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Newsletter

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

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Dear Friends of the Grizzly,

Now, under snowy blankets, mother grizzly bears are pulling off a miracle: giving birth to cubs the size of teacups, while not eating, drinking or defecating. For the next few months, her cubs will rely on her rich milk entirely for survival.

Meanwhile, the topside human world is deciding their fates. Now more than ever, they depend on our compassion – the central theme of a recent article, *A Test of Our Compassion*, by Savannah Barnes in Sun Magazine about our work. We hope you will enjoy!

Here are a few excerpts:

“Bears can show us a potentially different relationship with nature, which is maybe akin to an older, forgotten relationship we once had with bears: a kinship, a reverence for them, before we killed them off.”

“We think God put us at the center of the universe, but we put ourselves there and declared everything else lower than us, including animals like bears and dogs. We are not better than they are. We are just fellow travelers.”

“Living with animals like grizzly bears, wolves, and bison demands that we accommodate these other beings who impose constraints on us, that we find a place of openness for them — just like we have to do with other people.”

<https://www.thesunmagazine.org/issues/529/a-test-of-our-compassion>

NEW PODCAST:

Fabulous Interview with Gary Macfarlane of Friends of the Clearwater

Don't miss this interview with Gary Macfarlane, one of the great champions of the wild in the Northern Rockies! Director of the Friends of the Clearwater in Moscow, Idaho, Gary shares insights from 35 years of advocacy on behalf of wildlife and wilderness, including one of the largest intact ecosystems in the lower-48 states, the Selway Bitterroot.

One of the most exciting new developments in grizzly bear recovery is the recolonization of this vast ecosystem by grizzlies, which, if successful, could help reconnect the long-isolated populations of the Northern Rockies.



Gary Macfarlane, Champion of the Wild

A few excerpts:

“Backpacking in grizzly country is an enlivening experience – I am keener, sharper, and more attune to what is happening... Some people may find it stressful, but I find it exhilarating.”

“On public lands across the West, unfortunately, it seems the people who have the most influence are certain local elected leaders that represent the industrial perspective, that see the national forests only for the cash they can produce – be it logs, minerals, or grazing.... All that spells trouble for species like grizzlies.”

“We’ve already lost a lot of wild country and wildlife, and species like the grizzly have already lost a lot of country which will never return. Therefore, I think we have to be insistent that what remains must remain wild.... We need to be staunch defenders, because we’ve only got one planet, and our public land system is in serious trouble now.”

<https://www.grizzlytimes.org/the-grizzly-times-podcast> Episode 42

https://youtu.be/dR-LR61_7x0

But So Far, Government Officials Dismiss Grizzlies in the Selway Bitterroot

This week, another photo was published of a grizzly in the Selway Bitterroot – making the total, so far, of at least three grizzlies we know of that have wandered into the ecosystem. But there are almost certainly more.

As with other recent photos, this was taken near a station that baits black bears with rotten fruit and donuts to make it easier for hunters to kill them. In Idaho and Wyoming, where

the practice is still allowed, numerous grizzlies have been killed by black bear hunters in cases of "mistaken identity." Several conservation groups, including Friends of the Clearwater, Wilderness Watch, Wild Earth Guardians, and Western Watersheds Project, are suing to stop the barbaric practice – and David is helping provide expert testimony.

Interestingly, the article quotes agency "experts" saying they cannot confirm if this most recent photo – a perfect profile of a grizzly – was a grizzly bear or not. David says it is "egregious" that they can't confirm whether it was a grizzly – and that there must not be a real bear biologist among the lot.

The hunter who took the shot was also amazed that Idaho Fish and Game officials were disinterested. But it is not surprising. To admit that another grizzly has been confirmed in the Selway Bitterroot means the government must take responsibility to protect these threatened bears.

