

# TRACKS

## THE STATE OF WOLVES

LISA UPSON

There are more than 6,000 wolves in the lower 48 states, and Alaska holds another roughly 10,000. Still, wolves reside in only about 10% of their historic range. Wolf-livestock conflict remains the single biggest concern for residents in areas experiencing wolf recolonization, and some communities are slow to embrace prevention efforts.

Keeping track of—much less understanding—the status of wolf recolonization in the US is challenging at best. In the last year alone, agencies have sought to shift several recovery plans, which court decisions have temporarily halted. Of course, the ability of wolves to go where they want to go plays a defining role in their expansion. Here is a brief summary of the state of wolves in the US.

The Northern Rockies gray wolf population (MT, ID, WY, and eastern portions of WA and OR) is the only population under state control in the lower 48, having been removed from endangered species protection. There are about 2,000 wolves in this region, and we're pleased that Montana's population has grown a bit in recent years, with conflicts and deaths decreasing slightly. We are working to share successes with our neighbors to the west and south. We frequently share our expertise with practitioners and managers from the Pacific states via our short films, technical manuals, and project advice.

Wolves are slowly making their way into the Cascade mountains of western OR and WA, and one known wolf pack exists in Northern CA. Wolves in these areas are still protected under the ESA because they are outside a population designated for recovery and delisting. Last fall Congress attempted to remove wolves everywhere in the US (other than Mexican wolves) from protections; fortunately, the law failed to pass.

Found in AZ and NM, the Mexican wolf population stands at just over 100 wolves. Livestock conflicts have been proportionately high and are one of the limiting



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P.O. Box 6733  
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(406) 587-3389  
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Linda Kelly

While their numbers have increased in some areas, wolf sightings remain rare across most landscapes.

factors of this population, but we hope the February 2019 count will show some growth. El Lobo is the smallest subspecies of the gray wolf.

Another struggling and even smaller wolf population many are unaware of is the red wolf, currently found in North Carolina. There are roughly 30 red wolves in the wild, and the population survives only with a captive breeding program. Red wolves are protected by the ESA, but in 2018, the USFWS downgraded the recovery plan and confined red wolves to a small area. A court decision in the fall of 2018 overturned the rollback and ordered the USFWS to continue its ESA obligations to recover the population.

### WOLVES AT A GLANCE

GREAT LAKES.....	4,000	Protected under ESA
NORTHERN ROCKIES.....	2,000	Delisted; state managed
PACIFIC STATES.....	250	Protected; not designated
MEXICAN WOLVES.....	115	Protected under ESA
RED WOLVES.....	30	Protected under ESA

(estimated numbers)

WOLVES, cont'd page 2



# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to our Spring newsletter, which combines news with our annual report. We have a busy year planned: holding a field workshop, teaching a university class, and developing new manuals as well as a short film, along with our bread and butter field prevention projects. As you will read in our field notes, we are focusing on a few key geographic areas in western Montana, to help wolves and grizzly bears connect with others as well as to reach Central Idaho.

We also have many supporters and funding partners to thank as a part of our annual report. I have been with P&C (formerly Keystone Conservation) for eight years. It is interesting to see how some supporters come and go, but mostly that we are sustained by long-time contributors. Thank you to all.

Back in January of 2011 the organization was still recovering from a reduction in both revenue and program work as a result of the 2008 recession. Over time, and with the help of the merger of Keystone and P&C in 2015, we have been rebuilding. For the first time since the recession, the organization exceeded \$500,000 in assets last fiscal year. We have designated a portion of our surplus as reserve, which provides P&C with several months of operating expenses, and we have invested a portion of it. We are expecting some foundation funding shifts in the next couple of years, so we are thankful to have some contingency funds.

Thank you for your continued support and dedication to helping wolves, bears, and cougars re-occupy more of their historic range.

*Lisa.*

[lupson@peopleandcarnivores.org](mailto:lupson@peopleandcarnivores.org)

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**Humans cannot exist in a vacuum without the other creatures that are required for a healthy ecosystem. Keep up the good work you are doing.** ~ Shulamith Lotter, supporter

## WOLVES, continued

The largest wolf population in the lower 48 is the Western Great Lakes gray wolf, at more than 4,000. Also called the timber wolf, this population resides in MI, MN, and WI. As was the case with Northern Rockies wolves years ago, Great Lakes wolves have been on and off the endangered species list due to government delisting attempts as conflict-related pressures increase. Lawsuits have staved off delisting, and the population remains protected for now. The famed but isolated wolf population of Isle Royale (Michigan) was on the brink of extinction with just two wolves, but the National Park Service is introducing wolves to supplement the highly inbred alpha pair.



