

2015 Spring Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains Grizzly Bear Ecosystems Update

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Cabinet Mountains Augmentation

We released two sibling females in the Cabinet Mountains on June 19, 2014 west of Spar Lake. The bears were 2-year-olds weighing 95 and 110 pounds and had no history of human conflicts. The bears were captured by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks personnel in the North Fork of the Flathead River approximately 25 miles north of Columbia Falls. While we expected both bears to remain together for a while, the pair separated with one bear moving to the main Cabinet Mountains in the wilderness and the other moving south into Ross Creek. Both individuals denned in mid-November and emerged from their dens in mid April of 2015. Plans for 2015 include release of a male and female as part of additional augmentation.

Seventeen bears have been added to the Cabinet Mountains population since 1990 (13 females and 4 males) through the augmentation effort. Three female bears and one male have left the target area and 4 bears are known to be dead. Two augmentation bears are known to have reproduced resulting in at least 9 first generation and 9 second generation offspring.

Monitoring

We are monitoring 9 bears in the Cabinet-Yaak and 15 bears in the Selkirk Mountains including those in British Columbia. Collared grizzly bears emerged from dens at least 2-3 weeks earlier than typical this past spring. Males began exiting in mid March and females in early April. Two adult females that are still very near their dens and this is indicative of bears with new born cubs.

2015 Plans

We expect to field two trap teams in the Cabinet-Yaak and one team in the Selkirk Mountains. Trapping in the Cabinet-Yaak is expected in the Yaak River during May through September and in the Cabinet Mountains during June and possibly July. Trapping in the Selkirks will occur in Washington largely on the Sullivan Lake Ranger District during May and possibly June. Selkirk trapping will shift into Idaho around the Priest Lake Basin and north near the international border during July and August. Signs will be posted in areas where trapping is occurring to alert the public to this activity. Two people will be checking rubs and establishing corral and camera sites in each recovery area to collect hair for genetic analysis.

Trapping update

A young female grizzly bear was captured and radio collared on 19 May in Burnt Creek of the Yaak River drainage. She was 5 years old and weighed 230 pounds. She had been previously captured and monitored as a 1-3 year old before losing her radio collar. The additional monitoring will provide biological data on first age of reproduction and survival.

Bear Management Activity

A grizzly bear has been photographed on numerous occasions in the vicinity of the Kalispel Tribe Reservation during early May. The animal appears to be a younger bear. There has been at least one incident involving damage to bee hives in the area, but this appear to have been caused by black bears based on trail camera photographs and tracks at the site. A trap was set and a black bear female with young was captured. The bear was not particularly wary around people based on some of the photographs and the public is urged to contain

attractants such as garbage, bird feeders, pet and livestock foods to avoid conflicts with this young animal. There have been no additional sightings of the bear in the last 10-14 days.



Figure 1. Female grizzly bear 729 in the Yaak River on 5/13/15 with US Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Tom Radandt.