

TRACKS

Infrastructure in the Woods

Imagine you're a grizzly bear in the Selkirk Mountains of northern Idaho. You've decided it's time to move on to find some new, fattening food sources. As you amble around, who knows what you'll find?

We want to eliminate the risk of "who knows" for bears. In the Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF), garbage, coolers, human foods, and camping supplies can be found at recreation sites across the forest, and these are attractants for grizzly and black bears. These and other odorous items need to be stored properly to keep bears out of conflict so they can keep moving and, in the case of grizzlies, recolonizing Idaho wilderness to the south. People and Carnivores has partnered with forest managers to conduct an inventory of bear-related infrastructure at recreation sites across the IPNF. This summer, one of our staff members drove to front country campgrounds and hiked to several high-use backcountry camping areas on the IPNF to conduct the survey to not only record what infrastructure was on the landscape, but also what condition it was in.



Bear box, or food storage locker.



Bear-resistant trash can.

There are several ways to store bear attractants. One of the most secure options is food storage lockers, also called bear boxes. Most of these boxes are made of metal and can hold up against a bear's prying claws, teeth, and strength, but only as long as they're in working order and used properly. Bear-resistant garbage cans and dumpsters, which feature locks that require human hands to open, are another common and necessary piece of infrastructure, as garbage is a major

cause of human-bear conflict. Bear poles—poles on which to hang food—are also effective and were found at many of the IPNF's more remote sites. There are two main designs of bear poles: metal poles with hooks and a pulley system and horizontal logs running between two upright trees. Both let you hang food out of the reach of bears and other wildlife.



Wood bear pole, or food hang.

During the survey, we found some bear boxes missing part of their locking mechanism and others made of a thick



Several plastic bear boxes were damaged.

hard plastic material at high lakes that were so damaged they needed to be replaced. Garbage cans were in good shape and will continue to work well as long as people shut the lids and don't overfill

them. We came across several bear poles in need of repair: one pole was lying on the ground, and another was within reach when standing on a tree stump. If a human can reach it, a bear can reach it!



A metal bear pole lies unusable on the ground.

Even if bear boxes, bear-resistant garbage cans, and bear poles exist, people need to know how to use them.



PEOPLE AND CARNIVORES

Staff

Chris Anderson

Special Project Coordinator

Bryce Andrews

Field Advisor

Rosie Costain

Program and Communications
Coordinator

Kim Johnston

Field Project Manager: High Divide

Ryan Wilbur

Field Project Manager: NW
Montana

Lisa Upson

Executive Director

Mikayla Zukowski

Coexistence Outreach and
Development Coordinator

Board of Directors

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Charlotte Heldstab

Whitefish, MT

Lacy Kowalski

Columbia Falls, MT
President and Secretary

Photo Credits

Chris Anderson

Kim Johnston

Grizzly/Wolf Discovery Center

P.O. Box 6733

Bozeman, MT 59771-9922

(406) 587-3389

PeopleAndCarnivores.org



From The Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I'm looking out my window through smoke and orange sunlight and thinking about all the challenges wild animals have to contend with these days. As if a developing landscape isn't enough, wildfires, drought, and harsh policies conspire against the concept of wildness. All of these things make wolves, bears, cats, and other wildlife move around more as they try and navigate obstacles and risks. If we can keep them out of conflicts and moving, they can connect, expand range, and find food and mates.

To do just that this year, with your help we have reinforced and increased our program work by adding capacity in the field and in outreach and advocacy. We have and are dedicating more resources now to protect wild carnivores than we have in the last 15 years. Thank you for continuing to step up for the big critters as they face more challenges out there. We will do the same!

Lisa.

Lisa Upson

LUpson@PeopleAndCarnivores.org

Thanks to You: \$30,000 for 30 Years!

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, People and Carnivores is putting \$30,000 into a fund for local Bear Smart initiatives to commemorate 30 years working to protect wolves, bears, and cats. The "scholarship" fund will support fledgling efforts in Montana communities working to better live alongside grizzlies and black bears in key geographic areas. Beginning this fall, P&C staff will develop funding criteria and consider requests from local Montana individuals and organizations needing help getting their initiatives off the ground. For more information about "Bear Smart" initiatives, visit PeopleAndCarnivores.org/BearSmart.

Infrastructure in the Woods, cont'd



That's where signage comes in. Beyond instructional signs, educational signs letting people know how and why it's important to follow food storage orders are essential. The cliché is true: a fed bear is a dead bear.

