BOARD OF REVIEW REPORT

Fatality of Anthony Pollio from a grizzly bear attack in Glacier National Park on May 3, 2026

July 20, 2026

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Summary:

Mr. Anthony Pollio, a 33-year-old male from Davie, Florida, was killed by a grizzly bear on the Mt. Brown Lookout trail in Glacier National Park on Sunday, May 3, 2026. Mr. Pollio was on a multi-day road trip across the United States. Mr. Pollio entered the park on May 3rd and drove to the Lake McDonald Lodge where he decided to hike 5.1 miles up to the Mt. Brown Lookout. He started up the trail at approximately 6:30 pm. Mr. Pollio was intermittently communicating with family and friends via cell phone during his ascent to the lookout. His last known communication was at 8:20 pm wherein he indicated that he was still

ascending the mountain. His stated intention was to watch the sunset from the lookout, then hike back down to his car and find a camping spot in the park. Mr. Pollio never returned and was reported to the park as an overdue hiker on the afternoon of Monday, May 4th. An intensive search began that included ground and aerial searchers. At 12:10 pm on Wednesday, May 6th, a search team discovered Mr. Pollio's remains 69 feet below the Mt. Brown trail approximately 2.5 miles from the trailhead. Mr. Pollio had sustained fatal injuries consistent with those from a bear attack. Subsequent investigation confirmed that Mr. Pollio had been killed by an adult male grizzly bear. Evidence at the scene indicated that Mr. Pollio surprised the bear at close quarters while descending the mountain in the dark. After the attack, the bear left the area.

Format of report:

An interagency Board of Review (BOR) composed of state and federal personnel prepared this report. An investigation is required after any human fatality caused by a grizzly bear as per the Interagency Grizzly Bear Guidelines (p. 59). This report is based on the efforts and investigations, personal statements, and documentation by personnel with Glacier National Park, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP), and the Flathead County Coroner's Office. This report summarizes the incident, the management response, and the eventual resolution. After examining the detailed investigation materials, the BOR members discussed the incident and followed up on some details to clarify particular issues. Information that was used to develop the finding of the BOR is appended to this report. This report is written in sections of occurrence and with an investigative conclusion at the end of the report. The BOR attempted to reconstruct the incident as much as possible given the information available while avoiding speculation about details not supported by the evidence. All times in this report are Mountain Daylight Savings Time.

Background:

Glacier National Park is a one-million-acre protected area located in northwestern Montana. Known for its dramatic mountain scenery, it is a destination recreation area for hikers from across the country. The majority of park visitors enter through the park's west entrance in West Glacier, MT (48.506400° N, -113.987700° W) and then travel east along the Going to the Sun Road. Anthony Pollio, the victim, had been travelling with a friend but parted ways in Wisdom, MT on 5/3/2026. Mr. Pollio continued his journey north and west entering the park on Sunday, May 3rd at ~4:45 pm and ended up at Lake McDonald Lodge, a point where further vehicle travel up the Going to the Sun Road was prohibited by an annual snow closure, (48.616810° N, -113.875748° W). Mr. Pollio was intermittently communicating with family and friends during his journey. At Lake McDonald Lodge, he communicated his intention to climb to the lookout, watch the sunset, then hike out in the

dark to return to his car and locate a place to camp. Mt. Brown Lookout is approximately 5.1 miles from the trailhead at Lake McDonald Lodge and climbs from an elevation of 3,227 ft to 7,467 ft, an elevation gain of 4,240 ft. It is one of the steepest trails in the park.

Search:

On Monday, May 4th at 2:19 pm, Glacier Park Dispatch received notification from Mr. Pollio's father that his son had not communicated since his climb to the lookout and was concerned about his welfare. The initial report didn't specify which lookout, so hasty teams were sent to all the lookout trailheads in the area, (Huckleberry, Apgar, Mt. Brown) to find Mr. Pollio's vehicle. Subsequent communication with friends and family narrowed the search area to Mt. Brown and Mr. Pollio's rental car was found in the parking lot at the trailhead. Tuesday morning, May 5th, 2026, additional search resources were deployed including personnel from North Valley Search and Rescue, Flathead County, US Forest Service, US Geological Survey and aircraft from Alert, National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, and Minuteman Aviation. Despite the intensified search, including infrared FLIR flights by a National Guard Blackhawk helicopter, Mr. Pollio was not located.

