

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

2013 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/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

Prepared by
Brian DeBolt, Large Carnivore Conflict Coordinator

Data compiled by
Kyle Bales, Dan Bjornlie, Mike Boyce, Mark Brusino, Zach Gregory, Luke Ellsbury, Anders Johnson,
Dustin Lasseter, Ken Mills, Dan Thompson, Bob Trebelcock, Zach Turnbull, and Jason Wilmot

Wyoming Game and Fish Department
December 2013

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 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 2013.

Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals

During 2013, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department captured 26 grizzly bears in 27 capture events in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts (Figure 1). Most captures were lone grizzly bears, but 1 family group (1 female with 2 yearlings) was also captured. Fifteen (56%) of the 27 capture events occurred in Park County, six (22%) in Sublette County, three (11%) in Hot Springs County, two (7%) in Fremont County, one (4%) in Grand Teton National Park (GTNP), and zero in Teton County (Table 1). The lone subadult male (#760) was captured by GTNP personnel and was moved to the Boone Creek drainage near the Idaho border in Teton County after being caught for frequenting a campground. The bear returned to GTNP within 11 days.

Of the 27 capture events, 18 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. Thirteen 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. 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 18 relocation events, 8 (44%) bears were released in Park County, 5 (28%) were released in Teton County, and 5 (28%) were released in Fremont County (Table 1).

Eight of the 27 capture events resulted in the 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 concern).

All independent grizzly bears greater than 2 years old, which were relocated, were fitted with a radio-tracking collar ($n=14$) 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 (Table 1).

