



PO Box 2406
Livingston, MT 59047
Phone: 406-224-2250
Email: info@GrizzlyTimes.org
Web: www.GrizzlyTimes.org

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*.

[Visit our Website](#)

[Listen to our Podcasts](#)

February 24, 2021

Dear Friend of the Grizzly,

As the Great Bear sleeps through a brutal Yellowstone winter, a political spring is unfolding in the topside world. President Joe Biden has begun to reverse the legacy of Trump's reign of terror against the environment, placing top priority on our long-neglected climate and biodiversity crises. The need has never been so urgent.

We are delighted at Biden's pick of Deb Haaland for Interior, who, if confirmed, will be the first Native American cabinet secretary in U.S. history. A Laguna Pueblo from New Mexico, Haaland vowed to "be fierce for all of us, for our planet, and all of our protected land."

Predictably, Republicans have vowed to quash her nomination – with Montana Senator Daines attempting to ambush her on the grizzly bear delisting issue at this week's Senate confirmation hearing. But you can help. Please see the **Take Action** alert at the end of this newsletter.

NEW PODCAST:

Pilot Bruce Gordon Flies for the Land

Bruce Gordon is a veteran pilot who has spent decades offering journalists, decisionmakers and concerned citizens a bird's-eye view of threatened landscapes across the American West. Flying over 10,000 hours of conservation missions for hundreds of groups, Bruce and his partner Jane

Pargiter at EcoFlight provide a unique aerial perspective in their advocacy for wild lands and wildlife.

Louisa and Bruce go way back, working together to protect the wild country of the Northern Rockies, and species such as wolves and grizzlies. This is a wide-ranging conversation about the transformative power of seeing the big picture. Bruce's long friendship with singer and pilot John Denver inspired Ecoflight's work on how flying and climbing can open your consciousness.



A few excerpts:

"For me, it's all about education. I don't want people looking out the left side of the window, and I don't want them looking out the right side of the window. I want them looking at the earth, thinking about what they care about, and then advocating for what they care about.

I learned that getting people in an airplane and showing them places in a way that they've never seen before can be transformative. Years ago, when I was working on clearcutting issues, I flew a number of loggers. And some said: 'Oh my God, I had no idea that so much of this land had been clearcut.' It really opened their eyes and it changed them.

About the challenges facing the West:

"It's 'more people, more scars upon the land' as John [Denver]'s song said. But hopefully some of the images and the work that we've done with so many committed conservation organizations – and we fly for over 300 of them – we're

all working to get people to understand the challenges and try to address them appropriately.”

Click the image below to hear the Podcast:



<https://www.grizzlytimespodcast.org/post/bruce-gordon>

IN THE NEWS:

Red Skies over Montana

While the elections opened new doors for conservation, including in some western states, doors slammed in Montana. With the election of Greg Gianforte as Governor and Matt Rosendale as Congressman, and the reelection of Senator Steve Daines, Montana's extremist leadership has embarked upon terrifying policies that bode ill for grizzly bears and wild nature.

Since governors wield outsized influence over wildlife management in the West, the notoriously regressive Gianforte will cast a long shadow over the fate of grizzly bears. This year we are bracing for a high stakes battle over Montana's revision of the state Grizzly Bear Management Plan that will profoundly impact grizzlies in four of the five Northern Rockies' populations.

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks left little doubt about its intentions. In January, the agency released a biased opinion survey that was designed from the onset to show presumed public support for a grizzly bear hunt. Montana's subsequent release of the survey's results gave short shrift to ample public support for coexistence while inflating minimal support for a trophy hunt.

<https://dailyinterlake.com/.../it-time-hunt-grizzly-bears/>

Sadly, Gianforte will have allies in high places with the recent unfortunate appointment of Martha Williams, former Director of Montana's Fish, Wildlife and Parks, to the number two person at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Williams has long advocated for the removal of Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections for grizzlies and initiation of a trophy hunt.

