

GRIZZLY BEAR MANAGEMENT CAPTURES, RELOCATIONS AND REMOVALS IN NORTHWEST WYOMING

2008 ANNUAL REPORT



Submitted to the Wyoming Legislature's Joint Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Interim Committee, and this report is available to the public at each Wyoming Game and Fish Department Regional Office and on the Department's website at http://gf.state.wy.us/wildlife/wildlife_management/grizzly/index.asp. This report is in partial fulfillment of the requirements in Wyoming Statute 23-1-1001. Questions about this report or its content can 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, Brian DeBolt, Zach Turnbull, and Mike Boyce
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, property, or when they kill 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, bear numbers and distribution, 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 throughout the world where humans and bears live together. Relocating bears achieves 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 and/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. This action can prevent removing bears from the population and may be beneficial in meeting population management objectives.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department relocates and removes black and grizzly bears as part of routine management 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 status, physical injuries, type of conflict, severity of conflict, known history of the animal, human safety issues, 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 (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 2008.

Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals

During 2008, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department captured 28 individual grizzly bears on 32 occasions (three animals were captured twice and one was captured a third time) in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts. Eighteen captures were of individual bears while the remaining 10 captures were of family groups consisting of females with yearling cubs. Of the 32 capture events, 25 bears (78%) were relocated from areas where they were causing conflicts with livestock or property, or moved preemptively to avoid conflicts (Fig. 1). Seven bears (22%) were removed from the population by management authorities. These bears were killed after capture because of having a history of being involved in previous conflicts, had a known history of being in close association with humans, or were deemed unsuitable for release into the wild. There were no non-target captures during 2008.

Thirteen (41%) of the capture events occurred in Park County, 9 (28%) captures occurred in Fremont County, 6 (19%) in Teton County, and 4 (12%) in Sublette County (Table 1). Of the 25 bears moved from their capture sites, 22 (88%) were released in Park County, and three (12%) were released in Teton County (Table 1). All bears were released on U.S. Forest Service lands in the Grizzly Bear Primary Conservation Area (PCA), the area formerly designated as the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone. (Fig. 1).

All independent bears (>2years old, n=13) that were relocated were fitted with a VHF radio-tracking collar to allow for their movements to be documented after being released. Aerial attempts at obtaining movement and location data were made approximately every 7-14 days. Relocated bears wearing radio collars moved a mean straight-line distance of 42.6 miles (range 9.8-93.0 miles) from the release site to their last known location in 2008. One bear (549) remained within 9.8 miles of the original release site but was not known to be involved in any additional conflicts. Of the 12 bears wearing functional radio collars after release, 3 moved back to <10 miles from the original capture sites but were not known to cause additional conflicts. One bear (276) was never found after it was relocated probably due to its radio collar malfunctioning. One of the 12 bears wearing functional radio collars was removed by management authorities after it caused further conflicts at a location 31 miles north of its release site and 1 radio collared bear was killed by a elk hunter. Six of the 10 bears with functional collars remaining alive were last located within the PCA in 2008, and the other 3 were on national forest lands outside of the PCA as of their last known location in 2008.

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 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 (Table 1).

