

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

2012 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 each Wyoming Game and Fish Department Regional Office and on the Department's website at <http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/wildlife-1000674.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 are 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 locations is a management practice used throughout the world. Relocating bears 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 often negates the necessity of removing bears from the population, which 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, the animal's conflict history, 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 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 2012.

Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals

During 2012, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department captured 45 grizzly bears during 48 capture events in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts (Figure 1). Most individuals were lone grizzly bears, but 4 family groups (1 female with 3 cubs-of-the-year, 1 female with 2 yearlings, 1 female with 1 yearling, and 1 female with 2 two-year olds) were also captured. Of the 48 capture events, 20 (41%) occurred in Park County, 10 (21%) in Sublette County, 10 (21%) in Teton County, and 8 (17%) in Fremont County (Table 1).

Of the 48 capture events, 28 involved grizzly bears that were relocated from areas preemptively to avoid conflicts or where they were causing property damage, obtained garbage or some non-natural food such as pet food or livestock grain, or a combination of these factors. Nineteen captures were as a result of grizzly bears killing livestock, primarily cattle. One grizzly cub was caught at a residence in the town of Dubois. Despite efforts to save the cub, it died of pre-capture malnutrition before it could be placed in a zoo or other captive facility.

Twelve of the 48 capture events resulted in removal of grizzly bears 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 concerns). All relocated grizzly bears were released on U.S. Forest Service (n=33) or Wyoming Game and Fish Department (n=2) lands in or adjacent to the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone (Figure 2). Of the 35 relocation events, 23 (66%) bears were released in Park County, 10 (28%) were released in Teton County, and 2 (6%) were released in Fremont County (Table 1).

All independent grizzly bears greater than 2 years old, which were relocated, were fitted with a radio-tracking collar (n=23) 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 49.57 miles (range = 6.4–126.4 mi) from the release site to their last known location in 2012.

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).

