Grizzly Bear and Human Use at Moth Sites in Wyoming

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Photo: Austin Waisanen

Grizzly bears Ursus arctos

Army cutworm moths horribilis) (Euxoa auxiliaris) Bear enthusiasts, peak baggers, hunters

Increasing human interest & bear use



Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team (2018)

Management concerns

- human safety
- bear disturbance
- bear habituation



OBJECTIVE: Quantify human and bear use, overlap, and interactions at the most human-accessible moth sites.

Two study sites selected:

most accessible to humans = highest management concern



METHODS

Human use

Trailhead surveys GPS tracking units Peak log monitoring

Bear use

Repeated surveys Opportunistic observations

Human and bear use overlap & interactions

Predictive surface overlays Post trip surveys of hiking groups

EFFORTS

- July-September, 2017 & 2018
- 4 crew members each year
- 66 days conducting bear surveys
- 106 days trailhead monitoring
- Cumulatively hiked 989 miles & climbed 851,000 ft in elevation



Different human and bear use between sites

South site

- 427 bear locations
- 70 human groups
 (~3 groups/week)
- Peak climbing, bear viewing, photography

North site

- 59 bear locations
- 6 human groups
 (~3 groups/year)
- All use related to ungulate hunting



Human and bear use overlap and interactions

South site

- High spatial and temporal overlap at the south site
- 43 human-bear interactions
- Bear responses:
 - 80% ran away
 - 20% no reaction

MANAGEMENT CONCERNS: Human Safety

Highest concern areas, South site

- Peak area talus slopes
- Along the main route
- High elevation vegetation patches

Risky human activity

- Most groups <4 people (64/70)
- Unaware of bear use
- Lack of bear-related safety messaging with climbing info



MANAGEMENT CONCERNS: Bear disturbance

Most (80%) were displaced, some repeatedly

- Reduces foraging time
- Lots of effort expended

Evidence of habituation



MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

North site (Minimal overlap or concern)

- No apparent need for management intervention
- Continue monitoring human use

South site (Concerning overlap and number of interactions)

- Increase public education (kiosks, climbing websites)
- Continue monitoring human use

Consider human use monitoring at other sites that are more accessible or have other reasons for visitation (i.e. peak bagging)

THANK YOU

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