

THE BLACKFOOT WATERSHED WOLF AND BEAR ACTIVITY REPORT FALL 2020/SPRING & SUMMER 2021

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) Region 2 (R2) and the Blackfoot Challenge (BC) produce this wolf and bear activity report. These reports are typically compiled during our range rider season in the spring, summer and fall. This report covers activity from Fall of 2020 through June 2021.

The Blackfoot Challenge Range Rider Program was established in 2008 and the 14th season is underway. Sigrid Olson, Jordan Mannix and Vicki Pocha are range riding for the Challenge again this year. The Blackfoot Challenge Carcass Pick Up Program has been ongoing since 2004. We will continue to work with ranches throughout the Blackfoot watershed to monitor carnivore activity, assist with monitoring livestock, communicate with local ranchers and lessees, and continue operating the livestock carcass removal program. Thanks again to the ranchers, landowners, partners and funders that make these programs possible. If you have any questions about the Blackfoot Challenge wildlife committee or the range rider program call the **Wildlife Program Coordinator Eric Graham (406) 240-3132.**

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR REPORTING WOLF, BEAR AND LION ACTIVITY:

Jamie Jonkel – FWP Bear Management Specialist (406) 544-1447
Eli Hampson---FWP Bear/Lion Management Technician (406) 210-3213
Eric Graham – Blackfoot Challenge Wildlife Coordinator (406) 240-3132
Tyler Parks – FWP Wolf Management Specialist (406) 531-4454
Scott Eggeman – FWP Blackfoot Area Wildlife Biologist (406) 542-5542
Rory Trimbo—FWP Deer Lodge Bear Management Technician (406) 465-9343

If you have a suspected livestock-predation, please notify **USDA Wildlife Services (WS)** as soon as possible to determine the cause of death. Regarding reimbursement for losses through the **Livestock Loss Board**: If you suspect a livestock loss due to mountain lion/wolf/grizzly bear predation, you can request an investigation to see if the losses were due to a confirmed or probable depredation. The Livestock Loss Board can pay only for confirmed or probable losses as determined by USDA-Wildlife Services (WS).

WS Powell County - Bart Smith (406) 660-0368
WS Missoula County - Ted North (406) 274-4856
WS Lewis & Clark County - John Meidtke (406) 855-8429
Western Montana District Supervisor- Kraig Glazier (406) 458-0106
Department of Livestock - Livestock Loss Board (406) 444-5609

And for any other wildlife-related matters needing the attention of a game warden contact:

Ezra Schwalm– FWP Lincoln Game Warden (406) 438-3666
Sydney Young – FWP Seeley Lake Game Warden (406) 210-1299

BLACKFOOT VALLEY WOLF PACKS:

Montana FWP uses the improved Patch Occupancy Model (iPOM) to estimate Montana's wolf population and track trends. The transition to iPOM means that minimum pack counts are no longer intensely collected. Therefore, the pack structure for most of the packs below is unknown. The rough numbers below are from public reports and summer trapping/scouting efforts. Details on iPOM can be found in the Annual Wolf Reports at the FWP wolf web page (<https://fwp.mt.gov/conservation/wildlife-management/birds>).

ARRASTRA CREEK PACK

Pack Structure: 3 to 4 adults & ~6 pups

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report:

Nothing new to report.

AVON PACK

Pack Structure: ~4

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: Nothing new to report.

BELMONT PACK

Pack Structure: ~4

Collared Wolf: Yes

Pack Report: This pack is thought to spend time on the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe reservation. FWP trapped and radio-collared the breeding male on June 24.

BONNER MOUNTAIN PACK

Pack Structure: 6+ Adults

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: Nothing new to report.

BUGLE MOUNTAIN PACK

Backcountry

CHAMBERLAIN PACK

Pack Structure: 5

Collared Wolf: Yes (1)

Pack Report: WS removed two wolves in response to livestock depredations in summer 2021.

CONGER POINT PACK

Backcountry

HARDSCRABBLE

Pack Structure: 2

Collared Wolf: No
Pack Report: Nothing new to report.

HOODOO PACK

Pack Structure: 4+ adults

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: Wildlife Services confirmed two calf depredations and one injured calf as of April 2021. A yearling calf was confirmed to be killed by wolves. One wolf was shot while in the act of consuming a calf.

HUMBUG PACK

Pack Structure: 4+ Adults

Collared Wolf: Yes (3)

Pack Report: FWP trapped and radio-collared two yearling male wolves on June 5 and June 8.

INEZ PACK

Pack Structure: 3 Adults

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: Nothing new to report.

LANDERS FORK PACK

Pack Structure: Unknown

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: Nothing new to report.

MORRELL MOUNTAIN PACK

Pack Structure: ~3 Adults

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: Nothing new to report.

SEELEY LAKE PACK

Pack Structure: ~4 or more Adults

Collared Wolf: No

Pack Report: Nothing new to report.