His last known communication was a text message to his girlfriend sent at 8:20 pm wherein he indicated that he had "climbed over 2,000 ft and 3 miles" and that he had "2,400 ft to gain". While the mileages and elevations didn't match exactly, the search team estimated his position was 0.9 miles above where he was ultimately found (Figure 1). Sunset on May 3rd, 2026 was at 8:49 pm and last light at 9:24 pm. The temperature in West Glacier at 9:12 pm on May 3rd was 58° F under dry conditions. Winds were southeast at 2 mph gusting to 7 mph. Moonrise on May 3rd was at 11:46 pm and was waning gibbous at 94.1% under mostly clear skies, (<25% cloud cover). The trail was snow free up to ~6,080 ft elevation at which point it was covered with deep snow up to the lookout.

On Wednesday, May 6th, 2026, at approximately 12:10 pm a search party on Mt. Brown discovered Mr. Pollio's remains. A searcher spotted a can of GrizGuard brand bear spray laying in the brush just off the trail. The team began looking in that direction and quickly discovered the body. The searchers verified that Mr. Pollio was deceased and that he appeared to have suffered traumatic injuries consistent with a bear attack. The search team transmitted the information to the incident command.

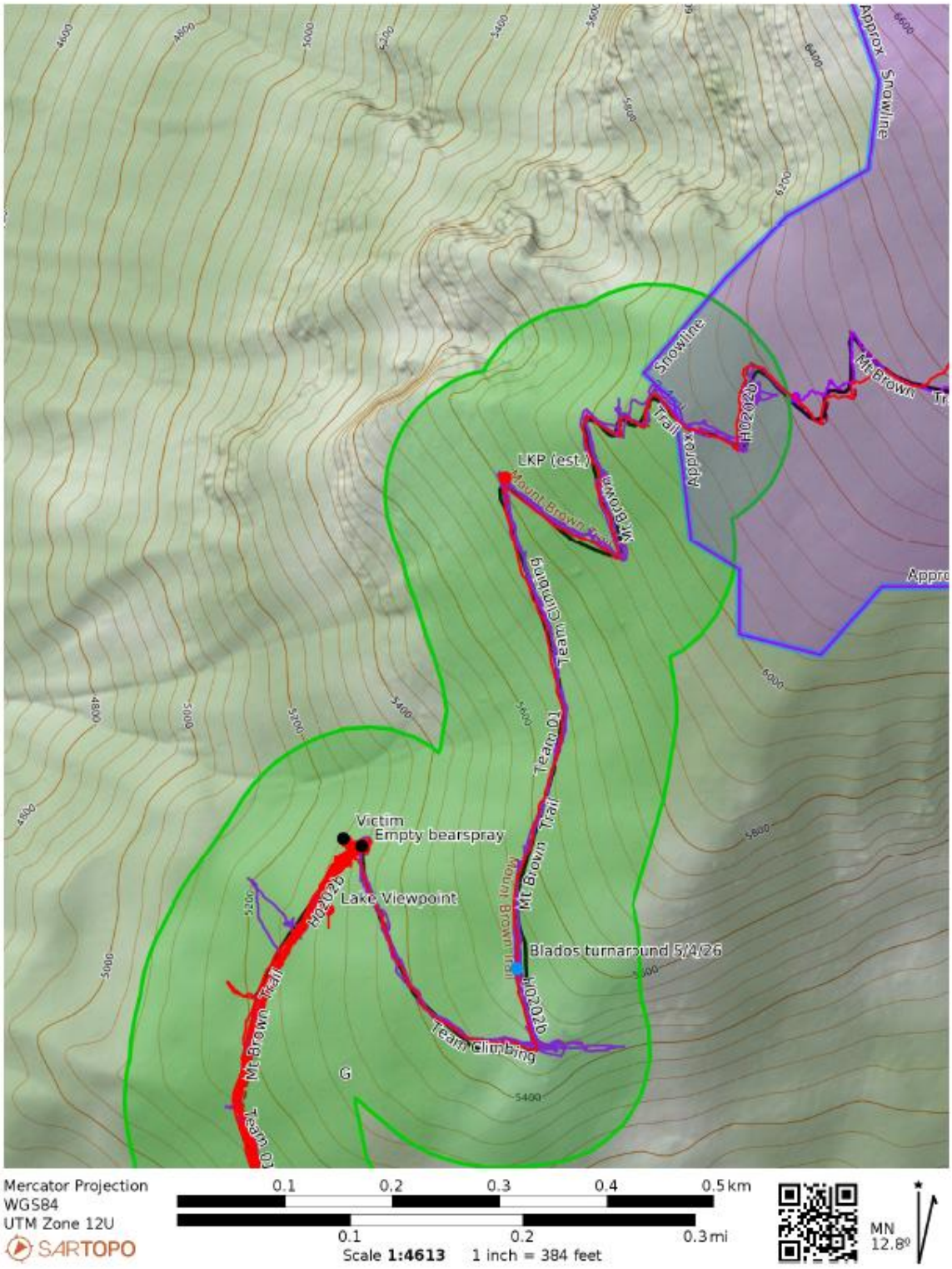


Figure 1. The trail to Mt. Brown Lookout. LKP indicates the victims' estimated last known position at 5,800 ft elevation.

