



PO Box 2406
Livingston, MT 59047
Phone: 406-224-2250
Email: info@GrizzlyTimes.org
Web: www.GrizzlyTimes.org

NEWSLETTER

Featuring updates on grizzly bear conservation activities,
and the latest *Grizzly Times* Blog
from [Louisa Willcox and David Mattson, PhD.](#)
Co-Founders of *Grizzly Times*.

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April 30, 2020

Dear Friend of the Grizzly,

As spring bursts forth mother grizzlies are emerging from well-worn dens, trailed by cubs greeting the big wide world for the first time. In this newsletter we have much good news to celebrate – and another Grizzly Times video and blog to share!

NEW BLOG:

Denned Up As Grizzlies Emerge: Reawakening Awe and Wonder
by Louisa Willcox

Inspired by the current crisis that has forced most of us into solitude, Louisa explores our need to connect with nature in her recent Grizzly Times blog. Reflecting on her first up-close encounter with a grizzly, she examines the transformative nature of awe in the company of wild animals – and the surprising amount of scientific research on the topic.

She writes: *“The experience of awe is accompanied by the perception of vastness and the struggle to mentally process an experience. Because the norms of our understanding are violated, we struggle to find a new way to accommodate it – which entails revising our notions of how the world works and our role within it... Even as we feel more connected to something larger, we feel smaller and less significant, even more humble.”*

She concludes: *“Despite our current isolation, let’s not forget our connections to other living beings, or our duty to care for the land and its inhabitants as if our health and well-being depended on it.”*

[Read More](#)



NEW VIDEO:

The Impacts of Trains and Railways on Grizzly Bears
by David Mattson

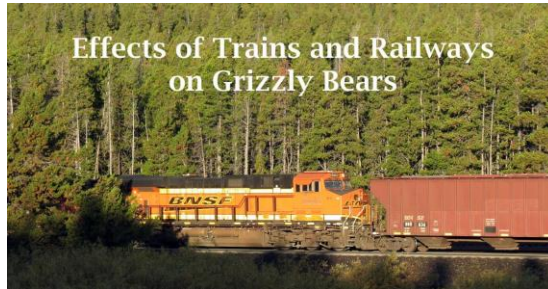
This video, another in the new Grizzly Times series, summarizes key results from a recent technical report by David on how trains and railways impact grizzly and brown bears. The report – the most comprehensive that has been done on the topic – draws on research throughout the Northern Hemisphere.

Last year a record number of grizzlies – a total of 8 – were killed by trains in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE). But much can be done to reduce deaths of bears and other wildlife. Successful efforts in Europe and Canada show how we can improve management of trains and railways in the US, including by slowing train speeds, deploying warning systems, and building overpasses and underpasses.

[Watch Here](#)

Many thanks to filmmaker Kristopher Chinander and Reel Kameleon Productions!

Here is David's complete report:



IN THE NEWS:

Six Grizzlies Already Killed or Removed from Northern Continental Divide Population

Hardly out of their dens, grizzlies in the NCDE are already being killed by humans.

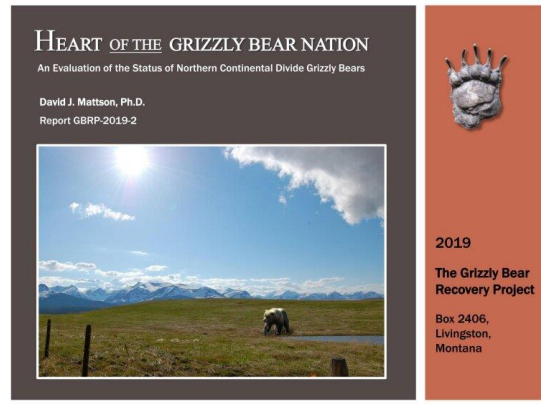
A mother grizzly was killed by government officials after she attacked a hiker in defense of her cubs. The hiker was not carrying bear spray – but was carrying a gun that he used to wound her. The mother bear had three cubs of the year that were caught by a rancher and turned over to state custody. These young cubs will not survive on their own in the wild, so the best we can hope for is that a zoo might take them.

Female grizzlies are essential to the health of our remaining populations. But a mother bear is challenged to ensure that a daughter survives to replace her during her lifetime. Despite what some managers claim, mother grizzlies are not disposable.

Also, two male grizzlies were recently killed by Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks after they depredated on cattle.

These deaths come on the heels of two years of record-breaking mortalities in the NCDE. According to the best evidence, this population may no longer be growing and could, in fact, be in decline. These deaths remind us that we need to show compassion for these animals, and that we urgently need to improve coexistence practices.

