

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

2015 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 <https://wgfd.wyo.gov>. 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 2015.

Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals

During 2015, the Department captured 45 grizzly bears in 51 capture events in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts (Figure 1). Most captures were lone grizzly bears of all age classes, but 2 family groups (1 female with 2 cubs-of-the-year, and 1 female with 2 yearlings) were also captured. Twenty-four (47%) of the 51 capture events were in Park County, 16 (31%) occurred in Sublette County, 7 (14%) in Fremont County, 2 (4%) in Hot Springs County, and 2 (4%) in Teton County (Table 1).

Of the 51 capture events, 22 captures were a result of bears killing livestock (primarily cattle), 6 were captured for getting unsecured garbage, and 6 were obtaining pet, livestock food, or foraging on fruit trees. Twelve management captures occurred as preemptive measures for bears exhibiting habituated behavior and/or being in close proximity to people, as well as 3 non-target captures and 2 captures for property damage. All relocated grizzly bears were released on U.S. Forest Service lands in or adjacent to the Primary Conservation Area (PCA) (Figure 2). Of the 34 relocation events, 17 (50%) bears were released in Park County, 16 (47%) were released in Teton County, and 1 (3%) was released in Fremont County (Table 1).

Seventeen of the 51 capture events resulted in the removal of grizzly bears from the population by Department personnel by lethal removal or live placement in a zoo. 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 that were relocated, were fitted with a radio-tracking collar to track their movements after release. Attempts to obtain locations on marked grizzly bears 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.

