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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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January 9, 2024

Dear Friend of the Grizzly,

In this *Grizzly Times* newsletter, we announce our latest recipient of the *Grizzly Times* Hero Award, Denise Boggs. The award is aimed at celebrating outstanding but often unsung heroes who are making the world a better place for grizzlies and other wildlife on behalf of all of us, including future generations.

A description of the award follows along with a brief bio of our hero, Denise.

Background on *Grizzly Times* Hero Award

Saving grizzly bears and their wild country involves challenging work that relies on people who have extraordinary passion, courage, and selflessness. Many of the most effective champions of the Great Bear work behind the scenes without promoting themselves, so they often do not receive the recognition they deserve.

That is why we launched the *Grizzly Times* Hero Awards: to celebrate outstanding but often unsung heroes who are making the world a better place for grizzlies and other wildlife on behalf of generations to come. At a time when threats are mounting and bad news can often prevail, it is easy to overlook the important difference that unsung heroes can and do make.

In giving these awards, we aim to spotlight those people who are living the example we want to see in the world. And in this essay accompanying the

granting of this award, we will explain why Denise matters, to both honor her, as well as hopefully inspire others to act.

We give special thanks to the world-renowned wildlife photographer, Tom Mangelsen, who has allowed us to use an iconic image of Grizzly 399, perhaps the most famous grizzly in the world, in creating this award. This iconic bear symbolizes what we are fighting for: a magnificent animal that is not only intelligent, resourceful, nurturing, and quintessentially wild – but also deserving of our compassion, reverence, and respect.

<https://www.grizzlytimes.org/hero-award>

Denise Boggs: *Grizzly Times* Hero



From northern spotted owls to grizzlies, wild animals are lucky to have Denise Boggs and her organization, Conservation Congress, on their side. Denise is one of the most tenacious “no holds barred” environmental activists we have been privileged to meet.

For over forty years, she has advocated for protecting wild places in the face of hostile government agencies, notably the U.S. Forest Service. In doing so, she has helped preserve sometimes little-known and underappreciated ecosystems on behalf of us all.

We are giving Denise the *Grizzly Times* Hero Award in recognition of her dedication, integrity, fearlessness, and phenomenal record of successes. Fueled by a passion for wild animals and intolerance of injustice, Denise possesses grit that few can match. She applies science and law with well-honed expertise. Not surprisingly, Denise has been called a lot of things, but one of our favorites is a “Sword of Damocles” hanging over the head of the Forest Service.

Thank you, Denise, for your heroic work epitomizing effective advocacy for wild places and the animals that depend on them.

More about Denise

Denise Boggs is one of the most devoted and tireless wildlife advocates in the West. For over forty years, she has worked without fanfare to protect National Forest lands neglected by many other environmental advocates from the ravages of road building, clearcutting, and development. Denise is not only dedicated to wildlife and wildlands of the Northern Rockies, but also often overlooked wildlands from Utah to California.

Louisa and Denise have a long history together. Over thirty years ago, Denise walked into Louisa’s office at the Greater Yellowstone Coalition volunteering to help. With piercing green eyes and a mane of flaming red hair, Denise personified a lioness. Louisa quickly learned that what Denise lacked in prior experience she made up for with ferocity and intelligence.

At the Coalition, Denise learned to analyze and dissect Forest Service plans for clearcutting and building roads in some of the last refuges for Yellowstone’s wildlife. She gained confidence when her work resulted in successful litigation. She also learned the importance of developing relationships with agency experts frustrated with bosses who were intent on implementing destructive projects. It did not take long for the conservation community to recognize Denise’s talents and tenacity.

Denise’s sense of daring has deep roots. At the age of five, she told her parents that she wanted to move to Montana. Her Floridian family had never been there. Twenty years later, Denise went anyway, making her dream come true. Montana has since been home.

Smitten with the stunning country, big rivers, and the larger-than-life wild animals, Denise vowed to protect the land she had come to love. She found a family in the

rag-tag clan of Earth First!, relishing attention-grabbing eco-theater and tactics such as tree sitting. “Earth First! was fun and a positive force that inspired others to get out in the woods,” she recalls.



After studying public administration and wildlife biology at Montana State University, Denise went to work for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, where biologist and wildlife champion Gayle Joslin took her under her wing. After learning that the Helena National Forest was planning massive clear-cuts in a vital elk migration corridor, Denise challenged the project as a private citizen – as is everyone’s right. The rebuke from the Department’s Director, Kay Kool, was swift, prompting a classic response from Denise: “I told him to kiss my ass, and quit.”