For more on the NCDE grizzly bear, read this report by David Mattson:



See additional articles below:

- <http://www.choteauacantha.com/news/article>
- <https://www.krtv.com/news/montana-and-regional-news/grizzly-bear-cubs-doing-well-at-montana-wild>
- <https://www.explorebigsky.com/mother-grizzly-euthanized-after-hiker-attack/33835>
- http://fwp.mt.gov/news/newsReleases/fishAndWildlife/nr_1330.html



Upper Green River, photo by George Wuerthner

Groups Sue to Stop Killing of 72 Grizzlies in Wyoming

Conservation groups recently filed a lawsuit against Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the US Forest Service for the 2019 decision to allow 72 federally-protected Yellowstone grizzly bears to be killed for the sake of livestock grazing operations on public lands in the Upper Green River area. The authorized killing comes despite the fact that only about 730 grizzlies remain in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

In contrast to other ranchers who accommodate grizzlies on their public land grazing allotments and work to avoid conflicts, wealthy ranchers who hold allotments in the Upper

Green prefer to kill grizzlies – or bully the government into doing their dirty work at taxpayers' expense.

In recent years, the Upper Green has emerged as the biggest black hole for grizzlies in the Greater Yellowstone, where bears enter but do not come out alive. This dynamic has been exacerbated by a recent climate-driven collapse of whitebark pine. The tree's high fat seeds had once been a staple for grizzlies in the late summer and fall. To compensate for the losses, grizzlies have been increasingly seeking meat, including livestock.

<https://missoulacurrent.com/outdoors/2020/04/yellowstone-grazing-feds-sued-for-plan-to-allow-killing-of-72-grizzly-bears/>



Grizzly Tracks, Grangeville, ID

Fresh Grizzly Bear Tracks in Idaho's Clearwater Country

According to Idaho's Fish and Game Department, fresh grizzly bear tracks were recently confirmed near Grangeville, Idaho. This means that a grizzly overwintered in the Clearwater country – and provides further proof that grizzlies are recolonizing the vast Selway-Bitterroot ecosystem on their own after being wiped out by the 1950s.

Central Idaho could support perhaps 700 grizzlies that would also serve to reconnect long-isolated grizzly bear populations in the Northern Rockies. Political opposition thwarted a federal plan to reintroduce grizzlies into this ecosystem 20 years ago, but grizzlies have been recently arriving on their own from the nearby NCDE, Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak ecosystems.

News of another grizzly in the Clearwater country underscores the need for government managers to stop sitting on their hands and start actively protecting newly arrived bears. Adequate sanitation, protection of roadless areas, and restoration of areas degraded by logging are urgently needed. Sadly, the draft plan for future management of the Nez Perce-Clearwater Forest provides none of these things.

The photo of these recent tracks was taken near a station where black bear hunters leave out bait (often rotten fruit and donuts) to lure in bears to make them easier to shoot. This practice is allowed despite the fact that leaving out garbage on public lands is

otherwise prohibited. And last year, game cameras captured a picture of a grizzly in the same area, suggesting it is only a matter of time before yet another grizzly is mistakenly killed over bait by a black bear hunter. Several conservation groups recently filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Forest Service to force the agency to ban bear baiting on these National Forest lands, as has been done in Montana.

<https://idfg.idaho.gov/press/fg-officer-spots-grizzly-bear-tracks-about-7-miles-south-grangeville-april>

Go to Friends of the Clearwater for more on these bears and how you can help: <https://www.friendsoftheclearwater.org/>



Felicia, Nick Sulzer/Buckrail

Felicia is Back on Togwotee Pass, Rekindling Questions about What to Do

Grizzly 863 (known also as Felicia) has again taken up residence along the highway on Togwotee Pass near Jackson, Wyoming. She appears to have lost the last of her cubs from last year. The cub known by locals as Pepper led a harrowing existence after losing its mother, but then being reunited before denning.

Felicia is comfortable living along roads, and as a consequence, is a frequent source of delight for the countless travelers, vacationers, and photographers fortunate enough to see her. But this situation is risky for her because she lives on Forest Service lands where she enjoys very little protection. Motorists commonly stop to take pictures and sometimes create hazardous situations.

According to a recent article, it appears as if Wyoming Department of Transportation (WDOT) plans to help by erecting signs to regulate traffic. But the details remain unclear – and last year's efforts left much to be desired.

<https://buckrail.com/felicia-the-grizzly-again-causing-a-stir-on-togwotee-pass/>

Last year, David wrote an extensive article about Felicia and the challenges on Togwotee Pass that is worth revisiting:

"...agencies with authority over roadsides and highways could institutionalize remedial measures. WDOT could reduce speed limits on a seasonal rather than ad hoc temporary basis for stretches of highway likely to be frequented by grizzlies. The US Forest Service and Wyoming Game and Fish could create teams of Bear Rangers on call to deal with roadside situations as they emerge, and trained to manage and educate the entailed crowds.

The National Park Service in both Yellowstone and Grand Teton Parks has perfected this method, based largely on employment of relatively low-cost volunteers. Given the passionate interest, considerable resources, and evident expertise of Grand Teton National Park personnel and nearby Jackson Hole residents, teams of bear rangers would seem an easy fix.

Longer-term, a comprehensive infrastructure of fencing and crossing structures could be installed with prospects of yielding considerable benefits for bears and other wildlife. Research in the Bow Valley of Banff National Park and along Highway 93 in the Mission Valley of Montana has demonstrated the efficacies of such measures..."