SUNFLOWER PACK

Pack Structure: 3

Collared Wolf: No

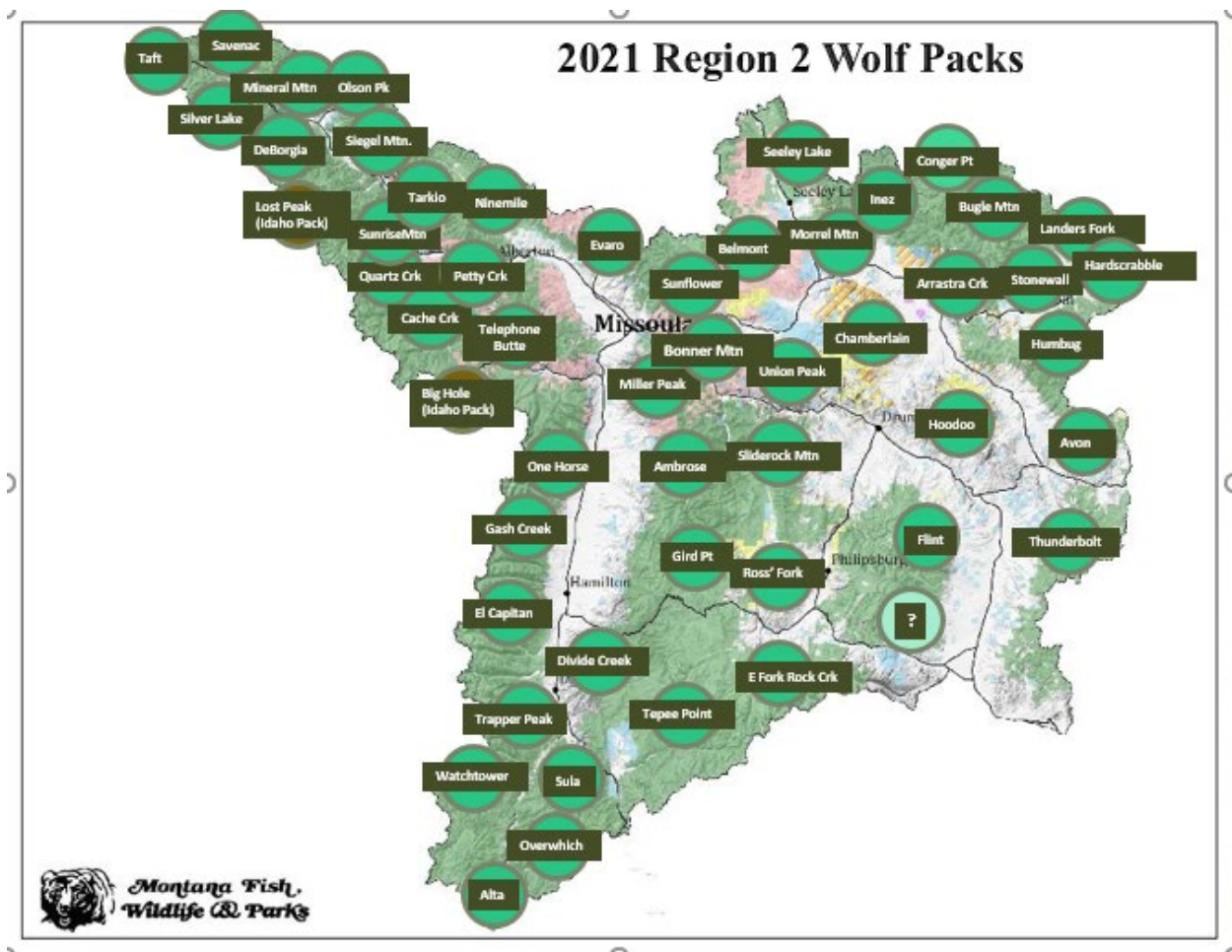
Pack Report: Nothing new to report.

UNION PEAK PACK

Pack Structure: ~4+ Adults

Collared Wolf: Yes (1)

Pack Report: Nothing new to report.



WOLF ACTIVITY Summary

2020:

During 2020, in the Blackfoot Valley Wildlife Services (WS) confirmed 13 calves and 1 ewe that were killed by wolves. Two additional calves were documented as probable wolf kills. The Belmont, Chamberlain, Hardscrabble, Hoodoo, and Union Peak wolf packs were involved in the depredations. WS radio collared four wolves and lethally removed 18 wolves in response to confirmed wolf depredations. To assist with wolves around livestock FWP collared eight wolves in Region 2 in 2020, two of which were in the Blackfoot Valley.

2021:

Thus far in 2021, Wildlife Services confirmed ~16+ calves and 1 yearling calf that were killed by wolves. The Chamberlain and Hoodoo wolf packs were involved in the depredations. Both packs are chronically depredating packs. WS removed two wolves from the Chamberlain pack in

response to the depredations. FWP collared 3 wolves in the Blackfoot Valley and 6 wolves in R2 to help monitor wolves around livestock and assist with depredation events.



