

THE BLACKFOOT WATERSHED WOLF AND BEAR ACTIVITY REPORT 10/27/2014

Hello, this is **Eric Graham**: As we wrap up the field season, a big thanks goes out to **Molly Parks** for her 3 seasons of hard work and dedication to the Range Rider Program for the Blackfoot Challenge. Molly is pursuing a master's degree in wildlife biology looking at the effectiveness of range rider programs throughout the west. We hope to learn about other range rider programs from her studies and are always welcome to new ideas to improve our program. Seth Wilson, Molly and I will be attending a range rider rendezvous in Washington State this November.



Molly Parks using radio telemetry to locate a radio collared wolf. Photo taken by Tyler Parks.

All of the participating Blackfoot Valley ranchers have brought their cattle home from their grazing leases. This is the last wolf and bear activity report for the season to give you updated information on carnivore activity in the watershed, an end of the season report will follow. Please continue to give me a call at any time if you have questions or comments regarding wolf or bear activity. I will be working with Jamie Jonkel at MFWP for the next couple of months and hope to keep in touch with some of you through the winter as you continue to report wolf tracks, scat, howling or sightings in the Blackfoot watershed. Thanks!

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 or bear activity:

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

Liz Bradley – FWP Wolf Management Specialist (406) 865-0017

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

If you have a suspected wolf 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

On 10/14 two grizzly bears were captured north-west of Ovando following a livestock depredation confirmed by Wildlife Services (WS) on 10/7. The male grizzly was collared and relocated in a remote area in the South Fork of the Flathead. The female grizzly “Fenn” was determined to not be involved with the depredation and was released in a remote area within her home range.

In past seasons hunters have been very helpful reporting wolf and grizzly bear sign and sightings. Thanks for taking the time to call in those reports. Hunters are encouraged to carry bear spray and to keep a clean camp when hunting in bear country. Hunters should be aware that on federal/state lands and many block management areas there are mandatory food storage orders. This hunting season there have been several reports of bears coming into camps that were not following the food storage requirements.

BLACKFOOT VALLEY WOLF PACKS

ARRASTRA CREEK PACK

Pack Structure: 2-3 Adults and approximately 5 Pups

Collared Wolf: Yes

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

BELMONT PACK

Pack Structure: 3 Adults, ? pups.

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 Adults and 4 Pups

Collared Wolf: Yes (2)

Pack Report: We continue to monitor these wolves 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, 3 Pups

Collared Wolf: Yes

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

LANDERS FORK PACK

Pack Structure: 6 Adults last winter, ? pups

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: Nothing new to report.

PIERCE PACK

Pack Structure: Unknown; 6 adults in December

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 AND BLACK BEAR ACTIVITY

MFWP has received multiple reports of grizzly activity from ranchers, recreationists and hunters throughout the Blackfoot and Clearwater Drainages. Aunt Molly WMA hunters have reported the sightings of several grizzly bears in the area. There were reports of a dead elk downstream from the Aunt Molly parking access area. The carcass was removed to reduce human/bear conflicts. Grizzly bears have also been reported grazing on agricultural crops north of Ovando. In early October there were reports of a grizzly coming into a back country hunting camp. West of Nevada Lake there was several reports of grizzlies observed by bow hunters.

Grizzly Bear conflicts reported this season: a bear damaged an ATV near Helmville, and a grizzly bear killed chickens near Seeley Lake, there was a lamb depredation near Lincoln and a grizzly damaged the door on a grain silo East of Ovando. MFWP and the landowners put up an electric fence around the chicken coop and grain silo. We had a family group of grizzlies downstream from Lincoln get into bird feeders and deer blocks at one residence and a grain shed and chicken coop at another residence. MFWP set up electric fence at the one residence which shocked those bears and they have not returned. MFWP is working with the other homeowner in an effort to reduce attractants. Most recently, a grizzly was getting into an old grain bin for several nights. The attractants were removed and an electric fence was installed to teach the bear to stay away from the residence. There have been several reports of grizzlies in and around the Lincoln area. One report was due to a salt lick in back yard east of Lincoln and another report west of Lincoln was related to empty garbage cans.

There have also been a handful of black bear conflicts in and around Seeley Lake, Lincoln and Potomac.

There continues to be 3 monitoring female grizzly bears in the valley to support the ongoing population trend monitoring efforts. During the recent capture of "Fenn", we put a new GPS collar on her since her old collar was set to drop off the following day. She continues to be a long-time female on the grizzly bear monitoring study and we will continue to monitor her closely. Fenn came out of the den in 2013 with cubs but it appears that she lost both yearlings to unknown causes sometime in June. She has been located between Monture Creek and Morrell Mountain and has been sighted on the Blackfoot Clearwater game range and near Upsata Lake. "Icel" is a sub-adult that has been hanging around the Blackfoot Clearwater game range, Shanley Creek and Monture Creek. "Portman" is another sub-adult that has been

located near Shanley Creek, Monture Creek and on the Blackfoot Community Conservation Area (BCCA). Several weeks ago another grizzly bear from the Flathead Indian Reservation traveled over the Missions and has been located on several occasions around Placid Lake, Seeley Lake and the Clearwater Junction area.



This photo was taken by Bob Wiesner during the capture/handling of the female grizzly "Fenn".

Now that the rifle hunting season is upon us we want to remind hunters to be aware of bear activity. We recommend that hunters carry bear spray and remove big game carcasses from gut piles as quickly as possible to reduce the chances that bears will feed on it. If unable to haul out the meat right away hunters should hang the meat 10 feet up and 4 feet out from the reach of bears. Removing meat as quickly as possible will reduce the chances that a bear will feed on it and always be careful going back into a kill site. This is the time of year we start to have bears going for uncontained attractants and gut piles. Please contain your bear attractants by making them unavailable to bears. Take down your birdfeeders and make sure your pet food, livestock feed and garbage is in a secure structure. Contact Jamie Jonkel if you would like to talk about cost share programs to install electric fence around chicken coops and other bear attractants. If anyone is interested in electric fence or tips for containing attractants in hunting camp they

can contact Jamie Jonkel at 544-1447. Thanks for your efforts to help to reduce human bear conflicts.

LIVESTOCK CARCASS PICK-UP PROGRAM

If you have a carcass, please call Jamie Jonkel (544-1447) and/or Eric Graham (240-3132). The Blackfoot Challenge's Livestock Carcass Pick Up and Removal Program will run from mid-February through mid-May in 2015. **Any questions about the program please call: Seth Wilson, BC-Wildlife Committee Coordinator at (406) 274-0507**

If you would like information about black bears and mountain lions elsewhere in MT FWP R2 you can look at www.missoulabears.org