It is no surprise that Denise has since worked for grassroots conservation groups, mostly ones she started, employing her consummate knowledge of science and law to address the challenges of preserving wildlife and wild places. Her prowess

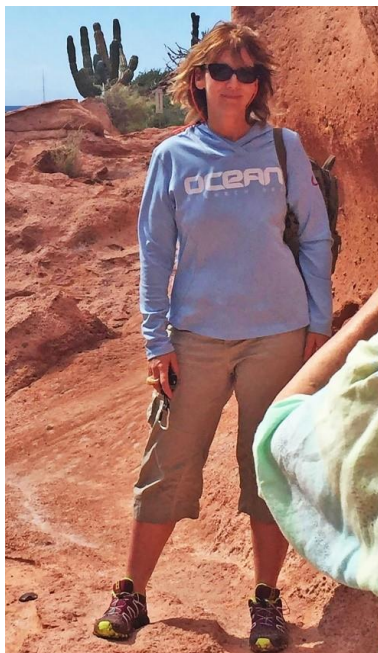
was recognized early in her career by a judge after Denise argued against the development of a proposed mine pro se – in the absence of a professional lawyer. The judge not only issued an injunction but also commented, “Congratulations, young lady, you did a wonderful job.”

For years, Denise has worked assiduously on behalf of Northern Spotted Owls, which have largely been abandoned by big environmental groups following the old growth wars of the 1990s. Only about 3,000 owls hang on, with some of the best owl habitat located in northern California’s politically regressive National Forests. Denise has remarked that this region “is a political backwater where the Forest Service is in bed with the timber industry, and unconstrained by the administration, no matter if it is Republican or Democrat.”

In protecting old-growth habitat for spotted owls, Denise has also helped protect entire ecosystems in northern California. Not surprisingly, the first pack of wolves in the state denned in spotted owl habitat that she had helped save from clearcutting.

Denise’s career has spanned the Intermountain West and involved a range of species, including trout, raptors, and reptiles. Despite her geographic reach, Denise has never strayed from defending wolves, grizzlies, bison, and the wilds of the Northern Rockies, which are the focus of a listserv she maintains called “Bad Kitty” comprised mostly of like-minded activists.

Denise has enjoyed astonishing successes, almost entirely without help from larger environmental groups. In her view, “the Big Greens (big environmental groups) are just a waste of time and money.”



Denise's philosophy is highlighted by the moniker: endless pressure, endlessly applied. "If we do nothing, we know what will happen. We must fight tooth and nail with every tool we have," she says. She is so well known for her chutzpah and skill that sympathetic agency scientists routinely share tips with her about threats they cannot openly address because of political pressure from developers. More than once, she has been complimented and encouraged by former government adversaries after they retired.

Denise laments that land management agencies have become more corrupt since she started her career in environmental advocacy. "The government is getting cleverer about how they justify clearcutting. Now, the Forest Service is promoting the notion of 'resilient forests,' which means cutting down the forest for fear of fires. Increasingly, the Forest Service has been promulgating rules with loopholes big enough to drive logging trucks through."

When Denise is not busy defending native ecosystems, she rescues animals, both domestic and wild. In addition to volunteering with wildlife rehabilitation centers, she has nursed wild animals and released them into the wild. These include robins, crows, and a yellow warbler that was so fond of her he wouldn't leave her side for days after she released him.

She was once given a young mink that had been trapped in central Montana's Gates of the Wilderness. She raised it in her garage, then paddled up the Missouri River back to the Gates of the Wilderness and freed him, watching him scamper off through the willows. It took a week for her to vent the mink odor from her garage. "He was fun, smelly, and scrappy – and loved tuna fish," she recalled.

These days Denise doesn't have many opportunities to disappear into the wilderness. "Work is my life, but I love what I do," she says. "I get really frustrated and demoralized sometimes, but I know I would do the same thing all over again."

Denise enjoys applying her hard-earned experience to new challenges. "Sitting at my kitchen table, I will wade through a two-hundred-page Forest Service tome justifying a terrible decision – a document that would intimidate a lot of people – but I see it as a fun opportunity to do good. I can quickly dismantle many of the agency's arguments since I have done it so many times before. I have gotten to the point that I can write ten pages rebutting a poor decision before I need to look up a citation."

Denise concludes with this: "Protecting the environment is honorable work. We environmentalists are often demonized and called extremists, but we have saved hundreds of thousands of acres for future generations. It's lonely work that few people know much about, but you put your heart and soul into it because you believe in what you are doing. I just wish more people would thank us."

We at *Grizzly Times* thank you, Denise, for your heroic work on behalf of grizzlies, owls, and all wild nature!

We are also grateful that Conservation Congress, founded by Denise, has served since day one as fiscal sponsor for *Grizzly Times*. With her rigorous accountability and attention to fiscal detail, Denise has spared David and Louisa the headaches of running yet another nonprofit.

For more information on Conservation Congress, see: <https://www.conservationcongress-ca.org/>



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.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is, yet again, making a run at removing endangered species protections for grizzly bears – potentially throughout Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. This move has been catalyzed by petitions from these Republican Governors against a backdrop of legislation in all three states designed to persecute carnivores, with wolves targeted for especially vindictive measures. Congressional delegations from the northern Rockies are simultaneously attempting to legislatively remove Endangered Species Act protections, with judicial review explicitly exempted.

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***