A yearling male wolf collared out of the Humbug pack by FWP. The wolf in the picture is recovering from being immobilized and is wearing a new radio collar. Photo by Tyler Parks.

UPDATES REGARDING 2021 GRIZZLY BEAR ACTIVITY IN THE BLACKFOOT VALLEY:

This spring of 2021 there were a handful of reports of grizzly bear activity. The first tracks and visual occurred on March 10th SE of Helmville, where a grizzly was feeding on a road-killed elk carcass along Highway 141. After the 10th and through the rest of the month tracks were reported in the Clearwater Drainage, Monture Creek area, the Blackfoot River Bottoms and elsewhere. The first report of female with a sub adult was on March 27th near Placid Lake and the second report of the years for a female with yearlings north of Ovando was on April 8th. Since that time, FWP has received reports of grizzly activity throughout the Blackfoot and Clearwater Drainages. The first collared grizzly in the Blackfoot Valley to emerge from his den,

a male known as “Lingenpolter”, was on March 27th and the collared bears “Ursa” and “Sue” emerged in late April. The first report from a grizzly near cattle was on March 29th when a grizzly was observed along the Blackfoot River East of Ovando in an area with newborn calves. The ranch moved the cow-calf group out of the river bottoms and the bear moved on.



Reports of grizzly bear activity by local residents are appreciated. Photo by Norma Hughes.

- The first grizzly conflict occurred on 4/8/21 with WS confirming that a grizzly killed a yearling cow NE of Avon, MT. The next day it was discovered that the same bear was also accessing dog food at an adjacent ranch. Traps were set but no bear was captured.
- On 4/19/20 the radio collared grizzly bear known as “Lingenpolter” did access two chicken coops on the outskirts of Drummond and traps were set. FWP has approached the owners of the chickens to see if they might be interested in the electric fence incentive program. On May 3rd “Lingenpolter” was able to cross Interstate 90 near Bear Mouth Hot Springs and has since moved south of Interstate 90 and has spent time in the John Long Range, the Flint Creek Range and has been on the south end of the Sapphire Range in the East Fork of the Bitterroot Valley. FWP is monitoring the bear’s movements.
- On 5/6/21, after a series of observations of a grizzly feeding in a bone yard within a calving ground near Avon, an adult grizzly was pre-emptively captured. The USFWS agreed to allow the grizzly, now known as “Ophir,” to be trapped and relocated because of the bear’s proximity to the ranch calving ground after the ranch agreed to remove all the carcasses from the dead pit and become involved with the Blackfoot Challenge’s Carcass Pick Up Program. The 400-pound male was relocated to the Huckleberry Pass area NW of Lincoln, MT. The bear moved north and was last located in the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

- On May 22nd two yearling steers were killed by a grizzly on the same Avon Ranch. Wildlife Services set traps and an adult male grizzly was captured on 5/24/21. This grizzly was suspected to be involved with additional calf and yearling depredations in April and after consultation with the USFWS the 500-pound male was destroyed. The hide and skull, after tanning and cleaning, will be on display and the Lolo Pass Visitor's Center.
- On 5/28/21 two grizzlies accessed a chicken coop north of Ovando. FWP and BC supplied the ranch with electric fencing materials and the bears moved on.
- On June 1st Wildlife Services set traps for a grizzly that killed several calves at a ranch near Helmville. No bear was captured.
- On 6/8/21 Wildlife Services verified that a grizzly killed a yearling on a ranch near Helmville in the Nevada Creek area. Traps were set, and a black bear was captured on the third day. The black bear was released at site.
- On June 10th two grizzlies accessed a grain shed. Although the site was protected by electric fence and an electrified drive over mat the bears were able to gain access. The electrified mat had grounded out and the bears were able to cross over without receiving a shock.
- On 6/12/21 a grizzly bear was observed investigating dumpsters and grease bins at two restaurants in Seeley Lake. FWP is working with both businesses on containing the sites.

Collared Grizzly Bears 2020/2021

Here is a quick summary of our radio collared grizzlies:

- On April 10th during the spring radio-tracking flight it was discovered that the research female grizzly bear "Silver Queen" had dropped her collar northwest of Silver King Mountain. She had been collared since July 2018. She was originally captured northeast of Lincoln and was observed last fall with her yearling in the headwaters of the Landers Fork of the Blackfoot. This bear spent most of her time ranging the south end of the Scapegoat Wilderness between the Landers Fork and McDonald Pass. "Silver Queen" is an older 245-pound adult female.
- "Walking Bear", a 535-pound adult male, recaptured last July 2018, was observed from the air in April and July 2020. His den site was not determined this spring, but in 2018 and 2019 he denned in Arrastra Creek. The collar was malfunctioning, but eventually dropped and was located on 5/5/21 NE of Lincoln in the headwaters of Keep Cool Creek. The collar will be retrieved in the near future and we are looking forward to seeing where he traveled. In year's past he spent most of his time ranging the river bottoms around the Aunt Molly Wildlife Management Area, the Blackfoot Canyon and the mountains north and south of Lincoln, MT, and made two tremendous/fast paced trips from the Blackfoot Valley over the top of the Mission Mountains to visit the corn fields around Ronan, MT.
- On June 10th the female grizzly bear "Ursa," and her two yearlings, were in Alice Creek in the headwaters of the Blackfoot River near the Continental Divide. "Ursa" was captured

