

GRIZZLY BEAR MANAGEMENT CAPTURES, RELOCATIONS, AND REMOVALS IN NORTHWEST WYOMING

2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Submitted to the Wyoming Legislature's Joint Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Interim Committee. This report is available to the public at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department Headquarters Office, Regional Offices and on the Department website at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov>. This report is in fulfillment of the requirements in Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001(c). Questions about this report or its content can be directed to Brian DeBolt, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, 260 Buena Vista, Lander, WY 82520, (307) 332-2688, Brian.DeBolt@wyo.gov

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Wyoming Game and Fish Department
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Introduction

Human-bear interactions and conflicts in Wyoming are typically a result of bears seeking unnatural foods in association with people and property, close encounters with humans, or when bears kill livestock. The number and location of human-bear conflicts is influenced by the availability of unsecured unnatural attractants (e.g. human foods and garbage), natural food distribution and abundance, bear numbers and distribution, and human and livestock use patterns on the landscape.

The management technique of capturing bears in areas where they may come into conflict with people and relocating them to remote locations is common throughout the world. Relocation achieves several social and conservation functions: (a) it reduces the chance of property damage, livestock damage, or human interactions in areas where the potential for conflict is high; (b) it reduces the potential for bears to become food conditioned and/or human habituated which often results in destructive and/or dangerous behaviors; (c) it allows bears the opportunity to forage on natural foods and remain wary of people; and (d) it could prevent removing bears from the population which may be beneficial in meeting recovery criteria and maintaining population management objectives.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Department) relocates and removes black and grizzly bears as part of routine management operations. All grizzly bear management actions are in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The decision to relocate or remove a bear is made after considering a number of variables including age and sex of the animal, behavioral traits, health status, physical injuries or abnormalities, type of conflict, severity of conflict, known history of the animal, human safety concerns, and population management objectives. Grizzly bears are relocated in accordance with state and federal law, regulation, and policy.

In 2005, the Wyoming Legislature enacted House Bill 203, which created Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001. Grizzly bear relocation (Appendix I). This statute requires the Department to:

- (a) Upon relocating a grizzly bear or upon receiving notification that a grizzly bear is being relocated, the department shall provide notification to the county sheriff of the county to which the grizzly bear is relocated within five (5) days of each grizzly bear relocation and shall issue a press release to the media and sheriff in the county where each grizzly bear is relocated;
- (b) The notice and press release shall provide the following information:
 - (i) The date of the grizzly bear relocation;
 - (ii) The number of grizzly bears relocated; and
 - (iii) The location of the grizzly bear relocation, as provided by commission rule and regulation;
- (c) No later than January 15 of each year the department shall submit an annual report to the Joint Travel, Recreation, Wildlife, and Cultural Resources Interim committee. The annual report shall include the total number and relocation area of each grizzly bear relocated during the previous calendar year. The department shall also make available the annual report to the public.

Subsequently, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission (Commission) promulgated Chapter 58 Notification of Grizzly Bear Relocation Regulation (Appendix II) to further direct the implementation of Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001.

This report satisfies the requirements set forth in Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001(c) and provides additional information on grizzly bear captures, relocations, and removals in Wyoming during 2016.

Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals

During 2016, the Department captured 39 grizzly bears in 40 capture events in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts (Figure 1). Most captures were lone grizzly bears of all age classes, but 2 family groups (both females with 3 cubs-of-the-year), and one pair of sibling 2-year olds were also captured. Twenty-six (65%) of the 40 capture events were in Park County, 8 (20%) occurred in Sublette County, 4 (10%) in Fremont County, and 2 (5%) in Hot Springs County.

Of the 40 capture events, 17 captures were a result of bears killing livestock (primarily cattle), 9 bears were captured for obtaining garbage, and 9 were captured for obtaining pet, livestock food, or damaging fruit trees. Two bears were non-target captures released on site, and 3 were orphaned cubs-of-the-year captured and removed for human safety/ethical reasons, and physical condition of the cubs. All relocated grizzly bears were released on U.S. Forest Service lands in or adjacent to the Primary Conservation Area (PCA) (Figure 2). Of the 16 relocation events, 9 (56%) bears were released in Park County, and 7 (44%) were released in Teton County (Table 1).

