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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 Friends of Grizzlies,

Yellowstone's summer has been incredibly wet and lush – good for bears, fish, and everything but camping with small kids. David has been in high gear, with a wonderful new talk on grizzlies in the Cabinet-Yaak region of northwestern Montana and northern Idaho!

He provides a masterful analysis of the threats to this small but critical population, and a compelling appeal for redoubled recovery efforts. As the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) continues to throw everything at delisting Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide region grizzlies, the agency has turned its back on the Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk populations, where grizzlies teeter on the brink of extinction, while utterly ignoring opportunities for recovery in the vast Selway-Bitterroot ecosystem where grizzlies have been exterminated.

FWS' mental gymnastics extend as far as endorsing a new (and ruinous) hard rock mine in a devil's bargain to pay for coexistence work in the Cabinet-Yaak – and the agency hasn't even paused to consider the threat posed by a proposed new high use trail in the Yaak, another knife in the heart of the best remaining habitat in this part of the ecosystem.

Many thanks to the tireless Rick Bass and the Yaak Valley Forest Council who supported David in his efforts to get to the bottom of the grizzly's troubles in this amazing ecosystem!



David's one-hour talk is on the *Grizzly Times* Youtube channel, here divided into five segments:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKV7sFGNirg>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jh5OxcbI_10
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvqHJ6ziUIQ>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mEN1wnhZdl>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xW4qxP9lpHw>

In the News:

Montana Grizzly Bear Advisory Council

The Billings Gazette recently published a piece by Louisa (which follows below) on Governor Bullock's Montana Grizzly Bear Advisory Council, and the need for a new reconfigured recovery effort that gives a meaningful seat at the table for stakeholders across the country:

https://billingsgazette.com/opinion/columnists/guest-opinion-revamping-grizzly-bear-recovery/article_f78a2237-ca1f-526a-b127-f3790425e2eb.html

Trump, Congress' Siege Against Bears, Wildlife Banning Funding for Listing Yellowstone Grizzlies?

While the Trump administration moves to gut the Endangered Species Act (ESA), his allies in Congress are using opportunities to damage the ESA in the meantime. Some Congressmen are asking for terrible amendments to the ESA when the House takes up Interior appropriations on the floor this summer. Wyoming's congressional Liz Cheney is at it again, seeking to ban funding for listing Greater Yellowstone grizzlies, while others seek to defund work to recover grey wolves, sage grouse and other species.

Please urge your representatives in Congress to say no to these terrible amendments!

You can find contact information for your representative here:

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Git-R-Done: Trump Opens 1.4 Million Acres of National Wildlife Refuges to Hunting, Fishing

As a sop to his trophy hunting sons and his NRA and Safari Club base, Trump told his oil-soaked Interior Secretary David Bernhardt to "Git-R-Done" and open up 1.4 million acres of national wildlife refuges to hunting and fishing. This is what wildlife management has come to mean under this administration: killing more animals.

<https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/washington-secrets/git-r-done-trump-opens-1-4-million-federal-acres-to-hunters-anglers>

Please consider signing this petition at Care 2:

<https://www.care2.com/causes/trump-opens-hunting-on-national-wildlife-refuges.html>

Yellowstone New Superintendent: Far Cry from Finley

The new superintendent of Yellowstone Park, Cam Sholly, was brought here for a reason: to study but not act to limit oppressive and damaging visitation, support delisting and hunting of grizzlies and wolves, and generally promote the Park. In a recent interview with Mountain Journal, the one good thing Cam Sholly shows is he is really interested in improving Park funding, which admittedly is disgracefully low, along with agency morale.

The legacy of former superintendents Mike Finley, who led a fierce campaign against the New World Mine, and Dan Wenk, who tried to do better for bison and to secure a no-hunt buffer zone outside the park for grizzlies, may be fading into the distant past, for now.

<https://mountainjournal.org/yellowstone-is-confronting-many-major-threats>

The Grizzly's Ecosystem: Connected in Amazing Ways

Several articles underscore how the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem is connected in incredible ways, and the problems we have created for this connectivity.

