

Image Details

# Grizzly Bear



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## Overview

Grizzly bears, *Ursus arctos horribilis*, are a member of the brown bear species, *U. arctos*, that occurs in North America, Europe and Asia. The subspecies *U. a. horribilis* is limited to North America and historically existed throughout much of the western half of the contiguous United States, central Mexico, western Canada and most of Alaska. Prior to 1800, an estimated 50,000 grizzly bears were distributed in one large contiguous area throughout all or portions of 18 western States, including Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Nevada, Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Grizzly bears were probably most common in the Rocky Mountains, along the Upper Missouri River and in California. Grizzly bears were less common or did not occur in large expanses of the North American deserts and Great Plains ecoregions.

With the arrival of Europeans to North America, grizzly bears were seen as a threat to livestock and human safety and, therefore, an impediment to westward expansion and settlement. In the 1800s, in concert with European settlement of the American West and government-funded bounty programs which aimed at eradication, grizzly bears were shot, poisoned and trapped wherever they were found.

The resulting declines in range and population were dramatic with rapid extinction of populations from most of Mexico and from the central and southwestern United States and California. Grizzly bears were reduced to close to 2% of their former range in the 48 contiguous states by the 1930s, with a corresponding decrease in population, approximately 125 years after first contact with European settlers. In the early 20th century, new regulations were designed to stop future extirpations. In some areas, the protections came too late. By 1975, grizzly bear populations in the 48 contiguous states had been reduced to between 700 to 800. Although significant numbers remained in Alaska and northern Canada, individuals were restricted largely to the confines of national parks and wilderness areas in Washington, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. Grizzly bears were relegated to these areas in the 48 contiguous states primarily because of limited human influences.

The 1993 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plan identified six ecosystems, with recovery zones at the core of each, to further recovery efforts. Each recovery zone represents an area large enough and of sufficient habitat quality to support a recovered grizzly bear population. The plan recognized that grizzly bears will move and reside permanently in areas outside the recovery zones and that connectivity between recovery areas would be necessary for isolated populations to increase and sustain themselves at recovery levels.

The recovery zones identified are:

- The Greater Yellowstone, referred to as GYE, in northwestern Wyoming, eastern Idaho and southwestern Montana

- The Northern Continental Divide, referred to as NCDE, of north-central Montana

- The North Cascades area of north-central Washington

- The Selkirks, referred to as SE, area of northern Idaho, northeast Washington and southeast British Columbia

- The Cabinet-Yaak, referred to as CYE, area of northwestern Montana and northern Idaho

- The Bitterroot, referred to as BE, in the Bitterroot Mountains of central Idaho and western Montana

Currently, there are at least 1,923 individuals in the 48 contiguous states, with 727 in the GYE demographic monitoring area, 1,092 in the NCDE, about 60 in the CYE and a minimum of 44 in the United States portion of the SE, although some bears have home ranges that cross the international border, as documented by C.M. Costello and L. Roberts in 2021 and M.A. Haroldson and others also in 2021. In the GYE, this estimate does not capture the entire distribution of grizzly bears. In addition, grizzly bears have been verified in areas between ecosystems; however, there are likely few resident grizzly bears in the 48 contiguous states outside of the GYE, NCDE, CYE and SE. There are currently no known populations within the North Cascades or the Bitterroot Mountains of central Idaho and western Montana.

Estimated distribution, or current range, represents areas in which grizzly bears are known to have established home ranges and continuously reside. Ecosystems are generally considered to be the larger area surrounding the recovery zones in which grizzly bears may be anticipated to occur as part of the same population. The Species List Area captures current range and additional areas of low-density peripheral occurrences and transitory individuals. Grizzly bears are expanding on the landscape, can disperse large distances and are not easily detectable. Developed through a standardized protocol, the Species List Area includes additional areas of verified outlier locations gathered by our state, federal and Tribal partner agencies, such as verified sightings, mortalities, conflicts and radio-collared individuals outside of current range.

[Map of current estimated occupied range for grizzly bears in the lower-48 States](#)

[Map of Species List Area for grizzly bear used for consultation](#)

Grizzly bears in the 48 contiguous states are currently protected as a threatened species. It is illegal to harm, harass or kill these bears, except in cases of self-defense or the defense of others. Grizzly bear conservation is complex and only made possible through a variety of partnerships with the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, state wildlife agencies, Native American Tribes, federal agencies, universities and other organizations.