Twenty-two of the 40 capture events resulted in the removal of grizzly bears from the population (Table 1). These bears were removed due to a history of previous conflicts, a known history of close association with humans, or they were deemed unsuitable for release into the wild (e.g. orphaned cubs, poor physical condition, or human safety concern). Removals occur after deliberation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and ultimate decisions take into account multiple factors unique to each conflict situation.

All independent grizzly bears greater than 2-years-old that were relocated, were fitted with a radio-tracking collar to track their movements after release. Attempts to obtain locations on marked grizzly bears through aerial telemetry were made approximately every 10-14 days.

Notification to the County Sheriff and the Media

Within 5-days of releasing a grizzly bear, the county sheriff was notified by e-mail and a press release was distributed to all local media contacts in the county where the grizzly bear was released. The media release contained information on the location of the grizzly bear release, the number of grizzly bears relocated, the date of the relocation and the reason the grizzly bear was relocated.

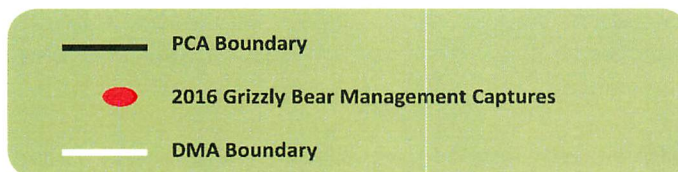
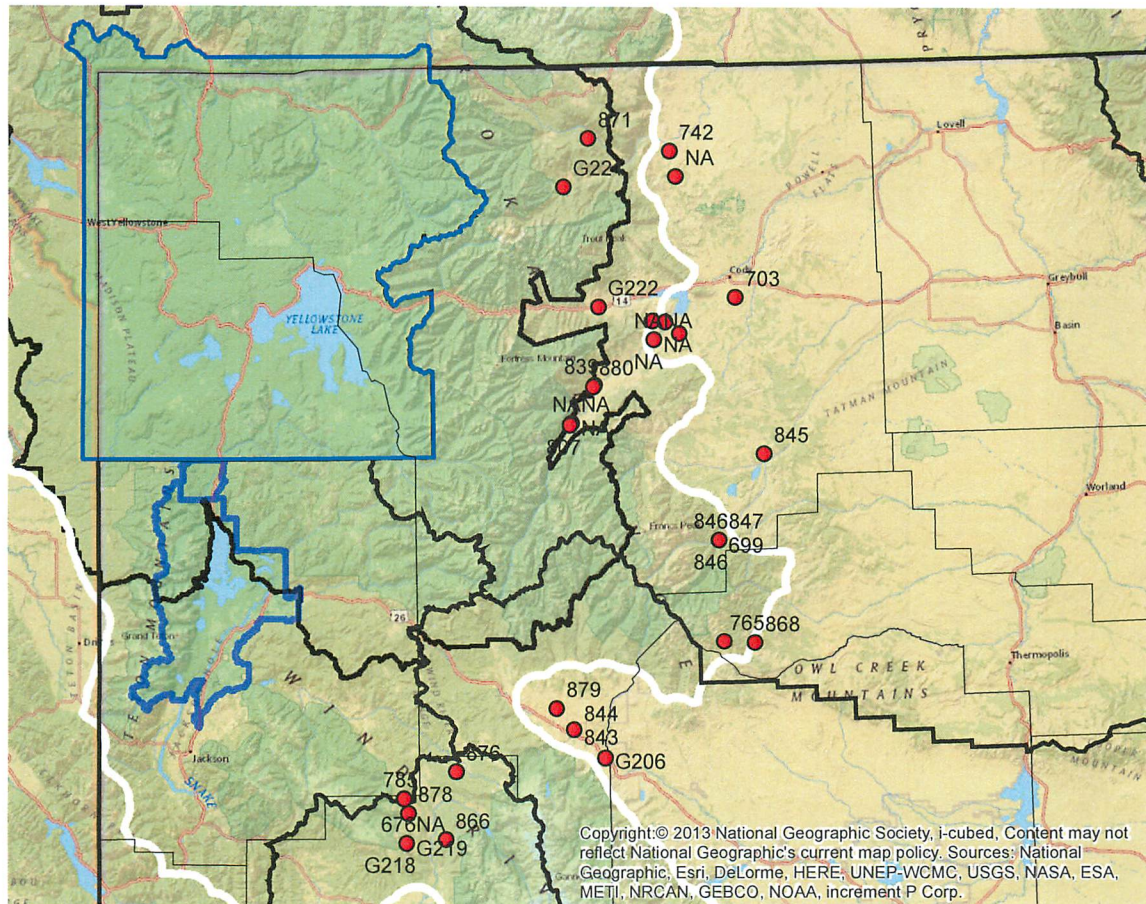