The data collected from this project will be passed on to the Forest Service and will guide infrastructure improvements and additions to where they're needed most. As bears wander the IPNF in search of food, mates, and new territory, conflict prevention infrastructure and its proper use offers people a way to help them do it safely.

Signage needs to be effective.

Trail Cameras

Seeing the Impact

Techniques for monitoring wildlife have come a long way, and one of our favorite methods is the use of trail cameras—remote motion-activated cameras that film wildlife. P&C field staff use trail cameras to detect animals in new areas, like grizzlies returning to parts of their historic range, wolves moving between ecosystems, and mountain lions in valley foothills. This helps us get ahead of conflicts. We also monitor project sites to see how effective different prevention tools



Kim Johnston installs a trail camera.

are at reducing conflicts. Are electric fences keeping large carnivores out of trouble? Is the fladry working? Are livestock guardian dogs staying with the livestock? How is the garbage can holding up against a grizzly? Trail cameras help us answer these questions.

Here's a specific example of how we used trail cameras this summer: After we captured a grizzly bear on a trail camera in Southwest Montana in a new area, we worked with local landowners, ranchers, and county officials to keep this bear out of conflict. We secured the nearby dump station containers, helped build a

permanent electric fence night pen for sheep, worked with a local ranch on a livestock guardian dog project, and helped the local watershed expand wildlife conflict reduction resources.

As we enhance habitat for large carnivores, we also enhance the habitat for a wide array of wildlife species. One ranch we're working with has detected more than 35 wildlife species on their property around project sites—mountain lions, bears, bobcats, bighorn sheep, moose, elk, river otters, mink, and more.

Perhaps most importantly, trail cameras help people connect to the wildlife they live amongst, see all the species their properties support, and witness the effects of their actions. When people see evidence from trail cameras of the success of the prevention tools and the benefits their actions have provided for wildlife, that's when we see change happening, tolerance building, and that coexistence is possible. Cameras alone can turn landowners into wildlife enthusiasts, which goes a long way for coexistence on private lands.

For some great trail cam footage, watch P&C's "Tracks & Cams" film at PeopleAndCarnivores.org/videos.



We found several wolves near this project site.



These moose are another of the many species we've captured on camera.



A mountain lion passes by a project site protected by livestock guardian dogs and electric fence.



A black bear wanders near a project site where we worked to secure garbage

High Divide Happenings

The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE), Central Idaho Wilderness complex, and Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem are three core habitat chunks that remain intact enough to support all large carnivore species including grizzlies, wolves, mountain lions, lynx, wolverine, and others. With human development and recreation between these ecosystems, they are becoming increasingly isolated. Other than the human activities, much of the land is good wildlife habitat. By removing attractants or keeping wildlife away from activities that draw in carnivores, we turn risky areas into functional habitat. This is what conflict prevention does—help wildlife navigate a mixed landscape to stay alive and on the move.



We installed this electric fence to protect a chicken coop.

Our bear work this season focused on keeping grizzlies and black bears out of conflict, especially grizzlies leaving the GYE to return to their historic range in Central Idaho. In the Big Hole Valley, which sits between these two ecosystems, we worked with ranchers and landowners to reduce conflicts with grizzlies on private lands using conflict prevention toolkits, bear-resistant trash cans, and solutions to remove major attractants like livestock boneyards. We've partnered with county officials and

local residents to keep grizzlies out of garbage by securing local dump transfer containers and other unsecured garbage sources.

We helped wolves stay away from livestock in the GYE and Central Idaho Wilderness. We helped two large, adjacent ranches implement the use of livestock guardian dogs and scare devices to prevent conflicts with wolves moving between Idaho and Southwest Montana. We're consulting with a large cattle ranch in the Big Hole region to develop a better livestock management program aimed at reducing conflicts with wolves. And livestock guardian dogs we helped place on a cattle ranch last season are successfully reducing conflicts. With brutal state wolf policies in place, every wolf matters.



A couple of eager young dogs learning to guard sheep.

We also helped mountain lions navigate the foothills and private-public land interfaces and stay out of conflicts with nearby communities, landowners, and ranchers. We assisted a sheep ranch by implementing various tools, including livestock guardian dogs with tracking collars, scare devices, electric fencing, and trail camera monitoring. We are seeing multiple mountain lions travel their private lands following native prey, lessening the risk of conflict with ranch livestock.