## Bear Safety

Learn the characteristics of bears and what you can do to prevent human-bear conflict. Check out our [Bear Safety](#) page. For more information on living and recreating in grizzly bear country, visit the [Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee's bear safety page](#) [!\[\]\(e474458956c9a37fbf9586ddb60a7fa1\_img.jpg\)](#).

### Scientific Name

*Ursus arctos horribilis*

### Common Name

brown bear, grizzly bear

### FWS Category

Mammals

### Kingdom

*Animalia*

### Location in Taxonomic Tree ()

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Species

↳ *Ursus arctos*

Subspecies

↳ *Ursus arctos horribilis*

## Identification Numbers

TSN: ⓘ ()

202385 ↗

## Characteristics

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS	▼
LIFE CYCLE	▼
HABITAT	▼
FOOD	▼
BEHAVIOR	▼

## Geography

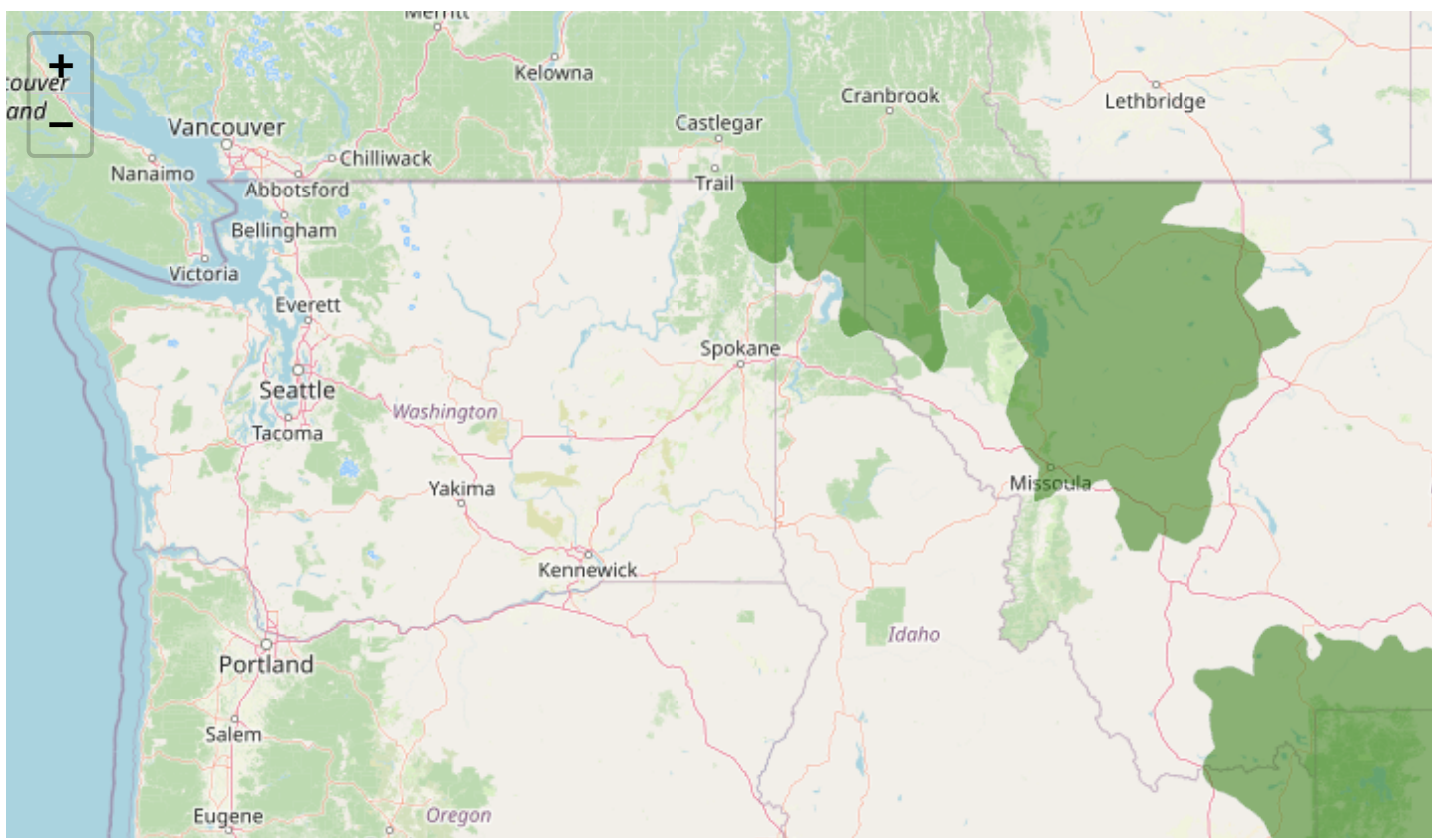
### Range

Adult grizzly bears are normally solitary except when breeding or when females have dependent young, but they are not territorial and home ranges of adult bears frequently overlap. Home range size is affected by resource availability, sex, age and reproductive status. Generally, females with cubs-

of-the-year or yearlings have the smallest home range sizes. The large home ranges of grizzly bears, particularly males, enhance maintenance of genetic diversity in the population by enabling males to mate with numerous females.

Young, female grizzly bears usually establish home ranges within or overlapping their mother's. This pattern of home range establishment can make dispersal of females across landscapes a slow process. Radio-telemetry and genetic data suggest females typically establish home ranges an average of 6.1 to 8.9 miles (9.8 to 14.3 kilometers) away from the center of their mother's home range, whereas males generally disperse farther, averaging 18.6 to 26.0 miles (29.9 to 42.0 kilometers) away from the center of their mother's home range. Maximum male dispersal distances of 42 to 109 miles (67 to 176 kilometers) have been documented in the Greater Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide ecosystems. Studies also indicate that females can and do disperse long distances up to 50 to 56 miles (80 to 90 kilometers), typically on the periphery of expanding populations. Although the frequency of long-distance dispersal by females is much lower than males, it can contribute to range expansion and demographic connectivity between populations.

Home range sizes vary among the ecosystems because of population densities and habitat productivity, as well as methodology. In the 48 contiguous states, observed average annual adult female home ranges vary from 130 to 358 kilometers-squared and average annual adult male home range vary from 475 to 2,162 kilometers-squared.






