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Vol. 1

## Spring Bear Wake-Up Newsletter



## current topics >>>

### A Note from the Working Group

*We've put this newsletter together to offer a source of information as we enter the active season for bears. Please reach out to us with any requests and questions, we will help you as best we can with our current public health guidelines. Find our contact information on the back of this newsletter. Thanks!*



## Turn your Bear Brain back on!

*As bears return to the landscape, we shift our daily practices*

Spending more time around the house with the stay-at-home order? This is a great time of year to see if you are bear smart at home by double checking your property for these common attractants:

- ✓ **Garbage:** all garbage should be stored inside a hard-sided building or a bear-resistant garbage canister until day of pick up, not the night before.
- ✓ **Birdfeeders:** remove birdfeeders, including humming bird feed and suet, from April 1 to mid-November and consider replacing with bird baths and ornamental flowers
- ✓ **Pet and Livestock Feed:** All animal food should be kept indoors, inside a hard-sided building or a bear safe container. This includes dog and cat food, empty pet food dishes, horse and livestock feed, and birdseed.
- ✓ **Barbeques:** Barbeque grills should be cleaned after each use and stored in building if possible.
- ✓ **Gardens, Fruit tree:** Outdoor gardens and compost piles should be protected. Fruit trees in season should be protected and fruit picked as it ripens, including removing any dropped fruit from the ground promptly
- ✓ **Poultry, Bee Apiaries:** Chickens and other small livestock should be protected using electric fencing, as well as bee apiaries.

Bears can be found across most of Montana. Whether you are hiking off-trail shed hunting, getting an early start pulling weeds, or out for a walk along a creek behind the house, remember these tips to prevent and prepare for bear encounters.

- ❖ **Be alert** and aware of your surroundings
- ❖ **Travel in groups**
- ❖ **Make plenty of noise** (most negative encounters are surprise encounters)
- ❖ **Avoid “beary” situations** such as carcasses and night-time travel in bear country
- ❖ **Carry bear spray** in a handy location and know how to use it
- ❖ **Never run** from a bear

## Meet a Bear Manager

# Rory Trimbo

## FWP Bear Technician, Deer Lodge Montana

*New bear management technician provides proactive support to prevent bear conflicts in-between grizzly bear-occupied ecosystems.*

Grizzlies are showing up in areas they haven't been seen for decades or longer, and many communities are learning about living in bear country. Recognizing the need to prevent conflicts and proactively address the concerns of communities experiencing these changes, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has hired a new grizzly bear technician.

In his position as a grizzly bear technician with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Rory works on grizzly bear conflict issues in the

“connectivity zone” between the Northern Continental Divide and Greater Yellowstone Ecosystems.

Within this zone he mainly focuses on the areas in, around, and between Anaconda, Deer Lodge, Drummond, Butte, and Helena. As sightings and conflicts arise, Rory may also respond in the Big Hole Valley and the Beaverhead area. Rory began working for FWP in this newly-formed position in December, 2019.

An essential component of this work includes close coordination with local communities, homeowners, landowners, businesses, ranchers, hunters, and recreationalists on grizzly bear education and proactively addressing bear conflict issues.

Numerous individuals and organizations have already been working diligently in the area and putting forth a tremendous effort helping the communities to be bear aware, and he looks forward to working closely with them to make a positive impact in the area.

Throughout his career in wildlife, Rory has spent many years working on research and human/wildlife

conflict mitigation involving many large carnivore species, including cougars, wolves, black bears and grizzly bears. He's been fortunate enough to work across much of the western U.S. and has also had the opportunity to work in some of America's most iconic national parks such as Yellowstone, Glacier, Mt. Rainier and Denali. Prior to moving to the Anaconda area, Rory spent several years in northwestern Montana working on grizzly bear research and conflict management in the Libby, Eureka, and Kalispell areas.

You can contact Rory, or any other FWP through the employee directory, found here:

<https://myfwp.mt.gov/fwpPub/contactUs>



*A bear den in a natural rock cavity. Photo: D. Oylar*

## Photo from the Archives

The bear den pictured here was used (and may still be in use) by a female black bear for many years and through several litters of cubs. We visited the natural rock den in the summer, when bears are not using dens, to limit the chances of disturbing the bear or her use of the den.

