

2014 Spring Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem Update

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Reports found at: <http://www.igbconline.org/index.php/scy-reports> or <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/grizzly/cabinetarchive.html>

Augmentation

We released two sibling female grizzly bears in the Cabinet Mountains on June 19 west of Spar Lake. The bears were 2 year-olds weighing about 100 pounds each 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 20 miles north of Whitefish. It was expected that the bears might remain together initially, but they appear to have already separated and gone different directions. They may regroup in the future and monitoring will determine that outcome. Pictures of the handling and release follow in this email.

We are currently monitoring two other augmentation bears. One is a 4 year-old male released in 2012. His most recent location was in the East Fork of the Bull River. The other bear is a 5 year-old male that was released in 2013 and his most recent location was the East Fork of Lightning Creek.

Fifteen bears have been previously added to the Cabinet Mountains population since 1990 (11 females and 4 males) through the augmentation effort (Table 1). Three female bears and one male have left the target area and 4 bears are known to be dead. Males are being emphasized because of observed inbreeding in this population. While this is not expected to be a population detriment at this point in time, the agencies are being proactive on this issue given the small size of the population. Two females are known to have reproduced from the augmentation effort with one bear having at least 9 first generation offspring and 8 second generation offspring. The other reproducing female has had at least one first generation offspring.

Capture and Monitoring

We have capture efforts ongoing in the Yaak and Cabinet Mountains portion of the recovery area and in the Selkirk Mountains in Idaho. This work is expected to continue through the summer.

We are monitoring two adult females in the Yaak River. One of these emerged with three cubs this year and the other does not have cubs, but was seen with a male recently suggesting a breeding event. Six females were monitored in the Selkirk Mountains however one of those bears was killed in British Columbia in early June. The incident is under investigation by Conservation Officers. One of the remaining bears emerged with two cubs this spring and another adult female which had two 2-year-old offspring has separated from those young and is expected to breed later in June or July.

Known Mortality

There has been one known grizzly bear mortality in the Selkirk Recovery area no known mortality in the Cabinet-Yaak Recovery area thus far during 2014.

Hair Snagging and DNA Analysis

During 2012 there was an extensive effort by USGS headed by Kate Kendall to sample the population through hair snagging at corrals and rub trees to estimate the population size. We are continuing a small portion of that work again this year by revisiting rub trees that were successful at snagging hair from grizzly bears. USGS has shared that information with us and

we are busy resampling those trees a few times over the summer. Many of these trees are in remote locations or widely scattered. We are also establishing and checking hair corrals at several locations. These sites involve a single strand of barb wire about 18 inches high around 4-5 trees in a 75 foot perimeter. In the center of the wire we place lure to attract bears to the site. Bears do not get a food reward and typically do not spend much time at the site. We also place remote cameras at these sites to record animal presence. The sites are moved every 2-4 weeks and any hair is collected. Hair samples will be sent to the genetics lab in December with results expected back after 4-5 months.

Table 1. Sex, age, capture date, capture location, release location, and fate of augmentation grizzly bears moved to the Cabinet Mountains, 1990-2013.

Bear	Sex	Capture Age	Capture date	Capture Location	Cabinet Mts Release Location	Fate
218	F	5	7/21/1990	NF Flathead R, BC	EF Bull River	Dennded in Cabinet Mts 1990, Lost collar August, 1991, observed July 1992
258	F	6	7/21/1992	NF Flathead R, BC	EF Bull River	Dennded in Cabinet Mts 1992 Produce 1 cub 1992, Natural mortality July 1993
286	F	2	7/14/1993	NF Flathead R, BC	EF Bull River	Dennded in Cabinet Mts 1993-95, Lost collar April 1995, hair snag 2004-2009, self-defense mortality November 2009
311	F	3	7/12/1994	NF Flathead R, BC	EF Bull River	Lost collar July 1994, recaptured October 1995 south of Eureka, MT, released in EF Bull River, Signal lost November 1995
A1	F	7-8	9/30/2005	NF Flathead R, MT	Spar Lake	Dennded West Cabinet Mts 2005 and 2006, Lost collar September 2007
782	F	2	8/17/2006	SF Flathead R, MT	Spar Lake	Dennded West Cabinet Mts 2006-07, Lost collar August 2008
635	F	4	7/23/2008	Stillwater R, MT	EF Bull River	Killed by train near Heron, MT October, 2008
790	F	3	8/7/2008	Swan R, MT	EF Bull River	Illegally killed near Noxon, MT October, 2008
715	F	10	9/17/2009	NF Flathead R, MT	Spar Lake	Dennded in West Cabinet Mts 2009-10, returned to NF Flathead R, May 2010
713	M	3	7/18/2010	NF Flathead R, MT	Spar Lake	Dennded in Cabinet Mts 2010, Lost collar September 2011. Recaptured NF Flathead 2012.
714	F	3	7/24/2010	NF Flathead R, MT	Silverbutte Cr	Returned to NF Flathead July 2010
725	F	2	7/25/2011	MF Flathead R, MT	Spar Lake	Returned to Glacier National Park, September 2011, then returned to Cabinet Mts August 2012 and dennded in Cabinet Mts 2012. Made similar round trip in 2013 and lost collar in October near Spar Lake.
723	M	2	8/18/2011	Whitefish R, MT	Spar Lake	Dennded in Cabinet Mts 2011. Lost collar June 2012.
918	M	2	7/6/2012	Whitefish R, MT	EF Bull River	Dennded in Cabinet Mts 2012 & 2013. Monitoring ongoing.
919	M	3	7/31/2013	NF Flathead R, MT	Spar Lake	Dennded in Cabinet Mountains 2013. Monitoring ongoing.



Two year-old female grizzly bear being radio collared prior to release in the Cabinet Mountains.



Two female grizzly bears following release in the Cabinet Mountains near Spar Lake June 19, 2014. Both bears are two years old and weigh approximately 100 pounds.