in 2019 on August 26th northeast of Lincoln, MT in the Landers Fork. She spends most of her time ranging the south end of the Scapegoat Wilderness between the Landers Fork and McDonald Pass. She denned in the headwaters of Falls Creek Northeast of Lincoln and emerged from her den in mid-April 2021. “Ursa” was last located and observed with her two sub adults on 5/5/21 in the headwaters of the Landers Fork. “Ursa” is an older 250-pound adult female.

- As mentioned below, on 5/6/20, Wildlife Services and FWP set several traps at a calf depredation near Helmville, MT and recaptured the research grizzly known as “Landers”. Landers was originally captured in 2019 in the headwaters of the Landers Fork North of Lincoln Montana. It was difficult to determine if “Landers” was involved in the calf depredation, so he was recollared and relocated on May 8th to Glacier National Park. He spent the summer in Glacier National Park and dropped his collar near the end of July five miles East of Duck Lake on Squaw Flat on the Blackfoot Indian Reservation along the NF of the Milk River not far from the Canadian Border.
- On 5/6/20, Wildlife Services and FWP set several traps at a calf depredation near Helmville, MT and captured a 680-pound adult male grizzly. It was difficult to determine if this new bear, now known as “Wales”, was involved in the calf depredation, so he was collared and relocated on May 8th to the Whitefish Range West of Glacier national Park. “Wales” dropped his collar in late June north of the Canadian Border and east of Waterton Park along the Belly River.



Photos of “Wales” by Lennie Phillips.

- On 6/7/20 the Flathead Indian Reservation agreed to have a Blackfoot Reservation grizzly relocated to the Upper Jocko Valley. The collared female grizzly, known as “Sue”, spent time in and around the Swan-Clearwater Divide, Bob Marshall Wilderness and Scapegoat Wilderness. She denned in the headwaters of Cabin Creek on the Scape Plateau. “Sue” has no management history and was captured and relocated to get her away from some homesites near East Glacier where her chances of survival were limited. In mid-April 2021 she emerged from her den and made a quick trip back to the Choteau area. But returned to the Blackfoot Valley in early June. She was located on June 14th near the Jocko Lakes on the south end of the Mission Range.
- On 8/5/20 a sub adult grizzly, known as “Trapper”, was re-captured for research purposes in the headwaters of Boles Creek West of Placid Lake. The young bear was not collared and was released at site. “Trapper” was originally handled in the late fall of

2018. He was captured in a leghold trap set for coyotes. To free the cub a helicopter was used to haze the cub's mother and siblings. The cub was darted, the trap removed and allowed to rejoin his mother and siblings.

- On 9/4/20 a young adult male grizzly, "Tipper-not", was captured at a private resort north of Seeley Lake. As mentioned below, at the time of capture there was no way to verify if "Tipper-not" was involved but was relocated to the Whitefish Range NW of Eureka, MT as a pre-emptive measure. He denned in Canada just north of Frozen Lake in the Whitefish Range and emerged from his den in mid-April 2021. On June 11th he was recaptured in Trego, MT after traps were set for a grizzly accessing uncontained garbage in a residential area. It appeared "Tipper-not" was one of several bears in the area and he was relocated to the Spotted Bear River on the south end of the Bob Marshall Wilderness.
- And as mentioned above, on October 21st, 2020 young adult male grizzly "Lingenpolter" was captured West of Garrison Junction and relocated near Huckleberry Pass Northwest of Lincoln, MT. This spring, 2021, he emerged from his den and returned to the Drummond area where he did get into several chicken coops. He eventually crossed Interstate 90 and is slowly traveling south.
- And as mentioned above on 5/6/21, after a series of observations of a grizzly feeding in a bone yard within a calving ground near Avon, an adult grizzly was pre-emptively captured. The USFSW agreed to allow the grizzly, now known as "Ophir," to be trapped and relocated because of the bear's proximity to the ranch calving ground after the ranch agreed to remove all the carcasses from the dead pit and become involved with the Blackfoot Challenge's Carcass Pick Up Program. The 400-pound male was relocated to the Huckleberry Pass area NW of Lincoln, MT. The bear moved north and was last located in the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

2020 Grizzly Bear Summary

Last year, in 2020, the Blackfoot Valley had an exceptional year of berry production, especially in the Seeley Lake area. As a result, FWP R2 started fielding lots of reports of both black bears and grizzly bears feeding on choke cherry, service berry and hawthorn in the foot hill regions, along stream bottoms and in the riparian zones along the Blackfoot river. The huckleberry production around the Seeley Lake area was the best crop in years and locals were picking huckleberries in the higher elevations until early fall. As a result, more bears than usual moved into the area to feed. Comparatively, huckleberry production was much poorer on the Flathead Indian Reservation West of the Missions and the Swan Valley North of the Swan/Clearwater Divide. Starting in late June, both grizzly and black bear activity increased in and around the community of Seeley Lake and some of these bears started feeding on garbage and other residential attractants.

