

GRIZZLY BEAR MANAGEMENT CAPTURES, RELOCATIONS AND REMOVALS IN NORTHWEST WYOMING

2005 ANNUAL REPORT



Submitted to the Wyoming Legislature's Joint Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Interim Committee, and the report is available to the public at each Wyoming Game and Fish Department Regional Office. This report is in partial fulfillment of the requirements in Wyoming Statute 23-1-1001. All questions about this report or its content should be directed to Mark Bruscano, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, 2820 State Highway 120, Cody, WY 82414, (307) 527-7125, Mark.Bruscano@wgf.state.wy.us

Prepared by
Mark Bruscano
Wyoming Game and Fish Department
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Introduction

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

Capturing bears in areas where they may come into conflict with people and relocating them to remote wildland settings is a common practice used where humans and bears live together throughout the world. Relocating bears serves several social and conservation functions: 1) relocating a bear from an area where the potential for conflict is high reduces the chance of property damage, livestock damage, or human interactions; 2) relocating bears reduces the potential for bears to become food conditioned or human habituated which often times results in destructive or dangerous behaviors; 3) relocating a bear may allow the bear to forage on natural foods and remain wary of people, preventing its removal from the population, which may be beneficial in meeting management objectives.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department routinely relocates and removes black and grizzly bears as part of normal department operations. 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, physical injuries, type of conflict, known history of the animal, and population management objectives. Grizzly bears are relocated after consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and in accordance with Federal law, regulation, and policy.

In 2005 the Wyoming Legislature enacted House Bill 203, which created Wyoming Statute 23-1-1001 (Appendix I). This statute requires the Wyoming Game and Fish 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 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 promulgated regulations in Chapter 58 (Appendix II) of the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission regulations to further direct the implementation of Wyoming statute 23-1-1001.

This report satisfies the requirements set forth in section (c) of the statute and provides additional information on grizzly bear captures, relocations and removals in Wyoming during 2005.

Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals

During 2005 the Wyoming Game and Fish Department captured 21 grizzly bears on 18 occasions in an attempt to prevent or solve conflicts. Sixteen captures were of individual bears while 2 captures were of family groups or siblings consisting of 2 or more bears. Thirteen bears (62%) were relocated from areas where they were causing conflicts with livestock or property, or moved preemptively to avoid conflicts (Fig. 1). In addition, 4 bears (19%) were killed because of having a history of being involved in previous conflicts (bear #471), were in poor physical condition (bear #G100), or because of a known history of being in close association with humans (bears #'s 361 and 473) and were deemed unsuitable for release into the wild. Three bears (14%) were non-target captures and either released on site (n=1) or moved a short distance to a safe release site (n=2) (Fig. 1), and 1 bear (5%) was accidentally killed during capture operations. One bear (4%) was captured in Fremont County, 10 bears (48%) in Park County, and 10 bears (48%) in Sublette County (Table 1). Of the 13 bears moved from their home ranges, 5 (38%) were released in Teton County, 1 (8%) in Fremont County, and 7 (54%) were released in Park County (Table 1). All bears relocated because of conflicts or moved preemptively to prevent conflicts (n=13) were released in the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone (RZ) (n=12) or within 1-mile (n=1) of the RZ, and all were released on U.S. Forest Service lands (Fig. 1).

All independent bears (>2years old, n=12) that were relocated were fitted with a VHF radio tracking collar to allow for their movements to be documented after being released. Movement and location data was obtained approximately every 7-14 days after release. Relocated bears moved a mean distance of 40.6 miles from the release site to their last known location in 2005. None of the bears that were relocated in 2005 were known to have been involved in additional conflicts with people or their property, although 4 bears (408, 504, 439, 433) exhibited "homing" movements and were last located near their original capture site. Seven of the 13 relocated bears were in the grizzly bear RZ as of their last known location in 2005.

Notification to the 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 and the Sheriff's office. The 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 (Table 1).

Table 1. Date, bear numbers, number, capture location, release site, and reasons for capturing, relocating or removing grizzly bears.

Date	Bear No.	Number	Capture County	Relocation Site	Relocation County	Reason	Comments
6/2/2005	361	1	Fremont	NA	NA	Horse Depredation	Removed, 2 nd capture, moved once in 2000 preemptively
6/15/2005	489	1	Park	Togwotee Pass	Teton	Cattle Depredation	Relocated to an area with no livestock
6/30/2005	462	1	Sublette	NA	NA	Cattle Depredation	Removed, 2 nd capture, moved once in 2004 preemptively
7/1/2005	433	1	Sublette	Sunlight Creek	Park	Cattle Depredation	Relocated to an area with no livestock
7/3/2005	439	1	Sublette	Sunlight Creek	Park	Cattle Depredation	Relocated to an area with no livestock
7/12/2005	495	1	Sublette	Fox Creek	Park	Cattle Depredation	Relocated to an area with no livestock
7/15/2005	497	1	Sublette	Lake of the Woods	Fremont	Non-Target	Released near capture site
8/4/2005	498	1	Sublette	Park Creek	Teton	Non-Target	Released near capture site
8/5/2005	499	1	Sublette	Strawberry Creek	Sublette	Non-Target	Released on site
8/6/2005	408	1	Sublette	Mormon Creek	Park	Sheep Depredation	Relocated to an area with no livestock
8/19/2005	G100	1	Park	NA	NA	Property Damage	Removed, emaciated, no prior history
8/20/2005	504	1	Sublette	Fox Creek	Park	Cattle Depredation	Relocated to an area with no livestock
8/21/2005	505	1	Park	Cartridge Creek	Fremont	Residential Area	Preemptive-relocated to a remote area
8/22/2005	471	1	Sublette	NA	NA	Cattle Depredation	Removed, 2 nd capture, cattle depredation
9/17/2005	513	1	Park	Togwotee Pass	Teton	Cattle Depredation	Relocated to an area with no livestock
9/21/2005	G101 G102	2	Park	Fox Creek/NA	Park	Frequenting Farm Lands	Preemptive-2 orphaned cubs/ 1 accidentally killed
10/11/2005	517 G103 G104	3	Park	Grassy Lake	Teton	Property Damage	Female w/ 2 cubs relocated to a remote area
10/15/2005	518	1	Park	Fox Creek	Park	Frequenting Farm Lands	Preemptive- relocated to a remote area

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 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. Regulation. The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission hereby adopts the following regulation governing notification to the County Sheriff and the media of grizzly bear relocations in the State of Wyoming. This regulation shall remain in effect until modified or rescinded by the Commission.

Section 3. Definitions. For the purpose of this regulation, definitions shall be as set forth in Title 23, Wyoming Statutes and the Commission also adopts the following definitions:

(a) "County Sheriff" means the County Sheriff's 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 relocation site to the nearest municipality, topographical feature or geographic location.

(c) "Provide a press release" means 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 4. Notification of relocation.

(a) 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.

Section 5. Savings Clause. If any provision of this regulation is held to be illegal or unconstitutional, such a ruling shall not affect other provisions of this regulation which can be given effect without the illegal or unconstitutional provision; and, to this end the provisions of this regulation are severable.

WYOMING GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

By: Linda Fleming, President

Dated: July 12, 2005