Bears find natural dens like this, improve on rocky areas already suitable for dens, dig dens in the ground, excavate dens beneath tree roots, or upended tree stumps, and sometimes hibernate in trees (black bears). Dens are used for hibernation, typically November through March or April. Bears may return to a rock den, but excavated dens are often dug each year, frequently in the same general area.

## Bear Biology >>>

# Bears Emerging from Hibernation

Grizzly bears generally enter dens from late October to early December. Pregnant females usually enter dens first, followed by females with young, subadults, and lastly, adult males. Likewise, males emerge first, usually in March, followed by lone females or females with older young. Females with newborn cubs are the last to emerge, usually from mid-April to early May. The cubs are born in the den around January, weigh less than a pound and are awake all winter in order to nurse. In the spring, females with newborn cubs may remain near the den for several weeks after emergence before leaving the area. Despite not eating for some five months, bears aren't ravenous when they emerge from hibernation.

Bears experience a slow return to normal, dubbed *walking hibernation*. As body temperature, heart rate and metabolism return to normal, they move slowly, scavenge and sometimes loiter near their dens. As they search for food, they will often descend to lower elevations where carcasses and fresh young plants are available.

Females with sub-adult cubs, (1.5 years for black bears and 2.5 years for grizzlies) will displace their offspring to prepare for mating again in June.



*L. Uffman*



# Grizzly Bears and the Endangered Species Act

*Grizzlies in the lower 48 states were first listed on the Endangered Species List as threatened in 1975. There are 6 recovery areas, of which 4 are currently occupied by grizzly bears.*

Currently, the status of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem's (GYE's) grizzly bears is contested, though the population remains listed as threatened. Until a decision is made by the Court of Appeals, it's unknown if or when other distinct populations of grizzly bears will be proposed for delisting. The legal history of this population is complex.

Here are some recent highlights:

**2017:** U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) removes the Yellowstone population of grizzly bears from the threatened species list.

**2018:** A U.S. District Judge restored protections for the GYE population under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

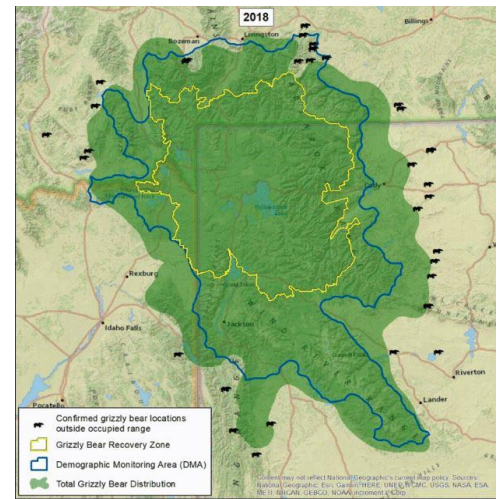


**May 24, 2019:** The USFWS filed a brief with the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit appealing a Montana District Court's September 24, 2018 ruling that vacated and remanded the rule to delist the GYE's grizzly population.

**July 30, 2019:** The USFWS revised the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife to again include grizzly bears in the GYE as part of the existing listing for grizzly bears under the ESA. This action was taken to comply with a September 24, 2018, Montana District Court order.

**January 14, 2020:** The USFWS is initiating a 5-year status review of grizzly bears in the contiguous United States under the ESA.

As a federally threatened species it is illegal to harm, harass, or kill these bears, except in cases of self-defense or the defense of others. When a species is removed from the Endangered Species List, each state takes over management of the species. States are responsible for setting and managing hunting seasons of recovered species if desired.



## Where might I encounter a grizzly bear?

*Grizzly bears are expanding their range from both the Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide Ecosystems. You could see a grizzly almost anywhere in the western half of Montana, though grizzly density varies greatly by location.*

## Online Training Coming Soon...

Your safety is important to us. While we aren't able to offer in-person trainings right now, we are working on making our bear safety training available to the public so that your groups, families and organizations can have access to bear safety training before you head out in the field this year. Please watch our Facebook page (/MTBEWG) for updates as well as event postings once we are able to gather in person again.

-Danielle Oyler, Education Coordinator

## Inert Bear Spray

Inert (practice) bear spray lacks the active ingredients in bear spray—capsaicin and related capsiacinoids. This product, produced by several bear spray manufacturers, provides a safe alternative to discharging real bear spray for practice. Inert cans are an excellent supplement to your bear spray training, and we highly recommend their use.

