

THE BLACKFOOT WATERSHED WOLF AND BEAR ACTIVITY REPORT 6/06/2015

Hello everyone, this is **Eric Graham** working as the Range Rider for the Blackfoot Challenge again this season. Many livestock producers are preparing to turn out their cattle on summer grazing leases in the next couple of weeks. I look forward to working with you all! Through October I will monitor cattle, grizzly bear and wolf activity and will produce this activity report. I will be working closely with MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) to monitor the locations of collared wolves and grizzly bears adjacent to ranches in the Blackfoot valley. I look forward to working with all of you again this season and please call if you have any questions. Thank you.

If you have any questions about the Range Rider program please call the Blackfoot Challenge **Wildlife Committee Coordinator, Seth Wilson (406) 274-0507**.

Contact Info for reporting wolf and/or bear activity:

Eric Graham – Blackfoot Challenge Range Rider (406) 240-3132

Jamie Jonkel – MFWP Bear Management Specialist (406) 544-1447

Scott Eggeman – MFWP Blackfoot Area Wildlife Biologist (406) 542-5542

If you have a suspected predator depredation please notify **Wildlife Services (WS)** as soon as possible to determine the cause of death.

Powell County – Bart Smith - 406-660-0368

Missoula County - Ted North - 406-274-4856.

IMPORTANT UPDATES

Wildlife Services confirmed a calf was injured by a wolf on private land west of Helmville on 5/21/15. The calf will likely live. WS set traps to collar wolves. Wildlife Services trapped and collared a 2 year old gray male wolf on 6/2.

Wildlife Services confirmed a calf was killed by wolves on private land in upper Nevada Creek on 5/29. They believe 2, and possible 3 wolves were involved. Traps were set to try to remove offending wolves. A wolf that was collared by WS recently on the east side of the divide was found in the vicinity, but it is unknown if they will be attempting aerial removal at this point.

Grizzly and Black Bears are Out and About: Please contain your bear attractants by making them unavailable to bears – please take down your birdfeeders and make sure your pet food, livestock feed and garbage is contained in a secure structure.

Reports of both grizzly bears and wolves have been very helpful and we appreciate you taking the time to pass those along.

BLACKFOOT VALLEY WOLF PACKS

ARRASTRA CREEK PACK

Pack Structure: 2-3 Adults

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: The collared wolf from last season was found dead in the Blackfoot River and we will work to get another collar out in this pack.

BELMONT PACK

Pack Structure: 2 Adults

Collared Wolf: Yes

Pack Report: This pack is thought to spend time on the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal reservation.

BUGLE MOUNTAIN PACK

Backcountry

CHAMBERLAIN PACK

Pack Structure: 2-3 Adults

Collared Wolf: Yes

Pack Report: We continue to monitor this wolf via radio telemetry.

CONGER POINT PACK

Backcountry

DALTON MOUNTAIN PACK

Pack Structure: Unknown

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: Nothing new to report.

HUMBUG PACK

Pack Structure: Unknown

Collared Wolf: Yes

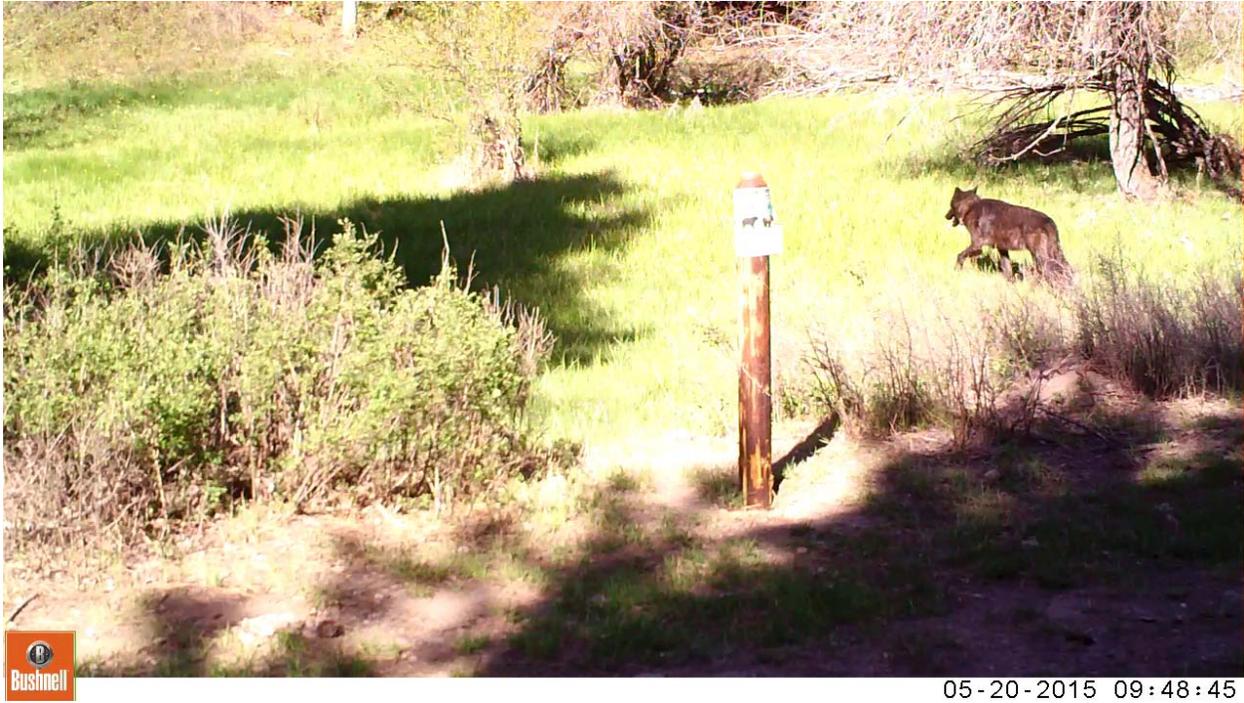
Pack Report: WS collared a yearling female wolf northeast of Lincoln and this wolf is believed to be a member of the Humbug pack. Further monitoring is needed to confirm this.