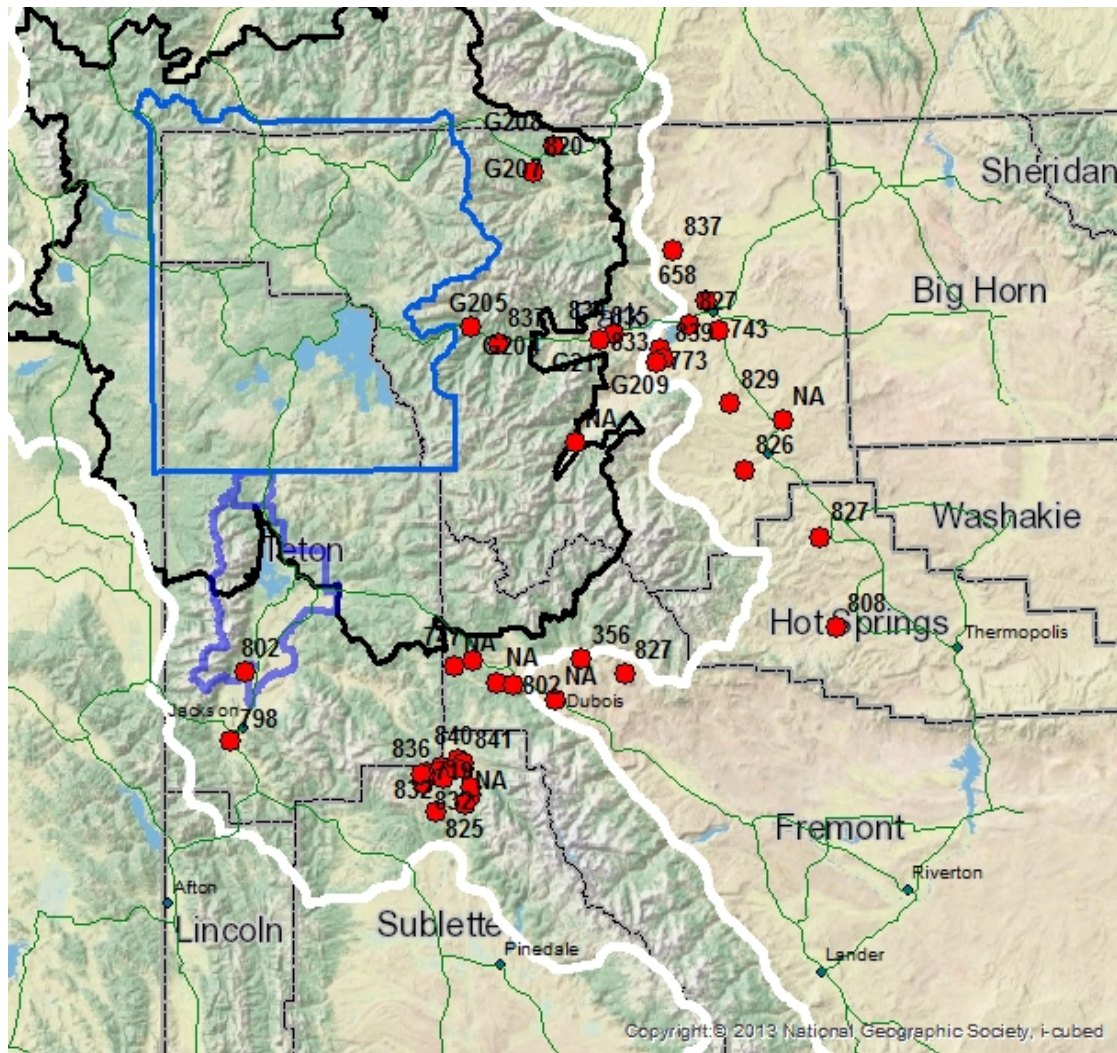


Figure 1. Management capture locations ($n = 51$) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, released, or removed in 2015. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were ear-marked but not fitted with radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared. Grizzly bears identified 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.

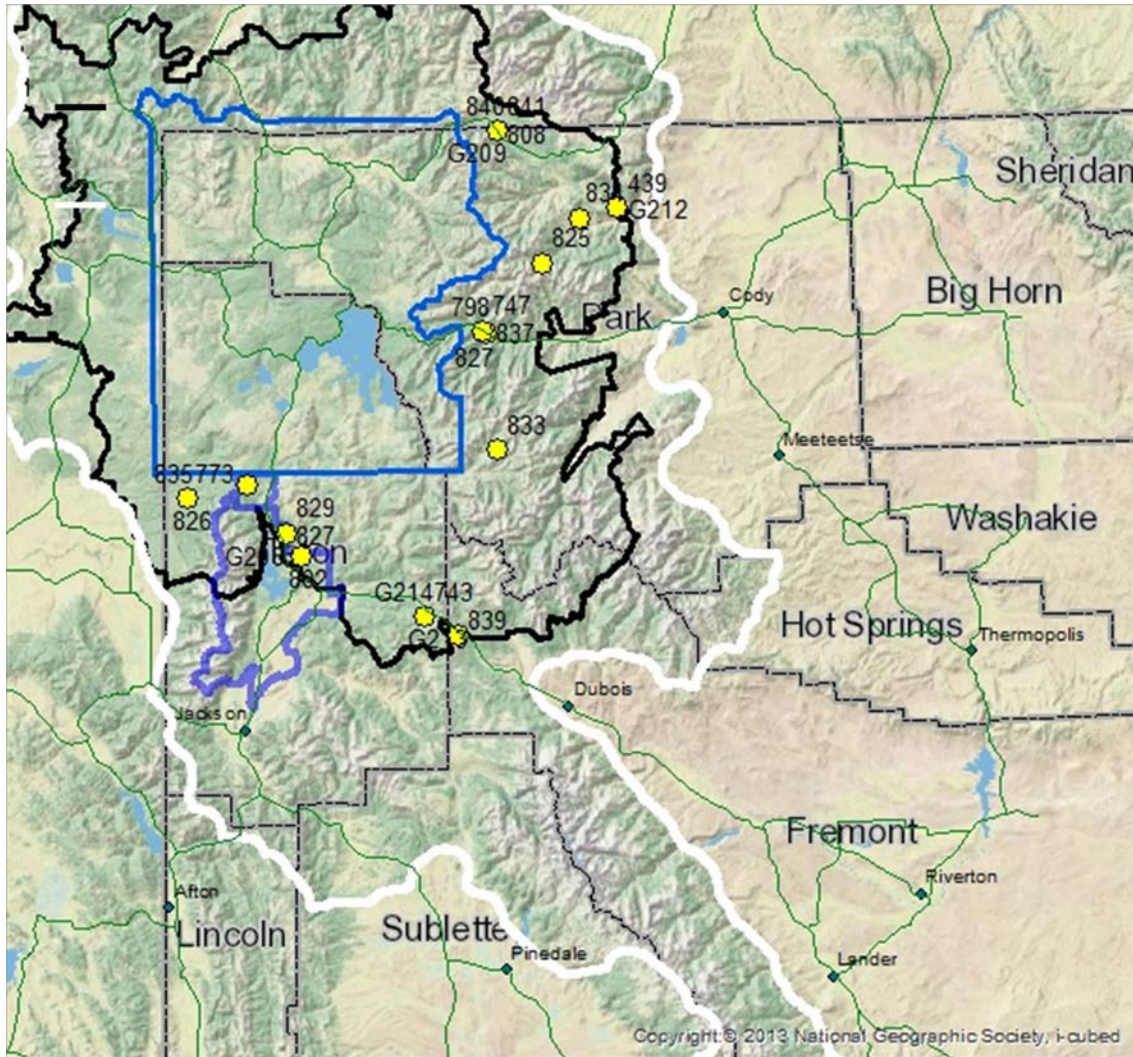


Figure 2. Release locations ($n = 34$) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, or released on site in conflict management efforts 2015. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were ear-marked but not fitted with radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared. PCA 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 2015 grizzly bear conflict management captures ($n = 51$) in Wyoming. Grizzly bears identified with “NA” were grizzly bears removed from the population without being given an identification number.