Drivers of Migrating Elk

A new ecosystem-scale study of elk in Greater Yellowstone by Arthur Middleton and his extensive team of collaborators in Wyoming shows that climate change will likely have major impacts on migrations – some of which may have already occurred. Elk arrived on their winter range nearly 50 days later in 2015 compared to only 14 years earlier.

Grizzlies depend on elk calves during late spring and on adults injured during the rut or killed by big game hunters during fall. Will this delay of migration prolong grizzlies' exposure to harm later into the fall?

Climate change has dramatically altered habitat in surprising ways – that so far have proved negative for the grizzly – and those surprises are expected to continue.

<https://goldrushcam.com/sierrasuntimes/index.php/news/local-news/19027-uc-berkeley-what-drives-yellowstone-s-massive-elk-migrations>

Are We Changing Bison Evolution?

The article linked below underscores the perils associated with years of heavy-handed treatment of bison when they step outside the border of Yellowstone Park. Thousands of bison have been killed in recent years under draconian state policies in Montana, driven by a livestock industry that deploys the unproven myth that bison will pass the disease brucellosis to cattle. The grizzly's ability to forage on winter-killed bison, a key spring food, is severely limited by Montana's policies that remove bison from the ecosystem.

Scientists are now warning of long-term evolutionary problems associated with excessive killing of migrating bison: wildlife biologist and retired Colorado State professor James Bailey warns that by culling the migrating bison, and therefore selecting for the trait to stay put, we might be "disorganizing and diminishing the wild, adaptive genome." He acknowledges that the proximity of people to places like Yellowstone makes some intervention necessary, though he calls the field he taught for 20 years – wildlife management – an oxymoron.

<https://www.popsci.com/wild-buffalo-conservation/>

Now for the Good News:

Grizzly Bear 610 May be Back!

After having not been seen for two years, grizzly bear 610, daughter of the famed grizzly matron of Grand Teton 399, may have reappeared. Local photographers, including Tom Mangelsen, have said they recognize the bear that showed up recently with two cubs of the year.

If true, this is great news, as grizzly 610 is not only a wonderful bear, but every female who reproduces is vital to the health of the population. And so far, 610 is the only daughter of 399 who has been reproductively successful, so she helps keep 399's lineage going.

https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/news/environmental/after--year-absence-is-grizzly-back-in-grand-teton/article_9fea3c2a-1dd8-58ef-bbff-c2e6cee5890e.html



Grizzly Bear 610 and Cubs, Jackson News and Guide

Don't Hike with Guns

At last, a decent article in a glitzy outdoor magazine that discourages guns – here for human safety as well as wildlife conservation reasons. Outside may be finally bucking the trend of promoting firepower in the backcountry. At least we can hope...

<https://www.outsideonline.com/2397355/dont-hike-with-guns>

Ranchers Getting Along with Grizzlies

Rob Cheney here focuses on the progress being made in Montana among ranchers to coexist with grizzlies, highlighting the Blackfoot Challenge. Improvements in storing livestock feed and disposing of dead cows has reduced conflicts considerably.

https://missoulian.com/news/local/ranchers-work-up-tactics-to-deal-with-grizzlies/article_b160b5d1-3ab0-5323-86ad-390bb9ebbfa5.html

Grizzlies in the Bitterroot?

Veteran reporter Rocky Barker writes on the potential to recover grizzlies in the enormous Selway-Bitterroot ecosystem. This vast wilderness ecosystem could play a critical role in re-connecting grizzlies in the Northern Rockies. The trick? Preventing conflicts with grizzlies that are rediscovering the ecosystem on their own.

<https://www.idahostatesman.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/letters-from-the-west/article231278348.html>

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.

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 Yellowstone'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 below.

<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***



Motherly Love: Grizzlies in Waterton Park, photo taken last week by photographer Ben Waugh

Billings Gazette

June 15, 2019

Guest Opinion: Revamping Grizzly Bear Recovery

by Louisa Willcox

The enthusiasm expressed for Governor Stephen Bullock's proposed grizzly bear advisory council promises to enhance coexistence efforts at a time when, with each new year, grizzly

bear deaths shatter records. But Montana's efforts must be nested within a larger national framework of grizzly bear recovery.