Fatality Site Investigation:

At approximately 2:30 pm on May 6th a team of investigators consisting of GNP Chief Ranger, Flathead Co. Deputy Coroner, and two law enforcement rangers hiked to the fatality site, (Photo 1,2).

They established a secure perimeter and began gathering evidence at the site. Items collected below the trail included a gray Carhart beanie, a smart phone and charging bank with bear scat on the surface, and a charging cable. Below was a closed Schrade pocketknife and the black plastic holster for the bear spray with a broken belt clip located above, (Figure 2). A Wildlife Human Attack Response Team, (WHART), consisting of a park wildlife biologist and two Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Grizzly Bear Management Specialists hiked into the site about 1 hour later and collected bear hair, bear scat, and measured bite marks on the body. They took distance measurements to and between various landmarks and evidence found on the scene. At approximately 6:00 pm the remains of Mr. Pollio were transported off Mt. Brown by helicopter long line and transferred to the custody of the Flathead County Coroner's Office.



Photo 1. Vew of attack site from below the trail looking upslope. Person in green jacket is on the trail.



Photo 2. View up the Mt Brown trail towards the attack site which was just before the first deadfall across the trail. The trail switch backed to the right just beyond the second deadfall across the trail.

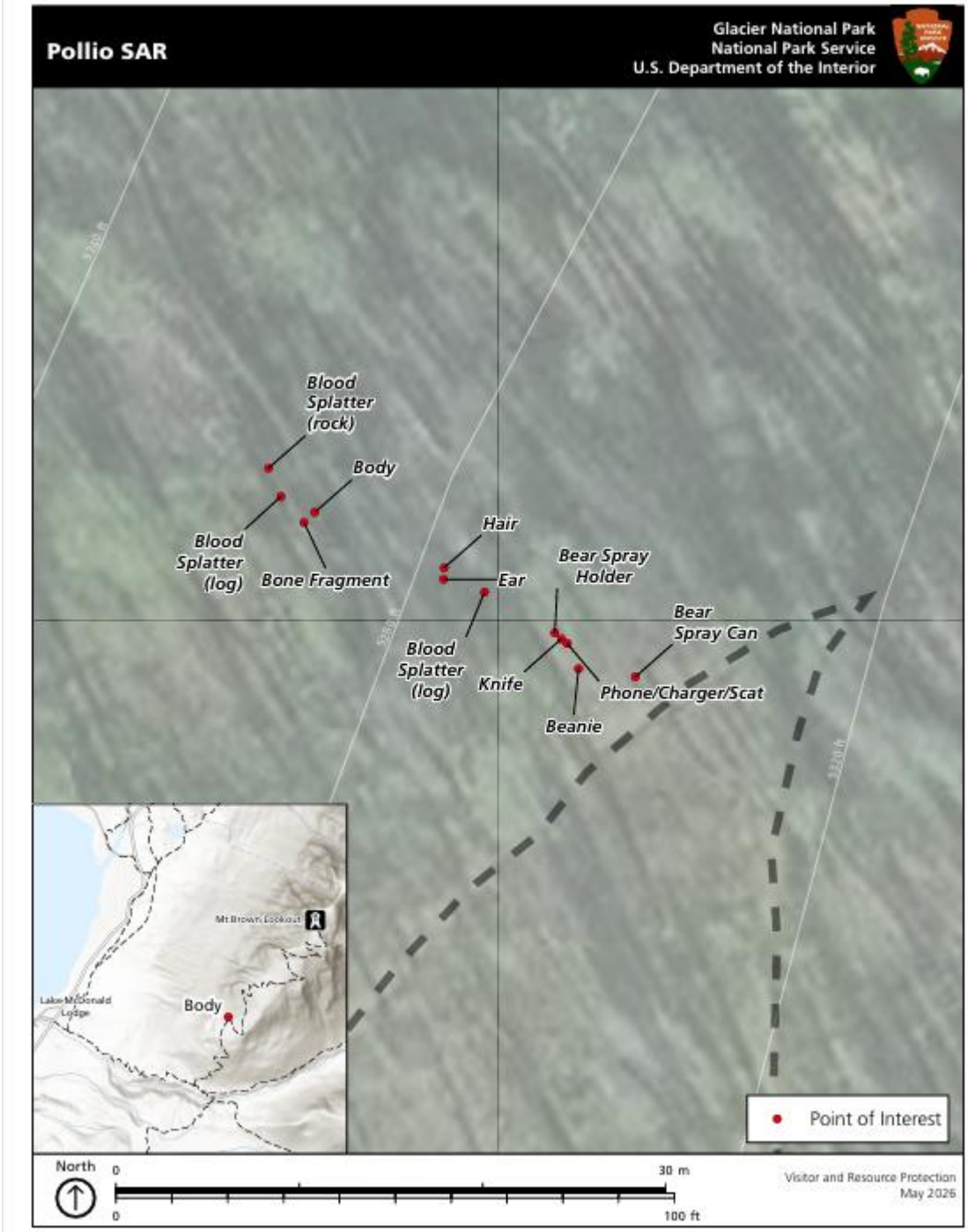


Figure 2. Location of personal items recovered from scene of 5/3/2026 bear attack on Mt. Brown.

Scene Findings:

The victim was lying on his back with his head upslope and his legs crossed at the ankles. He lay 69 ft. below the trail among scattered deadfall trees. The slope at the body location was 31 degrees, (60%). The victim's personal items collected by the initial team lay on the slope between the body and the trail. Blood spatters, presumed to be from the victim, appeared on deadfall about 10 ft below the trail and increased in coverage towards the body. There was significant blood 18 ft below the body suggesting that the victim had tumbled downslope to that location prior to moving to his final resting place.

