



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

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



Photo of a grizzly bear captured at a residence in the Cody Region, 2020.

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

In Wyoming, *grizzly bear conflicts* are defined as “interactions between grizzly bears, people and their property, resulting in damage to pets, livestock or bees, non-natural food rewards, animal caused human injury or death, and human caused injury or death to an animal other than legal hunting or a management action.” Human-grizzly bear interactions and conflicts in Wyoming are a result of an abundance of bears seeking unnatural foods in association with people and property, close encounters with humans, or when bears kill livestock. Proactive prevention is the goal of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Department) in minimizing conflicts. However, the number and location of human-grizzly bear conflicts is influenced by the availability of unsecured unnatural attractants (e.g. human foods and garbage), natural food distribution and abundance, grizzly bear abundance and distribution, and human and livestock use patterns on the landscape. For purposes of this report, we will be referring directly to grizzly bears in regards to any management actions and numbers provided therein.

The management technique of capturing grizzly 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 grizzly bears to become food conditioned and/or human habituated which often results in destructive and/or dangerous behaviors; (c) it allows grizzly bears the opportunity to forage on natural foods and remain wary of people; and (d) it could prevent removing grizzly bears from the population which may be beneficial in maintaining recovery criteria and population management objectives.

The Department relocates and removes grizzly bears as part of routine management operations. All grizzly bear management actions were conducted in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The decision to relocate or remove a grizzly bear is made after considering a number of variables including the 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, availability of suitable relocation sites, and population management objectives. Grizzly bears are relocated in accordance with Federal and State law, regulation, and policy.

In 2005, the Wyoming Legislature enacted House Bill 203, which created Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001 which 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 Chapter 58 Notification of Grizzly Bear Relocation Regulation (Appendix I) 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 2020.

Grizzly Bear Management Captures, Relocations, and Removals

During 2020, the Department captured 26 individual grizzly bears in 27 capture events in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts; meaning 1 bear (1006) was captured twice (Figure 1 and Table 1). Of the 26 individual captures, 8 were female and 18 were male grizzly bears. Most captures were adult males ($n = 12$).

Of the 27 capture events, 13 captures were a result of bears killing livestock (primarily cattle), 13 were captures involving bears that obtained food rewards (pet, livestock food, garbage, fruit trees), or were frequenting developed sites or human populated areas unsuitable for grizzly bear occupancy. One bear (991) was a non-target capture but is included in this report because the bear was relocated a short distance as a preventative measure. Of the 27 capture events, 15 (56%) were in Park County, 5 (19%) were in Sublette County, 3 (11%) were in Fremont County, 2 (7%) were in Hot Springs County and 2 (7%) were in Teton County (Figure 1 and Table 1).

Of the 27 capture events, there were 9 relocation events (Figure 2 and Table 1). All relocated grizzly bears were released on U.S. Forest Service lands in or adjacent to the Primary Conservation Area/Recovery Zone (Figure 2). Of the 9 relocation events, 6 were conducted in Park County (67%), 2 (22%) were in Teton County, and 1 (11%) was in Fremont County (Figure 2 and Table 1).

Grizzly bears are removed (lethally or through live placement in an approved facility) from the population 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). Of the 26 bears captured, 18 bears were removed from the population. Of these 18 grizzly bear conflict lethal removals associated with management captures, 9 were outside of the Demographic Monitoring Area. Removal of grizzly bears in Wyoming is dependent upon authorization from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service after careful and thorough deliberation taking into account multiple factors unique to each conflict situation.

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, the reason the grizzly bear was relocated, and additional bear safety and conflict avoidance information.

