

## **MANAGING BLACK BEARS AND COUGARS WITH PEOPLE PROBLEMS**

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The Flathead Valley area and most of northwest Montana is currently growing at a rate of 6 percent/ yr. Given the increasing human population and expanding residential development in the urban interface, there will continue to be bears (*Ursus* spp.) and cougars

(*Puma concolor*) living in close proximity to homes and human activity centers. During the 2007 and 2008 field seasons we received 774 and 881 black bear (*Ursus americanus*) conflict calls, respectively, concerning incidents of some kind. Most of these black bear calls occurred between May 1 and November 30, during 2008 that results in 881 calls in a 7-mo period or 126 calls/mo or 4.1 calls/day – everyday. During the 2007 and 2008 field seasons we received 70 and 152 cougar conflict calls, respectively, concerning cougar conflicts of some kind. The 6 yrs previous to 2008 we received an average of 68 calls/year concerning cougar conflicts. This dramatic increase in cougar conflicts in 2008 reflects an increasing cougar population trend in the last few years. Through continued education efforts it will be possible to disseminate the best available information to pre-emptively reduce human / wildlife conflicts. The continued use of a bear trap to relocate or trap and aversively condition program will address bears that have already made a positive association with people or their dwellings. The continued response to cougar conflicts will reduce (though not eliminate) the potential public safety issues that exist anywhere there are healthy cougar populations. It is our hope that we will be able to maintain the public tolerance for these highly prized big game animals in western