<https://Imtribune.com/outdoors/second-grizzly-likely-visited-north-central-idaho-last-year/article>

IN THE NEWS:

Government Downplays Grizzly Bear Deaths, But Discusses Coexistence

[Grizzly mortality reached record levels](#) in northwest Montana during the last two years, but at recent meetings of grizzly bear managers federal scientists again downplayed these deaths. However, we heard a few concessions. For example, Wayne Kasworm of US Fish and Wildlife Service said that, in the beleaguered Cabinet-Yaak population: "the biggest problem is bullets in bears, whether it's due to malicious poaching or misidentification." And U.S. Forest Service representative Tricia O'Connor admitted: "When we talk to people around Yellowstone, it's astounding how many people don't use bear spray."

Conservation groups have been pressing managers to redouble coexistence efforts. But federal scientists, including Frank van Manen, leader of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team (IGBST), dismissed the urgency of the problem, arguing that mortality levels are sustainable and that grizzly bear recovery levels have been reached. Remarkably, despite the evidence, he said nothing about the role of climate change in driving grizzly bear mortalities.

Most of the discussion so far has been about education, which is needed, but by itself has proved inadequate to address mounting and avoidable grizzly bear deaths. As Yellowstone, Grand Teton, and Glacier Parks have shown, a regulatory approach works when matched with good educational efforts. But no matter how much new rules are called for, such as requiring bear pepper spray and commonsense measures to reduce livestock conflicts on public lands, outside the national parks, the government continues to look the other way.

- <https://www.kpax.com/what-is-killing-montanas-grizzly-bears-humans-and-bullets-biologists-say>
- <https://www.mtpr.org/post/wildlife-managers-downplay-concerns-over-grizzly-bear-deaths>
- https://missoulian.com/news/local/scientist-grizzly-bear-conflicts-will-not-go-away/article_a9dd9062-0372-582f-987b-0e4d21f3e52d.html

Montana Grizzly Bear Debate Worsens

Under the direction of Montana Governor Steve Bullock and Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Director Martha Williams, the process involving the governor-appointed grizzly bear advisory council moves ahead to pave the way to strip endangered species protections for grizzlies. Bear advocates on the council are greatly outnumbered, while a few anti-bear screamers routinely grab headlines. While there is still a chance for the council to do good for grizzlies, especially to improve coexistence practice and to promote connectivity between populations, prospects are dwindling.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is complicit in this effort, doing nothing to engage the national public who passionately care about grizzlies. Its goal is to leave the fate of the grizzly up to states that seek to protect the status quo, to allow more grizzlies to be killed, including by trophy hunting, and to block people from outside the region from having a voice in the future of the Great Bear.

Meanwhile, George Edwards, executive director of the Livestock Loss Board, reported that Montana has paid more for livestock killed by predators in 2019 than ever before, with the number of grizzly bear-related losses almost double wolf-related losses. Many of these deaths are preventable.

And all current candidates running for governor, even so-called progressives, have announced their support of delisting. Only Whitney Williams, a democrat and daughter of former Montana Congressman Pat Williams, has reserved judgment about the wisdom of sport hunting grizzlies.

But conservationists have not been silent: Bonnie Rice of the Sierra Club wrote a good opinion piece on the problems of public involvement that ran in numerous Montana papers. And bear advocate Mike Bader challenged the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee on its recent decision to make delisting an explicit goal of the group's work for the first time in its 35-year history.

- <https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/politics/gubernatorial-candidates-talk-outdoor-recreation-and-state-management>
- http://www.choteauacantha.com/news/article_e008564c-2bf8-11ea-89d9-07b26c377f51.html
- https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/opinions/guest_columnists/grizzly-bear-council-needs-to-hear-from-public/article_c74d2bd8-7f07-5b9e-a0af-a6adc7cc6181.html
- https://helenair.com/opinion/columnists/grizzly-committee-needs-new-name/article_074ba60e-c492-520a-a462-8f9234bb9f8a.html
- https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/news/agriculture/state-pays-record-amount-for-livestock-killed-in/article_3e99d481-c672-5039-b777-e68bf3bffa55.html

Grizzly Tragedies: Ranchers Abuse Wildlife, Including Grizzlies, in Wyoming's Owl Creek Mountains

Angus Thuermer of Wyofile hit the ball out of the court with this must-read story documenting years of abuse by a wealthy family who own an enormous tract of land interspersed with Bureau of Land Management land in the Owl Creek Mountains southeast of Yellowstone Park.