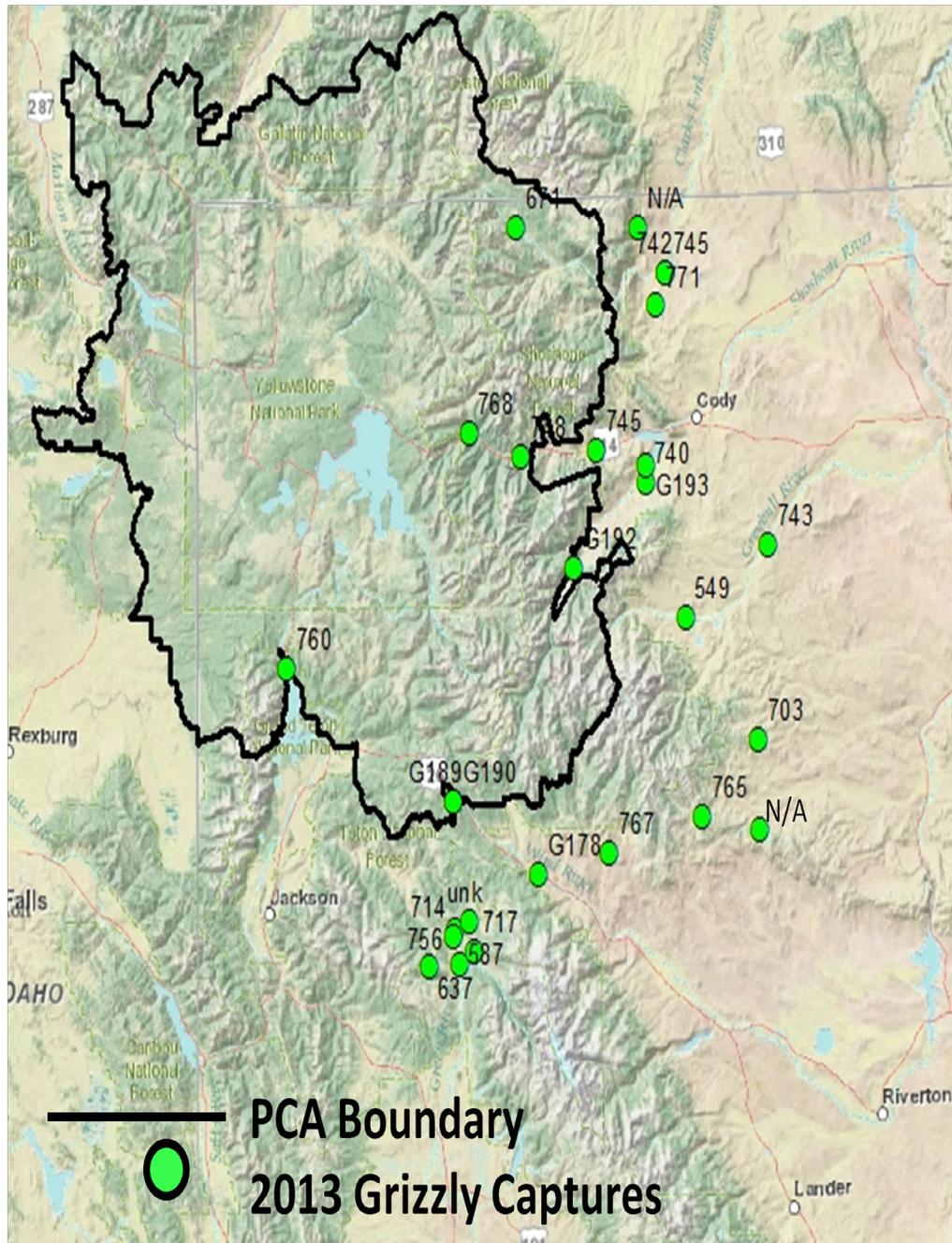


Figure 1. Management capture locations ($n=27$) for grizzly bears captured, relocated, released, or removed in 2013. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were ear-marked but not fitted with radio collars upon release typically because they were too young to be collared. Grizzly bears identified with “NA” were grizzly bears removed from the population without being given an identification number. The “unk” label is the yearling non-target capture released on site. PCA is the grizzly bear Primary Conservation Area as defined in the 2007 Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy.

Table 1. Capture date, grizzly bear identification number (ID), capture county, relocation site, release county, and reason for capture for all 2013 grizzly bear conflict management captures ($n = 27$) in Wyoming.

DATE	ID	Capture county	Relocation Site	Release County	REMARKS
3/23/2013	N/A	Park	N/A		Cattle Depredation
4/25/2013	671	Park	N/A		Garbage
5/6/2013	740	Park	Long Creek	Fremont	Cattle Depredation
5/6/2013	549	Park	N/A		Cattle Depredation
5/24/2013	742	Park	Mormon Creek	Park	Frequenting a calving pasture and aggressive behavior
5/25/2013	743	Park	Towgotee Pass	Fremont	Preemptive, from east of Hwy 120, frequenting agricultural areas
5/25/2013	G189	Park	Towgotee Pass	Fremont	Preemptive, from east of Hwy 120, frequenting agricultural areas
5/25/2013	G190	Park	Towgotee Pass	Fremont	Preemptive, from east of Hwy 120, frequenting agricultural areas
5/31/2013	745	Park	Mormon Creek	Park	Preemptive for frequenting calving pasture
6/7/2013	748	Park	Bailey Creek	Teton	Frequenting a campground
6/8/2013	G192	Park	Mormon Creek	Park	Frequenting a housing area
6/30/2013	756	Sublette	Sunlight Creek	Park	Cattle Depredation
7/7/2013	587	Sublette	N/A		Cattle Depredation
7/8/2013	714	Sublette	N/A		Cattle Depredation
7/23/2013	N/A	Hot Springs	N/A		Cattle and sheep depredation
7/28/2013	745	Park	Squirrel Creek	Teton	Garbage and frequenting a guest ranch
7/30/2013	760	GTNP	Boone Creek	Teton	Frequenting campground in GTNP
8/6/2013	637	Sublette	Mormon Creek	Park	Cattle Depredation
8/10/2013	unk	Sublette	N/A		Non-target at cattle depredation site
9/5/2013	G178	Fremont	N/A		Garbage, birdseed, and dog food at residences

9/10/2013	765	Hot Springs	Boone Creek	Teton	Cattle depredation
9/14/2013	717	Sublette	N\A		Cattle Depredation
9/23/2013	767	Fremont	Mormon Creek	Park	Cattle Depredation
9/27/2013	768	Park	Fox Creek	Park	Frequenting a resort lodge and restaurant
10/1/2013	703	Hot Springs	Fox Creek	Park	Grain at a cow camp, possible cattle depredation
10/9/2013	771	Park	Towgotee Pass	Fremont	Frequenting ranch buildings
10/14/2013	G193	Park	Grassy Lake	Teton	Damaging apple trees at residence

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