The victim was wearing hiking boots, jeans, a shirt, and an unzipped lightly insulated coat. He was wearing a small water bladder type backpack. The victim sustained extensive trauma to the left side of his head and face. Significant structural damage was present, including the loss of portions of facial tissue and underlying bone. Despite the severity of the injuries, some facial features remained identifiable. The damage exposed internal structures of the skull, indicating the force of the incident. There was what appeared to be a shallow claw slash mark across the victim's neck, and numerous bite marks on the victim's torso and thighs. The WHART team collected what appeared to be bear hair from some of the wounds and took measurements of tooth spacing from the wounds where they were apparent.

While the victim's injuries were severe and fatal, there was no evidence of predation. Mr. Pollio remained fully clothed and in a natural position. No flesh was removed from major muscle groups and there was no opening of the chest or abdomen. The avulsed bone and flesh were found near the body. There was no caching or covering of the victim with dirt or debris. No bears were observed or detected in the vicinity during the search or during this investigation. A survey of the area by a National Guard helicopter equipped with a FLIR camera detected mountain goats nearby but no bears. There were no animal carcasses present, or any evidence of bear foraging found at or near the scene.

The attack appeared to have been initiated at a point 43 ft. down-trail from a switch back on the Mt. Brown trail approximately 2.3 miles from the Gunsight Pass trailhead at Lake McDonald Lodge. There were several downed trees across the trail below the switch back and the easiest way to navigate around them would have been to cut the switch back about ~23 ft downhill, (Photo 2). Claw marks on a burned tree and a displaced stone suggested that the bear launched its attack from this point (Photo 3). This is also where the discharged canister of bear spray was located.

The bear spray can was fully discharged. The empty can weighed 84 g. A new, full can of the same brand with the same expiration date weighed 312 g, a difference of 228g. The advertised quantity marked on the label was 225g.

Fallen trees and poor light would have probably obscured the bear. As the bear attacked, the victim fell or was thrown downhill. His path was littered with personal effects beginning 10 ft below the trail (Figure 2). We believe the bear followed Mr. Pollio downhill, continuing the attack. Spatters of blood increased in frequency and volume down the hill. Mr. Pollio's ear was found approx. 40 ft downslope. A large pool of blood marked the limit of his descent 93 ft below the trail, (Figure 3).



Photo 3. Displaced rock and claw marks on tree below trail indicate rapid movement upslope to trail.

