

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

2014 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 the Wyoming Game and Fish Department Headquarters Office, Regional Offices and on the Department website at <http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/home.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 the availability of 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 common throughout the world. Relocation 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 could prevent removing bears from the population which may be beneficial in meeting population management objectives.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (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. Grizzly bear relocation (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 (Commission) promulgated Chapter 58 Notification of Grizzly Bear Relocation Regulation (Appendix II) to further direct the implementation of Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001.

This report satisfies the requirements set forth in Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001(c) and provides additional information on grizzly bear captures, relocations, and removals in Wyoming during 2014.

Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals

During 2014, the Department captured 22 grizzly bears in 23 capture events in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts (Figure 1). Most captures were lone grizzly bears, but 2 family groups (one female with a cub-of-the-year, and 2 yearling siblings) were also captured. Twelve (55%) of the 23 capture events occurred in Sublette County, seven (29%) in Park County, two (8%) in Hot Springs County, one (4%) in Fremont County, one (4%) in Teton County (Table 1).

Of the 23 capture events, sixteen captures were a result of bears killing livestock, primarily cattle. One management capture was a non-target yearling grizzly bear released on site in Sublette County. The remaining 6 bears were captured for exhibiting habituated behavior and being in close proximity to people. All relocated grizzly bears were released on U.S. Forest Service lands in or adjacent to the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone (RZ) (Figure 2). Of the 16 relocation events, 12 (75%) bears were released in Park County, and 4 (25%) were released in Teton County (Table 1).

Six of the 23 capture events resulted in the removal of grizzly bears from the population by agency personnel by lethal removal or live placement. These bears were removed 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 independent grizzly bears greater than 2 years old, which were relocated, were fitted with a radio-tracking collar ($n=13$) to track their movements after release. Attempts to obtain locations on marked animals through aerial telemetry were made approximately every 10-14 days.

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.

