

GRIZZLY BEAR MANAGEMENT CAPTURES, RELOCATIONS AND REMOVALS IN NORTHWEST WYOMING

2011 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/web2011/wildlife-1000378.aspx>. 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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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 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 a common practice throughout the world. 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; 4) 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 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 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 2011.

Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals

During 2011, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department captured 39 grizzly bears in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts (Figure 1). Twenty-nine individuals were lone grizzly bears, 1 was an adult female with 2 cubs-of-the-year, 1 was an adult female with 3 cubs-of-the-year, and 1 was an adult female with 2 yearlings. Twenty-four (62%) of the 39 capture events occurred in Park County, 6 (15%) in Sublette County, 5 (13%) in Fremont County, and 2 (5%) in Teton County, and 2 (5%) in captures occurred in Hot Springs County (Table 1).

Of the 39 capture events, 23 (59%) involved grizzly bears that were relocated from areas where they were causing conflicts with livestock or property, or moved preemptively to avoid conflicts. One grizzly cub was caught in a bobcat trap and released on site, and one yearling female was released on site because the mother could not be captured. Fourteen of the 39 capture events involved grizzly bears that were removed from the population by agency personnel 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). All relocated grizzly bears were released on U.S. Forest Service (n=20) or Wyoming Game and Fish Department (n=3) lands in or adjacent to the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone (RZ) (Figure 2). Of the 23 relocation events, 13 (57%) were released in Teton County, 7 (30%) bears were released in Park County, and 3 (13%) were released in Fremont County (Table 1).

All independent grizzly bears greater than 2 years old, which were relocated, were fitted with a VHF radio-tracking collar (n=17) to track their movements after release. Aerial attempts to obtain location data were made approximately every 10-14 days. Relocated grizzly bears wearing radio collars moved a mean straight-line distance of 49.1 miles (range = 5.0 - 121.3 mi; SD = 44.8) from the release site to their last known location in 2011. Of the 13 grizzly bears for which good movement data exists, 5 moved back to within 10 miles of their original capture site but were not known to cause additional conflicts. All 13 grizzly bears were on National Forest or Park Service lands and 8 of the 13 remained in the RZ as of their last known location in 2011.

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 (Table 1).