Grizzly activity in the central Basin of the Blackfoot around Ovando, Helmville and Lincoln was constant. And for the first time in many years, there was more activity on the south end of the Nevada Valley, especially during breeding season in May and June. Through the spring and summer there were abundant reports and observations of grizzlies feeding in crops, traveling

near homesites and towns and feeding on natural foods on private lands. But compared to 2019 and 2018 there was a reduction in the number of conflicts in the Blackfoot Basin.

2020 Livestock depredations/one grizzly euthanized and two bears relocated:

In 2020, the Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services and FWP R2 responded to 7 verified livestock depredation incidents and a handful of additional calls about livestock (where cause of death or injury was natural, or not determined). Below is a synopsis of each of the incidents and management actions that occurred in the Blackfoot Valley:

- On March 28th Wildlife Services investigated wounds on a newborn calf at a ranch east of Ovando, MT, and determined that the injury was not grizzly-related.
- Between April 10th and 12th a lone grizzly killed and cached three calves, and may have killed a fourth, in a pasture bordering a riparian area on the same ranch mentioned above. Due to cold weather and snow it was not feasible to re-locate the cow calf herd. On April 13th Wildlife Services captured a 500-pound adult male. After consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in accordance with Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee guidelines, it was decided that because multiple calves had been killed by this individual bear it would be euthanized. The hide and skull were salvaged and are now part of an exhibit at the Lewis and Clark's Travelers Rest in Lolo, MT.



- On 5/6/20, Wildlife Services responded to a calf being killed near Helmville, MT. Remote cameras at site indicated that multiple grizzlies and wolves were frequenting the area. It was difficult to determine if the depredation was wolf or grizzly-related. Wildlife Services, with the assistance of FWP, set two culvert traps and one snare. On 5/7/20 two grizzlies, a 680-pound adult male and a sub adult male were captured at site. A third bear, most likely another sub adult, was observed but not captured. Due to the number of bears at site and the inability to determine which of the three bears might have been involved both bears were relocated. The large adult male, now known as "Wales" was

collared and relocated to the Whitefish Range west of Glacier National Park. The second grizzly, a research bear known as “Landers”, originally captured in 2019 during a research trapping effort north of Lincoln, MT was recollared and relocated to Glacier National Park. Both bears remained in the Glacier area and both bears ended up dropping their collars later in the summer near the Canadian Border.

- On 5/11/20 Wildlife Services set two culvert traps for a grizzly that killed a calf near Helmsville. No bears were captured.
- A calf was killed on 5/16/20 in an incident that involved a grizzly bear mortality North of Lubrecht Experimental Forest. But this case is under investigation by the USFWS and cannot be discussed at this time.
- On 6/22/20 Wildlife Services responded to a report of a wounded calf in Alice Creek East of Lincoln. The wounds were consistent with a grizzly, but no traps were set as the calf had been brought in from the range and the wounds were older. The calf later died, and the ranch was reimbursed.
- On 7/16/20 Wildlife Services investigated a sheep depredation near Helmsville. Due to lack of evidence the species of bear was not determined. Traps were set but no bears were captured.
- On 8/9/20 Wildlife Services set a snare for a grizzly involved in a calf depredation North of Drummond, MT. Traps were set but no bears were captured.
- During roundup, the first week of September, two calves were discovered in the Arrastra Creek area with older bite wounds. Wildlife Services looked at photos of the wounds and determined the injuries were consistent with a large bear.
- On 10/23/20 Wildlife Services responded to a grizzly depredation on an adult cow in the Helmsville area. A culvert trap was set but closed by the ranch the next day after a large snowstorm. Wildlife Services was unable to get into the site after the storm but did re-set later, but by then the bear had moved on.
- Wildlife Services investigated additional carcasses where it was determined the livestock had died of natural causes and were scavenged by grizzlies.

Agricultural and Residential-related conflicts in the Blackfoot Valley (2020):

In mid-April there were several incidents of grizzlies in proximity to ranch compounds. Several of these incidents were associated with the Blackfoot Challenge’s livestock carcasses pick up program. The livestock carcasses were picked up as soon as the reports came in. The Blackfoot Challenge is recommending that after March all carcasses set aside for pickup be stored away from ranch premises.

