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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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April 10, 2024

***Dear Friend of the Grizzly,***

Grizzly bears are up and about this spring, reminding us of the miracle of [hibernation](#). Since time immemorial, we have been fascinated by the ability of bears to disappear into the earth in winter, seemingly die, and reemerge with new life in spring. Grizzly [moms with newborns](#) emerge a little later than males – typically mid-April through May – primarily because cubs are so small and vulnerable.

On a cautionary note, if you live in bear country, keep an eye out – and [secure attractants](#) like bird food!

In the topside world, we are witnessing a whirlwind of activity that promises to have profound effects on grizzly bears. Of greatest consequence, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will decide whether to strip federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections from Yellowstone and possibly Glacier area grizzlies. A decision regarding whether to keep protections for Yellowstone's grizzlies could happen as early as this year.

This possibility of loss of federal protections throws into relief the threat posed by state politicians and wildlife managers to grizzly bears – something that will become a reality when states in the Northern Rockies gain authority over grizzlies. Although we have written multiple times about the institutional and cultural problems of state wildlife management, in this newsletter we yet again focus on the enduring threat posed by state politicians and managers to not only grizzly bears, but all carnivores.

We recently produced two reports that feature different approaches to diagnosing not only the social, psychological, and institutional dynamics typifying state wildlife management, but also challenges that bedevil reform efforts. The first report offers a graphical preview of a comprehensive analysis that David embarked upon last year, and the second is a guide to strategies and tactics that have promise for reshaping a deeply problematic institution rooted in archaic worldviews, rather than our current social values.

We hope you find these reports helpful and informative!



*Photo of Bruno by Savannah Rose*

**[A Graphical Diagnosis of the Institution of State Wildlife Management \(A Preview\)](#) by Dr. David Mattson**

David recently compiled graphics summarizing key information relevant to understanding why the management of wildlife by state agencies poses a danger to carnivores in the United States – including grizzly bears. On the face of it, one need look no further than how state wildlife managers deal with coyotes, skunks, foxes, bobcats, mountain lions, black bears, and wolves...among others.

Coyotes are typically treated as varmints subject to unregulated killing. At best, the remainder are treated as “furbearers” or “game.” Carnivores are routinely subject to ill-regulated harvest that sanctions methods for killing and capture that most people would consider cruel. The use of poisons is rife, along with leg-hold

traps and snares – including neck snares that literally strangle captured animals. Hounds are not only routinely used to pursue and kill lions and black bears during hunting seasons, but also for recreational chases during the remainder of the year.

Even though all these policies and practices are objectionable or even morally repugnant to most people in most places, state wildlife managers continue to enthusiastically promote and support them. This paradox begs an explanation, which is why David has devoted himself to critically examining the cultures, identities, politics, ethics, and psychology of not only state wildlife managers, but also the hunters, trappers, and fishers they unabashedly call “customers.”

His latest undertaking has involved summarizing, synthesizing, and interpreting all the research and scholarship he can find pertaining directly or indirectly to the institution of state wildlife management. His efforts have so far resulted in copious notes, digital folders figuratively bulging with literature, and a bunch of summarizing graphics.

As a preview of where David’s efforts have taken him, he wrote extensive explanatory captions for a select number of graphics and then compiled them in a PDF entitled “[A Graphical Diagnosis of the Institution of State Wildlife Management: A Preview.](#)” that can be downloaded from the *Grizzly Times* website. These graphics do not encompass all of David’s ongoing analysis, but rather selectively focus on social, psychological, and cultural dynamics; derivative narratives constructed by hunters and managers to protect status quo arrangements; and, synergisms and self-reinforcing dynamics that spawn resistance to reforms despite the widely recognized emergence of crises related to finances and the legitimacy of state wildlife management agencies.

As David puts it, the central problem of state wildlife management is the domination of this institution by a regressive culture organized around hunting and trapping. Even more problematic, institutional arrangements are sustained by toxic identity politics and a smorgasbord of problematic social-psychological dynamics.



*Photo by Savannah Rose*

**[The Problem of State Wildlife Management Institutions](#)  
by Louisa Willcox, Dr. David Mattson, and Dr. Leo Rowland**

Lest we leave with the impression that there is no hope for reforming state wildlife management, we also feature another report in this newsletter that focuses expressly on strategies and tactics that have the greatest prospects of reshaping this institution. The report entitled “[The Problem of State Wildlife Management Institutions](#)” is authored by Louisa, David, and Dr. Leo Rowland, and is downloadable from our *Grizzly Times* website. The report is based on not only a synthesis of previous relevant analyses, but also in-depth interviews conducted by Dr. Rowland with numerous people who have closely observed state wildlife management either as agency employees or external advocates of change.

There is no mystery about key ingredients of reform. Sources of funding need to be diversified to eliminate the financial hold of hunters, trappers, and fishers over state wildlife management agencies. Governing commissions also need to be diversified to better reflect the interests of the public these commissions are supposed to serve. Likewise, the current culture of wildlife management agencies needs to be reconfigured by hiring people who identify with pursuits and interests other than hunting or fishing. Perhaps most important, people with interests other than “harvesting” animals – who value wild animals simply because they exist –

need to be given a meaningful voice in shaping consequential decisions affecting wildlife.

Perhaps self-evidently, none of these reforms will be easy. In fact, most have been vigorously, if not vehemently, resisted by hunters, trappers, fishers, and agency personnel who serve them. The central challenge for reformers lies in developing social and political strategies that have prospects of success.

In addition to our report, you can also find useful insights about state wildlife management and the means of promoting reform in articles, books, and book chapters published by a handful of thoughtful people. Notable examples include: "[Coexisting with Large Carnivores](#)," a compilation edited by Tim Clark, Murray Rutherford, and Denise Casey; "[Large Carnivore Conservation](#)," another compilation edited by Susan Clark and Murray Rutherford; and, a book chapter that David co-authored with Susan Clark entitled "People, Politics, and Cougar Management" in the book "[Cougar: Ecology & Conservation](#)." Adrian Treves, Michael Manfredo, and others have also produced a large body of relevant work reported in scientific journals, including seminal papers such as "[Predators and the Public Trust](#)" and "[Technocracy in a Time of Changing Values](#)."

We hope you find our recent reports on state wildlife management edifying, thought-provoking, and not too impenetrable.

### **Take Action for Bears!**

We conclude by featuring a recent Action Alert by Earthjustice requesting that the US Fish and Wildlife Service redouble protections for threatened grizzlies instead of removing ESA safeguards. We thought it best to not recreate the wheel – and could not have said it better:

<https://earthjustice.org/experts/perry-wheeler/grizzly-bears-still-need-protections>

We extend a special thanks to Savannah Rose, a photographer based in Jackson, Wyoming, for her generosity sharing her photos of grizzlies and for her passionate advocacy for the wild. For more of her fabulous work, see: [www.instagram.com/savannahrosewildlife](http://www.instagram.com/savannahrosewildlife)

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*Louisa, David and Tashi in Montana's Big Sky Country*

**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 preview in this newsletter, the US Fish & Wildlife Service is yet again contemplating removal of ESA protections for grizzly bears – potentially throughout Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. This move has been catalyzed by petitions from the Republican Governors of these three states against a backdrop of legislation in these states designed to persecute carnivores, with wolves targeted for especially vindictive measures. Congressional delegations from the Northern Rockies are simultaneously attempting to remove ESA protections, through legislation that expressly prohibits any judicial review.

If grizzlies are delisted, whether legislatively or by the administration, they will almost certainly be subject to punitive 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, *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 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***