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Newsletter and Blog

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 Grizzlies,

There is lots going on with grizzlies, including disappointments in Montana's Centennial Mountains and successes in British Columbia's Selkirks, not to mention the long hoped-for reunion of Felicia (Grizzly 863) and her cub on Togwotee Pass near Jackson.

NEW BLOG: *Wild Thoughts about the Wild Gallatin*

Louisa's blog (below in full) is a personal retrospective on the many battles she and others have fought over the fate of the Gallatin Range in southwestern Montana, the largest unprotected roadless area in the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem, and home to a slew of wildlife including grizzlies. Placing the current debate over the revised forest plan into context of a century-long discussion about wilderness that features champions such as conservation icon Aldo Leopold, Forest Service Chief Gifford ("Giff") Pinchot and Montana Senator Lee Metcalf, she observes:

"...the battles have been fundamentally the same for decades: a debate over what values should prevail in decisions over public lands – transcendence or selfishness, short-term profit or long-term benefit."

She concludes with this:

"It is obvious now that the job of protecting wilderness will never be over, because success depends on humility and generosity in a world that seems ever more self-centered and short-sighted. And the future will not be shaped by what Teddy [Roosevelt] and Giff or [Howard] Zahnizer and Lee Metcalf did, as laudable as their efforts were. With so many of us – and our toys – it is easier than ever to kill the wilderness that is all but impossible to recreate. Teddy and others gave us a fighting chance, but we are still faced with deciding what matters most – which means confronting and hopefully mastering our fears, doubts, ego, and even greed for ever more profits and ever more thrills.

The ghostly champions of the past can yet embolden us. As ever, I find inspiration in Aldo Leopold's words: '... too much safety seems to yield only danger in the long run. Perhaps this is behind Thoreau's dictum: In wildness is the salvation of the world. Perhaps this is the

hidden meaning in the howl of the wolf, long known among mountains, but seldom perceived among men.”

<https://www.grizzlytimes.org/single-post/2019/06/30/Wild-Thoughts-About-the-Wild-Gallatin>

IN THE NEWS:

Wyoming Rejects Appeal to Require Bear Spray

Predictably, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission has rejected a petition by conservation groups to require hunters to carry pepper spray in grizzly bear habitat. Hunter-related conflicts with grizzlies have been skyrocketing in recent years due to increased reliance of grizzlies on meat, including gut piles left by hunters. This trend is unambiguously linked to the collapse of whitebark pine from a climate-driven outbreak of pine beetles that killed over 70% of all cone-producing trees in the ecosystem. Hunters killed a record 15 grizzlies during close encounters in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem during 2017, a record nearly matched by the toll of 2018.

Bear spray is more effective than guns in deterring attacks by grizzlies—and far less lethal to the bears. More hunter-caused grizzly bear deaths occur in Wyoming than in any other state, but Wyoming’s wildlife managers flatly refuse to take prudent measures, out of fear of angering the regressive hunters and politicians who hold their purse strings.

- http://www.codyenterprise.com/news/local/article_59f87c52-acb0-11e9-8136-1f2cfa9dc67e.html
- https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/jackson_hole_daily/local/wyoming-considers-bear-spray-order/article_c8aa9e5b-0ac0-5162-a82e-28d7132ef34f.html

Judge Greenlights Harmful Sheep Grazing

Federal District Judge Dana Christensen (who ordered the return of Endangered Species protections to the Yellowstone area grizzlies) recently ruled that sheep grazing will not harm threatened grizzlies in the Centennial Mountains. The dispute over domestic sheep grazing by the taxpayer-subsidized Sheep Experiment Station (SES) has raged for over a decade. Elsewhere in Greater Yellowstone, the Forest Service has eliminated grazing of sheep by ranchers on public allotments in a highly effective effort to reduce conflicts with grizzlies.

Not only is SES the last sheep allotment in core grizzly habitat of the Yellowstone ecosystem, it is the only one owned by the public—and yet paradoxically dedicated to profiting private interests. And it lies in a critical landscape that could link Greater Yellowstone to the vast Selway Bitterroot Ecosystem. Research focused on the “Targhee” breed of sheep could easily be pursued in a less sensitive environment.

<https://www.mtpr.org/post/judge-rejects-bid-block-sheep-grazing-centennial-range>

Grizzly Body Count

So far this year, grizzly bear deaths in Greater Yellowstone have been relatively low: 10 in total as of July 23. The lush summer season has provided a lot to eat thus far. Not surprisingly, about 40% of the deaths are related to conflicts with cattle, mostly in Wyoming. Livestock-related conflicts and close encounters with hunters are now the leading causes of grizzly bear deaths.

<https://www.usgs.gov/data-tools/2019-known-and-probable-grizzly-bear-mortalities-greater-yellowstone-ecosystem>

So far, it appears that at least 15 grizzlies have died in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem, including one that killed about 40 sheep on the plains east of Glacier. On the west side, food-conditioning from garbage and attractants is still the primary killer of grizzlies.