### ask the experts >>>

## Using the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee Website to Understand Food Storage Orders and Certified Bear-Resistant Containers

Have you been confused about how to comply with food storage regulations on public lands? Want to know which coolers or containers have been certified as bear resistant? Visit the IGBC's website on Bear-Resistant Products. The IGBC provides an interactive map and list of all public lands with attractant storage orders, as well an annually updated Certified Products List. This list includes over 50 brands and even more products (including garbage cans) that have passed testing at the Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center.

Visit <http://igbconline.org/bear-resistant-products/> for more information.



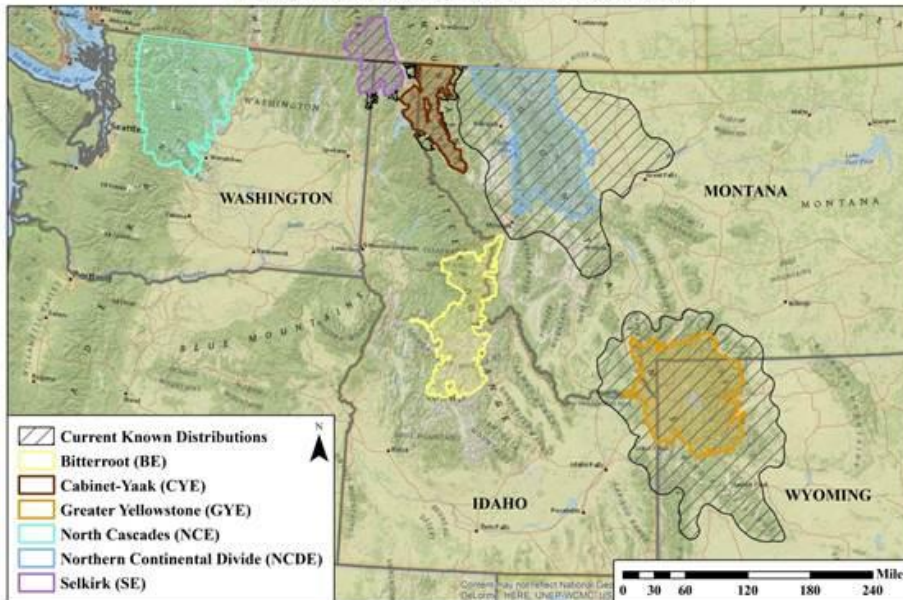
# Resource Highlight

Did you know the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest and BLM offices have public loaner programs available? These free programs offer the public bear-resistant products to check out for up to 16 days at a time. Products available to check out may include bear-resistant coolers, backpacking containers and Ursak® bags, horse panniers, and electric fence backpacking kits. Items are issued on a first-come, first-served basis, so check with a local agency office to find out what's available.

**Locations:** Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest offices in Ennis, Dillon, Wise River, Wisdom, Butte, and Philipsburg. BLM offices in Dillon.



Grizzly Bear Recovery Zones and Distribution



Estimated distributions are current as of 2018 for the GYE and the NCDE and are current as of 2017 for the CYE and the SE. The distribution for the NCDE is currently unknown and a draft EIS was released in early 2017 to examine recovery options. The BE is currently unoccupied with a reintroduction proposal with a non-essential experimental population status.

In the Next Issue>>>

In our Fall 2020 Newsletter, we'll be highlighting hunting safely in bear country, Hyperphagia, and more!

For folks in Missoula, Powell, Granite, and Deerlodge Counties, please check out the *Missoula Bears* website and Facebook page. They are a great place to share reports and find out what's going on in your area.

[MissoulaBears.org](https://www.missoulabears.org) and <https://www.facebook.com/missoulabears/>

Montana  
BEAR EDUCATION WORKING GROUP



Bear Awareness Outreach and Education  
Facebook: /MTBEWG  
Instagram: /MTBearEducation



PEOPLE AND CARNIVORES

Conflict Prevention, Tools and Resources  
[www.peopleandcarnivores.org](http://www.peopleandcarnivores.org)  
Facebook: /PeopleandCarnivores

The Montana Bear Education Working Group is a collection of federal and state agencies and non-profit organizations that have common interests in reducing bear-human conflicts, improving social tolerance for bears, and promoting the understanding of bears and their biology. Our partners include the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, Custer Gallatin National Forest, Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, Wildlife Management Institute, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, People & Carnivores, Wildlife Conservation Society, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

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