Wolf pups leave the den in the spring, and in the early months they are cared for by the entire pack.

Linda Kelly

People and Carnivores does not work directly on most policy issues so that we can work in communities where the day-to-day decisions are made about whether large carnivores roam free. Wolves, like bears and big cats, live and die largely by conflicts, even when they're protected. And carnivore policy initiatives are often driven by conflicts. We focus on keeping those conflicts from happening where possible.

# IN THE FIELD

The 2019 field season got off to a very early start in the Mission Valley with two livestock guardian dog projects and a fladry installation. Here are a few of our upcoming projects in the Southern Crown of the Continent and the High Divide.



Bryce Andrews installing fladry in a heavy spring snow.

- In May we are holding a field workshop on deterring grizzly bears with electric fencing where P&C field staff and other experts will share best practices, and practitioners in attendance will share their own fencing strategies.
- Field Director, Bryce Andrews, and Gillian Thornton will lead our second “Theory and Practice of Sustainable Ranch Management” course in partnership with the University of Montana. New this year, students will be networked with practitioners for internships and career-based outcomes.
- Starting in February we will implement at least two fladry fencing projects to deter wolves from entering calving pastures.
- Continuing our short film series, we will produce a video on the “what, why, and where” of our connectivity work.
- We have planned with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) to continue to build bear poles on the Flathead Reservation.

- Also with the CSKT, we are planning three bear safety and shared dialogue meetings which will include bear spray practice and cost-sharing of bear-resistant garbage canisters.
- Interest in livestock guardian dogs continues to grow. We’ve already placed one dog this year and another is in the works. We will continue to help landowners acquire LGDs, and are partnering with a landowner on two presentations about using LGDs.
- We are expanding our partnership with the SW MT Bear Education group and will co-present on bear safety to hunter groups.



A livestock guardian dog keeping his sheep safe.

## 2018 BEAR ENCOUNTERS IN THE NORTHERN ROCKIES

KIMBERLY JOHNSTON

Statistics show bear attacks across North America are rare. When given the chance, bears avoid people. Most grizzly bear attacks result from a bear that has been surprised, especially if there is a nearby food source or cubs to protect. Survival rates for bear attacks are high, especially when bear spray is carried and used properly.

In 2018, there were seven reported cases of human-grizzly bear conflict. While human injuries were reported in all seven cases, only one fatality occurred.

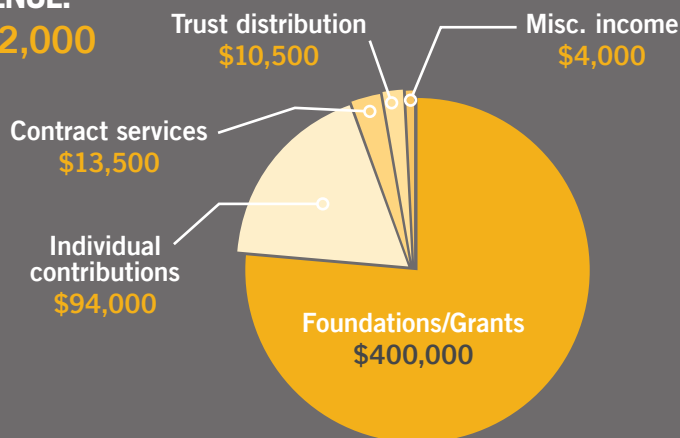
- In May a grizzly bear research technician was attacked after unknowingly coming close to an adult male grizzly bear. The technician dropped to the ground and was able to spray the bear before it let her go and disappeared.
- In August, in Yellowstone National Park, a 10-year-old boy was injured after surprising an adult female grizzly bear with a cub. The young boy ran, initiating a chase. The bear knocked the boy down but his family was able to drive the bear away using bear spray.

