected-in-upper-green-conflict/>

Of Conflicts and Coexistence

At a recent Yellowstone grizzly bear managers' meeting in Cody, citizens and government officials brainstormed ways to reduce human-bear conflicts. The break-out groups came up with a number of novel ideas, like using Airedales as guard dogs, and establishing a bear training academy where citizens could learn by exchanging coexistence success stories. But many suggested improving long-proven practices, including expanding the use of bear-resistant trash containers, deploying electric fence around beehives and calving areas, and basic education:

http://www.codyenterprisepublic.com/news/local/article_39a551c4-ff3e-11e9-ab84-d30017e01013.html

A recent Billings Gazette article focuses on conflicts created as a result of grizzlies increasingly feeding along roadsides such as near Togwotee Pass in Wyoming and in ranchlands like those of Montana's Tom Miner basin, where they are visible to roadside tourists. Bear Biologist David Mattson has suggested that a team of volunteers be created to manage roadside situations, such as along Togwotee Pass. The volunteers could employ the same tactics to keep bears and people separate as are already being used successfully in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

Regarding the Tom Miner situation, Gardiner-based photographer Brad Orsted agrees that bear watchers need more education, and urges visitors to be respectful by "not littering, slamming their doors, setting off their car alarms so the bears would raise their heads or blocking the road with their parked vehicles." He suggested: "Just treat it like it was your neighborhood." Good advice!

<https://billingsgazette.com/outdoors/urge-to-view-bruins-collides-with-growing-population-of-bears>

Researchers are trying to improve outreach to Yellowstone Park visitors to increase compliance with basic bear safety measures. According to a 2015 park study, only 13% of day hikers carried bear spray compared to 52% of backpackers. Room for improvement!

<https://billingsgazette.com/outdoors/researcher-suggests-new-tactics-to-make-yellowstone-visitors-bear-aware>

In British Columbia's Revelstoke and Glacier Parks, managers routinely close areas that are ideal feeding grounds for bears, require hikers to be in groups of four people, and ban dogs in some areas.

<https://www.revelstokereview.com/news/managing-bears-a-part-of-daily-operations-in-mt-revelstoke-and-glacier-national-parks>



Grizzly Bear in Revelstoke Park, British Columbia

GOOD NEWS:

Conflicts Low in Yellowstone Park

Despite record-breaking visitation and lots of bear jams, Yellowstone Park has witnessed relatively few conflicts with grizzlies this year – even fewer than last year. Yellowstone bear specialist Kerry Gunther observed: “bears now often tolerate people at very close distances and the people are just kind of benign background noise to the bears.” Kudos to Yellowstone Park – its strong sanitation rules and education efforts are paying off!

<https://buckrail.com/bear-conflict-low-in-yellowstone-and-park-wants-to-keep-it-that-way/>

High Country News Features Great Coexistence Work

Programs like the Blackfoot Challenge and Swan Valley Connections are doing great work. This quote by Randy Gazda of the Blackfoot Challenge gets to the heart of the matter: “One of the best things we’ve ever done to solve our problems is build trust and credibility between agencies and landowners through civil meetings. If you don’t have trust, you can have all the tools in the world, but it’s probably not going to work.”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/11/how-live-safely-grizzly-bears/601306/>

More Wildlife Crossing Structures in Alberta

The Alberta government recently approved \$20 million to build a wildlife overpass on Highway 1 in the Bow Valley near Banff and a wildlife underpass on Highway 3 east of Crowsnest Pass. This decision builds on the successful overpasses in Banff Park, and highlights the fact that governments can do more to facilitate safe passage for wildlife, including grizzlies. Great work -- and a reminder that we have a long way to go to prioritize this work in the US.

<https://www.thecragandcanyon.ca/news/local-news/20-million-budgeted-for-new-wildlife-crossing>



Wildlife Overpass, Alberta: Two New Crossing Structures Approved in the Province

Brown Bears Expanding in Galicia in Northwestern Spain

The tiny, endangered brown bear population of Galicia in the Cantabrian Mountains of northern Spain are faring a bit better and expanding westward. Biologist Fernando Ballesteros of the Brown Bear Foundation reflects on a past when killing was rampant and says: “Now we want to keep them and, as nobody kills them, they are recovering.”

<https://www.ilawjournals.com/galicia-learns-to-live-with-the-bears>

Dumb but Telling Videos

A few reminders of how stupid people can be and how problematic the entertainment industry is:

So why would Jason Momoa of “Aquaman” fame choose to let a grizzly eat an oreo out of his mouth?

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/jason-momoa-bear-oreo-mouth-feed-peta-animal-cruelty-a9184071.html>

And why would the Discovery Channel run a reality show called “Man vs Bear” that pits a grizzly against a human? Oh please...

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7640587/Man-vs-Bear-pits-humans-against-1-400-pound-GRIZZLY-tug-war-feats-strength.html>

And what do you expect from a frustrated grizzly in a loud, chaotic Russian circus?