The grizzly is an iconic species of global concern. Families from across America and the world are flocking to Yellowstone and Glacier hoping to see a grizzly bear in the flesh. Montana recognizes the public's passion for grizzlies and other wildlife -- and their economic contribution to numerous communities -- evident in widespread promotion of our State Animal.

But in giving grizzly bears Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections, the federal government long-ago recognized that state management was inadequate. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has played a vital role since 1975 in reversing the decline of grizzly bear populations in the Northern Rockies -- which the states had been perpetuating with trophy hunts. By banning hunting, setting high fines to deter poaching, and establishing tough regulations to keep human foods away from bears, the FWS, along with the Forest Service, National Park Service and States, has improved the health of Montana's grizzlies.

But progress has been slow. Low reproductive rates exacerbate the continued excessive rates at which grizzlies die. Yellowstone and Glacier bear populations have flat-lined during the last 15 years and could even be in decline--contrary to inflated claims of government biologists. The States can continue to make a positive difference, but only under oversight by a federal government charged with protecting the interests of all Americans.

Twenty years ago, the governors of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming set up a "roundtable" process similar to the current advisory council. Unfortunately, it proved to be little more than a vehicle for promoting premature delisting and limiting grizzlies to isolated island ecosystems -- despite overwhelming scientific evidence that lasting recovery can only be achieved by reconnecting grizzly bear ecosystems. In the aftermath, Montana undertook a costly and unsuccessful fight to grab power from the federal government, reduce grizzly populations, and disenfranchise the national public.

The federal government should not tolerate a repeat of this cynical exercise. Given that grizzlies in the Northern Continental Divide, Selkirk, and Cabinet-Yaak are still federally protected -- as are Yellowstone grizzlies following last fall's court order -- the FWS continues to be accountable for promoting meaningful recovery--and for giving all Americans a voice in the process. But FWS has been abdicating its responsibility, and wasting time and tax-payer dollars challenging the relisting ruling, which even Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator Hilary Cooley says is a lost cause. The agency has also been also looking the other way as grizzly bear deaths mount, despite maintaining that most of these deaths were avoidable. Indeed, other than keeping a rote tally, the agency has no records during the last two years detailing how a staggering 131 grizzlies died in the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

FWS must provide better oversight of the States -- including Montana's new Council. Together, federal and state stakeholders can improve coexistence efforts. We have learned a lot about how to prevent conflicts, with the help of bear pepper spray, bear-proof dumpsters, and electric fence around beehives and chicken coops. Much can be gleaned from successful coexistence work in the Madison and Blackfoot Valleys with relevance to improving practices elsewhere.

We need to redouble efforts to reduce conflicts. Climate warming and massive wildfires have already clobbered native bear foods, forcing bears to forage more widely and boosting human conflicts. Montana's Grizzly Bear Council could help navigate the new reality, while allowing more bears to live in the ample suitable habitat we still have.

But people outside Montana cannot and should not be ignored. During the last 20 years, citizens from around our country have overwhelmingly and consistently supported stronger protections for grizzlies through their comments on more than a dozen federal and state decisions. And their support is growing, as demonstrated by the nearly 1 million people who commented on the 2016 draft rule to remove ESA protections for Yellowstone's grizzlies. Of those people, more than 99.99% supported stronger, not weaker, protections. They deserve an on-going seat at the table.

Meaningful recovery of grizzlies can only be achieved through a combination of local, state, and national efforts. With 150 applicants for 15 seats on the Grizzly Bear Council, Montanans have shown a keen interest in constructive progress. The challenge now is to frame that work within an effective and coordinated national effort. That means the FWS must wake up and engage – on behalf of all of us.

Louisa Willcox has advocated for grizzly bears and other wildlife in the Northern Rockies for 35 years. She is a founder of Grizzly Times and lives in Livingston, MT.