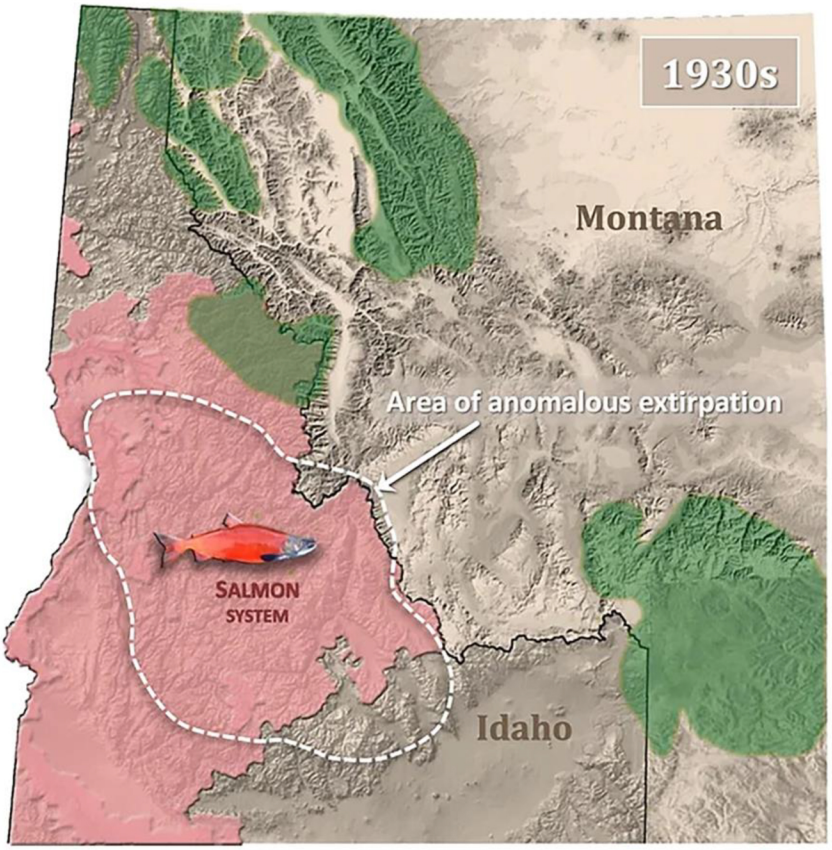
The Salmon Factor

by David Mattson

Grizzly Times

https://www.grizzlytimes.org/grizzly-bear-extirpations



The map above shows the distribution of grizzly bears in the US Northern Rockies circa 1930 (in green) relative to the distribution of contemporaneous surviving salmon and steelhead spawning runs (in pink). The distribution of spawning salmonids coincides with the area in central Idaho where grizzlies were extirpated in a wild and remote area—despite low human densities. The explanation for this juxtapose probably has to do with the fact that spawning salmon attracted bears to specific places at specific times along lower-elevation riparian corridors, which is also where most humans were active during the late 1800s and early 1900s. This anomalous juxtaposition exposed grizzlies to highly lethal people who clearly took full advantage of the opportunity to kill bears. For more on this see William Wright's 1909 book "The Grizzly."