<https://www.mtpr.org/post/grizzly-bear-captured-along-marias-river-euthanized-due-food-conditioning-livestock-depredation>

With more people and more summer traffic, vehicle collisions continue to be a significant cause of grizzly bear deaths. The vehicle-caused death of two grizzly cubs in the Bella Coola Valley in BC is woven into a broader – and familiar-sounding – story about human-bear conflicts in Canada:

<https://thenarwhal.ca/two-grizzly-cubs-run-over-and-killed-in-b-c-s-great-bear-rainforest/>

'Garbaging for Bears' on Federal Land Endangers Grizzlies, Wolves

The link immediately below takes you to a good article by UPI on the current lawsuit to stop baiting of bears and other wildlife on public lands. In a number of states, including Wyoming and Idaho, black bear hunters are allowed to use bait, such as donuts and rotten fruit, to attract bears – over which they can then shoot them. At least 10 grizzlies have been killed during the last decade when mistaken for black bears at bait sites. The unethical and harmful practice must stop. Our thanks to Western Environmental Law Center for taking on this important fight!

https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2019/07/16/Garbaging-for-bears-on-federal-land-endangers-grizzlies-wolves/3611562730144/

Trail Would Cut Through the Heart of the Yaak

I've linked here the first in a series by The Western News on the proposed high-use Pacific Northwest Trail through the Yaak region of far northwestern Montana that would harm the last 20 or so grizzlies hanging on there. Author and local resident Rick Bass says this:

"Grizzlies help me think about others than myself. They're so much like people; they're the closest thing we have on this continent to ourselves... Africa has the great apes, North America has the 'great bears.'

I love the negotiation they've made with the landscape, the way that they inhabit the world. They love the country that I love.

It is inappropriate to ask the bears to take on any more of a burden than they already have here. I would be very bereft if there were not grizzlies in the Yaak, and I think we're really close to that point."

Beautifully said Rick, thank you.

https://www.thewesternnews.com/.../grizzly_habitat_at_center...

BC Conservation Group Opposes Logging Whitebark Pine

British Columbia's conservation group Wildsight has sounded the alarm on inane logging of whitebark pine in the province. Their focus is the Elk Valley lying north of the US border in the Flathead river drainage, in an area critical to the health of grizzly bear populations that span this vulnerable transboundary area. Unbelievably, BC is allowing the logging of whitebark pine despite the fact that this species is declining precipitously due to inroads by a highly lethal non-native pathogen called blister rust. Although much diminished, whitebark pine still produces high-quality pine seeds for local bears to eat, fortuitously located in some of the most secure habitats.

Thank you Wildsight for speaking out!

<https://www.e-know.ca/.../wildsight-sounds-alarm-on-whitebar.../>

Leaving Some Berries for the Bears

Aggressive commercial huckleberry harvesting is stripping the forests bare at a time when grizzlies and black bears need these berries to fatten for survival of the winter famine. In a

surprising but much-needed move, the BC government is now restricting commercial harvesting. We need to consider doing that too on the US side of the border.

Huckleberry picking used to be primarily a family affair, but commercial interests have seen huge profits in recent years from exploiting berries on public lands. Bonnie Harvey of the Ktunaxa Nation says that “this commercial harvest is not respectful to the spirit of the berries and not respectful to the other animals who could be eating the berries... If we respect the spirit of the berry, it will be able to feed people, feed the bears, and feed all living things, but if we disrespect the berry, it won't provide in future years.”

<https://www.rosslandnews.com/.../huckleberry-harvesting-rest.../>

GOOD NEWS:

Felicia and Her Cub Pepper Reunite!

After a month of separation near Wyoming's Togwotee Pass, Felicia (Grizzly 863) and her cub Pepper have reunited. We hope that this first-time mom and her cub stay safe!

https://www.jhnewsandguide.com/this_just_in/grizzly-reunion-togwotee-mother-and-cub-back-together/article_7aa1fcf4-3cf6-5d65-8eb5-f6606149c4d0.html



Photo by Moran photographer Marc Kleinman of Felicia and her cub Pepper shortly after they were reunited.

If you missed David's blog on Felicia, here it is:

<https://www.grizzlytimes.org/single-post/2019/06/26/Felicia%E2%80%99s-Fate-The-Trials-of-a-Grizzly-Bear-Mom>

Nature Conservancy Canada Protects Critical Habitat

The Nature Conservancy of Canada has protected 30 square miles of private lands in the southern Selkirk Mountains that is critical for grizzlies, mountain caribou, wolverine and many other species in the Darkwoods Conservation Area of British Columbia, just north of the US border. This watershed contains a rare temperate rainforest that is home to the highest tree diversity in BC. This type of “snow forest,” which receives most of its moisture from snow, is found almost nowhere else on Earth.

This habitat is also critical to recovery of the critically imperiled grizzlies that move freely across the US-Canadian border in the Selkirk Mountains.

<https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/protection-for-rare-temper.../>



Unbearably cute photo taken in Stewart BC, by wildlife photographers Ian Harland and Liron Gertsman.
<https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/2019/07/13/curious-grizzly-bear-cubs-photo-bc/>

More Bear-Resistant Dumpsters in Grizzly Bear Habitat

The Forest Service and several nonprofits, including Greater Yellowstone Coalition, are putting bear resistant dumpsters in campgrounds in grizzly bear habitat in eastern Idaho. The goal is to install such dumpsters in all of Greater Yellowstone's Forest Service campgrounds. Good work!

<http://jacksonholeradio.com/2019/07/bear-proof-containers-to-be-installed/>

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, and despite the gradual dissolution of our physical bodies.

If you were following the recent 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 below.

<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***