Figure 1. Management capture locations ($n = 40$) for grizzly bears in 2016. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were ear-marked but not fitted with radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared. Grizzly bears identified with “NA” were grizzly bears removed from the population without being given an identification number. PCA is the grizzly bear Primary Conservation Area as defined in the 2016 Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. DMA is the grizzly bear Demographic Monitoring Area as defined in “Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team. 2012. Updating and Evaluating Approaches to estimate population size and sustainable mortality limits for grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.” Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team, U.S. Geological Survey, Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center, Bozeman, MT, USA. Please note that the mapping software combines some locations at this scale. Therefore, locations/bear numbers at or very near the same coordinates are not always distinct on the map, but are listed in Table 1.

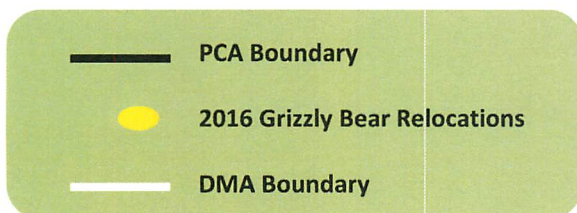
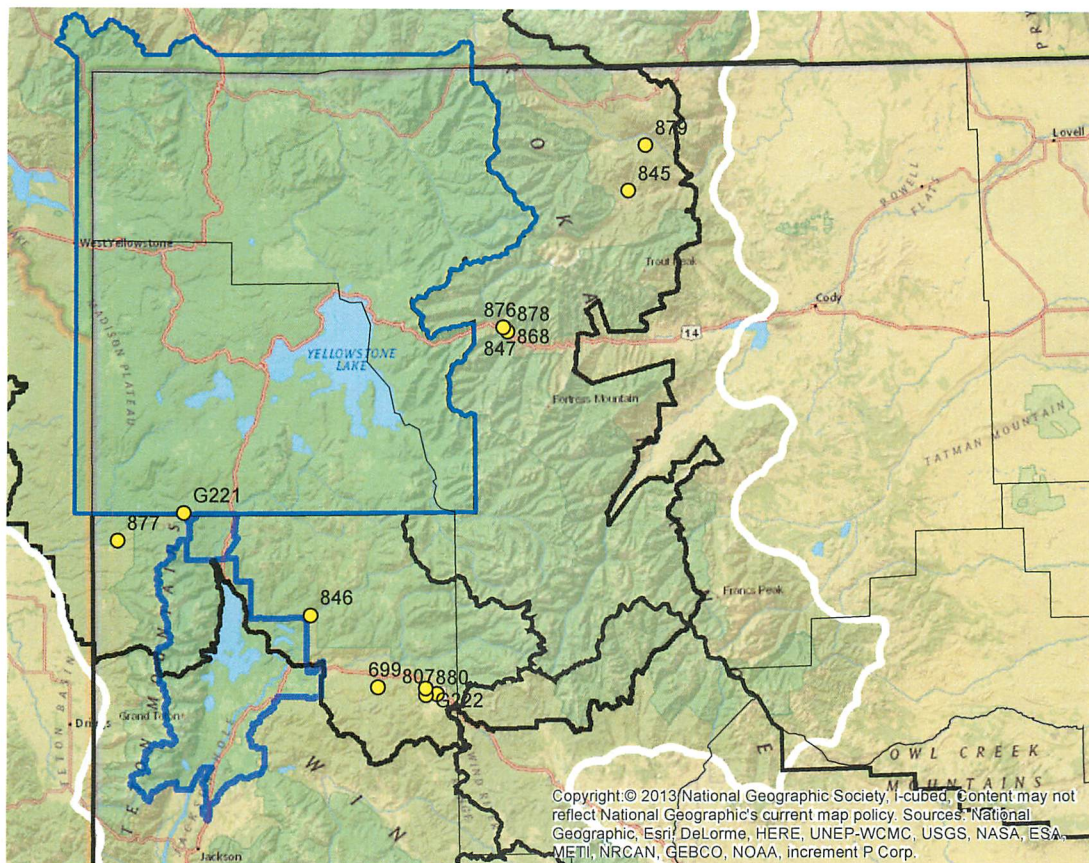


