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NEWSLETTER

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

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June 23, 2021

Dear Friend of the Grizzly,

Summer has exploded in the Northern Rockies – and so have the crowds seeking to catch a glimpse of a grizzly in the wild. This newsletter is devoted to Grizzly 399, perhaps the most famous grizzly in the world, the threats to her and other grizzlies in the Jackson Hole region, and what we can do to resolve them. These grizzlies are threatened by poorly managed throngs of people, semis barreling down nearby highways, and freely available human foods. Adding insult to injury, these grizzlies are now being shot at with rubber projectiles and harassed by managers in a haphazard effort to keep these bears away from the roadside habitat they depend on.

One of the hottest grizzly bear stories in the media right now relates to another celebrity, Grizzly 863 (aka Felicia) and her cubs who live on Togwotee Pass, east of Jackson – and outside the protected refuge of Grand Teton National Park. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is currently engaged in an ill-conceived and chaotic operation to haze her from the roadside habitat that is her home – rather than redoubling efforts to manage the crowds. The public protests have been inspiring and passionate – and while the government may be listening at last, we need to keep up the pressure.

Louisa's two-part blog, *Playing Russian Roulette with Grizzly Matron 399 and the Bears of Yellowstone*, digs deep into this fraught grizzly bear situation. The first focuses on why 399 and other grizzlies need this roadside habitat and the threats

to these bears. The second delves into the complexities of management and the problems, and offers an alternative, more generous approach.



399, the best ambassador the grizzly ever had – and a great mom. Photo by Tom Mangelsen

A new Grizzly Times podcast (two episodes) builds on some of these themes. It features renowned nature photographer and advocate Tom Mangelsen, who describes his personal journey from shooting wildlife with a gun to shooting them with a camera, his long advocacy for wildlife, and his special 15-year relationship with 399. Parenthetically, Tom and his tireless assistant, Sue Cederholm, are also at the epicenter of the current storm around Felicia, diplomatically pressing the government to improve how people are managed rather than tormenting bears.

Needless-to-say, Louisa dragged David into this issue too. He is now knee-deep in what turns out to be the first-ever comprehensive analysis of the efficacy of hazing grizzlies – which delves into how bears learn and make choices. This technical report will be featured in the next newsletter.

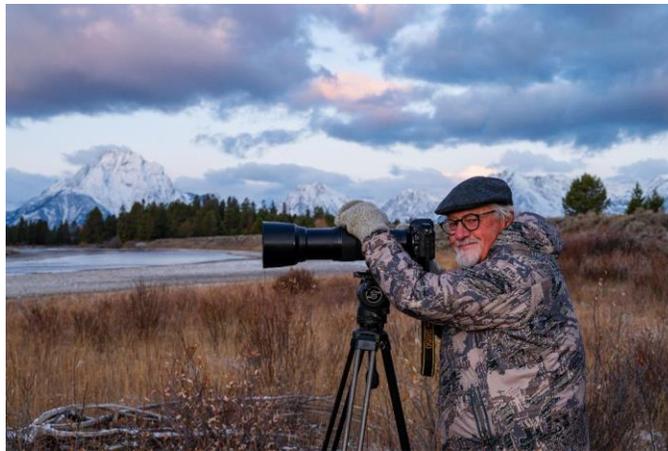
We hope you will help these and the many lesser-known bears of Greater Yellowstone by sending letters and emails to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, Hilary Cooley, and Secretary of Interior, Deb Haaland. The alert is provided at the end of this newsletter.

Grizzly Times Podcast (Two Episodes): Interview with Renowned Wildlife Photographer and Advocate, Tom Mangelsen

- <https://www.grizzlytimespodcast.org/post/tom-mangelsen-1>
- <https://www.grizzlytimespodcast.org/post/tom-mangelsen-2>

Tom Mangelsen is one of the most influential nature photographers in the world, and a legendary advocate of rare and imperiled species. Tom and Louisa go way back, sharing a journey towards a more compassionate way of treating our fellow non-human travelers. Tom has a special passion for grizzlies, wolves, and mountain lions, and co-wrote *The Grizzlies of Pilgrim Creek* with Todd Wilkinson, featuring Grizzly 399.

In the first episode of this wide-ranging conversation, Tom reflects on why he spends countless hours waiting for the perfect photograph, and his challenges speaking up for wildlife in an arena that promotes killing grizzlies, mountain lions, and wolves – for fun. In the second episode, Tom shares his long and intimate relationship with 399, his close friendship with Jane Goodall, and what he is doing to protect the grizzlies of Greater Yellowstone.