*BEARS, cont'd page 4*

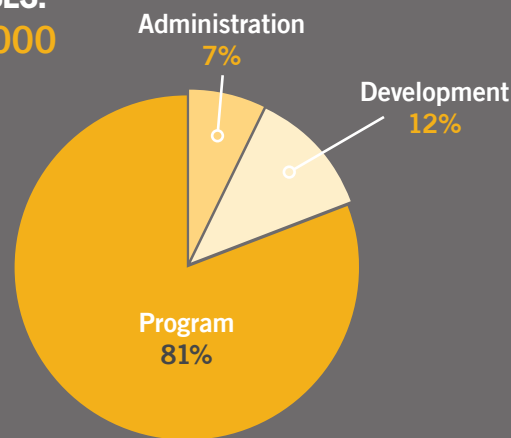


# FISCAL YEAR 2018 FINANCIAL INFORMATION (OCT. 1, 2017 – SEPT. 30, 2018)

**REVENUE:**  
**\$522,000**



**EXPENSES:**  
**\$384,000**



**NOTE:** In FY18, we received two contributions that were atypical (without possibility of repeating), totaling \$160,000—a bequest (individual contribution) and a large foundation grant for reserve and contingencies. We are anticipating some shifts in foundation funding over the next couple years as some longtime funders change their priorities or close their programs. Our surplus provides a safety net as we work to replace expired funding sources.

**NOTE:** Payroll is 70% of expenses. The next highest expense is field project equipment and travel, at 16%. Contractors (accounting, bookkeeping, legal) and rent/utilities combine to total seven percent of expenses.

## MANY THANKS TO OUR INSTITUTIONAL FUNDERS



### BEARS, continued

- There were three separate bear incidents in September. One involved a hiker who was carrying bear spray but did not have enough time to reach it before the attack occurred. The hiker survived. Two other incidents involved hunters. In one, a hunter was attacked when moving a moose carcass; we don't know if bear spray was present. In the other, a hunting guide was fatally injured by a grizzly while field dressing an elk. The guide did use bear spray to deter the attacks, but he had already sustained fatal injuries.
- In October, an elk hunter was injured after surprising an adult female with two 2-year-old cubs, north of Yellowstone National Park. His hunting guide was carrying bear spray, and was able to successfully spray the bear, causing it to let the hunter go.

- In November, another hunter surprised a grizzly bear near Glacier Park and sustained injuries, but survived.

What can we learn from these seven incidents?

Most grizzly bear attacks result from surprise encounters and in 2018, six out of the seven cases reported as surprise encounters, where the bear was likely acting defensively. More than half of the groups were carrying bear spray, which is good news, but three of them were unable to reach their bear spray in time. With more people recreating in bear country, and grizzly bears expanding into more of their historical range, it will be increasingly important to continue to expand bear safety education to reduce conflicts.

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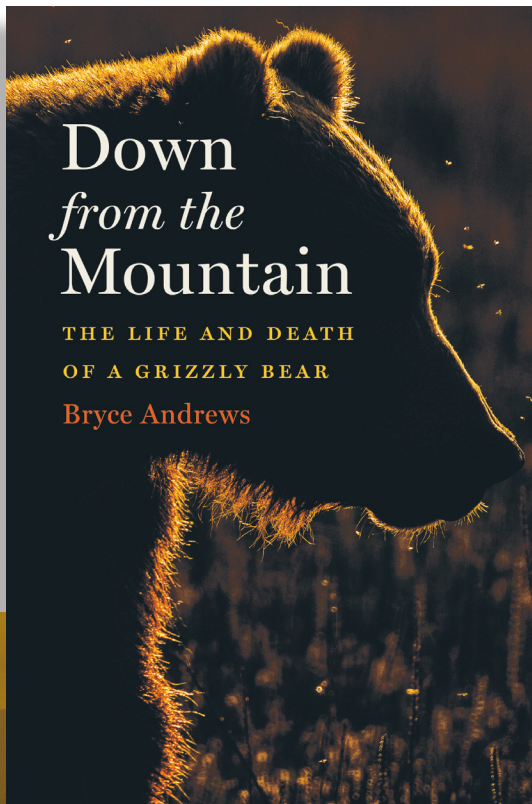
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## **DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN**

**BY BRYCE ANDREWS**

P&C's Field Director and award-winning writer, Bryce Andrews, shares the story of Millie, a mother grizzly bear, in his upcoming book, *Down from the Mountain*. Millie is a typical mother: strong, cunning, fiercely protective of her cubs. But raising the cubs—a challenging task in the best of times—becomes ever more difficult as the mountains change, the climate warms, and people crowd the valleys. There are obvious dangers, like poachers, and subtle risks, like the corn field that draws her out of the foothills and sets her on a devastating path. That corn field is where Bryce's story intersects with Millie's. It is the heart of *Down from the Mountain*, a singular drama evoking a much larger one: an entangled and sometimes bloody collision between two species in the modern-day West, where the shrinking wilds force human and bear into ever closer proximity. The book is due for release in April.