

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

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## 2009 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/grizzlymanagement/index.asp>. 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 Mark Bruscino, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, 2820 State Highway 120, Cody, WY 82414, (307) 527-7125, [Mark.Bruscino@wgf.state.wy.us](mailto:Mark.Bruscino@wgf.state.wy.us)

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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 share the land. Relocating bears achieves several social and conservation functions: 1.) It reduces the chance of property damage, livestock damage, or human interactions in areas where the potential for conflict is high; 2.) It reduces the potential for bears to become food conditioned and/or human habituated which often times results in destructive and/or dangerous behaviors; 3.) It allows bears the opportunity to forage on natural foods and remain wary of people. Relocation 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 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 (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 2009.

### **Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals**

During 2009, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department captured 26 grizzly bears on 29 occasions (24 animals were captured once, 1 animal was captured twice, and 1 animal was captured three times) in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts. Twenty individuals were lone bears, 3 were orphaned sibling cubs, and 3 were a family group comprised of an adult female with 2 cubs. Of the 29 bear capture events, 22 (81%) involved bears that were relocated from areas where they were causing conflicts with livestock or property, or moved preemptively to avoid conflicts (Fig. 1). Seven (19%) capture events involved bears that were removed from the population by agency personnel. These bears were removed after capture 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). There were 2 non-target bears captured during 2009 that were released on site.

Twenty (69%) of the 29 capture events occurred in Park County, 3 (10%) captures occurred in Fremont County, 2 (7%) in Teton County, and 4 (14%) in Sublette County (Table 1). Of the 22 relocation events, 9 (41%) bears were released in Park County, 12 (55%) were released in Teton County, and 1 (4%) was released in Fremont County (Table 1). All bears were released on U.S. Forest Service lands in or adjacent to the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone (RZ) (Fig. 1).

All independent bears (>2years old, n=13) that were relocated were fitted with a VHF radio-tracking collar to allow their movements to be documented after release. Aerial attempts to obtain movement and location data were made approximately every 10-14 days. Relocated bears wearing radio collars moved a mean straight-line distance of 44.6 miles (range=11.5-72.3 miles) from the release site to their last known location in 2009. Of the 13 bears fitted with radio collars, 4 individuals moved back to within 10 miles of their original capture site, but were not known to cause additional conflicts. One bear (613) was never found after it was released probably due to a radio collar malfunction. One (596) of the 13 bears wearing functional radio collars was removed by management authorities after moving to farmlands 88 miles northeast of its release site, and 1 radio collared bear (629) was killed by a black bear hunter. Eight of the remaining 11 bears with functional collars were last located within the RZ in 2009, and the other 3 were on U.S. Forest Service lands outside of the RZ as of their last known location in 2009.