<https://www.mtpr.org/post/former-fwp-director-appointed-us-fish-and-wildlife-service>

Below is a link to David's comprehensive report on why hunting grizzlies is a bad idea: [Efficacies & Effects of Sport Hunting Grizzly Bears](#)

Covid Refugees Pose New Threat to Grizzlies and the Wild: But Will Managers Respond?

Last summer, the Northern Rockies saw an unprecedented onslaught of out-of-state vacationers who had no clue about how to behave responsibly around wildlife, often leaving food and garbage out for grizzlies and other animals. At the same time the real estate market is overwhelmed by a new breed of buyer: the covid refugee. Many are ill-prepared to be neighbors with wildlife, especially large carnivores.

- <https://missoulacurrent.com/outdoors/2020/11/northern-grizzly-management/>
- <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/grizzly-bear-resurgence-increased-interactions-humans>

Bear managers admit to being totally unprepared for the challenges being posed by this influx of newcomers. Bear jams in the national parks were bigger than ever, with hundreds of people routinely gathering to watch grizzly bear matron 399 and her four cubs in Grand Teton Park. But the National Forests may be hit worse given a long history of funding shortfalls and disregard for wild nature among agency leaders.

It remains unclear whether agencies will be willing and able to ramp up efforts to deal with this assault. At recent meetings, bear managers have given predictably mixed signals. On the one hand, managers recently announced positive steps to more broadly apply Canada's "Bear Smart" Community Model featuring collaboration with communities, nonprofits and government agencies to minimize conflicts with grizzlies.

<https://mtstandard.com/news/local/at-winter-meeting-grizzly-bear-experts-talk-about-making-communities-bear-smart>

On the other hand, managers continue to resist calls by environmental groups for "no-brainer" measures such as requiring users of public lands to carry bear spray. And the federal government's recent refusal to bring charges against a Jackson, Wyoming, woman who has deliberately fed and food-conditioned

numerous bears, including Grand Teton's rock star grizzly bear mom, 399, speaks volumes about the motivations of wildlife managers.



Grizzly Bear 399 and her four cubs eat feed left outside a home near Grand Teton Park, Fall 2020, Jackson News & Guide Photo

- <https://www.powelltribune.com/stories/grizzly-bear-advocates-calling-for-mandates,28244>
- <https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/homeowner-feeds-teton-park-grizzlies-for-years-feds-decline-charges>

Grizzly Games with Numbers

Managers seem less interested in addressing the challenges arising from a rapidly changing world than continuing their decades-long efforts to remove federal protections for grizzly bears and turn management authority over to the states. In serving that end, grizzly bear researchers continue to play games with methods for counting bears. At a recent meeting, Frank van Manen, leader of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team, said that there might be 40-45% more grizzlies than the roughly 725 currently estimated – an estimate created simply by changing methods.

<https://www.wyomingnews.com/team-says-grizzly-numbers-may-be-higher-than-believed>

But these are paper bears.

As David put it: *"Inevitably, the process of clarification of numbers points to what seems like a deliberate strategy of disinformation on the part of agency representatives. To put it simply, there is no evidence of a population increase during the last 15 years. All of the "increases" have been a result of changing methods – which amounts to no real increase in size of the population at all."*

David's discusses the feds "Numbers Game"
here: <https://www.grizzlytimes.org/the-numbers-game>

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Must Do More to Reduce Grizzly Bear Deaths

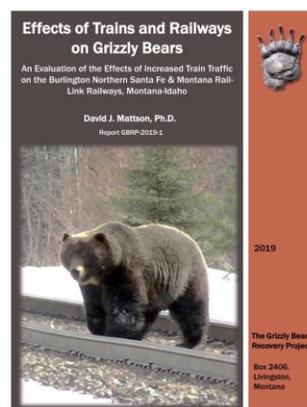
Although grizzly bear deaths caused by train strikes along railways in the Northern Continental Divide and Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystems are increasing, many can be avoided. Even so, Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) – a corporation with revenues of nearly \$22 billion and the cause of most grizzly bear deaths – claims that meaningful mitigation is too costly.

