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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, Ph.D.](#)
Co-Founders of *Grizzly Times*.

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July 20, 2023

Dear Friend of the Grizzly,

This special edition of our newsletter invites you, our reader, to share a story with us and other readers about how grizzly bears have inspired, amazed, or even mystified you.

For far too long news outlets have been dominated by stories that paint grizzlies as threatening and problematic. Some writers would have us believe that grizzly bears are demonic and evil. This public furor has fed a campaign mounted by politicians in the northern Rockies to remove protections for grizzlies, institute a trophy hunt, and kill on sight any grizzlies deemed to be “a problem”—ultimately with the intent of confining a reduced number of grizzly bears to wilderness areas too small to support viable populations.

These narratives paint grizzly bears as little more than nuisances, numbers in a population tally, or a source of body parts for trophy hunters to collect and mount on a den wall.

It is high time that we offer a corrective for these narratives of negativism. As David recently reflected: “My field studies allowed me to experience the magic of grizzly bears through numerous close observations—magic that millions of visitors to Yellowstone, Grand Teton, and Glacier National Parks have experienced from afar. We are collectively rediscovering what indigenous people have known for a long time: that grizzlies are a source of powerful medicine.”

We invite you to contribute a written piece, either as prose or poetry, featuring an inspiring or magical experience that you've had with grizzly bears, whether through an encounter, an observation, a reading, a video, or even a dream. We will publish as many contributions as possible in a newly created section of our website *Grizzly Times*, post them on our Facebook site, share them with others, and if you are so inclined, invite you for an interview on our *Grizzly Times* podcast. We hope to not only promulgate a positive vision of grizzly bears, but also foster a community of mutually inspired people willing to speak up for grizzly bears and those who care about these animals.

In your contributions, please try to limit your written pieces to 500 words—although we encourage you to compose longer pieces to share with friends and family or in other venues.

Perhaps even more important, we encourage you to use your contribution as the basis for an opinion piece or letter to the editor for submission to a local newspaper or other media outlet. Most papers limit opinion pieces to 600 words and letters to 150-200 words. Either should be submitted to the editor in charge of editorials. You will have the best prospects of acceptance if you are civil, and end by advocating for some sort of civic or political action. Please contact us if you are looking for ideas of where to submit possible pieces.

In service of kick-starting this endeavor, we've included four pieces below that are in the spirit of what we hope to elicit: by Cecilia Mink of Whitefish, Montana, poet Ellen Bass of Santa Cruz, California, Louisa Willcox of Livingston, Montana, and the late Brian Peck of Columbia Falls, Montana. Please draw on whatever personal experiences or insights have inspired you. Please don't worry if you are not a poet like the acclaimed Ellen Bass—it is your authentic voice that counts.

Cecilia Mink has graciously agreed to help us coordinate this project. If you have pieces to submit, please send them to: protectrgriz@gmail.com and to *Grizzly Times* at info@grizzlytimes.org

In this newsletter, we are thrilled to feature the photos of **Savannah Rose**, a wildlife photographer and champion who helped catalyze recent effort to reduce the availability of bear attractants in the Jackson Hole Area, now called [Jackson Hole Bear Solutions](#).

Her ethos: "I believe that it is paramount that wildlife photographers give back to their subjects in some way. Otherwise, sharing their time is simply exploitative. I'm aware that I trespass in their home, intrude on their time, and I know to some extent disrupt the peace, although I try hard to be as noninvasive as possible."



