

Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains Grizzly Bear Monitoring Update 11/8/2018

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Selkirk Mountains Research Monitoring

We monitored 8 grizzly bears in the Selkirk Mountains during at least a portion of 2018. Four were females and four were males. Two bears were captured during 2018 trapping activities (Figures 1-2). Both individuals were adult males that had worn radio collars previously. One of these bears made a notable movement west of the Pend Oreille River in early October then returned (Figure 3). A 2 year-old male was captured near Rathdrum, Idaho and relocated to the Cabinet Mountains, but has been recently using habitat on the periphery of the Selkirks Mountains north of Bonners Ferry. Another 2 year-old male originally captured in the Selkirks has moved southeast through the Cabinet-Yaak and has recently lost the radio collar in the Fisher River (Figure 4). The bear has traveled over 125 miles from the Selkirks to the most southeasterly point. This is another example of bears moving from one recovery area to another; however ultimate population linkage is determined by reproduction and gene flow from one population to another. One of the collared females has yearlings this year and two of the other adult females were observed without young.

Cabinet-Yaak Research Monitoring

We monitored 11 grizzly bears in the Cabinet-Yaak during at least a portion of 2018. Two of these bears were previously mentioned in the Selkirk Mountains discussion. A subadult male was captured east of the recovery area near McGregor Lake in early May and released in Big Creek on the west side of Kooacanusa Reservoir. An adult male was captured in the Yaak River in late September. This animal previously wore a radio collar on three previous occasions dating back to 2011. Four of the bears in the Yaak River are females and two of these are adults that emerged from dens with 2 cubs each. The other two females are 3 and 5 years-old and have not produced cubs yet. Two subadult males wore radio collars as part of research monitoring with one in the Yaak and one in the Cabinets. The remaining individual was a male bear moved to the Cabinet Mountains as part of the augmentation program.

Cabinet Mountains Augmentation

A 2 year-old male augmentation bear was released in the West Cabinet Mountains near Spar Lake on July 21. The bear moved south from the release and crossed the Clark Fork River on August 7 just downstream from Cabinet Gorge dam (Figure 5). The bear remained south of the Clark Fork River with few if any observations or reports from the public until September 3 when an Idaho resident reported a collared grizzly bear at a black bear bait site. A decision was made to attempt capture and relocate the bear back into Montana. On September 5 the bear was captured and after receiving a new radio collar the bear was released in the South Fork of the Bull River. However, the bear returned to the same area south of the Clark Fork River on September 13. Most recently the bear has been located in Montana south and west of Heron. We have relatively few reports or sightings of the animal. Baiting of bears during the black bear hunting season is not allowed in Idaho north of the Clark Fork River nor is it allowed at any time in Montana. The practice of baiting is at contrast with the policy of minimizing attractants for bears until the black bear season opens when these attractants become legal for the purpose of hunting black bears. There are also established policies of food storage on public lands within the recovery area to minimize the opportunities for bears to learn to use human foods. The bait site in this case utilized human foods and was within 500

yards of five homes and was within 1000 yards of more than 20 homes. Current recovery direction seeks bears to move between recovery areas for genetic interchange among populations and in the case of the Bitterroot to restore populations of grizzly bears. Natural restoration of bears to the Bitterroot could potentially occur from the Selkirks, Cabinet-Yaak, NCDE, or Yellowstone. Three grizzly bears are known to have been killed in the area south of the Selkirks and Cabinet-Yaak since 2007. Two of those bears have been killed at black bear bait sites. One of those bears originated in the Selkirk Mountains but was killed in the Bitterroot recovery area.

Genetic Sampling for Research

Our genetic samples from 2017 have not been completed by the lab, but are expected soon. Hair snagging at corrals and rub trees occurred in both recovery areas during 2018. Rub trees are visited and collections made monthly. Corrals and cameras are set and may remain for 2-4 weeks prior to collection. Sites are typically moved but may remain in a site longer depending upon results. We place trail cameras at corral sites and we are checking these photos for presence of young and any identifying marks of bears at the sites. All collected hair is being cataloged and assembled for transport to the lab later this year or early next year.

Management Actions

A young male grizzly bear was captured near McGregor Lake between Libby and Kalispell in early May. The bear had been frequenting several residences and may have gotten pet food or garbage. Traps were set and the bear was captured and collared. Due to snow cover and limited release site opportunities it was decided to release this animal in Big Creek on the west side of Kootenai Reservoir approximately 25 miles north of Libby, MT. The animal moved extensively including a foray into the Cabinet Mountains and a return to the Yaak near the area of release. A mortality signal from the collar initiated an investigation which determined the animal was dead from human causes and is still under investigation.