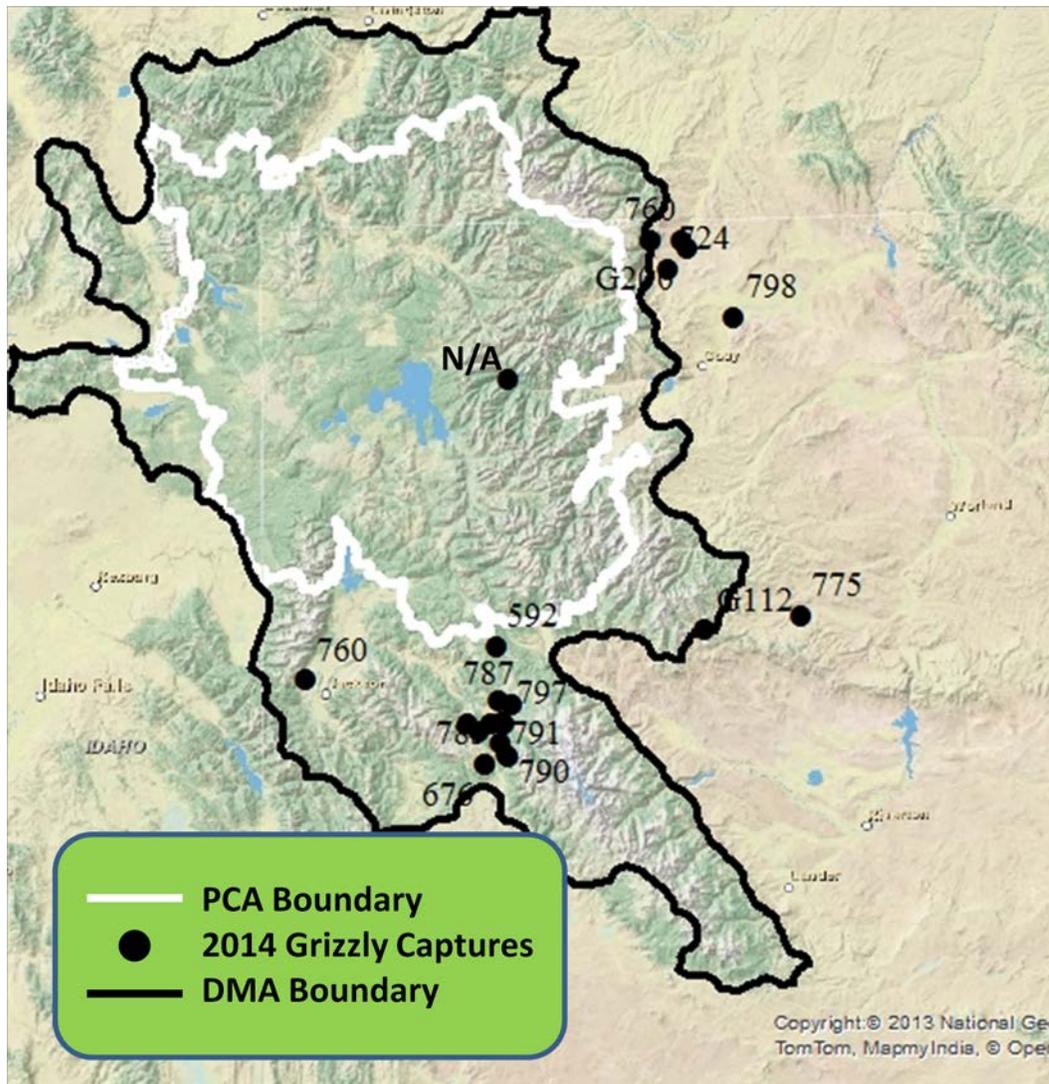


Figure 1. Management capture locations ($n=23$) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, released, or removed in 2014. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were ear-marked but not fitted with radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared. Grizzly bears identified with “NA” were grizzly bears removed from the population without being given an identification number. PCA is the grizzly bear Primary Conservation Area as defined in the 2007 Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. DMA is the grizzly bear Demographic Monitoring Area as defined in “Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team. 2012. Updating and Evaluating Approaches to estimate population size and sustainable mortality limits for grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team, U.S. Geological Survey, Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center, Bozeman, MT, USA.