[Read More](#)

GOOD NEWS:



Hebgen Lake, Nick Meyer/Billings Gazette

Judge Stops Harmful Logging Project – Thanks to Environmental Hero Dr. Sara Johnson!

A federal judge recently stopped a 5,600 acre timber sale planned by the Custer-Gallatin National Forest for a highly sensitive area near Yellowstone National Park's western border. The prospective timber sale lay between Yellowstone Park and the Lionhead Wilderness, in an area that is part of a corridor to wildlands of central Idaho farther west.

The same judge halted the same project in 2017. The case was brought by Native Ecosystems Council and the Alliance for the Wild Rockies.

Credit for this victory goes largely to Dr. Sara Johnson, a wildlife biologist who worked on the Gallatin and Targhee Forests for many years. After she retired, she started the Native Ecosystem Council, which has done phenomenal work championing the cause of wildlife and wild places.

Sara and Louisa have worked together for years, demonstrating courage under fire. Sara has worked tirelessly to protect lands that few have heard of, but critical to the health of wildlife. She is a true environmental hero – thank you Sara and all involved!

<https://billingsgazette.com/lifestyles/recreation/judge-rules-in-favor-of-environmental-groups-on-hebgen-area>

Inspiring Bear Tales from the Old Country:



German Grizzly

- Brown Bear Ventures into Germany, First in 16 Years

Last fall, a brown bear (*Ursus arctos*, same species as the grizzly) ventured into Bavaria. It is the first bear on German soil since another bear, named Bruno, was killed by hunters 16 years ago.

As with Bruno, this new bear came from Trentino in Italy and crossed Tirol, a state of Austria, on its way to Germany.

Bruno was the first bear to have made his home in Germany in 170 years, which made his senseless death all the more outrageous. Advocates are hoping that the new bear will avoid Bruno's fate.

<https://wilderness-society.org/first-bear-in-germany-in-16.../>



Apple Trees, Italian Farm

- Pruning Apple Trees for the Apennines (Italy) Bear

A recent article in the Atlantic magazine focused on how conservationists are working to improve coexistence in the central Apennines of Italy to help recover the rare Marsican brown bear. With only about 60 bears left, central Italy's isolated bear population is teetering on the brink of extinction.

But the abandonment of farms at the end of the World War II offered bears some unexpected benefits. Fields and orchards that have long been untended still offer high-quality food for bears.

And conservationists are even working to enhance this bounty by pruning apple trees to increase productivity. Electric fences around local beehives and a team of carefully selected "bear ambassadors" are also making a difference. <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2020/04/what-wildlife-really-looks-like/609721/>

- Video of Cantabrian (Spain) Brown Bear in Town as Streets are Temporarily Abandoned

There is also some good news, albeit temporary, for imperiled brown bears and other wildlife in the Cantabrian Mountains of Spain. With the COVID lockdown keeping people out of the streets, bears and other wildlife are showing up in town.

A video recently went viral of a young bear walking at night down a street of Ventanueva, a town in the Principality of Asturias.

Watch Here

Roberto Hartasánchez, president of the Fund for the Protection of Wild Animals, and an advocate for protecting bears, says: "...for the first time we are having an absolute peace of mind in areas of protected wildlife". <https://oicanadian.com/wildlife-gaining-ground-before-the-withdrawal-of-the-human-coronavirus-science/>

Help Protect Wildlands on the Custer-Gallatin Forest

The Custer-Gallatin National Forest contains substantial areas occupied by grizzlies, as well as lands that bears are colonizing in response to climate change and losses of key foods. But the forest's wild country is vulnerable to mounting threats from mountain bikers.

The Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance recently released a video featuring why we need to protect all of the remaining 700,000 acres of wildlands on the forest as Wilderness. Louisa makes an appearance at the end:

[Watch Here](#)

Please consider supporting the work of the Gallatin Yellowstone Wilderness Alliance:



Louisa and David have both written on this important topic here:

[Read Louisa's Blog](#)

[Read David's Blog](#)

Please Consider a Gift to Grizzly Times...

[Donate](#)

We need your help!

David and I have retired and are doing this full-time work pretty much gratis, and despite the gradual dissolution of our physical bodies.

If you were following the delisting court case, you know that David's role was vital to the litigation success that restored protections to Yellowstone's grizzly

bears. The skilled attorneys could not have won the case without David's scientific expertise. David is again helping in the leadup to oral arguments in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals on May 5 – and as you can see from other articles here, he is helping with other cases.

As we do not have our own nonprofit, Conservation Congress, a not-for-profit tax-deductible organization, has agreed to be our fiscal sponsor. (Thank you, Denise!)

You can make a one-time contribution or sign up for a monthly donation through the Conservation Congress using the "Donate" button above.

Or, you can mail a donation to:
Conservation Congress
2234 Sierra Vista Circle
Billings, MT 59105

* Be sure to note that your contribution is for Grizzly Times (GT).

Thank you for your continued support – in any way. It is greatly appreciated!

***For the Bears,
Louisa and David***

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