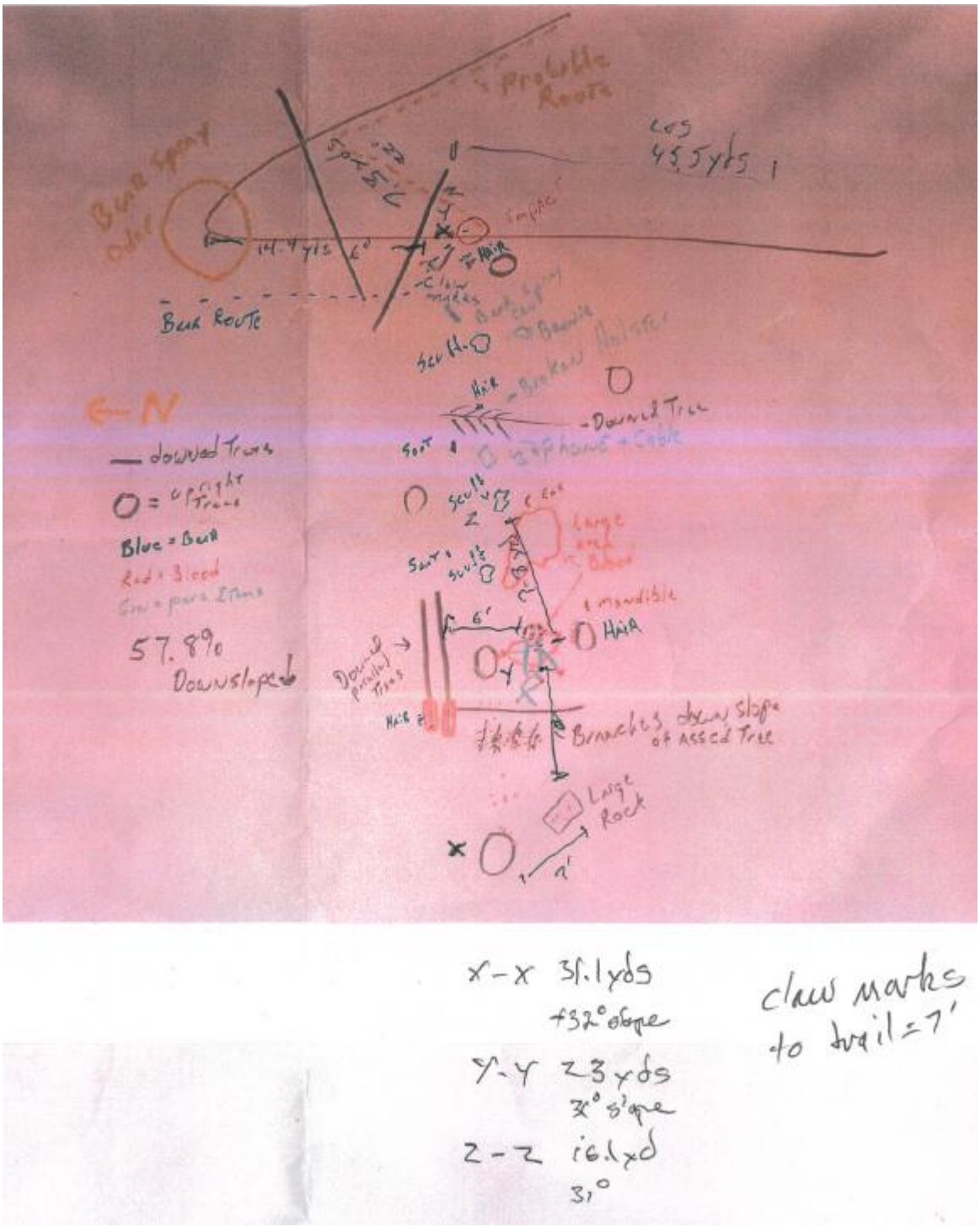


Figure 3. Scene sketch from Pollio fatality site.

Based on blood marks and the orientation of branches, it appears as though Mr. Pollio managed to climb back up slope approximately 18 ft at which point the bear re-engaged and inflicted the fatal bites to Mr. Pollio's head.

The Mt Brown trail at the time of the attack was choked with wildfire-burnt deadfall trees brought down by windstorms during the winter, especially those portions above the attack site. A park employee familiar with the trail estimated travel speeds at 1 mph uphill and 1.7 mph downhill during dry, cool, daylight conditions. Being unfamiliar with the trail and traveling during twilight hours, Mr. Pollio's speed down the trail was likely much less. Because Mr. Pollio's text message, his last known position (LKP), was sent from 0.9 miles above the attack site and that he indicated that he was still ascending in his 8:20 pm message, it is highly probable that the bear attack occurred in darkness after 9:30 pm. Last light on this date was 9:24 pm. The distance from his LKP to the snowline was 0.25 miles, or roughly 15 minutes. If he turned around at the snowline, he would have reached the attack site 45 minutes to an hour later, or 9:20 to 9:35 pm.

Coroners Findings:

No autopsy was performed on Mr. Pollio at the request of family. Cursory examination revealed numerous bites and lacerations on the legs and torso in addition to the previously described head and facial injuries. There were no defensive wounds or injuries on his hands. Toxicology findings were not available at the time of this report.