Instead of working to coexist with wildlife, they seem to delight in precipitating conflicts, especially with bighorn sheep and grizzlies, while bullying public officials. This story sheds light on these ranchers' outrageous behavior that threatens our world-class wildlife – and is an example of the kind of informative in-depth journalism that we desperately need more of today.

The Owl Creeks are becoming increasingly important to grizzlies, who are expanding their range in order to compensate for the devastating losses of whitebark pine, formerly a key grizzly bear food for Greater Yellowstone grizzlies. The pine has declined as a result of an unprecedented climate-driven outbreak of mountain pine beetles. In the face of relentless hostility, this area is becoming a significant grizzly bear mortality sink.

Many ranchers are trying hard to coexist with wildlife, but not these guys. Their irresponsible behavior has no place anywhere, let alone Greater Yellowstone. Their grazing privileges should be immediately revoked.

Thanks, Angus, for uncovering the facts about a shocking situation that must not be allowed to continue!

<https://www.wyofile.com/bighorns-bears-and-bad-blood-grazing-v-wildlife-on-owl-creek/>

Meanwhile, Acting Bureau of Land Management Director Wants to Sell off Public Lands

Prospects that BLM will meaningfully address this and other environmental problems are slim to none, as Interior Secretary David Bernhardt recently extended the tenure of William Perry Pendley as effective head of the Bureau of Land Management – without a presidential nomination to the post.

Pendley has been a stalwart supporter of selling or opening up federal lands to drilling, mining and other commercial use, saying “The Founding Fathers intended all lands owned by the federal government to be sold.”

https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/interior-secretary-extends-the-tenure-of-federal-lands-chief---without-nominating-him/2020/01/02/0facd6fe-2da0-11ea-9b60-817cc18cf173_story.html

Federal Scientists Poo-poo Threats to Grizzlies from Grand Teton Elk Hunt

In a recent paper, Frank Van Manen of IGBST and others dismissed the threats to grizzlies from the Grand Teton Park elk hunt to serve the purpose of Wyoming Game and Fish, which has a vested interest in maintaining the hunt.

The “study” narrowly constrained the time frame to just two years, but more importantly, failed to examine if there are more bears now feeding on elk carcasses than there were five years ago, and if more grizzlies will likely be recruited into this niche with the passage of time. Nor did the researchers examine whether the current configuration of the hunt poses a significant hazard for the involved bears and people.

David concludes: “All of this dodges what I see as THE central issue: the ethics and moral implications of an execution-type slaughter of fleeing animals. There is no way this can be

represented as "fair chase"... this goes to the core ethos of violence, dominance and use that informs state wildlife management, all under a justifying gloss of "science."

- <https://www.wideopenspaces.com/no-grand-teton-elk-hunt-does-not-attract-grizzlies-study-concludes/>
- <https://www.mtpr.org/post/study-grand-teton-elk-hunt-not-major-draw-grizzlies>
- https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/news/environmental/study-team-teton-park-hunt-isn-t-a-grizzly-magnet/article_55d23e13-50ee-52b8-b624-ccf81ef67d3b.html

Bad News for Bears: Weyerhaeuser Selling Lands to Company with Wilks Brothers Ties

Southern Pine Plantations is buying 630,000 acres of Montana timberland from Weyerhaeuser, leading to speculation and concern about what is next for wildlife, including grizzly bears between the Northern Continental Divide and Cabinet-Yaak ecosystems. Connectivity is essential to boost the health of long-isolated grizzly bear populations. Without gene flow, grizzlies are at risk of inbreeding, particularly in the Cabinet-Yaak, which hosts only about 40 bears.