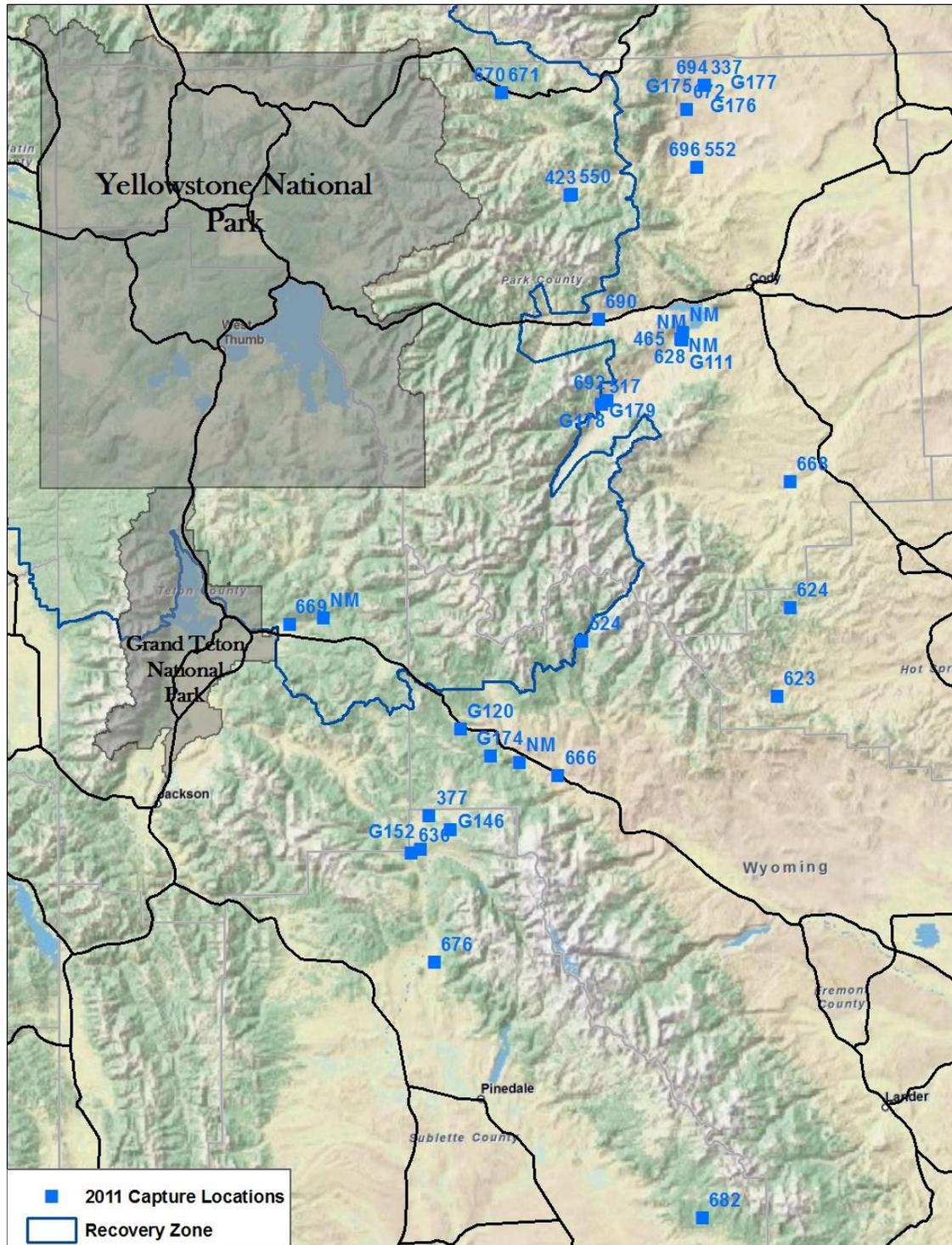


Figure 1. Capture locations (n=39) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, released, or removed in 2011. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were marked but not wearing radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared. Grizzly bears identified with “NM” were non-target grizzly bears released without handling.

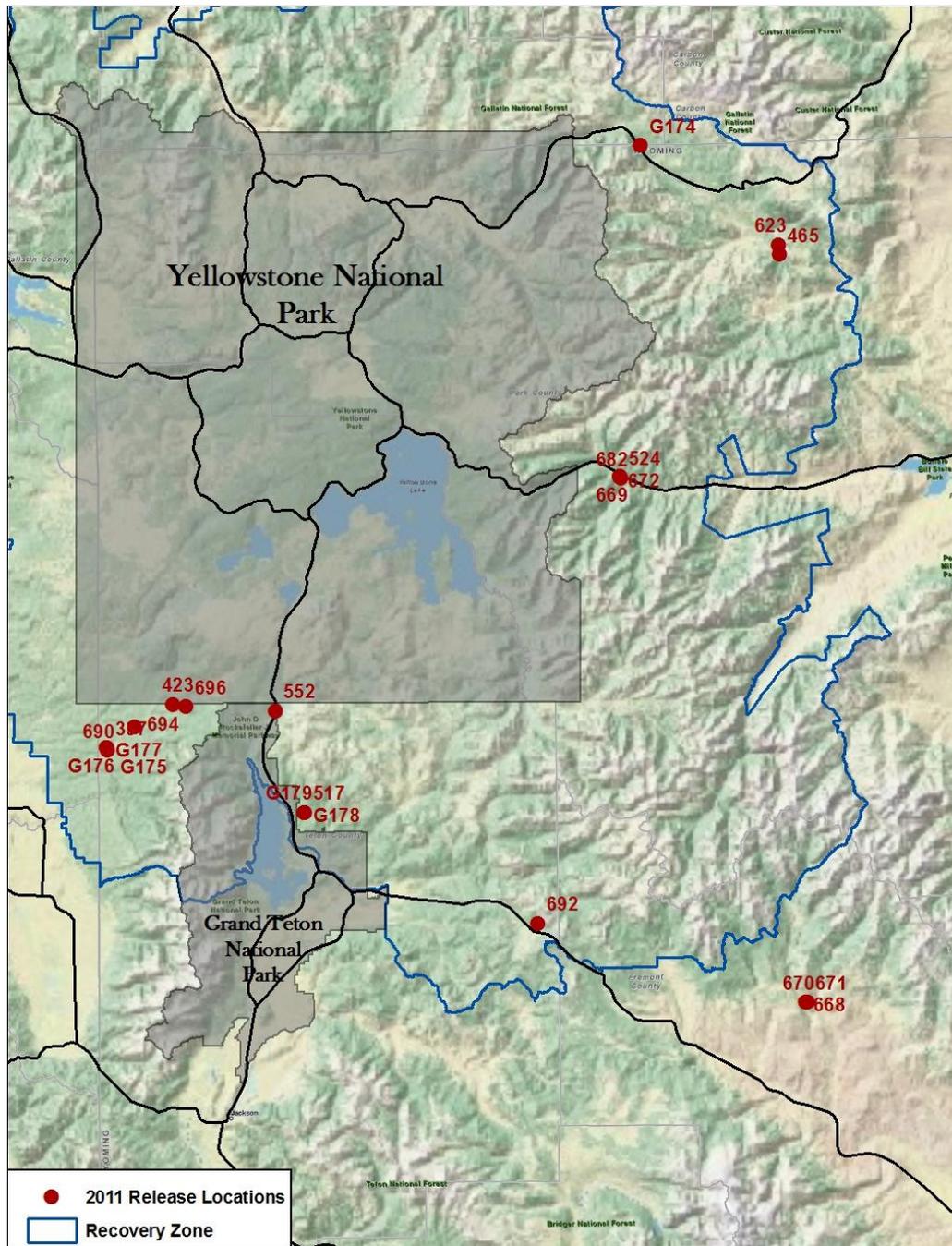


Figure 2. Release locations (n=23) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, or released on site in 2011. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were marked but not wearing radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared. Grizzly bears identified with “NM” were non-target grizzly bears released without handling.