DNA Findings:

Collected bear hair and bear scat samples were sent to the Wildlife Genetics, Inc laboratory in Nelson, B.C for analysis. The laboratory identified with high confidence DNA from these samples as being from male grizzly bear #138239. This genome was in the NCDE grizzly bear monitoring database having been previously detected in rub-tree samples obtained in 2011. This would make the bear at least 15 years old. His parents were also identified in a 2004 DNA survey. His father had a large home range stretching from Coal Cr. east to Upper Two Medicine Lake. His mother lived in the area around Cutbank Pass. Neither had any history of conflict with people. Bear 138239 appears to be a life-long resident of the park and does not have a conflict history, capture history, or known history of aggression towards people.

Previous bear sightings:

During 2025, there were no sightings of adult male grizzly bears on Mt. Brown that warranted management concern. The majority of the 46 reported grizzly bear sightings in the Mt. Brown area during 2025 were of 2 family groups that spent most of their time on the Gunsite Pass trail near Sperry Chalet. There was only one reported sighting of a grizzly bear in 2026. That sighting on 4/29/2026 by a visitor was of a lone adult near Lake McDonald Lodge. The species of the bear could not be verified.

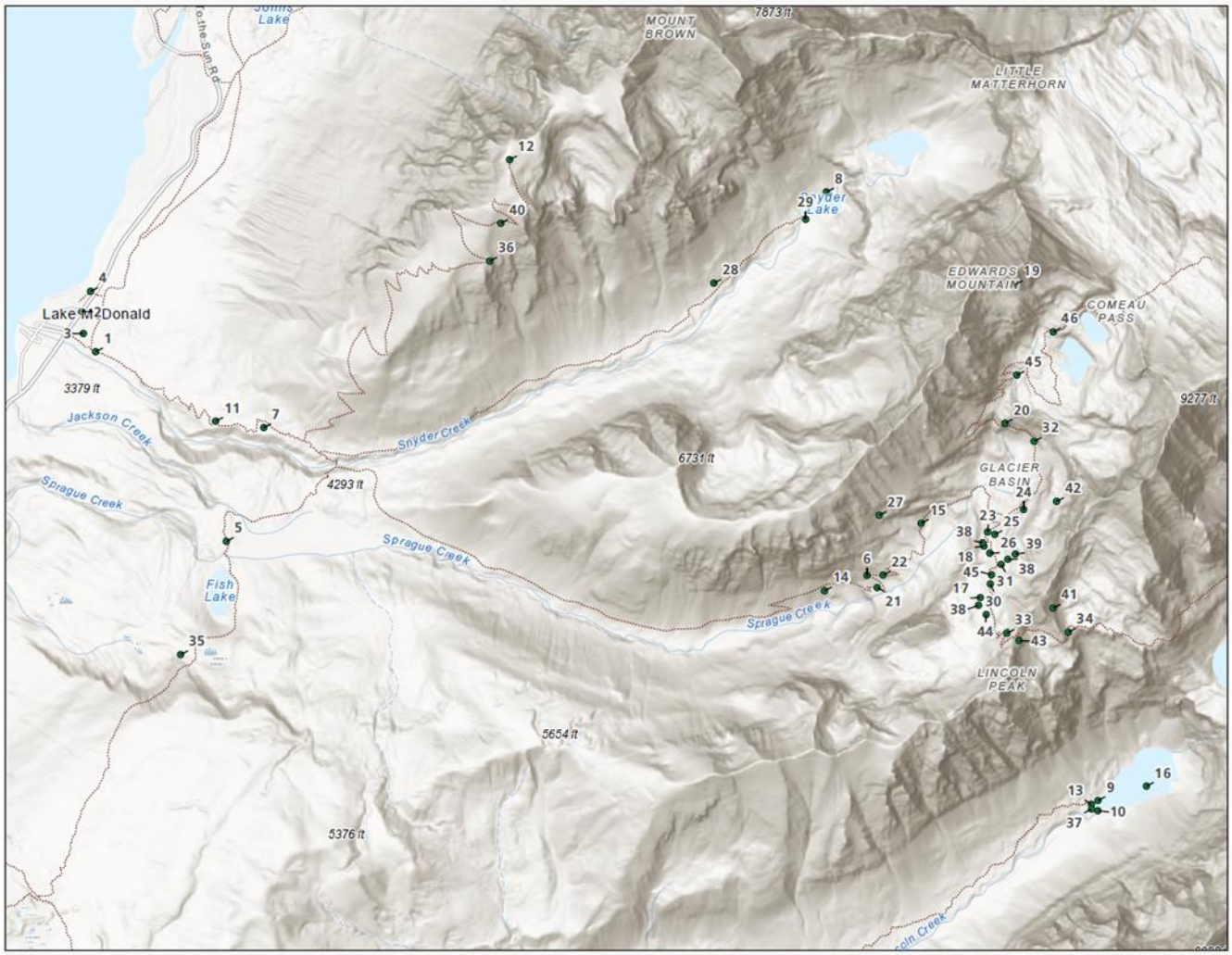


Figure 4. Bear sightings reported near Mt. Brown, Glacier National Park, during 2025. Numbered sightings are keyed to Table 1.

