

# PEOPLE AND CARNIVORES

# TRACKS



## Coming Together for Bears

This year, the town of Alberton, MT wanted to make a change. Black bear conflicts were worse than ever last fall due to a failed berry crop. Garbage, pet food, small livestock, and fruit trees drew hungry bears into town. On top of that, grizzly bears were being reported close by. Residents decided it was time to tackle bear conflicts and become "Bear Smart."

Alberton is one of five communities we're working alongside through our new program, the Bear Smart Community Resource Fund. Through the Fund, we provide various types of support: consulting on ways to manage attractants, providing educational materials, and in some cases, small amounts of funding we know will make a difference. Community members take the lead on these projects, and we guide them through the Bear Smart Community process.

In the Bear Smart process, municipalities, HOAs, or other community groups gather information and begin to form a working group, conduct a conflict assessment, develop a management plan, implement solutions, and plan for sustainability. Our partner communities are in different stages of this process.

**Pink Bench Distilling in Troy** <sup>1</sup> hired a fruit gleaning coordinator to help gather and secure apples, plums, and other fruit so bears aren't tempted to hang around and eat it. The fruit will be used to make brandy and Pink Bench will highlight bear conservation in their marketing.



The wildlife education trailer under construction at the Spanish Peaks Mountain Club.

**Alberton** <sup>2</sup> conducted a community conflict assessment, which they'll use to build and implement a conflict reduction plan. In the meantime, they put electric fencing around the community orchard (a big draw for bears) and are now working on protecting chicken coops.

**University of Montana** <sup>3</sup> students led the charge last spring in laying out a plan to secure attractants bringing black bears to campus. UM facilities and staff are putting part of this plan in place, starting by enclosing two

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# From the Director

## Dear Friends and Supporters,

The last time we assembled Tracks, we were gearing up for not only a busy field season but a busy policy season. With the Montana legislature in session earlier this year, we learned the state is preparing in the worst ways for removal of federal protections from grizzlies, proposing to drastically limit where they can exist, consider hunting and trapping, and establish population connectivity via translocation versus allowing bears to travel naturally from one population to another. Wolves, black bears, and mountain lions were also targeted by lawmakers.

We testified or submitted written comments on more than a dozen policy changes relating to large carnivores. Along with other opponents, we prevented the right to hunt and trap as a primary wildlife management approach getting into the Montana Constitution. Proposals to revise wolf trapping laws and black bear hunting laws in negative ways failed as well. But wolf hunting is still allowed just outside Yellowstone Park, and wolf bounties survived the session. We will be a voice for wolves and grizzly bears while new management plans are developed. As we've weighed in on specific bills, we've emphasized the effectiveness of non-lethal conflict prevention, that the state needs to use more of it, and that we're happy to help. Thank you for making it possible for us to fight for wild carnivores!

*Lisa.*

**Lisa Upson**  
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**"I think P&C is amazing. Humans have taken over most land and driven wildlife out. Coexistence is crucial and I am so glad P&C works towards achieving this goal." –Tami Redi, supporter**

## Doing More, Thanks to You

In recent years, we've talked a lot about expanding our work, adding resources on the ground, and scaling coexistence solutions across the landscape by working with communities. Protecting wolves, bears, and lions is both an immediate need, through conflict prevention projects in specific locations, and long-term, through culture change as coexistence becomes more broadly embraced and applied across a large landscape. We firmly believe coexistence is the future of conservation for large terrestrial mammals. If we can coexist with wild carnivores, we can live with all wildlife. Thank you for being a part of this positive movement. We are doing more now than ever before, and we will continue to work and grow for our shared commitment to protect wildlife.

**We have expanded our project area**  
**120%**  
**in the last three years**

# Not Your Average Bake Sale

**“Protect wildlife for future generations”**— an appeal you’ve seen many times if you support conservation. We all want nature and biodiversity to be around for the enjoyment of those who come after us. Well, this year the tables turned, and People and Carnivores was fortunate to be the beneficiary of some determined representatives of future generations.