Another young male was observed north of Rathdrum, Idaho in early August and apparently was being fed by several residents. A decision was made to attempt capture and this occurred on August 16 by Idaho Fish and Game. The bear was fit with a radio collar and released in the East Fork of Boulder Creek in the West Cabinet Mountains. The animal subsequently moved into the Kootenai River Valley north of Bonners Ferry and is being monitored. Origin of this individual is unknown, but genetic samples may answer that question.

Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains Human Caused Mortality

There are no known instances of human caused mortality thus far in the U.S. portion of the Selkirk Mountains. We have two instances of known mortality in the Cabinet-Yaak and one instance of probable mortality. A trail camera from a private individual in the Yaak detected a bear that was injured or wounded in early spring. A site visit by MDFWP conflict specialist Kim Annis located hair samples that will be genetically analyzed. The bear or a carcass could not be located but the apparent severity of the wounds to the bear in the photograph leads to a probable mortality classification. One of the instances of known mortality was previously described as the McGregor Lake management bear. The other was an adult female found dead of human causes in Canuck Creek. The incident is under investigation by Idaho Fish and Game.

Bear Attack in the Cabinet Mountains

On the morning of May 17th, 2018, a young woman was mauled by a bear in the Poorman Creek drainage approximately 15 miles south of Libby Montana in the Cabinet Mountains. Amber Kornak was employed by the University of Montana but supervised by the US Fish and Wildlife Service Grizzly bear Recovery program. She was hiking along a closed road visiting rub trees to collect bear hair for genetic analysis. Though she was cautious and

making noise she surprised a bear along Poorman Creek and was bitten on the back of her neck and head by the bear. Ms. Kornak was carrying bear spray and was able to deploy the spray which probably saved her from additional injury and possibly her life. She was also carrying a satellite communication device that enabled her to contact 911 services immediately after the event. She was able to walk back to her truck and drove part way back to Libby before meeting the ambulance with medical attention and transport to Kalispell Regional Hospital. Ms. Kornak underwent several hours of surgery for her wounds, but has since returned to limited duty work on this project and at another seasonal job. Bear hair found at the site was analyzed the genetics laboratory and found to be a male grizzly bear previously captured in the Cabinet Mountains in 2005 and since identified at numerous hair snag sites. An MDFWP investigation determined it was a surprise defensive encounter and no action was taken against the bear.

Acknowledgements

These capture efforts and hair snagging are part of a research and monitoring effort including cooperators and funders from Birchdale Ecological (M. Proctor), British Columbia Conservation Officer Service, Colville National Forest, Idaho Department of Lands, Idaho Fish and Game, Idaho Panhandle National Forest, Kalispel Tribe, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, Kootenai National Forest, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The effort is led by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Grizzly Bear Recovery Office but also supported by funding from the Idaho and Washington state offices of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We thank numerous private owners of timber lands that have granted access to their property for this research effort including: Caribou Mountain Lodge, Hancock Forest Management, Molpus Woodlands, Stimson Lumber, and Weyerhaeuser Timber.



Figure 1. Alex Welander fitting a radio collar on grizzly bear 4327 in the Selkirk Mountains of Washington.



Figure 2. Male grizzly bear 1002 in the Selkirk Mountains of Washington, 2018.