Date	ID	Capture county	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
4/17/2015	802	TETON	PILGRIM CREEK Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	NON-TARGET CAPTURE
5/14/2015	808	HOT SPRINGS	FOX CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR SHEEP DEPREDATION
5/14/2015	802	FREMONT	GLADE CREEK JDR Parkway	TETON	NON-TARGET CAPTURE
6/11/2015	G204	PARK	SQUIRREL MEADOWS Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING GUEST LODGE
6/11/2015	G205	PARK	SQUIRREL MEADOWS Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING GUEST LODGE
6/26/2015	656	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
6/27/2015	NA	FREMONT			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC GARBAGE CONFLICTS
6/27/2015	G206	SUBLETTE	FIVE MILE CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
7/3/2015	356	FREMONT			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC GARBAGE CONFLICTS
7/12/2015	719	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
7/25/2015	780	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
7/25/2015	G207	PARK	BAILEY CREEK Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREA
7/25/2015	G208	PARK	BAILEY CREEK Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREA
8/2/2015	824	SUBLETTE	MORMON CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
8/3/2015	825	SUBLETTE	SUNLIGHT CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR SHEEP DEPREDATIONS
8/7/2015	826	PARK	SQUIRREL MEADOWS Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR OBTAINING HORSE GRAIN
8/8/2015	NA	FREMONT			REMOVED FOR GARBAGE CONFLICTS
8/8/2015	827	HOT SPRINGS	BAILEY CREEK Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREA
8/11/2015	NA	FREMONT			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
8/13/2015	658	PARK			REMOVED FOR OBTAINING GARBAGE

Date	ID	Capture county	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
8/20/2015	826	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR PROPERTY DAMAGE
8/20/2015	G209	PARK	FOX CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR OBTAINING GARBAGE
8/21/2015	829	PARK	BAILEY CREEK Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
8/24/2015	NA	PARK			REMOVED FOR LIVESTOCK DEPREDATION
8/29/2015	832	SUBLETTE	FIVE MILE CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
9/1/2015	833	PARK	FOX CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR DAMAGING APPLE TREES
9/2/2015	834	PARK	EAST PAINTER GULCH Shoshone Forest	PARK	NON-TARGET CAPTURE, RELOCATED
9/3/2015	835	PARK	SQUIRREL MEADOWS Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR DAMAGING APPLE TREES
9/3/2015	G210	PARK	SQUIRREL MEADOWS Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR DAMAGING APPLE TREES
9/3/2015	G211	PARK	SQUIRREL MEADOWS Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR DAMAGING APPLE TREES
9/6/2015	836	SUBLETTE	FIVE MILE CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
9/8/2015	827	FREMONT	MORMON CREEK Bridger-Teton Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR PIG DEPREDATIONS
9/9/2015	837	PARK	MORMON CREEK Bridger-Teton Forest	PARK	RELOCATED PRE-EMPTIVELY FROM DEVELOPED SITE
9/10/2015	439	SUBLETTE	ANTELOPE BUTTE Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
9/10/2015	G212	SUBLETTE	ANTELOPE BUTTE Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
9/11/2015	NA	SUBLETTE			CAPTURED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION, ACCIDENTAL MORTALITY
9/11/2015	798	TETON	FIVE MILE CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR DAMAGING APPLE TREES
9/13/2015	839	PARK	MOCCASIN BASIN Shoshone Forest	FREMONT	RELOCATED FOR KILLING CHICKENS AND DUCKS
9/16/2015	747	FREMONT	FIVE MILE CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
9/19/2015	832	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
9/21/2015	773	PARK	SQUIRREL MEADOWS Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FOR OBTAINING GARBAGE
9/23/2015	837	PARK			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC HABITUATION

Date	ID	Capture county	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
9/25/2015	787	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
9/25/2015	840	SUBLETTE	FOX CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
9/26/2015	841	SUBLETTE	FOX CREEK Shoshone Forest	PARK	RELOCATED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
10/6/2015	NA	PARK			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC HABITUATION
10/17/2015	827	PARK			REMOVED FOR CHRONIC HABITUATION
10/22/2015	820	PARK			REMOVED FOR REPEATED PROPERTY DAMAGE
10/28/2015	743	PARK	SQUAW BASIN Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FROM CODY LANDFILL
10/30/2015	G213	PARK	SQUAW BASIN Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FROM CODY LANDFILL
10/30/2015	G214	PARK	SQUAW BASIN Bridger-Teton Forest	TETON	RELOCATED FROM CODY LANDFILL

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