Figure 2. Release locations ($n = 16$, 2 management capture bears were released on site) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, or released on site in conflict management efforts 2016. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were ear-marked but not fitted with radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared. PCA is the grizzly bear Primary Conservation Area as defined in the 2016 Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. The DMA is the grizzly bear Demographic Monitoring Area as defined in “Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team. 2012. Updating and Evaluating Approaches to estimate population size and sustainable mortality limits for grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.” Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team, U.S. Geological Survey, Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center, Bozeman, MT, USA. Please note that the mapping software combines some locations at this scale. Therefore, locations/bear numbers at or very near the same coordinates are not always distinct on the map, but are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Capture date, grizzly bear identification number (ID), capture county, relocation site, release county, and reason for capture for all 2016 grizzly bear conflict management captures ($n = 40$) in Wyoming. Grizzly bears identified with “NA” were grizzly bears removed from the population without being given an identification number.

Date	ID	Capture county	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
4/16/2016	839	PARK			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC CATTLE DEPREDATION
4/27/2016	845	PARK	TRAIL CREEK-WGFD WHMA	PARK	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING A DEVELOPED AREA
5/5/2016	846	PARK	PACIFIC CREEK- Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR PROPERTY DAMAGE AND FOOD REWARD OF FISH FOOD
5/6/2016	NA	PARK			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC CATTLE DEPREDATION.
5/12/2016	G206	FREMONT			REMOVED FOR REPEATED CONFLICTS AND PROPERTY DAMAGE
5/19/2016	699	PARK	FLAGSTAFF CREEK- Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	NON-TARGET CAPTURE
5/22/2016	846	PARK			REMOVED FOR REPEATED PROPERTY DAMAGE
5/22/2016	847	PARK	FIVE MILE CREEK- Shoshone Forest	PARK	NON-TARGET CAPTURE, NO CONFLICT, RELOCATED AFTER INJURED BY BEAR 846 IN SNARE
6/25/2016	742	PARK			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC CATTLE DEPREDATION
7/8/2016	807	PARK	LOST LAKE ROAD- Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR CHICKEN DEPREDATION
7/10/2016	843	FREMONT			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC FOOD REWARDS IN DEVELOPED AREA
7/10/2016	844	FREMONT			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC FOOD REWARDS IN DEVELOPED AREA
7/19/2016	866	SUBLETTE	ON SITE-Bridger-Teton Forest		NON-TARGET AT CATTLE DEPREDATION
7/23/2016	868	HOT SPRINGS	MORMON CREEK- Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION.
8/6/2016	785	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/7/2016	871	PARK	ON SITE-Shoshone Forest		NON-TARGET FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/15/2016	765	HOT SPRINGS			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/29/2016	676	SUBLETTE	FIVE MILE-Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR SHEEP DEPREDATIONS WITH DEPENDENT YOUNG (3 COY)