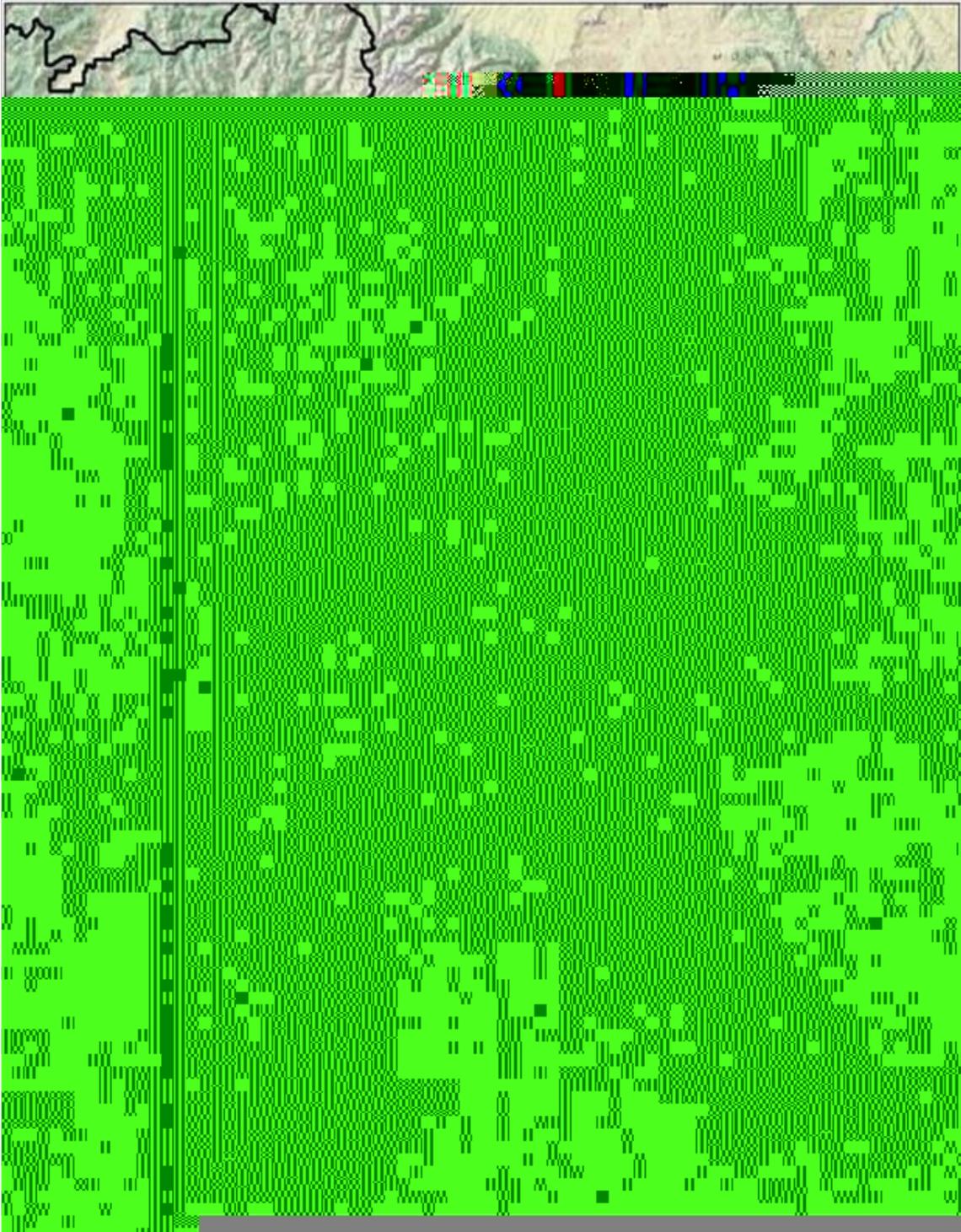


Figure 1. Capture locations (n=48) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, released, or removed in 2012. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were marked but not wearing radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared. Grizzly bears identified with “NA” were grizzly bears removed from the population without being given an identification number.

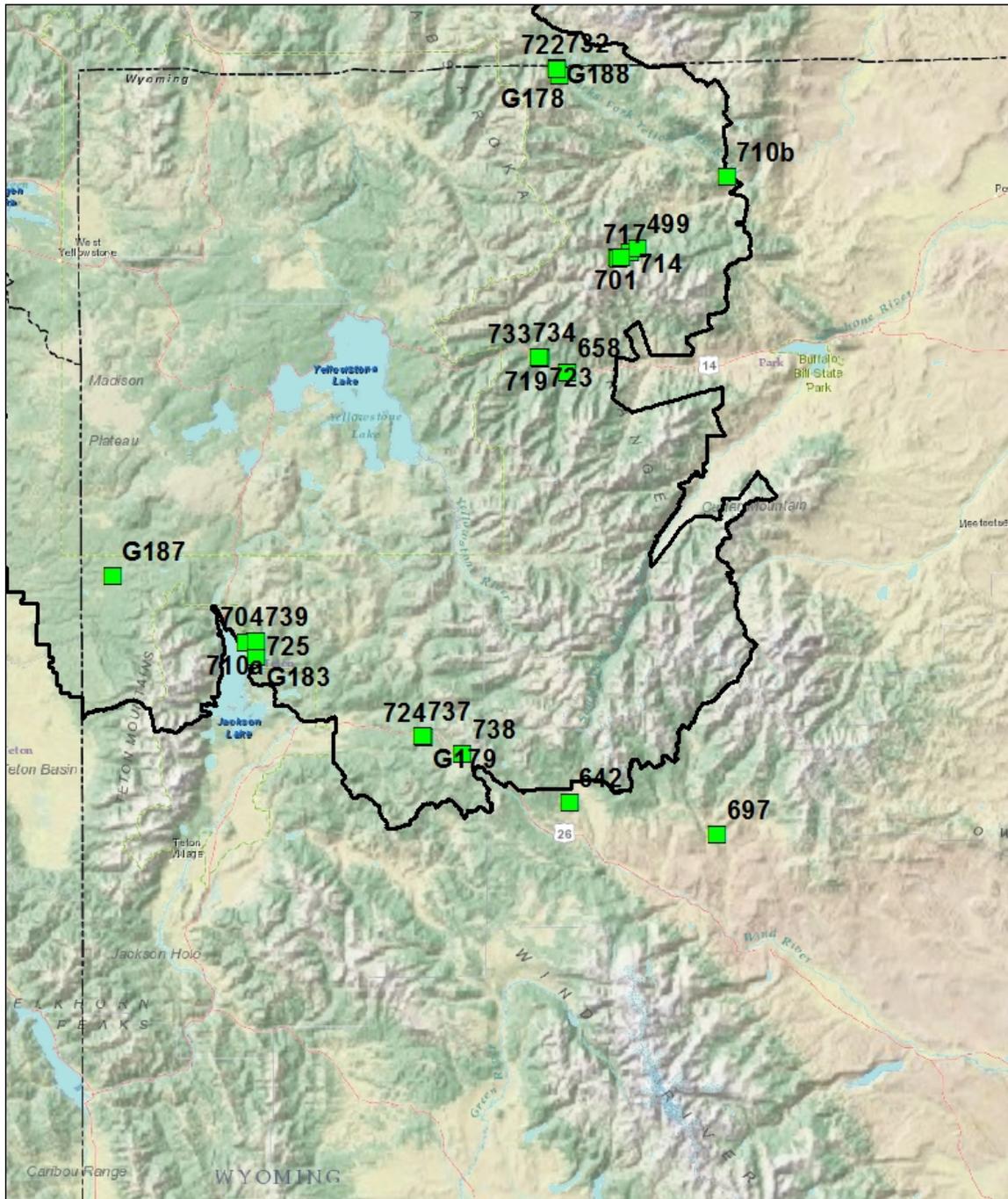


Figure 2. Release locations (n=35) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, or released on site in conflict management efforts 2012. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were marked but not wearing radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared.

Table 1. Capture date, grizzly bear identification number (ID), capture county, relocation site, release county, and reason for capture for all 2012 grizzly bear conflict management captures (N = 48) in Wyoming.