Southern Pines Plantations has ties to the notorious right-wing Dan and Ferris Wilks brothers of Cisco, Texas – billionaires who have been buying up vast tracts of land across the West after making their fortunes in the fracking industry. The Wilkses have become a symbol of the out-of-touch owner and the gentrification of the American West, shuttering trails and hiring armed guards to patrol their land and block access not only to their private property, but also to some publicly owned areas.

- <https://www.missoulacurrent.com/outdoors/2019/12/grizzly-bear-weyerhaeuser/>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/22/us/wilks-brothers-fracking-business.html>

Groups Challenge Ski Area Expansion in Grizzly Bear Habitat

The Swan View Coalition and Friends of the Wild Swan are objecting to more development in grizzly habitat as they try to hold the Flathead National Forest to its promises to protect Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem grizzly bears. The problem is the destruction of "secure core" grizzly bear habitat to benefit the Whitefish Mountain Resort that aims to add new ski runs and lifts, while building more roads and logging 1,000 acres.

"The Flathead is arbitrarily ignoring the Forest Plan requirement to maintain grizzly bear security in the Hellroaring Basin in favor of increased development, recreation, roads, logging and habitat fragmentation," said Arlene Montgomery of Friends of the Wild Swan.

Many thanks to Arlene and Keith Hammer of the Swan View Coalition, ferocious champions of the NCDE!

<https://www.missoulacurrent.com/outdoors/2020/01/swan-valley-grizzly/>

Body Cameras to Reduce Bear Deaths?

Disturbed by the heavy-handed behavior of conservation officers responsible for killing alarming numbers of bears in British Columbia, Pacific Wild is demanding that officers be required to carry body cameras.

Former conservation officer Bryce Casavant said that: "the current trend is to keep trying to kill our way out of [conflicts] with wildlife and that's not appropriate," and: "there's

hundreds of instances where a law enforcement officer is discharging their service weapon in an urban environment and there's nobody reviewing this."

<https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/conservation-officers-body-cameras-pacific-wild>

GOOD NEWS & COOL STUFF:

Huge Win for Grizzlies and Indigenous Rights: Jumbo Ski Resort is Dead!

Conservation has won in the 30-year battle over the \$1 billion Jumbo Glacier resort in the Purcell Mountains of British Columbia adjacent to the Selkirks, with an agreement to extinguish the developer's tenures and turn the area into a First Nations protected area. After years of fighting for grizzly bears, fighting for Ktunaxa First Nation rights, and fighting for wild places, the proposed resort is finally dead!

The Ktunaxa are buying out the resort owner's tenures for Jumbo and turning the land into a conservation area that they call Qat'muk, backed in part by \$16.1 million in funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada's Canada Nature Fund and \$5 million from private foundations.

To the Ktunaxa, Qat'muk is considered a spiritual home of the grizzly bear and the bear's spirit.

Speaking for the province, Cabinet Minister Michelle Mungall called the agreement "reconciliation in action and the right thing to do."

- <https://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/jumbo-glacier-deal-enshrines-indigenous-protected-area-consigns-mega-resort-to-history>
- <https://globalnews.ca/news/6431230/jumbo-glacier-first-nation/>

Patagonia produced a powerful film to help Keep Jumbo Wild, here:

<https://www.patagonia.com/new-localism/jumbo-wild.html>

For more on the fabulous coalition who fought for decades for this wilderness – and made this happen: <https://www.keepitwild.ca/jumbowildforever>

"It's turning the page and ending a chapter of decades of defensiveness on our part."
Kathryn Teneese of the Ktunaxa Nation Council



Wild Jumbo, photo by Pat Morrow



Grizzly Bears in Qat'muk, photo by John Bergenske

Big Win for Grizzlies: Another Destructive Gold Mine Blocked for Now

Advocates for the West recently won a court ruling that prevents the U.S. Forest Service from approving a Canadian mining company's permit to explore for gold in the best habitat connecting Yellowstone and the Selway Bitterroot ecosystems. The Kilgore Exploration Project in the Centennial Mountains would harm habitat for trout, grizzly bears and other wildlife that depend on this critical wildlife corridor.