Map ID Num	Obs_date	Obs_time	Species	Age	Color	Sex	Bear_Comments	bservation_Ty	NumBears	ObserverType	ObserverActivity	NumPeople
1	20250405	1400	Grizzly	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		Track	1	Visitor_firsthand	Hiking	2
2	20250405	1245	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Male	Probably the same bea	Sighting	1	Visitor_firsthand	Hiking	1
3	20250405	1250	Grizzly	Unknown	Dark_brown	Unknown		Sighting	1	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	3
4	20250508	710	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Unknown	bear observed near ca	Sighting	1	Concessionaire	Hiking	4
5	20250531	1500	Grizzly	Unknown	Light_brown	Unknown		Sighting	1	Visitor_firsthand	Hiking	1
6	20250605	1130	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/2 subadult cub	Sighting	3	Visitor_firsthand	Hiking	2
7	20250602	1442	Grizzly	Adult	Light_brown	Female	Sow w/1 coy	Sighting	2	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	1
8	20250608	1715	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	2
9	20250608	2046	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Unknown	Came down a big gam	Sighting	1	NPS_Employee_self	Working	1
10	20250616	1746	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Unknown		Sighting	1	NPS_Employee_other	Hiking	2
11	20250625	1400	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	From a visitor email to	Sighting	1	Visitor_secondhand	Hiking	2
12	20250717	1105	Grizzly	Adult	Unknown	Female	sow w/2 cubs	Sighting	3	Visitor_secondhand	Hiking	1
13	20250721	1100	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Unknown	Sow w/ 2 coy	Sighting	3	Visitor_firsthand	Camping	2
14	20250724	1105	Grizzly	Adult	Unknown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings. Cul	Sighting	3	Concessionaire	Hiking	3
15	20250724	1035	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Acted defensive (clack	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	7
16	20250803	815	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Female	Sow w/2 coy	Sighting	3	Visitor_firsthand	Camping	6
17	20250731	1230	Grizzly	Adult	Unknown	Unknown	Sow w/2 cubs	Sighting	3	Visitor_firsthand	Camping	2
18	20250731	100	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		Sighting	1	NPS_Employee_other	Camping	1
19	20250803	1700	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Unknown		Sighting	1	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	2
20	20250803	1740	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	2
21	20250807	828	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	3	Contractor	Horseback Riding	2
22	20250804	1200	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings. Mo	Other	3	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	1
23	20250805	1855	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings. Fir	Other	3	NPS_Employee_self	Bear patrol	2
24	20250806	1102	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Female	Sow with 2 yearlings. '	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	ar patrol with 185 G	2
25	20250807	645	Grizzly	Yearling_Subadult	Light_brown	Unknown	Two yearlings. Trail cr	Sighting	2	NPS_Employee_other	Inside trails cabin	2
26	20250805	1229	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	8
27	20250806	900	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	2
28	20250816	1454	Grizzly	Adult	Unknown	Female	Sow & 2 cubs reportec	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_other	Hiking	6
29	20250813	1808	Grizzly	Adult	Unknown	Female	Reported from dispatc	Sighting	3	Visitor_secondhand	Camping	2
30	20250817	1600	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	6	NPS_Employee_other	Hiking	4
31	20250816	1400	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	5
32	20250814	1200	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	3	Concessionaire	running	1
33	20250824	1100	Grizzly	Adult	Other	Female	Sow with two cubs. So	Sighting	3	Visitor_firsthand	Hiking	2
34	20250826	1350	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	3	Visitor_firsthand	Hiking	2
35	20250902	1200	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Unknown	Bear foraging around t	Sighting	1	Visitor_firsthand	Hiking	2
36	20250905	1434	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	Hawk watch	4
37	20250904	1841	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Unknown	Sow w/2 yearlings. Rar	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	Camping	2
38	20250904	1500	Grizzly	Adult	Grey	Unknown		Sighting	3	Concessionaire	Hiking	1
39	20250825	1030	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/ 2 yearlings. Ni	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_other	Water operations	1
40	20250907	1622	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Male	Adult brown male griz	Sighting	1	NPS_Employee_self	wk watch observatic	2
41	20250908	1230	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Unknown	sow w/ subadult	Sighting	2	Visitor_firsthand	Hiking	5
42	20250907	1600	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	2
43	20250907	1630	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Female	Sow w/ 2 yearlings wa	Sighting	3	GNPC	Hiking	2
44	20250907	1549	Grizzly	Adult	Dark_brown	Female	Sow w 2 coy moved fr	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	4
45	20250911	1100	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/2 yearlings	Sighting	3	Visitor_firsthand	Hiking	1
46	20251010	1450	Grizzly	Adult	Medium_brown	Female	Sow w/ 2 yearlings tha	Sighting	3	NPS_Employee_self	Hiking	2

Table 1. Sightings of grizzly bears and bears of unknown species reported in the vicinity of Mt. Brown during 2025. Map ID numbers are keyed to the map in Figure 4.