INEZ PACK

Pack Structure: 3 Adults

Collared Wolf: Yes

Pack Report: We continue to monitor this wolf via radio telemetry.



A trail camera photo of what is suspected to be the collared Inez male. Photo by Mike Johnson.

LANDERS FORK PACK

Pack Structure: 6 Adults

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: Nothing new to report.

MORRELL MOUNTAIN PACK

Pack Structure: 2 Adults

Collared Wolf: Yes

Pack Report: We continue to monitor this wolf via radio telemetry.

OVANDO MOUNTAIN PACK

Pack Structure: Unknown

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: **The lack of consistent wolf activity in the Ovando Mountain area has lead us to believe there is no longer a resident wolf pack. We will remove them from future reports but will continue to monitor this area.**

PIERCE PACK

Pack Structure: Unknown; 6 Adults

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: This pack is a border pack between FWP Regions 1 and 2 around the Clearwater Divide and so monitoring efforts are split between the Regions.

UNION PEAK PACK

Pack Structure: 3 Adults

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: Nothing new to report.

GRIZZLY BEAR ACTIVITY



A photo of a male grizzly bear in the Blackfoot valley this spring. Photo by Michael Johnson.

Grizzly bears are widely dispersed throughout the Blackfoot and Clearwater valleys this season and have been reported by antler hunters, black bear hunters, ranchers, local residents and recreationists. Bears are spending most of their time in the lush creek and river bottoms and/or the higher alpine meadows seeking out green up vegetation.

A collared adult female grizzly bear came over from the Flathead Indian Reservation and dropped her collar just north of Seeley Lake.

There continues to be 3 monitoring female grizzly bears in the valley to support the ongoing population trend monitoring efforts. "Fenn" continues to be a long-time female on the grizzly bear monitoring study and does not appear to have cubs this year. She has been located below Morrell Mountain over to Shanley Creek and Cottonwood Creek. "Icel" is a female sub-adult that has been localized in the Woodworth and Cottonwood Creek area and was last seen with a

male grizzly. "Portman" is now considered to be an adult because she came out of the den with at least one cub. She has been located around the Monture Creek and Cottonwood Creek areas.

"Sisco," a management male from last season that was trapped, collared and relocated up to the north end of the Great Bear Wilderness by Hungry Horse Reservoir has not been detected this spring by anyone using radio telemetry.

In June and July, Jamie Jonkel and his crew will be trapping grizzly bears in the Blackfoot valley for research in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE). More information related to the grizzly bear population monitoring study is available on the MFWP website. <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/grizzlyBear/monitoring.html>

Earlier this spring, east of Ovando there was an incident with grizzlies getting into a grain shed. Traps were set that same night but no bears returned to the site.

West of Lincoln there was a grizzly bear that got into two chicken coops and a bee yard. The homeowners are participating in an electric fence incentive program to install a permanent electric fence to deter bears. MFWP set up a temporary electric fence while the permanent fence was being constructed. East of Lincoln a grizzly bear was reported feeding on clover and grass in a front yard and tipping over a barbeque. Wardens responded but the bear had moved on. Bears are attracted to lawns for green grass, clover and dandelions. While grazing they often discover that some homesites also have garbage, BBQ, fruit trees, bird feeders, livestock grains and pet food available. Please contain your attractants in a building or containers that will be resistant to bears.