Date	ID	Capture County	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason for Capture
3/21/2012	697	Park	Wiggins Fork	Fremont	Cattle depredation
4/8/2012	698	Teton	N. Fk. Shoshone	Park	Captured for obtaining cat food from out-building
4/15/2012	699	Park	N. Fk. Shoshone	Park	Captured for possible sheep depredation and close proximity to a residence
4/17/2012	682	Park	N/A	N/A	Removed for repeated sheep depredations
4/18/2012	642	Park	Long Creek	Fremont	Preemptive capture for being around domestic calves
5/4/2012	701	Fremont	Sunlight Creek	Park	Captured for obtaining birdseed and garbage
5/7/2012	N/A	Fremont	N/A	N/A	In residence yard in town. Died of starvation
5/17/2012	704	Park	Bailey Creek	Teton	Cattle depredation
6/16/2012	710	Park	Clark's Fork	Park	Near ranch headquarters for several weeks
6/28/2012	714	Fremont	Sunlight Creek	Park	Cattle depredation
6/28/2012	G181	Fremont	Sunlight Creek	Park	Cattle depredation
6/28/2012	G182	Fremont	Sunlight Creek	Park	Cattle depredation
7/8/2012	716	Sublette	N.Fk. Shoshone	Park	Cattle depredation
7/10/2012	717	Fremont	Sunlight Creek	Park	Cattle depredation
7/17/2012	719	Sublette	N.Fk. Shoshone	Park	Cattle depredations
7/21/2012	710	Park	Bailey Creek	Teton	Frequenting guest ranch for several weeks

Date	ID	Capture County	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason for Capture
7/21/2012	722	Sublette	Clark's Fork	Park	Cattle depredation
7/28/2012	650	Sublette	N/A	N/A	Removed for repeated cattle depredations
7/29/2012	499	Sublette	Sunlight Creek	Park	Cattle depredation
8/3/2012	304	Sublette	N/A	N/A	Removed for repeated livestock depredations
8/4/2012	723	Sublette	N. Fk. Shoshone	Park	Cattle depredation
8/14/2012	724	Park	Blackrock Creek	Teton	Damaging apple and chokecherry trees
8/15/2012	725	Park	Bailey Creek	Teton	Damaging apple trees
8/15/2012	G183	Park	Bailey Creek	Teton	Damaging apple trees
8/17/2012	670	Sublette	N/A	N/A	Removed for cattle depredation
8/28/2012	698	Teton	N/A	N/A	Removed for repeated property damage and food rewards
9/7/2012	G174	Park	N/A	N/A	Removed for obtaining food rewards of garbage and fruit close to the town of Ralston, WY
9/10/2012	732	Teton	Clark's Fork	Park	Property damage and obtaining food reward
9/12/2012	N/A	Teton	N/A	N/A	Removed for repeated property damage
9/13/2012	524	Fremont	N/A	N/A	Removed for previous cattle depredation and subsequent capture for property damage
9/14/2012	315	Teton	Sunlight Creek	Park	Frequenting outfitter camp and obtaining livestock food from horse trailer
9/14/2012	G184	Teton	Sunlight Creek	Park	Frequenting outfitter camp and obtaining livestock food from horse trailer
9/14/2012	G185	Teton	Sunlight Creek	Park	Frequenting outfitter camp and obtaining livestock food from horse trailer

Date	ID	Capture County	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason for Capture
9/14/2012	G186	Teton	Sunlight Creek	Park	Frequenting outfitter camp and obtaining livestock food from horse trailer
9/17/2012	733	Sublette	N. Fk. Shoshone	Park	Preemptive move; suspect in nearby cattle depredations
9/17/2012	N/A	Sublette	N/A	N/A	Removed for repeated cattle depredations
9/18/2012	N/A	Park	N/A	N/A	Removed for multiple food rewards of trash
9/21/2012	734	Park	N. Fk. Shoshone	Park	Non-target capture ranch hay field
9/21/2012	G178	Park	Clark's Fork	Park	Frequenting ranch and getting into oat hay bales
9/21/2012	G179	Park	Blackrock Creek	Teton	Frequenting ranch and getting into oat hay bales
9/21/2012	G187	Park	Squirrel Creek	Teton	Frequenting a ranch near Cody, WY
9/22/2012	472	Park	N/A	N/A	Removed for getting into grain shed, trash, and corn field
10/1/2012	G188	Park	Clark's Fork	Park	Frequenting campground
10/10/2012	737	Park	Blackrock Creek	Teton	Frequenting developed area and eating crab apples near homes
10/19/2012	738	Park	Blackrock Creek	Teton	Receiving a food reward of garbage
10/20/2012	315	Teton	N/A	N/A	Removed for repeated property damage and food rewards at trailhead camps
10/26/2012	658	Fremont	N. Fk. Shoshone	Park	Breaking into grain shed
10/28/2012	739	Park	Bailey Creek	Teton	Cattle depredation

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.

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