As a means of dodging legal accountability for its actions, BNSF last month requested that FWS approve a plan for its operations that would allow the company to kill 18 grizzlies during the next seven years without running afoul of the ESA. That number actually represents an increase over its average rate of 2.1 train-caused bear mortalities per year during the past 18 years.

<https://missoulacurrent.com/outdoors/2021/02/trains-grizzlies/>

David responded with this: "Essentially BNSF will be permitted to kill every bit as many bears as they've killed in the past." He criticized the plan as "largely aspirational with no accountability," and underscored the need for practical mitigations, including reducing train speeds around blind corners and minimizing traffic during nighttime, dawn and dusk hours, when bears are more likely to be moving around.

For more about the impacts of trains on grizzlies and what can be done to reduce deaths, see this report by David Mattson: [Effects of Trains and Railways on Bears](#)



Chronic Wasting Disease Hits Elk in Jackson: Another Tragedy Strikes Greater Yellowstone

The long-expected moment when elk on the Jackson Elk Refuge feeding grounds would be infected by the deadly Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has finally arrived – with potentially catastrophic consequences for elk, grizzlies, and the entire Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

<https://mountainjournal.org/experts-say-yellowstone-could-be-hit-by-superspreading-wildlife-disease>

Last December, a hunter shot an elk in Grand Teton Park that was infected with CWD. Because Wyoming Game and Fish Department is, for now, continuing to feed elk on a landscape known to harbor the deadly disease, the state wildlife managers are guaranteeing that the highly contagious disease will spread throughout Greater Yellowstone.

CWD has been spreading steadily since it was first detected in southeastern Wyoming more than four decades ago. Conservationists have long sought to force closure of Wyoming's elk feed grounds because they increase the spread of all sorts of diseases by concentrating animals in a limited area during most of the winter.

Needless to say, Yellowstone grizzlies cannot afford to lose another staple food. Yellowstone's cutthroat trout and whitebark pine have already crashed, victims of human-induced climate change and invasive species. But news of CWD in the Jackson elk herd is being met with a shrug by managers who wrongly claim that all bear foods are equal.



Illustration by Phil Juliano

Here, David rebuts the argument that a salad is the same as a steak: <https://www.grizzlytimes.org/single-post/2016-1-28-let-them-eat-grizzly-cake>

More by David on why elk and other large herbivores matter to grizzlies: <https://www.mostlynaturalgrizzlies.org/trends-1>

At 34 Years, Grizzly 168 Was the Oldest Bear Known in Yellowstone

Grizzly 168 was the oldest grizzly ever documented in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem – having lived as long as any grizzly on record in North America. But last fall, managers killed him.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/wyoming/articles/2021-01-23/grizzly-34-confirmed-as-yellowstone-regions-oldest-known>

Here's a bit of what we know about his life:

As a 3-year-old, he was originally captured during 1989 in the Pacific Creek drainage on the Bridger Teton National Forest. He made his living apparently without incident until last fall, when he zeroed in on the Upper Green River area, which has long been a hotbed of conflicts between cattle ranchers and grizzlies. With only a few nubs for canines and no other teeth left, he turned to killing cows as a last resort. When managers killed him in retaliation, he weighed just 170 pounds – far less than the 500 or so pounds he would have weighed in his prime.

Bear 168 was proof that grizzlies can live a very long time free of conflict with humans, but only if we give them room. Dead, he reminds of how problematic the grazing allotments are on public lands in the Upper Green River area, where ranchers actively resist taking measures to coexist with grizzlies.

For more on these problems, read David's declaration in a lawsuit on the Upper Green River grazing allotments: [Upper Green River grazing allotments Lawsuit](#)

GOOD NEWS AND FUN STUFF:

Montana Supreme Court Puts Another Nail in Coffin for Gold Mine Near Yellowstone

The Montana Supreme Court recently pounded another nail in the coffin of a proposed gold mine in the Emigrant Gulch area north of Yellowstone National Park. The court unanimously reaffirmed a lower court's 2018 ruling that the Montana Department of Environmental Quality did not adequately analyze the potential impacts of exploratory drilling operations on wildlife such as grizzly bears and wolverines.