Blondie and Cubs, photo by Savannah Rose

**“Grizzly”
by Ellen Bass**

*She grazes in a meadow, sulfur blossoms spilling
from her jaw.*

*At this moment she seems so calm, she could be holy,
if what that means is something like being
wholly unaware of the good she gives,
how even her rooting tills the soil
and even her shitting ferries the seeds
and even her bathing is a joy to behold
as I am beholding her this morning
as she leans over a water hole, her shadow first*

*and then her reflection on the skin of the water,
then the splash as she enters, the pond opening,
rippling, and the scritch as she scrubs
her head with her paw, the great planet
of her head that she dunks and raises, shaking
the water in wide arcs, spraying
the lens of the hidden camera. And now
she climbs out, water rivering off her fur.
She is drying that huge head
in the long grasses.
And here she hunkers
over a bison carcass, slowly ripping free
the shoulder. Those precision instruments
that work with an ease that seems—yes—delicate.
Blood stains the river and stains
the snowbank and stains the rock.
Vessel carrying the chemicals of life—
hair and bone, flagella and bloom.
She carries them, lumbering forward
as she sinks her teeth and feeds.*

Used with permission from Ellen Bass.

Ellen Bass is an acclaimed poet who has won many awards, including fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation. The poem “Grizzly” is in her collection of poems, *Indigo*, published by Copper Canyon Press.

For more on Ellen, listen to this *Grizzly Times* podcast:

- <https://www.grizzlytimespodcast.org/post/ellen-bass>
- <https://www.ellenbass.com/>



Bruno, Grizzly Dude of Jackson Hole, Photo by Savannah Rose

***In Honor of Monica
by Cecilia Mink***

I was raised on a farm and cattle ranch in southern Idaho. It was hard work but rewarding to spend part of my summer on a horse looking for lost calves in the mountains. My three favorite things: horses, cattle, and mountains. It was wild and adventurous. While in the lower Sawtooth Mountain range my dad made it clear to us kids that we were to leave the wildlife alone. He would say, "We are in their home". Co-existence was mandatory. I had no idea at the time how much this experience would come full circle later in life.

I have always loved bears. They are larger than life to me. It started with Smokey Bear. Then I heard of the famous Queen of the Tetons, Grizzly 399. I was smitten.

September of 2021 changed my life forever. Word spread that a mama grizzly, Monica, and her three cubs were killed in Polebridge, Montana, after becoming conditioned to eating trash left in a trailer by some irresponsible people. When I saw the picture of Monica with a tear coming from her eye, I vowed that day I

would become an advocate for these creatures of grandeur even though I had no clue what I was doing.

I am an avid hiker and backpacker and I have yet to see a grizzly bear in the wild. Every day I think of that tear coming from Monica's eye, which inspires me to keep fighting for these precious souls. I then think of my dad and I ask myself, "Why can't everyone just learn to co-exist? It isn't that hard."

John Muir offers a quote that perhaps captures our relationship with grizzly bears best: "Bears are made of the same dust as we, and breathe the same winds and drink of the same waters. A bear's days are warmed by the same sun, his dwellings are overdomed by the same blue sky, and his life turns and ebbs with heart-pulsing's like ours and was poured from the same fountain.... They truly have a spirit that we as humans have."

When I think of this quote, I see them as my kindred spirit.

I am asking you, the reader, to share with us an experience with bears, their country and why you care. Then consider taking that inspiration and putting it into action to help save grizzly bears from being trophy hunted and protect their habitat. Please reach out to your Members of Congress. Let them know we must keep the grizzly bear on the Endangered Species list. More than ever, we must be voices for the bear and the wilderness.

Cecilia is a wildlife advocate from Idaho, currently living in Whitefish, Montana.



Grizzly Bear Matriach of Jackson Hole, 399, photo by Savannah Rose

One Day I Met a Bear
Absaroka Mountains, Wyoming
by Louisa Willcox

If I had been moving any faster, I would have plowed into the grizzly bear. With the momentum of my seventy-pound pack, I fell backward. For a second that felt like forever, our eyes met. We were as surprised as we were drenched by a thunderous downpour. Then the bear wheeled, crashed through a creek and vanished in the darkening woods.

What happened? Who was this mysterious being anyway? Grizzlies became my obsession. The more I hiked in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem, the more I was smitten with the animal that defined it. Learning about the ways of the bear meant appreciating its plight—the destruction of its habitat and the hostility of many who live in and around grizzly bear country. I felt compelled to act. Four decades of conservation work perhaps represent a gesture of atonement for the harm we Europeans have inflicted.