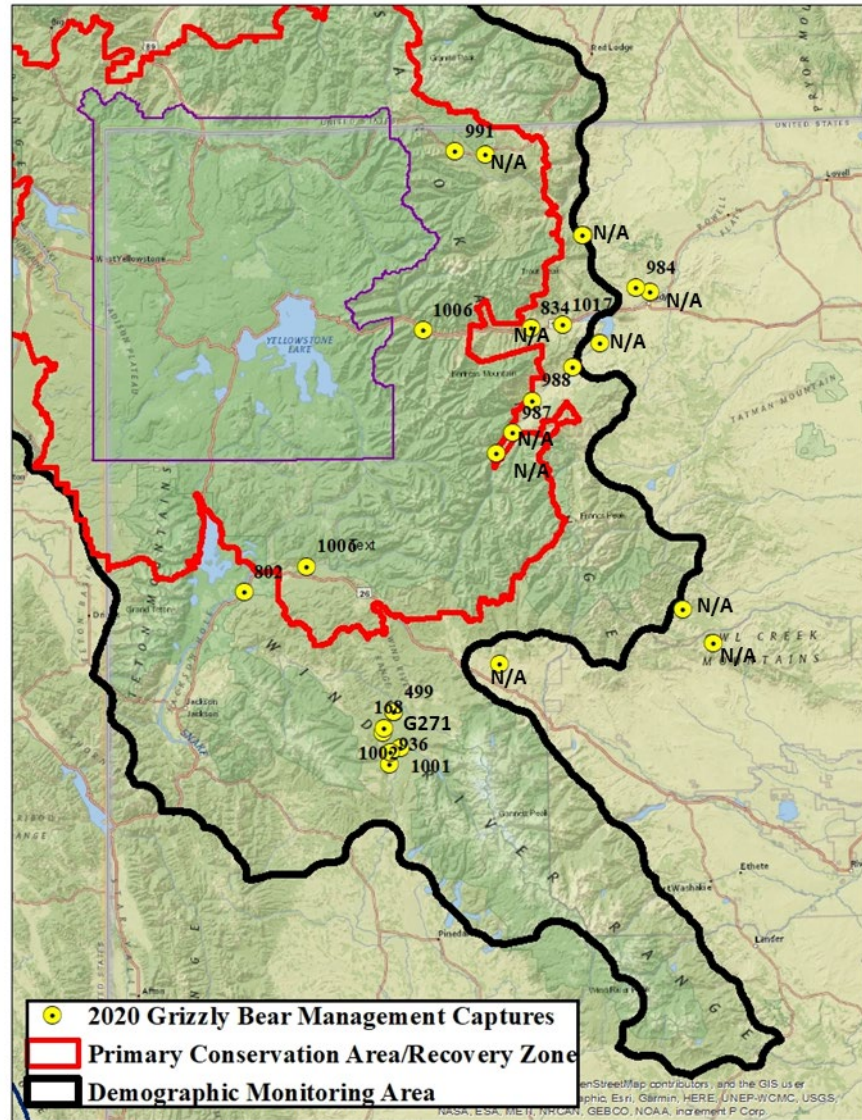


Figure 1. Management capture locations ($n = 27$) for grizzly bears in 2020. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were marked but not fitted with radio collars (typically because they were too young to be collared). Grizzly bears identified with “NA” were grizzly bears removed from the population without being given an identification number. Primary Conservation Area/Recovery Zone is depicted as defined in the 2016 Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. Demographic Monitoring Area is depicted 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. Please note that the mapping software combines some locations at this scale. Therefore, locations/bear numbers at or very near the same coordinates are not always distinct on the map, but are listed in Table 1.