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bear-attack-russia-circus-trainer-caught-on-video-no-barrier-front-of-horrified-audience-2019-10-25/>

Last Word from Joel Connelly: “Silence is Consent”

Joel Connelly of the Seattle Post Intelligencer gets the last word this week, in a column that rails against the Trump Administration’s multi-pronged campaign to cut, drill, and gouge wild Alaska. He concludes: “All creatures, and future generations of creatures, will lose if the Trump Administration has its way with Alaska. Three words apply: Silence gives consent.”

<https://www.seattlepi.com/local/politics/article/Connelly-The-Trump-Administration-seeks-to-cut-14548962.php>

TAKE ACTION: Support Tribal Heritage and Grizzly Bear Protection Act!

Last spring, Congressman Raul Grijalva (D-AZ) introduced the Tribal Heritage and Grizzly Bear Protection Act that would ban trophy hunting and protect grizzlies for their ecological and cultural value. It would also guarantee Native American Tribes a role in conserving and managing grizzlies that are considered sacred by many tribes. Moreover, Tribes have claims to considerable suitable habitat where grizzlies could be recovered.

But this bill needs as much support in Congress as possible if it is to pass. Please call your Representative and Senators and ask that they support H.R. 2532 "Tribal Heritage and Grizzly Bear Protection Act."

You can read more here: <https://www.grizzlytimes.org/liz-cheney-action-alert>

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, and despite the gradual dissolution of our physical bodies.

If you were following the recent delisting court case, you know that David's role was vital to the litigation success that restored protections to the Yellowstone region's grizzly bears. The skilled attorneys could not have won the case without David's scientific expertise. There will be continued demands on David's time with the appeal of this case to the 9th Circuit Court, potential delisting of NCDE or even all Lower 48 grizzlies, and mounting threats to the Cabinet-Yaak population.

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 the Conservation Congress link: <https://www.conservationcongress-ca.org/give>

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*

Guest View: Too Many Grizzlies Killed, Again

Nov 8, 2019

[Louisa Willcox](#)

As snow buries the mountains, grizzlies are slowing down and heading into dens. This comes in the nick of time as deaths mount, threatening to reverse progress toward

recovery of grizzlies in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE), but giving us time to examine why grizzly bears are dying, and to redouble our coexistence efforts.

We are poised to reach or even surpass last year's record grizzly bear deaths. So far, 44 grizzlies are considered known or probably dead in the NCDE, all but one killed by humans. Applying the government's formula that estimates unknown and unreported mortality, near 90 grizzlies are likely dead. This amounts to an unsustainable portion of the population.

Fortunately, we know a lot about how to reduce deaths from poaching, livestock conflicts, vehicle and train collisions, and the lure of human foods – the primary causes of mortality in the Northern Rockies.

This year is increasingly the new normal when it comes to the record numbers of grizzlies killed in collisions with cars (five) and trains (eight). The reasons are obvious. More people are on the roads. More trains are hauling coal and grain. But we can look to work by the Confederated Salish Kootenai Tribes and Montana Highway Department on Highway 93 through the Flathead to see some solutions. Here, over 40 crossing structures have facilitated safe passage for grizzlies and a slew of other species, not to mention people. But this laudable effort is incomplete and covers a relatively small part of a vast ecosystem.

Burlington Northern Railway has reduced grain spills that are magnets for bears, but cows, including those killed in this fall's early snows, also draw bears to the tracks. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has yet to complete a plan with Burlington Northern to address the problem.

Among the residences of the rapidly growing human population of the Flathead Valley, attractants constitute the root cause of more than one third of grizzly bear deaths on the NCDE's west side. By contrast, conflicts with cows and sheep lead to more deaths on the more sparsely populated east side.

Reducing both sorts of conflicts depends on assiduously keeping human foods out of bears' reach. Electric fence, prompt removal of livestock carcasses, and disciplined sanitation are proven remedies. Although the tribes, state and federal agencies, and at least five nonprofit organizations are working to reduce availability of attractants, they still account, directly or indirectly, for roughly 20% of grizzly bear deaths ecosystem-wide. More needs to be done.

Malicious killing is a tougher problem that robs all citizens of their wildlife legacy while imperiling grizzlies. Poaching is notoriously underreported and likely accounts for 25-30% of total grizzly bear deaths in the NCDE. Even though the Endangered Species Act imposes stiff penalties for poaching, funding for law enforcement is far from adequate, and convictions are few and far between. Excessive and poorly managed road systems on national forest lands facilitate access for poachers.

During the next year, the governor-appointed Montana Grizzly Bear Advisory Council will examine ways to reduce conflicts and advance recovery. This means looking anew at problems that will be exacerbated by warming temperatures and increasing wildfires.

These changes will continue to drive the spread of bears, even as they bump into more people in more places, especially in the Flathead Valley and around Missoula.

Because the lion's share of our last grizzlies in the Lower 48 find refuge in Montana, we play a critical role in the Great Bear's future. As grizzlies dream this winter, let us dream a better world for these magnificent animals to wake up to.

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