After studying wildlife, an elementary school class in Livingston, MT decided to raise funds to support local wildlife. They considered several nonprofits and voted to give P&C the \$350 they raised through an ice cream social and selling magazines they created! Another young advocate from southern California read the book *A Wolf Called Wander*, inspired by famous wolf OR-7 whose wanderlust first grew the Oregon wolf population and then started the California wolf population. The third-grader was so touched by the story she organized a fundraiser for wolves. After researching different



*Daniela Guevara and her mom, Emily, raking it in for wolves.*

organizations, she chose to give P&C the \$892 she raised selling baked goods, crafts, and other items! We thanked the youngsters by having our field staff speak to their classes about large carnivore conservation.



Wolf pups of the Lassen pack in 2017, courtesy of the California Dept of Fish & Wildlife.

## OR-7 Exemplified Coexistence

Like many of Yellowstone wolves, Wolf OR-7 is a legend. OR-7 was born into the Inmaha wolf pack in Oregon in 2009. He left his pack to disperse in 2011 and traveled hundreds of miles in Oregon and into California, crossing rivers and major highways, back and forth across the state borders. He was confirmed as California’s first wild wolf in almost a century. OR-7 and his mate OR-94 contributed significantly to wolf recovery, including the Lassen pack in California (see photo). There are now 3 to 4 wolf packs in California.

When wolves and other wildlife species can travel without harm, they can expand the species’ range and expand populations. OR-7 traveled more than 4,000 miles. State wildlife managers believe he died in 2020.

## Coming Together for Bears

*(Continued from cover)*

dumpsters on campus and removing unsecured trash cans. With the fall semester starting, we’ll collaborate with campus representatives and bear managers to get bear safety messaging out to students at a student orientation event.

**The Spanish Peaks Mountain Club in Big Sky** <sup>4</sup> built a wildlife education trailer, complete with a remote-controlled bear to help people practice their bear spray skills, and are using it around the community to teach residents, resort employees, and tourists how to safely live with bears and other wildlife.

**In Gardiner just outside Yellowstone National Park** <sup>5</sup>, P&C helped map out attractants so community leaders can better prioritize the many needed solutions there, and we’ll help put a bear-resistant dumpster in a key commercial area where garbage and grease vats are drawing in bears.

The first Bear Smart Community in the region was **Virginia City** <sup>6</sup> and we continue to work with city officials to sustain their bear smarts! We’ve also been working in other areas to either develop new initiatives or address certain attractants: **Columbia Falls** <sup>7</sup>; **Seeley Lake** <sup>8</sup>; **Bozeman** <sup>9</sup>; **West Yellowstone** <sup>10</sup>; and the **Jackson, WY area** <sup>11</sup> through Jackson Hole Bear Solutions, where we funded canisters.

# News from the Field

It's been a productive field season helping people prevent conflicts with large carnivores in the Northern Rockies and a few highlights follow. In northwest Montana, we started the season during spring calving. We installed turbo fladry—red flagging hanging from an electrified



*Fladry is an effective wolf deterrent even in snow.*

line—around landowners' calving pastures to protect livestock from wolves. Spring is a vulnerable period for all wild carnivores for different reasons. As bears began waking up, giving people the tools and knowledge to safely live, work, and play in bear country is always a focus. We partnered with the USFWS to host bear safety trainings across

southwest Montana and give out more than 300 cans of bear spray. Before handing off the spray, people had a chance to practice using inert training spray on our new remote control target bear.

In the Mission and Flathead Valleys, education targeted seasonal orchard workers who may run into bears during harvest season. These valleys encompass some of the best fruit orchards in the region, which is not lost on bears. Many of the workers primarily speak Spanish, so we partnered with Rural Employment Opportunities to distribute Spanish-translated bear safety material and training.