This is the third Canadian gold mining company in recent years to push to destroy vital lands in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. The other two proposals, one abutting Yellowstone Park, and the other near Emigrant Peak in Paradise Valley, were resoundingly defeated in response to public outrage. Let us hope the Kilgore Project meets the same fate!

- <https://advocateswest.org/case/kilgore-mine-exploration>
- https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/jackson_hole_daily/local/yellowstone-cutthroat-slow-gold-prospecting/article_5c192e5f-bcc3-5b2a-8049-0e6bbb08b77b.html

Wildlife Services Gets New Funding for Large Carnivore Conflict Prevention

In the recent spending package to keep the government going, Congress appropriated \$1.38 million for the federal agency Wildlife Services to hire new employees dedicated to using nonlethal measures – including electric fencing around bee yards and chicken coops – to reduce livestock-carnivore conflicts in up to twelve states. The bill was

supported by Natural Resources Defense Council and Defenders of Wildlife, as well as by livestock groups.

<https://www.nrdc.org/experts/zack-strong/congress-funds-new-nonlethal-conflict-prevention-positions>

More Scientists Probe Why Bears' Muscles Don't Atrophy During Hibernation

New research underscores the bear's mysterious and miraculous ability to maintain muscle mass during hibernation – and how far we have to go to apply what bears do naturally to help humans who are bedridden or inactive.

Recent experiments revealed proteins that "strongly influence" a bear's amino acid metabolism during hibernation, resulting in higher levels of certain non-essential amino acids (NEAAs) within a bear's muscle cells that stimulate cell growth. While cell growth in humans' muscles exhibiting atrophy could be stimulated by NEAAs, clinical studies show that taking these amino acids in pill form are not enough to prevent muscle atrophy in elderly or bedridden people.

Needless-to-say, scientists still have a long way to go using discoveries from bears to help humans suffering atrophy. Bears never cease to amaze and humble us!

<https://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/animals/blogs/why-dont-bears-muscles-atrophy-during-hibernation>

TAKE ACTION:

Preserve Montana's Gallatin Range's Irreplaceable Wilderness!

Several recent articles highlight a renewed effort to preserve the Gallatin Range as wilderness – for all of it to remain wild country. George Wuerthner and Joe Scalia, President of the Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance, make a powerful case for permanent protection of the largest unprotected roadless area in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, which provides vital habitat for a host of wildlife, including grizzlies, wolves, and bighorn sheep.

The Forest Service and some conservation groups – including Montana Wilderness Association, where Joe once served as president, as well as Greater Yellowstone Coalition, where Louisa served as Program Director for ten years – are willing to compromise away lands that deserve protection as Wilderness. These concessions were made in a predictably futile attempt to appease a rapidly growing and strident off-road vehicle and mountain bike community.

Joe says: "the well-being of this landscape can no more be compromised away, in the name of cutting a deal, than a human would willingly barter away a lung, kidney or colon."

The Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance is doing a great job making the case that we need to protect the wild Gallatin! You can learn more here:

- <https://www.gallatinyellowstonewilderness.org/>
- <https://mountainjournal.org/the-fate-of-the-wildest-unprotected-mountain-range-near-yellowstone-will-soon-be-decided-forever>
- <https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/12/27/saving-the-wild-gallatins/>

Please Consider a Gift to *Grizzly Times*

We need your help! David and I have retired and are doing this full-time work pretty much gratis – despite the gradual dissolution of our physical bodies.

If you were following last year's delisting court case, you know that David's role was vital to the litigation success that restored protections to Yellowstone's grizzly bears. The skilled attorneys could not have won the case without David's scientific expertise. There will be continued demands on David's time with the appeal of this case to the 9th Circuit Court, potential delisting of NCDE or even all lower-48 grizzlies, and mounting threats to the Cabinet-Yaak population.

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 the Conservation Congress link: <https://www.conservationcongress-ca.org/give>

Or, you can mail a donation to:
Conservation Congress
2234 Sierra Vista Circle
Billings, MT 59105

* 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***

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