

Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains Grizzly Bear Ecosystems Update 06/1/2017

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Reports: <https://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/es/grizzlyBear.php>

Selkirk Mountains Monitoring

We began 2017 monitoring four grizzly bears in the U.S. and four bears in BC. Current collared bears in the US include two females with one accompanied by a yearling and one accompanied by two cubs and two males. We are monitoring four females in BC but we do not know their reproductive status yet. One of the radio collared males in the US is a young male bear that was originally captured in the Yaak near the Idaho-Montana border and moved west across the Kootenai River during early September of 2015. He denned in the Selkirk Mountains during the winter of 2015 and 2016. Another young male captured at a Yaak River conflict site in 2016 has also recently moved to the Selkirk Mountains and is currently in BC.

Cabinet-Yaak Monitoring

We began 2017 monitoring two augmentation bears (female and male) in the Cabinet Mountains and 10 bears (three females and seven males) in the Yaak River. At least four bears appear to have dropped collars this spring. These include a female in the Cabinet Mountains, a female, and two males in the Yaak River. One collar has been retrieved so far and the others will be retrieved as soon as snow melt allows. The 2016 augmentation male from the Cabinet Mountains could not be located during November or December of 2016 but was located in early May of 2017. A download of his radio collar revealed extensive movements to the south end of the recovery area during November and December of 2016 prior to denning on Graves Peak in Deep Creek about 12 miles north of Thompson Falls, MT. He emerged from his den in early April and has since returned to the area where he was released near Spar Lake in the West Cabinet Mountains. Figure 1 traces his route from November when we lost his signal south to his den and then from den emergence north to his location in May.

Cabinet-Yaak and Selkirk Mountains Human Caused Mortality

No bears are known to have died thus far in 2017.

Trapping

Trapping is planned for the area on and around the Boundary Creek Wildlife Management area in the Selkirk Mountains for May and June with trapping moving higher into the mountains as snow melt occurs. Trapping will occur in the Yaak and Cabinets during May and June of 2017 with success determining later trap locations. Cabinets trapping in June will occur on the east side of the wilderness. All trap locations are signed to alert the public.

On May 25 we captured and collared a yearling male grizzly bear in Boundary Creek (102 lbs). The bear had been seen around the trap site on a few occasions, but always without a mother. We have seen other instances of young bears being separated from their mother's as yearlings, typically when the litter only consists of one individual. At that point the female breeds with a male and the cycle begins again with cubs produced the following winter.

2017 Plans

We will continue to perform monthly check of rub trees in all study areas and place trail cameras at corrals to snag hair for genetic analysis. Corrals are left for 2-3 weeks before hair collection and removal. Corrals are equipped with a trail camera to record the presence of bears or other species. If bears do not leave hair we still have a picture of the animals involved and this is particularly useful for identifying females with young. During 2016 we checked over

750 rub trees and 29 corrals in the Cabinet-Yaak and over 150 rub trees and 160 corrals in the Selkirks. We are establishing more rubs in the Selkirk Mountains during 2017.

Our genetic samples from 2016 are still being analyzed by the genetics laboratory. When complete we will finalize our 2016 monitoring reports for both these recovery areas. Results from 2015 provided genetic information 20 different grizzly bears in the Selkirk Mountains and 29 different grizzly bears in the Cabinet-Yaak.

Acknowledgements

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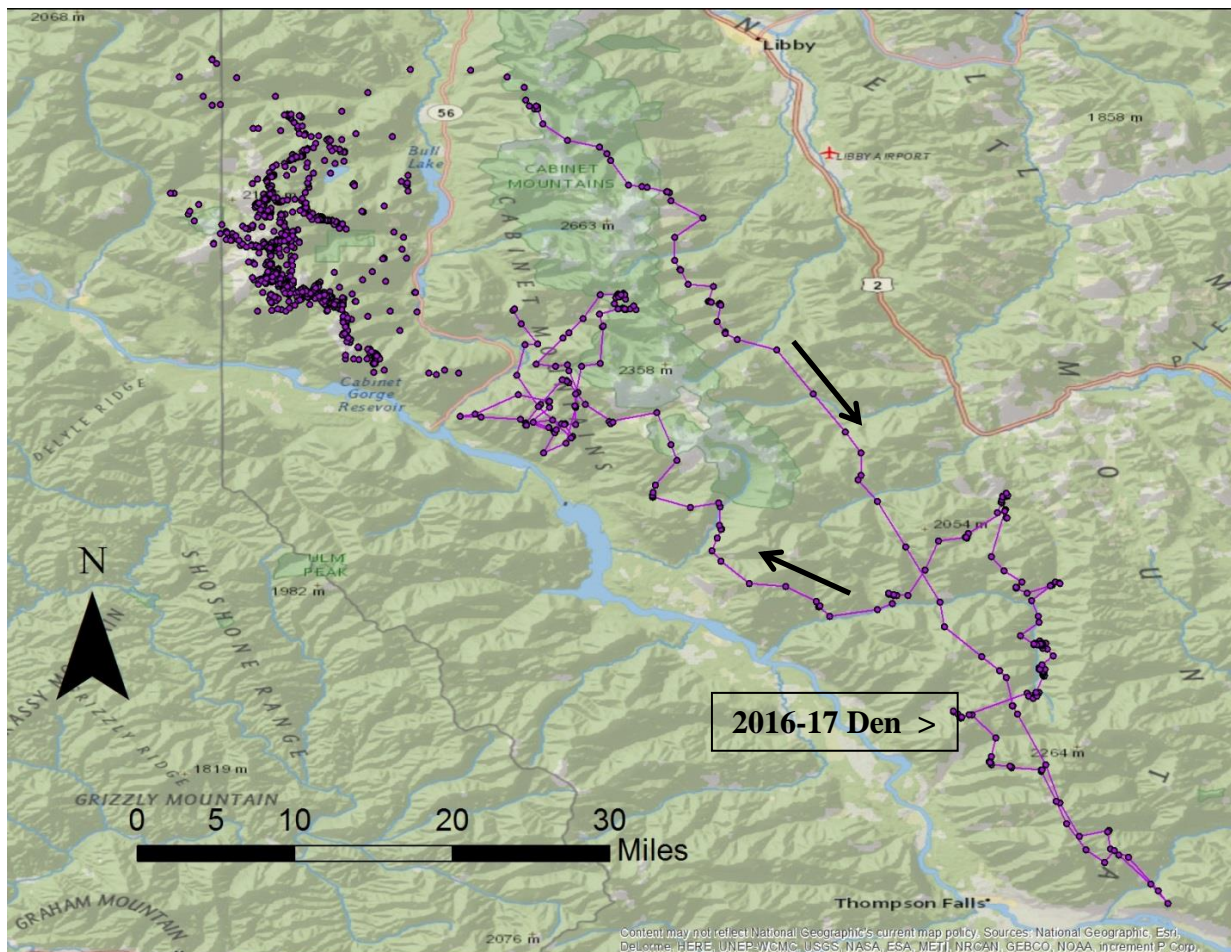


Figure 1. Locations of male augmentation grizzly bear 926 in the Cabinet Mountains from his release in July of 2016 to May of 2017. The points with lines trace his path from the loss of his signal in November of 2016 through denning to his locations in May of 2017.