As I dug into the lives and ecology of bears, I unearthed new levels of our connections with “Bear,” a word that shares the same root word as “breath,” “birth” and “bury.” For time out of mind, our lives have been intertwined. We ferociously nurture our young, teaching them not less than everything about how to live in the

world. We have long shared similar foods—bison, berries, salmon, and roots. We share a sense of intelligence, playfulness, courage, and resilience. I was not surprised to learn that one of the oldest stories told throughout the Northern Hemisphere, from Greece to Siberia, is about the Woman Who Married a Bear.

But I continue to be surprised and dismayed to find that despite much-improved education about grizzly bears, their habitat, and nonlethal conflict deterrents such as bear pepper spray, too many bears continue to be killed unnecessarily. Although we currently have more bears in Greater Yellowstone than at the time of my encounter, we have still not assured meaningful restoration of the Great Bear or ensured that there are enough bears to fill historical ecological roles. As those of us who have long advocated for bears have become grizzled, we need a new generation of advocates willing to speak up for grizzly bears and the magical wild places they need to survive.

For more about Louisa see:

- <https://www.youtube.com/LouisaWillcoxiintro>
- <https://www.grizzlytimes.org/interviews-louisa-david>



What? Who, Me? Grizzly with a Rodent Dig, Perhaps a Vole Root Cache. Photo by Savannah Rose

Grizzly Changing Lives—One Grizzly at a Time

by Brian Peck

Soon after moving to Montana, my wife and I had the opportunity to see how even a brief and distant encounter with a grizzly can transform someone's day—and perhaps their life. In mid-September, in the glacier lily meadows at Glacier National Park's Logan Pass, we saw a grizzly with a dark black coat and silver highlights down his back.

A family from Michigan arrived and asked what we were looking at. When I said "a grizzly" the mom jumped a foot in the air exclaiming, "Oh my gosh where? I've got to see it!" I pointed it out and invited her to look through my scope, which was at 48X for one of those "up close and personal" moments that few people ever get to experience.

Her jaw dropped and her eyes grew wide, "Oh my gosh, this is unbelievable. He's so beautiful. This is too much." Other family members pried her away from the scope so they could look. Tears rolled down her cheeks, and a smile stretched from ear to ear. She told us that they'd been in the park for a week hoping to see a grizzly but with no luck.

She told us that we'd made their day—no we'd made their entire trip! I pointed out that we only brought the scope, and the real thanks should go to the black and silver bear that transformed a subalpine meadow into a lifetime memory. Then I gave the family a copy of the Great Bear Foundation newsletter and urged her to help ensure that grizzlies survive. She thanked me and promised they would help.

Twenty years later I remember that moment like it was yesterday, and somewhere in Michigan, I suspect there's a family that still looks back on that day and smiles. Such is the power of the Great Bear to transform days and change lives if we are willing to summon the humility to look, listen, and learn.

Brian was an indefatigable advocate for wildlife and a consummate educator. For decades, he was a leading voice for grizzly bears and wolves in the Northern Rockies and worked as a wildlife consultant for Great Bear Foundation, Sierra Club, and Natural Resources Defense Council, among other groups.

For more on Brian, see this: <https://www.grizzlytimes.org/brian-pecks-story>



Grizzly, photo by Savannah Rose

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.

As we have discussed before, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is, yet again, making a run at removing Endangered Species Act protections for grizzly bears—potentially throughout Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. This move has been catalyzed by petitions from these states' Republican Governors against a backdrop of legislation in all three states designed to persecute carnivores, with wolves targeted for especially vindictive measures. Congressional delegations from the northern Rockies are simultaneously attempting to legislatively remove ESA protections, which judicial review explicitly exempted.

If grizzlies are delisted, whether legislatively or by the administration, they will almost certainly be subject to punitive state management aimed at reducing the sizes and distributions of our two largest grizzly bear populations. As always, we will be in the trenches trying to protect grizzlies and the habitats they depend on in this region and elsewhere

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*