<https://montanafreepress.org/2020/12/10/state-supreme-court-blocks-proposed-gold-mine-near-yellowstone/>

For more on the amazing campaign that defeated this mine, check out this Grizzly Times podcast with one of its leaders, Michelle Uberuaga Zanoni of the Park County Environmental

Council: <https://www.grizzlytimespodcast.org/post/michelle-uberuaga>

Pebble Mine Permit Denied!

On its way out the door, the Trump administration denied a key permit for a massive gold and copper mine proposed for an area upstream from Alaska's Bristol Bay, delivering a terminal blow to a project opposed by an unusual coalition of conservationists, fishermen, Alaska Natives, and citizens across the country. The pristine area is home to grizzlies, wolves, eagles and salmon.

In an unusual move, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said that proposed operations of the Pebble Mine would violate the Clean Water Act and was "contrary to the public interest." The fact that Donald Trump Jr. considered the area to be his personal hunting and fishing grounds no doubt inspired the Corps of Engineers to break with its tradition of routinely issuing permits.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/pebble-mine-alaska/2020/11/25>

Want to Lose Extra Pounds? Try Hibernating



Napping Griz, Department of Interior Photo

Check out this fun video by grizzly bear fan Trent Sizemore – and a New Year's joke posted by the U.S. Department of the Interior: "Are you having trouble losing those unwanted, extra holiday pounds? Then ask your doctor if hibernation is right for you."

<https://ftw.usatoday.com/2021/01/yellowstone-grizzly-bear-tries-napping-outside-heartwarming-video>

TAKE ACTION:

Support Deb Haaland as Interior Secretary



Billboard seen on Montana highways.

Grizzlies have been swept up in the campaign supporting Deb Haaland's confirmation as our new Secretary of the Interior. Haaland is supremely qualified for the post, having served as Vice Chair of the House Committee on Natural Resources, and achieved a lifetime League of Conservation Voters score of 98% based on a stellar voting record that included opposition to new oil and gas drilling leases on federal land as well as the Keystone-XL Pipeline – positions she shares with President Biden.

But Montana Senator Steve Daines, who receives heavy financial support from the oil and gas industry, is leading a fight against her confirmation. Daines has questioned Haaland's qualifications and has labeled her positions "radical." Senator Daines apparently thinks that after the corrupt legacies of Zinke and Bernhardt, it is radical to appoint a Secretary of Interior who will protect, rather than plunder, public lands.

Daines tried to ambush Haaland about removing ESA protections from grizzly bears and her support for the *Tribal Heritage and Grizzly Bear Protection Act*. "I was caring about the bears," Haaland replied when Daines asked why she co-sponsored the bill.

The Tribal Heritage and Grizzly Bear Protection Act was shaped by the historic Piikani Nation Grizzly Treaty, the most-signed tribal treaty in history, with over 200 tribal nation signatories. Tribal leaders fought the delisting to protect the Great Bear, which is considered sacred, and to protect treaty rights, sovereignty, and spiritual freedoms.

Following the hearing, a funny new hashtag emerged on twitter, #BearsforDeb. The group's bio reads: "#BearsForDeb because Deb is for the Bears!! Proud ursine relatives bearing down for #DebForInterior!!"

Please contact your Senator and support Haaland as Interior Secretary. You can find the contact information here: https://www.senate.gov/senators/How_to_correspond_senators.htm

If you are from Montana, please contact Steve Daines at: <https://www.daines.senate.gov/connect/email-steve>

- <https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/indigenous-organizations-challenge-gop-attempt-to-block-haaland-from-becoming-the-first-native-american-secretary-of-interior>
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/02/19/haaland-interior-native-american/>
- <https://nativenewsonline.net/currents/haaland-retains-her-composure-in-the-face-of-immense-disrespect-in-confirmation-hearing>
- <https://twitter.com/hashtag/BearsForDeb>

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 recently helped with the successful appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court, which has implications for delisting of Northern Continental Divide, and perhaps all lower-48, grizzlies.

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,

David and Louisa