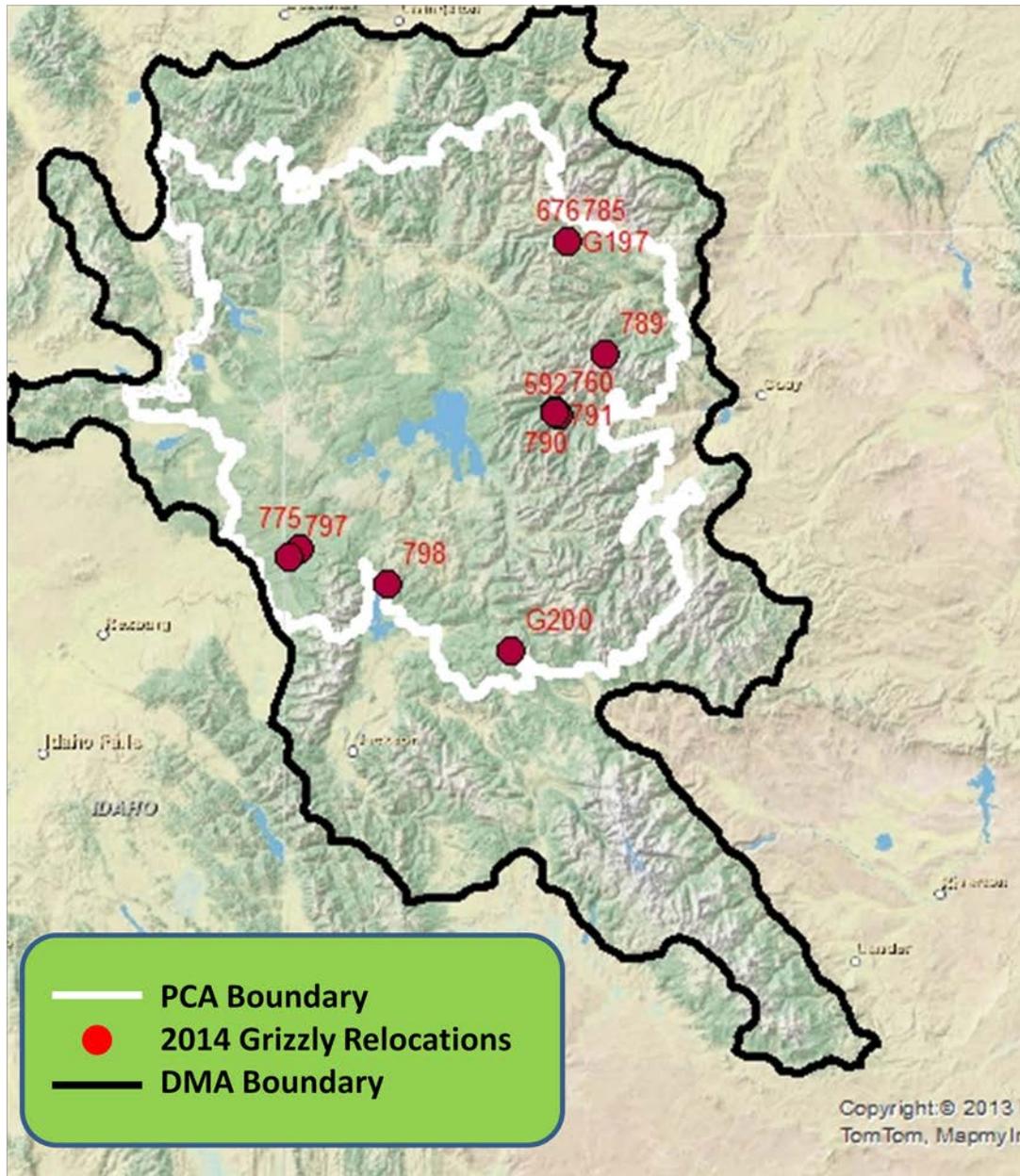


Figure 2. Release locations ($n=16$) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, or released on site in conflict management efforts 2014. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were ear-marked but not fitted with radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared. PCA is the grizzly bear Primary Conservation Area as defined in the 2007 Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. DMA is the grizzly bear Demographic Monitoring Area as defined in “Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team. 2012. Updating and Evaluating Approaches to estimate population size and sustainable mortality limits for grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team, U.S. Geological Survey, Northern Rocky Mountain Science Center, Bozeman, MT, USA

Table 1. Capture date, grizzly bear identification number (ID), capture county, relocation site, release county, and reason for capture for all 2014 grizzly bear conflict management captures ($n = 23$) in Wyoming.

Date	ID	Capture county	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
5/19/2014	775	HOT SPRINGS	GIBSON MEADOWS - Targhee National Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR SHEEP DEPREDATION
7/2/2014	780	SUBLETTE	MORMON CREEK - Shoshone National Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
7/12/2014	729	SUBLETTE	5 MILE CREEK- Shoshone National Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
7/23/2014	756	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR KILLING MULTIPLE CATTLE
7/26/2014	676	SUBLETTE	FOX PARK - Shoshone National Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR SHEEP DEPREDATION
7/27/2014	G197	SUBLETTE	FOX PARK - Shoshone National Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR SHEEP DEPREDATION
8/2/2014	G112	HOT SPRINGS			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/8/2014	787	SUBLETTE	ON SITE		NONTARGET AT DEPREDATION SITE. RELEASED ON SITE
8/14/2014	789	SUBLETTE	SUNLIGHT CREEK - Shoshone National Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/27/2014	731	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
8/27/2014	790	SUBLETTE	MORMON CREEK - Shoshone National Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
9/7/2014	791	SUBLETTE	FIVE MILE CREEK - Shoshone National Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
9/8/2014	785	SUBLETTE	FOX CREEK - Shoshone National Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
9/11/2014	592	FREMONT	MORMON CK-N FK SHOSHONE RIVER - Shoshone National Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
9/22/2014		PARK			FREQUENTING A GUEST RANCH,UNAFAID OF PEOPLE,REMOVED TO THE POCATELLO ZOO
9/30/2014	G198	PARK	5 MILE CREEK - Shoshone National Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION

Date	ID	Capture county	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
9/30/2014	G199	PARK	5 MILE CREEK - Shoshone National Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDAATION
10/4/2014	797	SUBLETTE	SQUIRREL MEADOWS- Caribou- Targhee National Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDAATION
10/8/2014	798	PARK	BAILEY CREEK,- Bridger-Teton National Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR DAMAGING FRUIT TREES/BIRDFEEDERS, GETTING GRAIN AND CLOSE TO PEOPLE
10/10/2014	760	TETON	5-MILE CREEK - Shoshone National Forest	PARK	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING RESIDENTIAL AREAS
10/26/2014	760	PARK			REMOVED FOR CONFLICT HISTORY AND CLOSE ASSOCIATION TO PEOPLE AND DEVELOPED AREAS
10/28/2014	724	PARK			REMOVED FOR CONFLICT HISTORY AND CLOSE ASSOCIATION TO PEOPLE AND DEVELOPED AREAS
11/3/2014	G200	PARK	LOST LAKE - Bridger-Teton National Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR BEING IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO RESIDENCES AND DAMAGING A CORN FIELD

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 Notification of 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. Definitions. Definitions shall be as set forth in Title 23, Wyoming Statutes, Commission regulations, 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 3. Notification of relocation. 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.

WYOMING GAME AND FISH COMMISSION

By: 
Mike Healy, President

Dated: January 22, 2014