Further south in the Madison Valley and Ennis, we used fencing and our toolkits to help residents and visitors with increasing grizzly presence. A grizzly bear was spotted running through a small housing area on the edge of town, and that day we assisted several residents in securing attractants to keep this young male grizzly bear out of trouble. We set up temporary fencing around chickens and goats, loaned out scare devices and a bear-resistant garbage can, handed out bear spray, and talked about long-term prevention.



*This one trailer extends carcass pickup for months.*

To the west in the Big Hole Valley, we helped the Big Hole Watershed Committee expand livestock carcass removal by adding a flatbed trailer to the removal program. This is a valuable service to the ranching community, as it removes carcasses that could otherwise draw wolves, bears, and lions to the property and lead to conflicts.

In the nearby Pioneer Mountains, we helped a large cattle ranch prevent wolf and grizzly bear conflicts using livestock guardian dogs (LGDs) and range riders. Using our newest range rider/LGD toolkit, we placed tracking collars on the ranch's LGDs. The range riders can monitor the dogs' movements, ensure they're staying with the livestock, and check out any unusual movement that might indicate a problem.



*Guard dogs and range riders are a great coexistence combination.*

# A Bear's Best Friend

Our canine friends work in many different ways to help people live with wildlife. Over the years, we have shared stories of our livestock guardian dog projects. This year, we started a unique project involving range riders along with guard dogs. To learn more about the outcomes we are using GPS collars and locators on the dogs and riders to see how well the two work in tandem on public lands. In these projects, guard dogs are bonded with livestock, usually cattle or sheep, and they ward off predators like wolves, bears, or mountain lions.

Using dogs in this way is not without controversy because it can put the dogs at risk if not trained properly. People and Carnivores will not place dogs unless and until we know they will prioritize the dogs' welfare (and we have turned down projects for this reason), and we follow up to ensure the dogs are treated well and the project is effective.

Karelian Bear Dogs are another type of dog that can support coexistence with bears, but that use a different technique. Whereas guard dogs bond and stay with cattle, then defend the herd by running off predators that get too close, Karelian Bear Dogs (KBDs) are used by bear managers and practitioners to train bears to leave or avoid certain areas. Traditionally a hunting dog from Finland, in addition to conflict prevention work, KBDs can be used for monitoring, returning captured bears to the wild, detecting poaching, and more.

This past spring, People and Carnivores partnered with Wind River Bear Institute to purchase and place a KBD with a wildlife manager working in western Montana's Bitterroot Valley, where grizzlies have returned after decades of absence (hopefully on



*Kaija hamming it up before a training session.*

their way to Central Idaho!) The KBD's job is to find bears who have been close to trouble and haze them from the area, release captured bears, and provide any other non-lethal help to teach bears where they can safely be and where to avoid. Things are going well and Kaija the KBD has already experienced her first "hard release" in which she hazes bears as they're released.

## Kits, Kits, and More Kits

With the success of our Vacation Rental Bear Safety Toolkit, having mailed out over 1,000 to short term rentals since March, People and Carnivores developed similar toolkits for homeowners and restaurants. With garbage, grease bins, and food smells, restaurants can be a hotspot for bear activity. The Restaurant Bear Safety Toolkit contains materials like a closing checklist and reminder posters to help management and staff properly secure attractants.

The At Home Bear Safety Toolkit includes educational flyers, a magnet, sticker, and checklist to help evaluate bear attractants around the house. We'll share these kits with HOAs, agencies, and local organizations to get this information to homeowners and long-term renters who call bear country home. We also partnered with the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes on a residential kit for tribal members on the Flathead Reservation who live in bear habitat.



*The At Home Bear Safety Toolkit.*

# PEOPLE AND CARNIVORES

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## PEOPLE AND CARNIVORES

Like all wildlife, mountain lions are finding it harder to live with humans as more people take up more space. Yet, there are no government or wildlife agency materials on how to coexist with the elusive cats of the Northern Rockies. In partnership with the Mountain Lion Foundation, People and Carnivores is developing a how-to booklet and a campaign to share information about cat coexistence.

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