NOTES OF GRIZZLY BEARS AND RAVENS

March 23, 1973

I want to write a paragraph on the grizzly bears, particularly Marion locating a carcass. Perhaps the bison one where we moved in and found Marion associating with other bears. Here I would like to bring out that it is the ravens with their keen eye sight that first detect carrion. but they, as well as the coyotes, which detect it by scent, are unable to get at the meat through the heavy hide of the animals. We have radio tracked bears coming into carcasses from long distances one from as far as 18 1/2 miles. They have a very keen sense of smell but it seems improbable that they can detect a carcass from more than a few miles. Perhaps in some ways the ravens communicate to the bears that a carcass is present as the ravens need these large carnivores to tear it up so that they can get the scraps. There appears to be some form of communication between our pet raven and the wild ravens near by. Perhaps this same form of communication enables them to inform the grizzlys that there is food available.

Oct. 26, 1963
Yearlings of sow # 65 foraging for mice + ravens following them on ground to catch mice too,

Grizzly Bear Notes - May 18-19, 1974

On May 18 I left Moose at 1300 with Lance and drove through Yellowstone via Canyon to West Yellowstone. Snow still covered most of Yellowstone. Hayden Valley was still patchy with snow and very little sign of green. Spring creeprs were calling at the monad on Trout Creek. I saw no sign of grizzlies in this area but observed one set of old tracks that were possibly from a grizzly. This was just before reaching Mud Volcano. At Mud Volcanoe there was a slight green in some areas as the sedges sprouted. Buffalo were feeding in this area as well as in the area of Trout Creek. Although the sedge had a slight green appearance the old grass was still brown with no sign of new shoots. Saw muskrats in the Yellowstone River, scaup ducks, baldpate, canada geese, golden eye, no white pelicans and an osprey as usual at Otter Creek. The marmots were out. At 6:30 p.m. we spotted a sow grizzly and yearling near where the old Canyon Hotel used to be. She was digging for field mice and pocket gophers. There were signs of a considerable population of both species here. A sparrow hawk and a red-tail hawk were also hunting for these. The sow had a tag in her ear indicating that she had been previously trapped. There was still snow all around here except for some bare patches of ground. When the sow in her digging located a mouse next or escavated one, her yearling would come running and she apparently permitted him to catch and eat it.

A raven was also hopping around closeby and the yearling chased him off on several occasions. In just a very few minutes the sow dug a considerable hole apparently trying to get at a pocket gopher. At this time of year the grizzlies appear to use up more energy obtaining food than it acquires. Both animals looked in good condition and were apparently still utilizing stored energy. Sedge shoots here in a nearby seep were just turning green. I saw no other grizzlies and no sign of black bear, including tracks. On my return the next day, May 19, I saw five white pelicans at Big Game Overlook and spotted one nesting osprey in the canyon. There were elk grazing in the meadows at Norris, at elk meadows and along the Gibbon and Madison Rivers. I saw no signs of fresh winter killed elk nor any sign of grizzlies. Most of the elk carcasses would have been consumed by this time. This is still a difficult period for grizzlies to obtain food although some plants were beginning to appear including the snow bank or sage buttercup.

The apparent dispersion of grizzlies over greater areas of Yellowstone at this time of year and even beyond the borders may effect the efficiency of mating pairs getting together and thus decrease the reproductive index.