These are just a few of our 2022 projects. Your support and P&C's field presence helps save a place for predators and other wildlife species.



One Lucky Bear

2020 was not only a rough year for people, it was also tough on Yellowstone bears. The Yellowstone area saw plenty of "bear-unaware" visitors. A grizzly bear, now named "Bo," was searching for food when he hit the jackpot at Rainbow Point Campground located just west of Yellowstone. Bo ended up becoming habituated to humans and food conditioned after finding easy meals in coolers and unsecured garbage at the campsite. Bo ended up at the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone, MT, where he is thriving as an educational ambassador for his wild counterparts. Most food-conditioned bears do not have the same fortune as Bo and are lethally removed from the wild. P&C has started working in the West Yellowstone area to prevent future conflicts with bears and to keep Montana's grizzlies wild.

Bo, the grizzly bear. (Photo credit: Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center)



≡ **Breaking!**

The town of Virginia City has worked with P&C for the last few years on becoming a Bear Smart Community, after years of having constant black bear conflicts.

We just released a new short film about what it means to be a Bear Smart Community, highlighting the people of Virginia City and the steps they've taken to live safely alongside bears.

Watch it on our website at:
PeopleAndCarnivores.org/BearSmart

DIY Coexistence Scaling our Knowledge

Like wild carnivores, our field team is always on the move. The more tools we put on the ground, the more coexistence there is across the region. But for times our field team is unavailable or when a person has a strong “do-it-yourself” attitude, we want to make sure individuals have access to P&C’s knowledge and resources on conflict prevention. Here’s how we’re making information and tools more widely available:

- We launched the “People and Carnivores Tools and Resources Page” on Facebook dedicated to sharing technical information, tips, and resources with landowners and managers who want to learn more about coexistence tools.
- We’re expanding the resources available on our website. We’re finishing up a digital manual on how to install electric fence, complete with step-by-step videos. And we’re updating our Coexistence Tools Manual—a quick guide of the main conflict prevention tools we use—to include case studies from our work and expanded “best practices” for effectively using each tool.
- We’re building partnerships with local businesses to get coexistence tools in stores. Having tools available to buy locally, instead of only online, means they’ll be on hand when people need them.



Sharing our knowledge from years of field work and making resources and tools more readily available will leverage our work, further spreading coexistence efforts across the Northern Rockies.

Welcoming P&C’s New Field Specialist

Since 2016, Bryce Andrews has been at the center of P&C strategy and field work, having developed our Northwest Montana coexistence work. Bryce’s experience managing ranches bolstered the expansion of our livestock conflict and crop loss prevention projects, including “Corn Bear” which became the subject of Bryce’s award-winning book, *Down from the Mountain* (HMH, 2019). After serving as P&C’s Field Director for several years, Bryce is stepping back to focus on family, farm, and writing. He is now an advisor with P&C, and we welcome Ryan Wilbur, our new field project manager for Northwest Montana. Ryan will carry on our expanding field presence between Glacier and Idaho—a critical corridor for grizzlies and wolves

and key habitat for black bears and mountain lions.

Early in his career Ryan worked on diverse field projects relating to birds, bears, and wolves, among other species. He has studied the effectiveness of a biofence to reduce conflict between wolves and livestock using wolf scat and urine. While working on the Mexican Gray wolf project, Ryan learned to use fladry to reduce livestock losses. In addition to field projects, Ryan has studied how social factors affect human interactions with natural resources and wildlife. Durango, Colorado has led a well-known bear-resistant trash can project and Ryan studied the compliance of individuals to utilize trash cans effectively and their utility to reduce



Ryan Wilbur conducting a scat survey.

conflict. Through his academics, Ryan has engaged with multiple stakeholders to understand carnivore conservation and conflict reduction. Ryan will work out of Kalispell, MT.

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P.O. Box 6733
Bozeman, MT 59771-9922

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30 Years Come November

It was in November 1992 that Predator Project was formed, many years later becoming People and Carnivores. If you missed the Special 30th Year Spring Issue of Tracks, you'll want to check it out for:

- ... our "Big Hairy Audacious Goals"
- ... Dr. Adrian Treves' state of carnivore coexistence
- ... Our impact protecting wildlife

Visit PeopleAndCarnivores.org/30years

*A young wolf near one
of our project sites.*

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