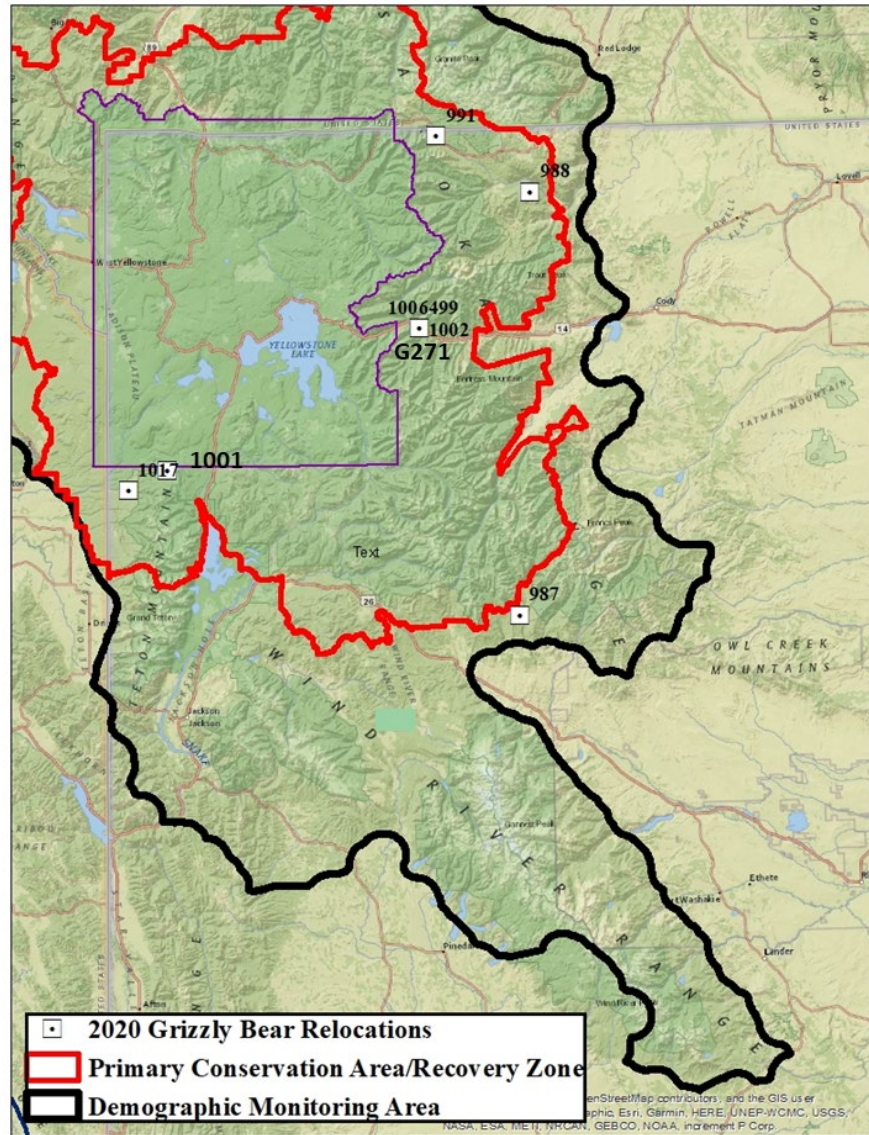


Figure 2. Release locations ($n = 9$) for grizzly bears captured and relocated in conflict management efforts for 2020. Grizzly bears with “G” in front of their number were marked but not fitted with radio collars (typically because they were too young to be collared). The Primary Conservation Area is depicted as defined in the 2016 Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. The Demographic Monitoring Area is depicted 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. Please note that the mapping software combines some locations at this scale. Therefore, locations/bear numbers at or very near the same coordinates are not always distinct on the map, but are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Capture date, grizzly bear identification number (ID), capture county, relocation site, release county, and reason for capture for all 2020 grizzly bear conflict management captures ($n = 27$) in Wyoming. Grizzly bears identified with “N/A” were grizzly bears removed from the population without being given an identification number.

Date	ID	Capture County	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
4/25/2020	984	PARK			REMOVED FOR PREVIOUS CONFLICT HISTORY OF GARBAGE AND PET/LIVESTOCK FEED, AND SEVERAL FAILED ATTEMPTS TO HAZE AWAY FROM DEVELOPED AREAS
4/29/2020	802	TETON			REMOVED FOR NUMEROUS CONFLICTS INVOLVING GARBAGE, PET/LIVESTOCK FEED, PROPERTY DAMAGE AND ENTERING STRUCTURES
5/5/2020	834	PARK			REMOVED FOR KILLING CHICKENS AND DAMAGING THE COOP, FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS AND REPEATED FAILED RELOCATION ATTEMPTS
5/7/2020	987	PARK	WIGGINS FORK	FREMONT	CAPTURED FOR PIG DEPREDATION AND PROPERTY DAMAGE
5/9/2020	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR FREQUENTING DEVELOPED AREAS AND CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE CITY OF CODY
5/17/2020	988	PARK	CAMP CREEK	PARK	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING RANCH HOUSING AREA, FAILURE TO LEAVE AFTER SEVERAL HAZING ATTEMPTS
5/22/2020	991	PARK	FOX CREEK	PARK	NON-TARGET CAPTURE AT DEVELOPED SITE
6/17/2020	N/A	HOT SPRINGS			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS ON PRIVATE LANDS
6/18/2020	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR VERY BOLD AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR TOWARDS PEOPLE
7/1/2020	1001	SUBLETTE	GRASSY LAKE	TETON	CAPTURED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATION
7/3/2020	936	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR REPEATED LIVESTOCK CONFLICTS AND DEPREDATIONS
7/22/2020	1002	SUBLETTE	MORMON CREEK	PARK	CAPTURED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
7/28/2020	1006	TETON	FIVE MILE CREEK	PARK	CAPTURED FOR REPEATED NUISANCE BEHAVIOR IN SUBDIVISION AND FOOD REWARDS (GRAIN IN SCAT)
7/30/2020	168	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR REPEATED CATTLE DEPREDATIONS AND EXTREMELY POOR CONDITION
8/2/2020	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR HABITUATED BEHAVIOR AND CONFLICTS INVOLVING BEEHIVES, BIRDFEEDERS, AND APPLE TREES

Date	ID	Capture County	Relocation Site	Release County	Reason For Capture
8/7/2020	1006	PARK			REMOVED FOR MULTIPLE FOOD REWARDS, AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR, AND FAILED RECENT RELOCATION
8/29/2020	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR REPEATED CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
8/30/2020	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
9/1/2020	N/A	HOT SPRINGS			REMOVED FOR SHEEP DEPREDATIONS
9/2/2020	499	FREMONT	FIVE MILE	PARK	CAPTURED FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
9/2/2020	G271	FREMONT	FIVE MILE	PARK	CAPTURED WITH MOTHER (499) FOR CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
9/22/2020	1017	PARK	SQUIRREL MEADOWS	TETON	CAPTURED FOR FREQUENTING YARDS AND RESIDENTIAL AREAS WITH FRUIT TREES, FREQUENTING AREAS AROUND BUFFALO BILL STATE PARK
9/24/2020	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR MULTIPLE CONFLICTS INVOLVING GARBAGE, BIRDFEEDERS, AND LIVESTOCK FEED
9/29/2020	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR MULTIPLE FOOD REWARDS INCLUDING GARBAGE AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR TOWARDS PEOPLE
9/29/2020	N/A	SUBLETTE			REMOVED FOR REPEATED CATTLE DEPREDATIONS
10/19/2020	N/A	FREMONT			REMOVED FOR HABITUATED BEHAVIOR, PROPERTY DAMAGE, AND HUMAN SAFETY (NEAR SUBDIVISION, TOWN AND SCHOOL)
11/4/2020	N/A	PARK			REMOVED FOR MULTIPLE FOOD REWARDS, FREQUENTING RANCH, AND PROPERTY DAMAGE

Appendix I. 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 re location 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