- During the month of May, bear breeding season, multiple grizzlies were observed in proximity to Helmsville, MT. Residents observed and photographed several lone grizzlies, several grizzly pairs and at least one family group. On 5/11/20 traps were set for a large adult male grizzly that came into a ranch compound to feed on a cow carcass. The carcass was removed immediately but the bear continued to visit the ranch to feed on

the molasses-based livestock feed known as “Crystalx.” Electric fence was erected around the product. No bears were captured.

- On multiple occasions a lone grizzly and a female with yearlings accessed uncontained grain, pet food and damaged a motorcycle at a ranch east of Ovando, MT. Traps were set on 7/15/20, but no bears were captured.
- There were several incidents involving a single sub adult grizzly investigating home sights between Ovando and Clearwater Junction. In October the bear accessed a freezer full of meat in an open garage and pulled out a bag of grain. Electric fence and an electric drive over mat were set up around the site, but the bear returned and entered another building. A trap was set on 10/15/20 but no bear was captured.
- A grizzly and handful of black bears got into uncontained garbage dumpsters and garbage cans South of Lincoln in the in the Poorman Creek area. FWP is working with the landowners and the Lincoln Refuse District to resolve the situation.
- Also, in late October a lone grizzly tipped over a BBQ, entered an open barn, got into cat food on a porch and broke into a chicken coop at three different residences in the Woodworth area. Electric fence and electronic alarms were placed, and the bear did not come back.

Campground, residential and business-related conflicts in the Clearwater Valley (2020):

As mentioned above more bears than usual inhabited the Seeley Lake area due to bountiful huckleberries, service berries, choke cherries and hawthorn. FWP R2 estimates that upwards of seven to ten lone grizzlies and at least four different grizzly bear family groups, along with multiple black bears, spent a good portion of the summer and fall in the foothills around town. Most of the residential-related conflicts in and around town and at the various campgrounds can be attributed to approximately 15 different black bears and two or three grizzlies that learned to associate Seeley Lake area with uncontained garbage.

- Starting in late June, several different grizzlies began seeking garbage. Some of the first reported activity occurred in the Big Sky and Emerald Lake areas near the dump and as summer progressed the bears began tipping bear-resistant garbage cans at various private campgrounds, USFS campgrounds, the Seeley Lake Ranger Station and various businesses and summer cabins and private homes. It was quickly discovered that the bear-resistant dumpsters were being locked incorrectly or were not being locked at all. FWP R2 began working with the USFS, the local community and Republic Services and traps were set on multiple occasions.
- “Bear jams”, due to grizzly bears feeding on road-side huckleberries, resulted in the Missoula County Sherriff’s Department and FWP Game Wardens being called in to assist with traffic control along Highway 83.
- On 9/4/20 the young adult male grizzly, “Tipper-not”, was captured at a private resort north of Seeley Lake. At the time of capture there was no way to verify if “Tipper-not” was involved. For pre-emptive reasons, the bear was relocated to the Whitefish Range

NW of Eureka, MT. The very night after being captured and relocated a grizzly was videoed tipping dumpsters at other sites.

- Issues continued into the fall (there were more than 50 incidents) and FWP continues to work with the community, the USFS and the sanitation company to resolve the situation.



Grizzly bear unable to access garbage after FWP and BC set up a temporary electric fence around this site near Seeley Lake.

2020 Grizzly Bear activity and conflicts elsewhere in Region 2:

Grizzly bears are re-colonizing historic ranges South of the Blackfoot Drainage and elsewhere in Region 2. Over the last ten years grizzly activity has been verified in the Canyon Creek and Helena area, Little Blackfoot Valley, Boulder Mountain Range, Deer Lodge Valley and in the Butte and Georgetown Lake areas. Grizzly bears have also been observed in the Rock Creek Drainage, Sapphire Mountains and into the Big Hole Valley area. Grizzly bears are also appearing in the Missoula Basin and Lower Clark Fork Basin and Bitterroot Valley areas. Last year in 2020 there were a handful of conflicts reported in other areas:

- On June 5th, 2020 an unmarked female grizzly and her sub adults investigated a chicken coop in the lower Ninemile Valley West of Huson, MT. The bear moved on. FWP is working with the family on an electric fence.
- On October 2nd, 2020 an unmarked young adult male grizzly was photographed at a residence feeding at a fruit tree and eating bird seed in Lolo, MT. A few days earlier a bow hunter reported encountering the same grizzly at close range near St Joseph Peak,

in the Bitterroot Range. The bear moved on and FWP is working with the family and the community of Lolo on containing garbage and other residential attractants.