Table 1. Date, Grizzly Bear ID number, Capture County, Relocation Site, Release County, Reason for Capture, and Remarks for all 2011 grizzly bear management captures (N = 39) in Wyoming.

DATE	ID	Capture County	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason for Capture	Remarks
5/3/2011	668	Park	Wiggins Fork	Fremont	Preemptive	Near calving pasture
5/7/2011	624	Hot Springs	Removed	NA	Property Damage	Broke into cabin and trailer
5/7/2011	669	Teton	N.FK. Shoshone River	Park	Property Damage	Into fish and livestock feed
5/11/2011	670	Park	Wiggins Fork	Fremont	Property Damage	Broke into grain shed
5/12/2011	671	Park	Wiggins Fork	Fremont	Property Damage	Broke into grain shed
5/14/2011	672	Park	N.FK. Shoshone River	Park	Food Reward	Into trash and bird feeders at residence
7/3/2011	676	Sublette	On Site	NA	Livestock Damage	Cattle damage
7/16/2011	G146	Sublette	Removed	NA	Livestock Damage	Sheep damage
7/26/2011	623	Hot Springs	Clarks Fork	Park	Livestock Damage	Cattle damage
7/27/2011	G152	Sublette	Removed	NA	Livestock Damage	Cattle damage
7/29/2011	682	Sublette	N.FK. Shoshone River	Park	Livestock Damage	Sheep damage
8/7/2011	G111	Park	Cleveland Zoo	NA	Food Reward	Into trash and grain at residence
8/8/2011	NA	Park	Cleveland Zoo	NA	Food Reward	Into trash and grain at residence
8/8/2011	NA	Park	Cleveland Zoo	NA	Food Reward	Into trash and grain at residence

8/24/2011	377	Sublette	Removed	NA	Livestock Damage	Cattle damage
8/28/2011	636	Sublette	Removed	NA	Livestock Damage	Cattle damage
8/29/2011	524	Fremont	N.FK. Shoshone River	Park	Livestock Damage	Cattle damage
9/1/2011	423	Park	Calf Creek	Teton	Livestock Damage	Cattle damage
9/1/2011	G174	Fremont	Clarks Fork	Park	Preemptive	Frequenting subdivision
9/11/2011	550	Park	Removed	NA	Livestock Damage	Cattle damage
9/20/2011	G120	Fremont	Removed	NA	Livestock Damage	Cattle damage
9/23/2011	690	Park	Squirrel Ck	Teton	Property Damage	Apple Trees
10/4/2011	692	Park	Blackrock Ck	Teton	Property Damage	Apple Trees
10/7/2011	694	Park	Squirrel Ck	Teton	Preemptive	In Landfill
10/9/2011	337	Park	Squirrel Ck	Teton	Preemptive	In Landfill
10/9/2011	G175	Park	Squirrel Ck	Teton	Preemptive	In Landfill
10/9/2011	G176	Park	Squirrel Ck	Teton	Preemptive	In Landfill
10/10/2011	G177	Park	Squirrel Ck	Teton	Preemptive	In Landfill
10/14/2011	517	Park	Bailey Ck	Teton	Property Damage	Eating oat bales
10/14/2011	G178	Park	Bailey Ck	Teton	Property Damage	Eating oat bales

10/14/2011	G179	Park	Bailey Ck	Teton	Property Damage	Eating oat bales
10/19/2011	465	Park	Clarks Fork	Park	Preemptive	Near Residential Area
10/21/2011	NA	Teton	Removed	NA	Food Reward	At Trailhead and In Campgrounds
10/30/2011	628	Park	Removed	NA	Food Reward	Apple Trees and Pig Feed
11/4/2011	696	Park	Cascade Ck	Teton	Preemptive	Near Ranch Buildings
11/6/2011	666	Fremont	Removed	NA	Food Reward	In Town of Dubois
11/11/2011	552	Park	Cascade Ck	Teton	Preemptive	Near Ranch Buildings
11/11/2011	NA	Park	Removed	NA	Human Injury	Human Attack
11/28/2011	NA	Fremont	On Site	NA	Non-target capture	Released from bobcat trap on site

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