ELECTRIC FENCE COST SHARE PROGRAM

Contact Jamie Jonkel 544-1447 if you would like to talk about cost share programs to install electric fence around home sites, livestock holding pens (chickens, pigs, goats, sheep, bee yards) or fruit orchards, gardens and other bear sites that might attract bears or other wildlife. More information is available at www.missoulabears.org

BLACK BEAR ACTIVITY

East of Salmon Lake there have been problems with black bears getting into garbage and being up on residents porches. MFWP has had a trap set to catch one bear in particular that has become comfortable around people but no bears have been captured. MFWP will continue to monitor the situation.

There has been a female black bear with two yearlings as well as a lone male black bear hanging around the Double Arrow area getting into garbage/bird feeders. The Forest Service responded to a black bear near Seeley Lake at Big Larch campground. The bear eventually climbed down from a tree and moved on. This same bear has been finding uncontained garbage on the north side of Seeley Lake. In the Potomac area there have been reports of black bears getting into garbage/bird feeders.

We have heard from several people now that some black bears were relocated up Marcum Mountain. To the best of our knowledge we are not aware of any bear relocations in that area this season. Black bear and grizzly bear relocation information is available on the MFWP website. <http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/livingWithWildlife/relocation/default.html>

ELECTRIC FENCE STUDY

During the summer of 2015, a small wildlife study will be conducted in the Blackfoot Valley. Brittani Johnson, a graduate student of Montana State University, is studying the effects that permanent electric fence has on the movement patterns of grizzly and black bears and whether or not the miles of electric fence in the valley will hinder these animals from gaining access to bears and whether or not the miles of electric fence in the valley will hinder these animals from gaining access to portions of the landscape. The study will take place over the course of two years, and there are two parts to the study.

The first part, or Study A, is an experiment where Brittani will be building and testing two different designs of electric fence:

1) The first design is a style of three-wire electric boundary fence that was recently approved by the state legislature. It is hypothesized that this style of new boundary fence will allow bears passage under the fence if only the top hot wire is hot (42"). If this fence proves to actually hinder wildlife passage when the top wire is hot it may have impacts on fence design criteria for conservation easements across the west.

2) The second style is a three-wire hot/ground/hot fence that is much closer to the ground. It is hypothesized that this style when turned on, will actually prevent bears from entering. The importance of testing this fence design is that at this time the only electric fences officially approved for deterring bears from backcountry camps, sheep bedding grounds and other attractant sites is a 5 to 7 wiper hot ground system. Fences that are less than five wires at this time cannot receive funding from the NRCS, Defenders of Wildlife and other groups. We are hoping to prove scientifically that three wire fences, with two hot wires and one ground wire, that is just above knee height will stop bears and will be appropriate for funding in certain situations - - - such as quickly electrifying an large orchard, crop field or temporary livestock enclosure. We are hoping to prove that three-wire electric fences are applicable for deterring bears so as to get funding for the rapid deployment three wire electric fence (a new tool in the basket) that we were hoping to put around alfalfa and seed crop fields near home-sites when bears are getting too close. The overall goal is to find a fence design that when turned on, hinders bear movement into sensitive areas such as calving pastures, crop fields, and other areas that bears are not wanted at certain times of the year, but when turned off it allows the bear to go through the fence and gain access to the landscape.

Each electric fence design involves baiting the small enclosures with scent lure, and observing through trail cameras the behavior of any bear that comes to the site and tries to go through the fence. Every three days the fences will be turned on and off. When the fence is off, the bear will penetrate the fence and receive a reward from a scent lure placed inside the fence. The bear will hopefully then come back and try to penetrate the fence when it is electrified and receive a shock. Brittani will observe if the

bear comes back to the fence after being shocked and tries to penetrate the fence again or if the bear never comes back because of the negative experience of being shocked. The overall goal is to find one fence design that when turned on, hinders bear movement into sensitive areas such as calving pastures, crop fields, and other areas that bears are not wanted at certain times of the year, but when turned off it allows the bear to go through the fence and gain access to the landscape. And to test a second design, that was recently approved by the legislature for boundary fence, that will hopefully allow free passage of wildlife across the landscape when only the top wire is electrified.

The second part of the study, or Study B, is a presence/absence study of all grizzly and black bears in the Blackfoot Valley. Throughout the course of the two year study, 60 trail cameras will be placed at random points in the valley to determine where these animals are and where they are not. At the end of the study, these data will be used to create a map of grizzly and black bear occupancy throughout the valley, and whether or not these bears are already hindered by areas that are heavily fenced with electric fence and have been avoiding those areas because of difficulty of passage.



This is a photo of one of the electric fences set up for the study. Photo by Brittani Johnson.

For more information please call Jamie Jonkel 544-1447.

LIVESTOCK CARCASS PICK-UP PROGRAM

The Blackfoot Challenge's Livestock Carcass Pick Up and Removal Program ran from mid-February through mid-May. If you have a carcass before that program starts up again in mid-February 2016, please call Jamie Jonkel 544-1447 and/or Eric Graham 240-3132.