- A grizzly bear was photographed south of Interstate 90 in the Jens area on 10/15/20. The bear accessed a bird feeder and moved on.
- On October 21st, 2020 a young adult male grizzly got into uncontained grain, rotten bread and other types of pig and chicken feed stored out in the open at a ranch West of Garrison Junction. The bear returned the next night and traps were set. On 10/23/20 an young adult male, known as “Lingenpolter”, was captured and relocated near Huckleberry Pass Northwest of Lincoln, MT.
- On October 24th a lone grizzly broke into a chicken coop on the outskirts of Missoula in Butler Creek. The bear moved on the next day but FWP continued to field reports of tracks at various sites in the hills North of town until early December.

2020 Grizzly Bear Mortalities:

In 2020 there were confirmed grizzly bear mortalities:

- As mentioned above, on April 13th Wildlife Services captured a 500-pound adult male. After consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in accordance with Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee guidelines, it was decided, that because multiple calves had been killed by this individual bear, it would be euthanized.
- On 5/3/20 a sub adult male was killed west of Lincoln, MT. But this incident is under investigation and cannot be discussed at this time.
- On 5/16/20 an adult male, 660 pounds, was killed North of Lubrecht Experimental Forest. But this incident is under investigation by the USFWS and cannot be discussed at this time.
- On 7/10/20 FWP received multiple reports of a grizzly struck by a vehicle on Highway 200 near the North Fork of the Blackfoot River. FWP and the USFS responded but no carcass was located. It appeared that the carcass had been collected by an unknown individual. From blood and drag marks it appeared that the bear had indeed died but was not verified as being grizzly and could very well have been a black bear. For more information on the laws pertaining to salvaging road-kill check out this website:

http://fwp.mt.gov/news/newsReleases/hunting/nr_2062.html#:~:text=Montana%20wildlife%20officials%20said%20permits,food%20became%20effective%20in%20October.&text=The%20permit%20must%20be%20completed%20within%2024%20hours%20of%20salvage.

BLACK BEAR AND MOUNTAIN LION ACTIVITY:

2020

Last fall, black bear conflicts in the Potomac Valley and Seeley Lake were constant. In Seeley Lake, MT, several lone black bears were trapped and relocated in response to conflicts. Three black bears were euthanized. Two of these bears were accessing garbage at the Big Larch Campground and were destroyed at site. The other black bear was breaking into campers at

Emerald Lake and was destroyed after becoming trapped inside a cargo trailer. Multiple other black bears were reported accessing uncontained garbage, bird seed, dog food, chicken feed and other residential attractants. Seeley Lake has an extreme issue with uncontained attractants and last fall black bears were observed accessing garbage and other attractants on a nightly basis.

There was an incident at a ranch NW of Helmville involving a black bear that had damaged a covered septic tank. The bear climbed a power pole and was electrocuted. The body of the bear was discovered the next morning blocking the pathway near the front door. At first it was not obvious as to what had occurred, and the bear was first reported to be a grizzly bear.

As in previous years in Potomac, there was an extreme situation involving bears feeding on residential garbage. At the ends of county roads, multiple homes are required to bring garbage cans to certain sites for garbage service. Most of these cans are left out all week and as a result, resident black bears are obtaining garbage on a nightly basis. Since 2015, FWP has been working with the community to resolve the situation, but with very little progress. In addition, there were multiple incidents of both lions and bears killing small livestock and fowl in 2020. Wildlife Services and FWP responded on multiple occasions.

Last summer FWP fielded multiple reports of lions throughout the Blackfoot and Clearwater Valleys. Similar, to year's past, most of the reports come from the communities of Potomac, Seeley Lake and Lincoln. These three communities are known for lion activity due to prime habitat and abundant deer. FWP also responded to a handful of lions in the Nine-mile Prairie area that were near camp sites. In 2020 four juvenile mountain lions, that were frequenting the community of Seeley Lake, were lethally removed.

2021

Black bear activity has been constant and it looks like we are in for a busy summer. FWP has fielded multiple reports of black bears getting into attractants around Seeley Lake. FWP, USFS and Missoula County Sherriff's Department, in conjunction with the Clearwater Resource Council, Blackfoot Challenge and other groups will be working with the community of Seeley Lake to reduce conflicts with black bears and lions.

In January, February and March, FWP fielded reports of lion activity throughout the Blackfoot and Clearwater Valleys. There were a handful of incidents where lions were in proximity to home sites. FWP was called out to assist a trapper who had attempted to free a trapped mountain lion from a wolf trap. While attempting to release the lion from the trap the lion escaped with the neck pole still attached. The lion was successfully captured, and the pole was removed. FWP also responded to a moose calf that had been captured in a neck snare. FWP responded but the moose was no longer at site.

Report black bear and mountain lion activity and incidents as quickly as possible to Eli Hampson (406-210-3213), Jamie Jonkel (406-544-1447), or Scott Eggeman (406-531-6759).