Date	ID	Capture county	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
8/29/2016	G218	SUBLETTE	FIVE MILE-Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED WITH MOTHER 676 AND SIBLINGS FOR SHEEP DEPREDACTIONS
8/29/2016	G219	SUBLETTE	FIVE MILE-Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED WITH MOTHER 676 AND SIBLINGS FOR SHEEP DEPREDACTIONS
8/29/2016	NA	SUBLETTE			CAPTURED WITH MOTHER 676 AND SIBLINGS FOR SHEEP DEPREDACTIONS – ACCIDENTAL MORTALITY
9/1/2016	876	SUBLETTE	FIVE MILE-Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDACTION.
9/7/2016	877	PARK	BOONE CREEK-Targhee Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR APPLE TREE DAMAGE AND FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS
9/9/2016	878	SUBLETTE	MORMON CREEK-Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDACTIONS
9/13/2016	879	FREMONT	DEADMAN CREEK-Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING RANCH BUILDINGS ADJACENT TO TOWN OF DUBOIS
9/15/2016	880	PARK	BLACKROCK CREEK-Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS.
9/18/2016	G221	PARK	GRASSY LAKE-JDR Parkway	TETON	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING A GUEST RANCH
9/29/2016	369	PARK			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC FOOD REWARDS IN DEVELOPED AREA
9/29/2016	829	PARK			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC FOOD REWARDS IN DEVELOPED AREA
9/30/2016	703	PARK			REMOVED FOR FREQUENTING LANDFILL
10/3/2016	G222	PARK	HOLMES CAVE-Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS AND DAMAGING APPLE TREES
10/7/2016	NA	PARK			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDACTION AND FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS
10/7/2016	NA	PARK			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDACTION AND FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS
10/7/2016	NA	PARK			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDACTION AND FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS
10/8/2016	NA	PARK			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDACTION AND FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS
10/9/2016	NA	PARK			REMOVED FOR GETTING GARBAGE AND IN POOR CONDITION

Date	ID	Capture county	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
10/15/2016	465	PARK			REMOVED FOR DAMAGING CHICKEN COOPS AND KILLING 3 GOATS.
10/21/2016	NA	PARK			ORPHANED CUB EUTHANIZED
10/21/2016	NA	PARK			ORPHANED CUB EUTHANIZED
10/21/2016	NA	PARK			ORPHANED CUB EUTHANIZED

Appendix I. State of Wyoming's Grizzly Bear Relocation Statute

ARTICLE 10. GRIZZLY BEAR RELOCATION

§ 23-1-1001. Grizzly bear relocation.

(a) Upon relocating a grizzly bear or upon receiving notification that a grizzly bear is being relocated, the department shall provide notification to the county sheriff of the county to which the bear is relocated within five (5) days of each grizzly bear relocation and shall issue a press release to the media and sheriff in the county where each grizzly bear is relocated.

(b) The notice and press release shall provide the following information:

(i) The date of the grizzly bear relocation;

(ii) The number of grizzly bears relocated; and

(iii) The location of the grizzly bear relocation, as provided by commission rule and regulation.

(c) No later than January 15 of each year the department shall submit an annual report to the joint travel, recreation, wildlife and cultural resources interim committee. The annual report shall include the total number and relocation area of each grizzly bear relocated during the previous calendar year. The department shall also make available the annual report to the public.

Appendix II. Wyoming Game and Fish Commission's Notification of Grizzly Bear Relocation Regulation

WYOMING GAME AND FISH

COMMISSION CHAPTER 58

NOTIFICATION OF GRIZZLY BEAR RELOCATION REGULATION

Section 1. Authority. This regulation is promulgated by authority of W.S. §23-1-1001.

Section 2. Definitions. Definitions shall be as set forth in Title 23, Wyoming Statutes, Commission regulation s, and the Commission also adopts the following definitions:


(a) "County Sheriff' means the County Sheriffs Office in the county where a grizzly bear is relocated.

(b) "Location of the grizzly bear relocation" means the proper name of the drainage in which a grizzly bear is relocated and the estimated number of miles from the re location site to the nearest municipality, topographical feature or geographic location.

(c) "Provide a press release" mean s the Department shall provide to the County Sheriff and the media in the county in which a grizzly bear is relocated, a press release including the location of the grizzly bear relocation, number of grizzly bears relocated, date of the relocation and the reason the grizzly bear was relocated.

Section 3. Notification of relocation. Upon relocating a grizzly bear or upon receiving notification that a grizzly bear is being relocated, the Department shall notify the County Sheriff of the date, number of grizzly bears relocated, the location of the grizzly bear relocation and the reason of the relocation via direct telephone conversation, written or electronic correspondence, or personal contact within five (5) days of the date of the relocation. The Department shall provide a press release to the County Sheriff and the media in the county where a grizzly bear is relocated of the date, number of grizzly bears relocated, the location of the grizzly bear relocation and the reason of the relocation within five (5) days of the date of relocation of any grizzly bear.

WYOMING GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

By: 
Mike Healy, President

Dated: January 22, 2014