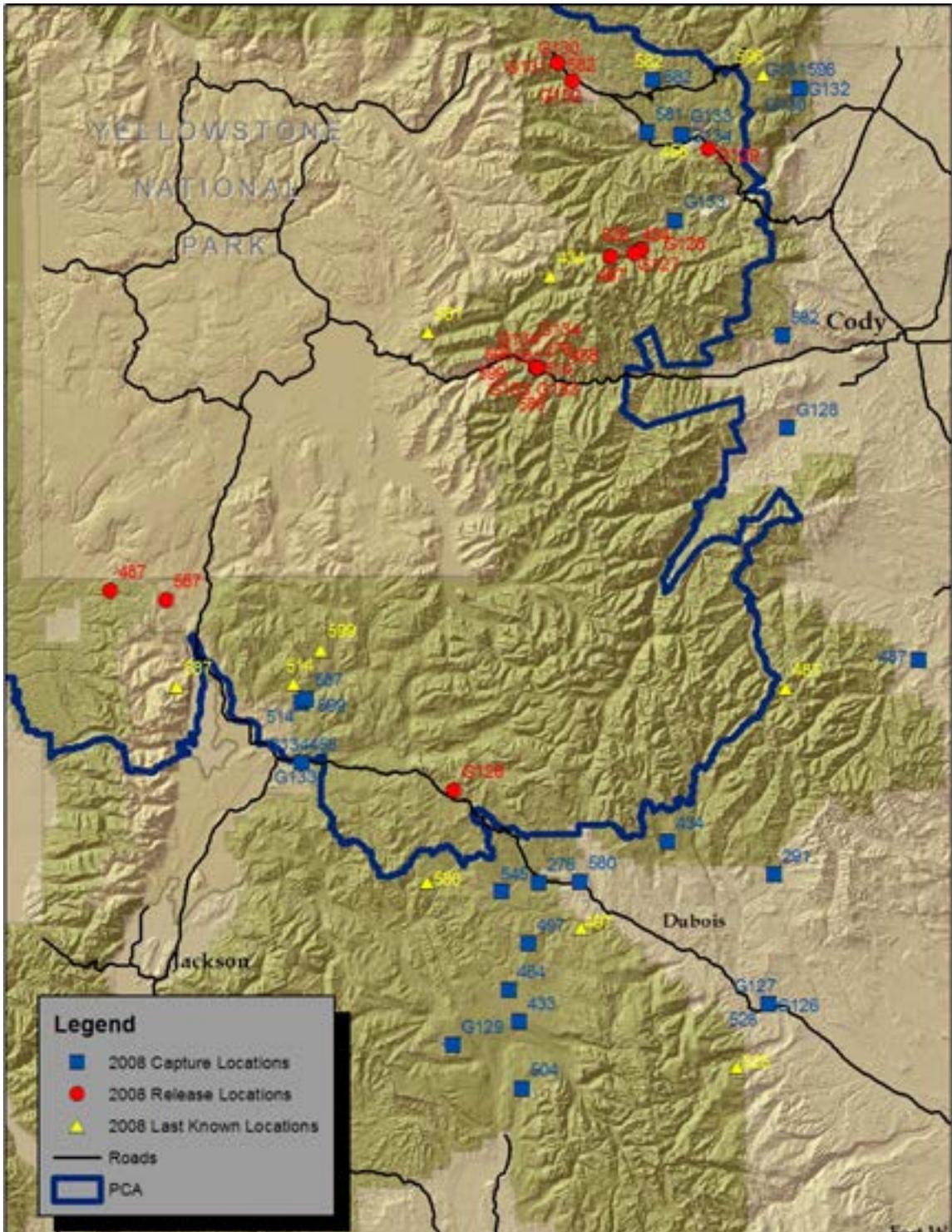


Figure 1. Capture locations (n=32), release location (n=25), and last known locations (n=12) for grizzly bears captured and relocated or released in 2008. Bears with "G" in front of their number were not wearing radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared.

Table 1. Date, bear ID numbers, capture location, release site, and reasons for capturing, relocating or removing the grizzly bear(s).

Date	Bear No.	Capture County	Relocation Site	Relocation County	Reason	Comments
4/19/2008	291	Fremont	Killed	NA	Property damage	Removed for repeated property damage
5/8/2008	G127	Fremont	Sunlight Creek	Park	Preemptive	In ranch carcass dump
5/8/2008	G126	Fremont	Sunlight Creek	Park	Preemptive	In ranch carcass dump
5/9/2008	580	Fremont	Mormon Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Cattle depredation
5/9/2008	525	Fremont	Sunlight Creek	Park	Preemptive	In ranch carcass dump
5/17/2008	581	Park	Mormon Creek	Park	Garbage	In business garbage trailer
6/8/2008	582	Park	Pilot Creek	Park	Garbage	Small amount of garbage and frequenting housing area
6/28/2008	587	Teton	Grand Teton N.P.	Teton	Preemptive	In subdivision eating lawn grass
7/8/2008	434	Fremont	Sunlight Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Cattle depredation
7/18/2008	G128	Park	Togwotee Pass	Teton	Preemptive	In rural housing area
7/24/2008	433	Sublette	Killed	NA	Livestock damage	Chronic cattle depredation
7/27/2008	487	Park	Grassy Lake area	Teton	Property damage/ Food reward	Breaking into grain shed
7/28/2008	504	Sublette	Killed	NA	Livestock damage	Chronic cattle depredation
7/31/2008	464	Sublette	Killed	NA	Livestock damage	Chronic cattle depredation
8/4/2008	497	Fremont	Sunlight Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Cattle depredation
8/9/2008	G129	Sublette	Camp Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Cattle depredation
8/11/2008	582	Park	Killed	NA	Food Reward	Frequenting developed sites, unafraid of people
8/13/2008	545	Fremont	Killed	NA	Livestock damage	Chronic cattle depredation
8/28/2008	276	Fremont	Mormon Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Cattle depredation
9/12/2008	G130	Park	Fox Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Cattle depredation with mother
9/12/2008	G131	Park	Fox Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Cattle depredation with mother
9/12/2008	G132	Park	Fox Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Cattle depredation with mother
9/14/2008	596	Park	Mormon Creek	Park	Preemptive	Frequenting ranch buildings, on porch
10/1/2008	G133	Teton	Mormon Creek	Park	Garbage	In dumpster with mother
10/1/2008	G134	Teton	Mormon Creek	Park	Garbage	In dumpster with mother
10/1/2008	458	Teton	Mormon Creek	Park	Garbage	In dumpster with cubs (G133, G134)
10/6/2008	G133	Park	Sunlight Creek	Park	Food reward	Released on site, mother and sibling not captured
10/17/2008	599	Teton	Mormon Creek	Park	Property damage/ Food reward	Food rewards at outfitter camp
10/21/2008	G133	Park	Mormon Creek	Park	Property damage/ Food reward	Breaking into outbuildings with mother
10/22/2008	G134	Park	Mormon Creek	Park	Property damage/ Food reward	Breaking into outbuildings with mother
10/22/2008	458	Park	Killed	NA	Property damage/ Food reward	Breaking into outbuildings, cubs G133, G134 relocated
10/27/2008	514	Teton	Mormon Creek	Park	Property damage/ Food reward	Food rewards at outfitter camp

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