# Timeline

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60 ITEMS



Jan 15, 2025

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**Publication type:** Proposed Rule

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ITEM 60

Key:

 Event       Regulatory Status Change

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Grizzly Bear Bitterroot EIS Project - Spring 2025 Quarterly Update

For more information: <https://www.fws.gov/BitterrootEIS>

PDF

Apr 17, 2025

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; 12-Month Finding for the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem of the Grizzly Bear in the Lower-48 States

Delisting



Jan 15, 2025

12m petition finding

## Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; 12-Month Finding for the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem of the Grizzly Bear in the Lower-48 States

Delisting

Jan 15, 2025

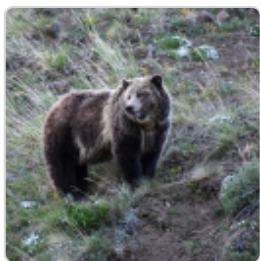
12m petition finding

## Grizzly Bear Listing on the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife With a Revised Section 4(d) Rule; Proposed Rule

Revision of Entity

Jan 15, 2025

Proposed Rule



### USFWS Proposes Update to Grizzly Bear ESA Listing & Management

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today announced a new and comprehensive approach to long-term grizzly bear recovery in the lower 48 states and the concerns of those living with and near bears. The Service is proposing a rule to clarify the geographic area where grizzly bears in the lower 48...

Press Release

Jan 8, 2025



## Literature Cited: Proposed Revision to the Grizzly Bear Listing on the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife with a Revised Section 4(d) Rule

For more information: <https://www.fws.gov/grizzlyrulemaking>

PDF

Jan 8, 2025



## Shapefile: proposed grizzly bear DPS boundary lower 48

For more information: <https://www.fws.gov/grizzlyrulemaking>

Zip Archive

Jan 8, 2025



## Federal Register Notice: Grizzly bear GYE 12-month finding

For more information: <https://www.fws.gov/grizzlyrulemaking>

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## Species Assessment Form: Grizzly bear GYE 12-month finding

For more information: <https://www.fws.gov/grizzlyrulemaking>

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## Literature Cited: Grizzly bear GYE 12-month finding



For more information: <https://www.fws.gov/grizzlyrulemaking>

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