For detailed information on black bear and lion activity in and around Region 2 check out these two sites:

<http://missoulabears.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/missoulabears/>

RESEARCH TRAPPING

For more information related to the grizzly bear population monitoring go to:

<http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/management/grizzlyBear/monitoring.html>

GRIZZLY BEAR ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMENDATIONS

Grizzly bear management in Montana is complex. While they are at recovery levels in the Greater Yellowstone (GYE) and Norther Continental Divide Ecosystems (NCDE), they have yet to reach recovery goals in the Bitterroot and Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Zones. In places where bear numbers are on the rise, they are dispersing into places they haven't been for decades, sometimes causing conflicts with people and communities. In 2019 the Governor of Montana appointed members to the Grizzly Bear Advisory Council.

The Grizzly Bear Advisory Council was comprised of a broad cross section of Montanans with a diversity of views on grizzly bear management, conservation, and recovery. The Council was been tasked with considering broad strategic objectives, such as:

- Maintaining and enhancing human safety
- Ensuring a healthy and sustainable grizzly bear population
- Improving timely and effective response to conflicts involving grizzly bears
- Engaging all partners in grizzly-related outreach and conflict prevention
- Improving intergovernmental, interagency, and tribal coordination

The council worked diligently and in September 2020 the council issued its final recommendations. For more information go to:

<https://fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/grizzly-bear-advisory-council>

LIVESTOCK CARCASS PICK UP PROGRAM:

The Blackfoot Challenge's Livestock Carcass Pick Up and Removal Program runs during calving season from mid-February through mid-May. Thereafter, carcasses in the Blackfoot Valley are picked up by FWP or Blackfoot Challenge employees. In the last few years there have been incidents of grizzly bears venturing into ranch compounds to retrieve carcasses left out for the carcass pickup program. Dead calves were either left on the ground or placed on hay bales within high activity areas on the ranch and bears were lured in to feed on the carcasses. As a result, the pickup protocol was re-evaluated, and it is now recommending that after March all

carcasses set aside for pickup be stored away from ranch premises. If you have a carcass for picking up, please call 544-1447 to reach Jamie Jonkel with FWP as soon as possible. **If you are unable to reach Jamie call Dan Masee at 406-793-5639 (during calving season) Barry Gordon at 406-541-1078 (outside calving season).** Or call Eric Graham with the Blackfoot Challenge at 240-3132 or Eli Hampson with FWP at 210-3213. The carcass will be taken to the compost site near Clearwater Junction to help prevent conflicts with bears and wolves. To learn more about this program, watch “Living with Carnivores: Boneyards, Bear & Wolves.” Click here: <https://vimeo.com/131528982>.

Here are our recommendations for storing livestock carcasses until they can be picked up by the Blackfoot Challenge Carcass Pickup Program:

- Due to issues with grizzlies being lured into several ranch compounds for livestock carcasses in past years, it is recommended that after April 1st, carcasses not be stored within the ranch headquarters or near cattle activity. Rather, carcasses should be stored at a minimum of 400 yards from human and livestock activity at an accessible site with good visibility. Make sure the carcasses are still convenient for carcass pickup, but at a safe site well away from human activity and cover. If possible, place carcass on top of an old hay bale. In April, if livestock die, be sure to call Dan Masee so he can prioritize his normal route pick up schedule. If needed, the ranch can also call any of the numbers mentioned above for pick up. If there is concern that a carcass will lure in bears before pick up, there is always the option of personally hauling the carcass to the Clearwater Compost site. The last thing you want to do is surprise a grizzly on the carcass.

RESIDENTIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ATTRACTANTS:

The Blackfoot Region is well known for a community-driven approach to managing and mitigating bear conflicts, and has been recognized internationally for cooperative effort and having some of the lowest numbers of grizzly conflicts in the state.

However, as mentioned above, there are a few grizzlies in the Blackfoot watershed that have developed bad habits the last few years. Therefore, it is always best to lock up all sheds and barns where garbage, grain and other attractants are stored. If you need additional alarm devices, bear spray, electric fence materials or energizers for containing carcasses or other bear attractants (grain, sweet licks, garbage, etc.) call Eric Graham or James Jonkel.

And for information on how to avoid either directly or indirectly feeding wildlife in Montana, visit:

<http://fwp.mt.gov/fishAndWildlife/livingWithWildlife/feeding/default.html>

ELECTRIFIED CATTLE GUARD TESTING PROGRAM:



A grizzly bear fleeing from a driver-over electric mat test site after receiving a shock.

ELECTRIC FENCE COST SHARE PROJECTS:

Electric fencing is an excellent way to protect livestock, fowl and contain residential attractants. Electric fence is a method of ensuring that bears or other predators that check out yard areas will not come back again. A good shock is the best way to teach bears to keep away. Contact Jamie Jonkel (544-1447) or Eric Graham (240-3132) if you would like to talk about cost share programs to install electric fence around home sites, livestock holding pens, chickens, cattle, pigs, goats, sheep, bee yards, fruit orchards, gardens and other sites that might attract bears or other wildlife. For information on electric fence and another option for cost sharing on electric fence check out this website:

<https://defenders.org/got-grizzlies>