Tom Mangelsen out on another frigid morning along the Snake River, waiting for wildlife.

Interview Excerpts:

“Five million people came through Teton Park last year – and probably 500,000 of those saw a grizzly bear or a wolf. And if these animals were shot or trapped, that would steal that opportunity from that many people, which seems pretty selfish and stupid – and for somebody who’s ego is driven by killing and hanging something on the wall.”

“As a boy, I learned to trap animals along the Platte River... And one day, I found a raccoon in one of my traps that had chewed his foot off to save himself... And then about three or four days later, I caught a three-footed raccoon and realized he had come back again because he was probably hungry. But that was sort of an eye-opening experience for me, an epiphany that this poor raccoon had had to chew his foot off...And it was one of the early lessons that I learned that animals are so special and intelligent – and they just want so hard to live – and that it’s so easy for us to kill them.”

“I saw how most of our wildlife management is based on hunting and or fishing, but mostly hunting. The laws are written in favor of hunters, and in favor of killing basically as many animals of a species in a particular area as that area and species can tolerate before maybe the population retreats or crashes. And that’s all in favor of selling as many licenses as possible...”

“I fell in love with her [Grizzly 399] – she is such a good ambassador for other bears and for other wildlife. And she taught people a lot about the bear world, and how important they are, and how special they are because of their behavior and everything about them.

About the day that Judge Christensen stopped a trophy hunt and restored Endangered Species Act protections for Yellowstone grizzly bears: “I was in Nebraska with the opening of “A Life in the Wild” legacy show, a traveling show of my photographs, talking about 399 to the audience, and how the judge was making a decision at that moment. And as I was talking, my nephew walks up to the podium, and hands me a note that says: “The judge ruled to put the bears back on the Endangered Species List.” A woman next to my nephew had been keeping track on her iphone – now this is in Omaha – and she showed him this ruling...And so I told the audience: ‘Oh my god, the judge just ruled to put them back on the Endangered Species List’. And everybody stood up, and it was a standing ovation for the bears.”

“I’ve learned so much about 399, and still do. Last year, she traveled 40 miles in two days before January 1st when she went into the den up above Pilgrim Creek in deep snows... And watching her plow through two or three feet of snow with new cubs, it was so incredibly heartwarming... And she’s 25 years old, and she’s snow plowing. And the cubs on the first day, they were just sort of playing grab ass with each other following her, because they were full of themselves, and fat and sassy. But by the second, they were marching right behind her, with her breaking trail. And the thought of somebody killing her for fun, or for any reason, is just – it would break my heart, but it would break so many hearts.”



Grizzly 760, a grandson of 399, was needlessly killed as a result of government bungling in 2014. Photo by Tom Mangelsen

Grizzly Times Blog: Playing Russian Roulette with Grizzly Matron 399 and the Bears of Yellowstone, Part 1

<https://www.grizzlytimes.org/single-post/playing-russian-roulette-with-grizzly-matron-399-and-the-bears-of-yellowstone-part-1-this-is-the>

This piece focuses on why these grizzlies “depend on the kindness of strangers,” why every grizzly mom matters, the unnecessary killing of 399’s cubs, and other current threats.

A few excerpts:

Grizzly 399 makes her living near people, teaching generations of cubs how to live amicably along roads and around recreation areas. Her main reason for settling into these human-impacted environments is to keep her cubs safe from aggressive male grizzlies – known as boars – that often prefer to hang out in more remote areas.

For her and other female grizzlies who frequent roadsides, staying near people is a better bet than mixing it up with boars who can and will kill cubs. Every day, these females and their offspring literally depend on the kindness of strangers, to borrow from Blanche Dubois’ famous line in *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

We cannot forget the difference that one good mom can make. All existing Yellowstone grizzly bears are the decedents of perhaps only 50 females alive during the early 1980’s. Every mom matters. And a female such as 399 is an Olympian.

But despite her competence as a mother, so far 399 has raised only two females who have also had cubs, Grizzlies 610 and 962, the latter just appearing with a new cub. The reasons are straight-forward. Grizzly bear birth rates are inherently low and many of 399’s offspring have been killed by humans.



Grizzly 610 is only one of two cubs of 399 who we know has successfully raised cubs.

Grizzly Times Blog: Playing Russian Roulette with Grizzly Matron 399 and the Bears of Yellowstone, Part 2

<https://www.grizzlytimes.org/single-post/playing-russian-roulette-with-grizzly-matron-399-and-the-bears-of-yellowstone-part-2>

This blog was hard to write in many ways, including the fact that the drama was unfolding and changing nearly every day. Many thanks to David for his keen editorial eye and patience with my struggles.