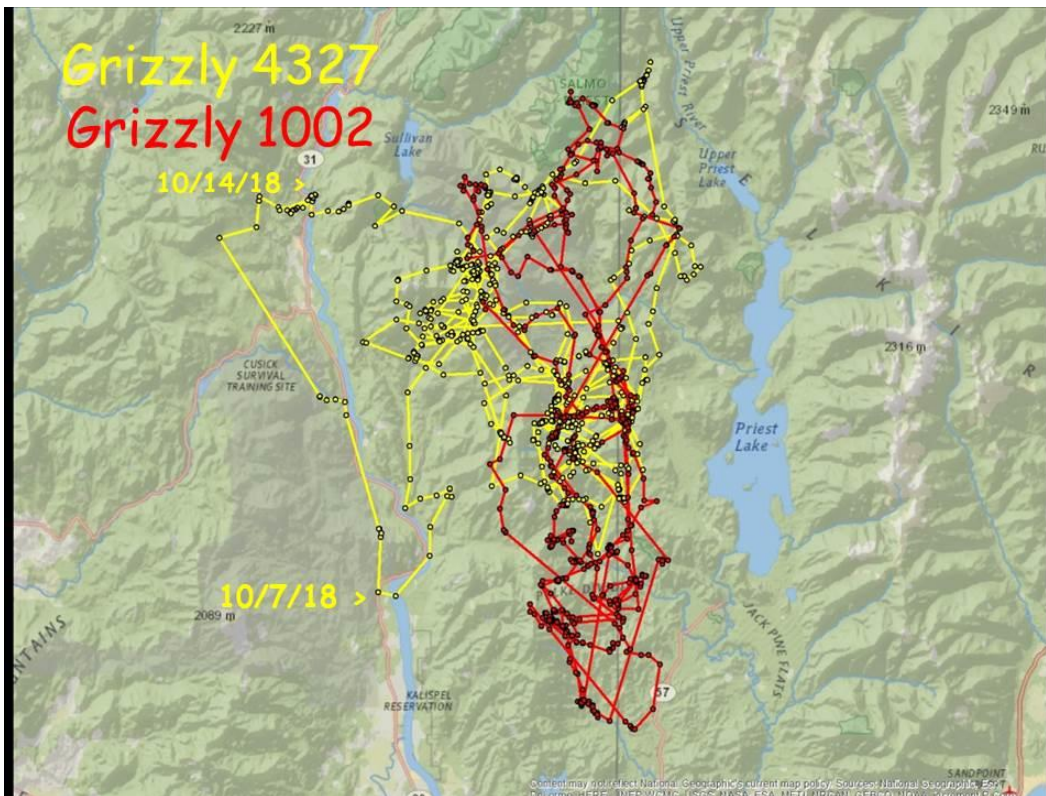


Figure 3 Radio locations from male Selkirk grizzly bears during 2018.



Figure 4 Movements of 2 year-old male grizzly bear 1006 during 2018.

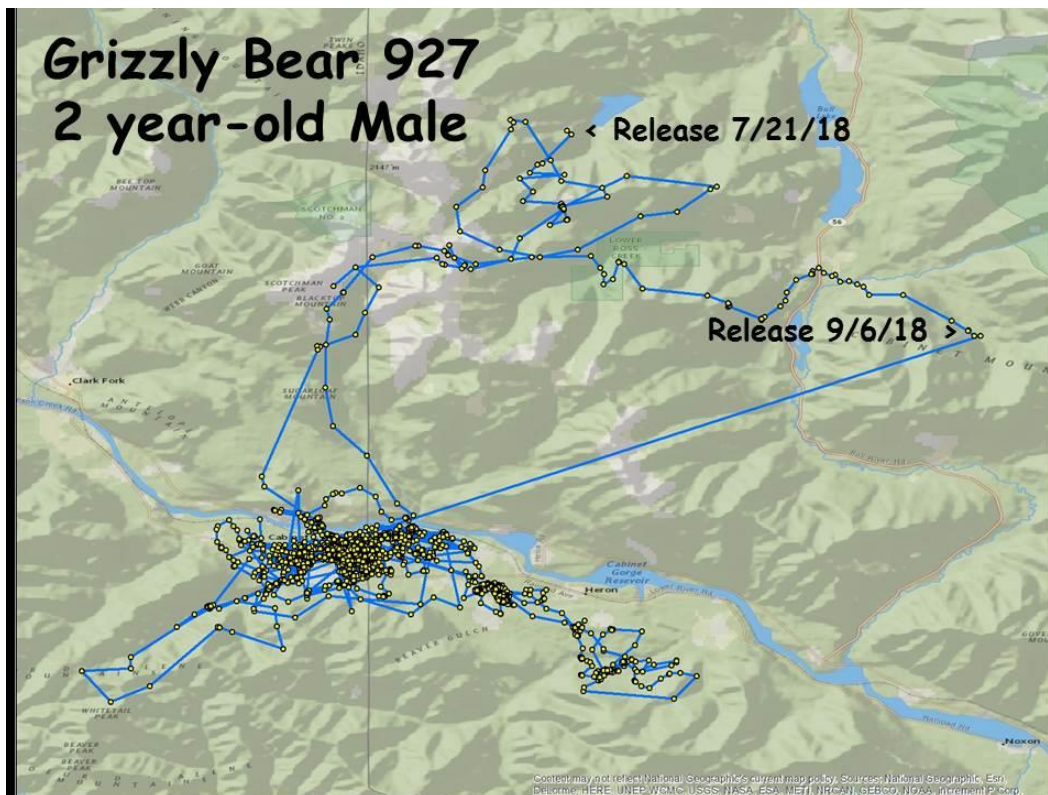


Figure 5. Movements of male augmentation grizzly bear 927 during 2018 in the Cabinet Mountains.