Timeline:

5/3/2026

4:45 pm - Mr. Pollio arrives at Glacier National Park.

6:30 pm – Mr. Pollio starts his hike up Mt. Brown.

6:48 pm – Mr. Pollio leaves a voicemail with his father stating he was hiking towards a lookout.

8:20 pm – Last known communication, 0.9 mi above fatality site. A text message sent to Mr. Pollio's girlfriend stating he intended to continue up the trail from his current location to the lookout and return to the trailhead in the dark by 11:00 pm.

9:30 pm – Bear attack. The exact time that Mr. Pollio died is unknown but was likely between 9:15 and 10:00 pm.

5/4/2026

2:19 pm – Overdue hiker reported to Glacier Dispatch.

3:30 pm – Hasty searches initiated.

4:28 pm – Mr. Pollio's rental car found by Ranger at Mt. Brown trailhead. Incident Command System established. Rangers sent up Gunsite Pass and Mt. Brown trails.

6:08 pm – Park receives photos of Mr. Pollio to aid in search.

6:52 pm – Alert helicopter begins searching Mt. Brown area. Aerial search discontinued at 7:23 pm due to high winds.

10:34 – T-Mobile cell phone pings obtained from Mr. Pollio's phone.

5/5/2026

6:23 am – Mr. Pollio's vehicle still parked at trailhead. Search ramps up. Additional resources acquired including aerial assets.

6:00 pm – Search team notified of 5/3 text message from Mr. Pollio to girlfriend from halfway up Mt. Brown trail. Search efforts refocused on that area.

5/6/2026

8:00 am – Search continues.

12:10 pm – Searchers discover body of Mr. Pollio on the Mt. Brown trail.

2:30 pm – Initial investigation team hikes to scene.

3:30 pm – WHART team hikes to scene.

6:00 pm – Body flown out by helicopter and transferred to Flathead Co. Coroner.

9:00 pm – All units clear of scene

Conclusions:

Mr. Pollio, while hiking alone, surprised an adult male grizzly bear on the Mt. Brown Lookout trail. Based on his last text message, trail condition and distances, he was most likely descending the trail in darkness. Darkness and deadfall on the trail would have prevented the bear and Mr. Pollio from seeing each other until they were very close. We don't know if Mr. Pollio was making any noise. He may have been using his cell phone flashlight. During the initial assault, Mr. Pollio managed to discharge his bear spray, but it is unknown if and

where the spray contacted the bear. Mr. Pollio tumbled down slope, probably while the bear continued its attack, for 93 ft. We surmise that the bear broke off the attack at that time allowing Mr. Pollio to climb upslope approximately 18 ft at which point the bear re-engaged and killed Mr. Pollio with crushing bites to the head. The attack was likely brief and intense and not prolonged. There was no consumption or caching of the victim by the bear. There was no evidence that Mr. Pollio was fighting back. After the attack, the bear left the area. Mr. Pollio appears to have been the victim of a defensive attack by a surprised grizzly bear.

To avoid surprise encounters with bears, follow these Recommendations:

- Stay alert and use all your senses to detect bear activity, especially where visibility or hearing is limited (woods, bushy areas, streams, poor light).
- Make noise by talking, singing or clapping. This may not be necessary continuously but is critical when visibility and hearing are limited. Do not scream or shriek, as this may startle or confuse a bear.
- Travel in a group. Groups of people are usually noisier and less likely to surprise bears. Don't let your group get spread out. Stay close to each other so everyone is visible and can gather even closer together if a bear is encountered.
- Carry bear spray close in an immediately accessible place and know how to use it.
- Avoid traveling at night, dawn, or dusk when bears are most active. If you do, use a good flashlight or headlamp.
- During an encounter with a bear: If a bear charges you and is going to make contact with you, go face down on the ground, cover your neck and head as much as possible, and deploy your bear spray in the bear's face. If you are unsure of the species, but you recognize it is defensive, play dead. If the attack is prolonged and no longer defensive, fight back!
- Let others know your detailed plans before you start your hike.