### **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).

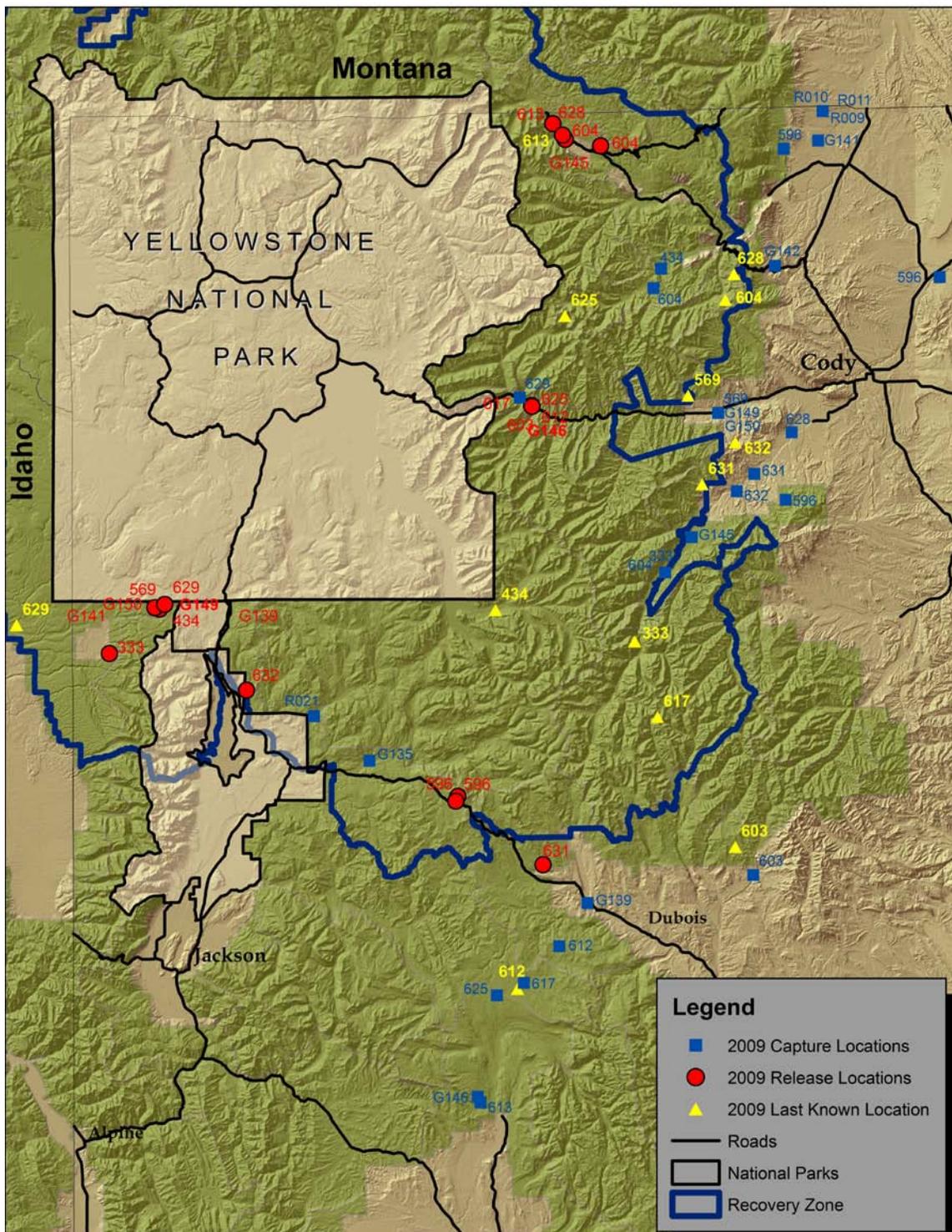


Figure 1. Capture locations (n=29), release location (n=22), and last known locations (n=15) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, released or removed in 2009. Bears with “G” in front of their number were not wearing radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared. Bears with “R” in front of their number were removed with no relocation in 2009.

Table 1. Date, bear ID number, 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
4/30/2009	603	Fremont	Mormon Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Sheep damage
5/23/2009	G139	Fremont	Sheffield Creek	Teton	Preemptive	Frequenting residences
7/20/2009	612	Fremont	Mormon Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Cattle damage
5/3/2009	604	Park	Fox Creek	Park	Property damage	Damaging chicken coop
5/17/2009	604	Park	Lilly Lake	Park	Preemptive	Frequenting lodge area
6/7/2009	G141	Park	Grassy Lake area	Teton	Preemptive	In landfill
6/11/2009	G142	Park	Killed	NA	Livestock damage	Chronic cattle damage
6/25/2009	596	Park	Togwotee Pass	Teton	Livestock damage	Cattle damage
6/28/2009	434	Park	Grassy Lake area	Teton	Livestock damage	Killed 4 pigs
6/28/2009	G145	Park	Fox Creek	Park	Preemptive	Near residences
7/19/2009	R009	Park	Removed to zoo	NA	Orphaned cub	Mother killed by public
7/19/2009	R010	Park	Removed to zoo	NA	Orphaned cub	Mother killed by public
7/19/2009	R011	Park	Removed to zoo	NA	Orphaned cub	Mother killed by public
8/20/2009	333	Park	Grassy Lake area	Teton	Property damage	Damaging chicken coop, fish feeders
8/23/2009	596	Park	Togwotee Pass	Teton	Livestock damage	Cattle damage
10/2/2009	569	Park	Grassy Lake area	Teton	Property damage	Fruit trees
10/2/2009	G149	Park	Grassy Lake area	Teton	Property damage	Fruit trees
10/2/2009	G150	Park	Grassy Lake area	Teton	Property damage	Fruit trees
10/12/2009	628	Park	Fox Creek	Park	Food reward	Garbage
10/12/2009	629	Park	Grassy Lake area	Teton	Preemptive	Frequenting lodge area
10/14/2009	631	Park	Long Creek	Fremont	Food reward	Eating from grain shed
10/30/2009	632	Park	Arizona Creek	Teton	Livestock damage	Killed a pony
11/10/2009	596	Park	Killed	NA	Removal	Frequenting residential area
7/24/2009	613	Sublette	Fox Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Sheep damage
8/2/2009	617	Sublette	Mormon Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Cattle damage
8/11/2009	G146	Sublette	Mormon Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Sheep damage
9/18/2009	625	Sublette	Mormon Creek	Park	Livestock damage	Cattle damage
5/12/2009	G135	Teton	Killed	NA	Removal	Poor shape, old, frequenting residences
10/6/2009	R021	Teton	Killed	NA	Property damage	Building damage, old, poor shape

**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