A few excerpts:

Protecting threatened grizzly bears is about managing people. This simple truth is reinforced by the travails of Grand Teton’s renowned grizzly matron, known by her number “399,” and her many descendants.

Progress will depend on numerous government agencies redoubling commitments to public education, conflict reduction, crowd control, and law enforcement – which means stronger leadership, more resources, and better collaboration. Lack of information and knowledge about how to manage people and foster coexistence are not the problems. We just need to apply our collective insights more comprehensively, consistently, and at the scale of the lands used by 399 and her kin.

...with mounting threats, it is our turn to redouble care and protection for 399 and other threatened grizzlies. We can do it. With enough political will and commitment, we can develop a more inclusive, big-hearted and sensible approach to ensure that grizzlies flourish. In the end, how we treat the grizzly, an icon of the American West, says a lot about how we treat each other – and how we view our duty to those who come after us.



Felicia doing yoga with this year’s cubs. Photo by Ann Smith

The Upshot: A Summary of Recommendations of What Can be Done to Protect Jackson Hole Grizzlies

What follows is a bullet list of some recommendations, described in detail in the second blog, about how to resolve current grizzly-human conflicts in and around Jackson Hole. Implementation depends on multiple agencies – including the National Park Service, Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, state of Wyoming, Teton County, and Wyoming Department of Transportation – each stepping up to the plate. We recognize that implementing these steps is a tall order, and will happen only because of political courage, and citizen action – “relentless pressure, relentlessly applied,” to quote from renowned environmentalist David Brower.

- Expand Grand Teton’s Wildlife Brigade
- Establish a Partnership Between the Government & Bear Watchers to Improve Management of People
- Improve Sanitation around Jackson Hole
- Establish Limits in Grand Teton Park & Implement a Mass Transit System
- Make Highways Safer for Wildlife, including Overpasses & Underpasses
- Reform Wyoming’s Management of Grizzlies
- Treat Jackson’s Celebrity Bears as Valued Individuals
- Launch A Collaborative Interagency/Citizen Effort on Behalf of Jackson Hole Grizzlies

PLEASE ACT ON BEHALF OF THESE GRIZZLIES

These grizzlies need your help now. Please contact Hilary Cooley at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (hilary_cooley@fws.gov) and ask her to stop the cruel and futile efforts to haze grizzlies from roads, and instead focus on improving how people are managed.

Since there is currently no Director currently in place at FWS, please copy your letter to Deb Haaland, Secretary of Interior (feedback@ios.doi.gov). With authority over the Park Service, Haaland also needs to hear that hazing grizzlies is not appropriate inside National Parks, and that Grand Teton Park needs to improve its management of people – not bears.

Please emphasize that citizens are eager to help, and that new private/public partnerships could yield far better results for grizzlies than the government’s current approach.

Also, here is the change.org petition advocating for protecting Felicia – signed by over 41,000 people so far! And thank you, Savannah Rose Burgess, for getting this going!

<https://www.change.org/p/u-s-fish-and-wildlife-service-for-felicia-let-bears-be-bears?>



399 with quadruplets, shortly after they emerged last year. Photo by Steve Franklin

A Few News Clips:

A slew of articles has been published recently on this grizzly bear situation, but here are a few:

- <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2021/06/18/grizzly-bear-felicia-cubs-near-wyoming-road-may-euthanized-fws>
- <https://oilcity.news/community/2021/04/16/famous-yellowstone-grizzly-399-reportedly-spotted-for-first-time-in-2021/>
- <https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/news/environmental/local/togwotee-grizzly-family-to-be-heavily-hazed-for-two-weeks>
- <https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/news/environmental/habituation-food-conditioning-claims-two-jackson-hole-bears>
- <http://www.buffalobulletin.com/news/article>
- <https://apnews.com/article/jackson-bears-wyoming-coronavirus-pandemic-parks>
- <https://www.idahostatejournal.com/freeaccess/no-charges-after-wyoming-grizzly-feeding-investigation>

Please Consider a Gift to Grizzly Times...

We need your help! We 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 Endangered Species Act protections to Greater Yellowstone's grizzly bears. The skilled attorneys could not have won the case without David's scientific expertise. He also helped with the successful

appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court, which has implications for delisting of Northern Continental Divide grizzlies, and perhaps all grizzlies in the lower 48 states.

As we do not have our own nonprofit, a not-for-profit tax-deductible organization, Conservation Congress, 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 link:

[DONATE HERE](#)

Or, you can mail a donation to:
Conservation Congress
C/O Denise Boggs
1604 1st Avenue South
Great Falls, Montana 59401

* 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***