
WHY IS THIS GRIZZLY BEAR IN MY BACKYARD? MANAGING HUMAN/GRIZZLY BEAR CONFLICTS IN NORTHWEST MONTANA

Timothy L. Manley, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Kalispell, Montana 59912

The question may seem simple, “Why is this grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) in my backyard”? A reasonable answer would be “Because it has probably found something to eat.” While the question and answer are basic, the solutions and prevention of future conflicts are more complex. From 1993 through 2008, there were 244 management captures of grizzly bears in Northwest Montana. These captures ranged from responses to grizzly bears causing property damage to incidental captures. Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) Guidelines give direction on capture and fate of the bear, but it is up to the Bear Conflict Management Specialists to work with both the grizzly bear and the people on the ground. Techniques to deal with the grizzly bears include relocation, on-site releases, hazing, aversive-conditioning, securing attractants, and removal from the population. Techniques to deal with the people include education, assistance in securing attractants, and citations. Just like people, grizzly bears are all individuals, and what might work in one situation might not work in all situations. Methods for dealing with and preventing conflicts is evolving as new techniques and technology gives grizzly bear managers new tools and options. The ultimate goals are to keep people safe and to keep grizzly bears alive and in the wild.