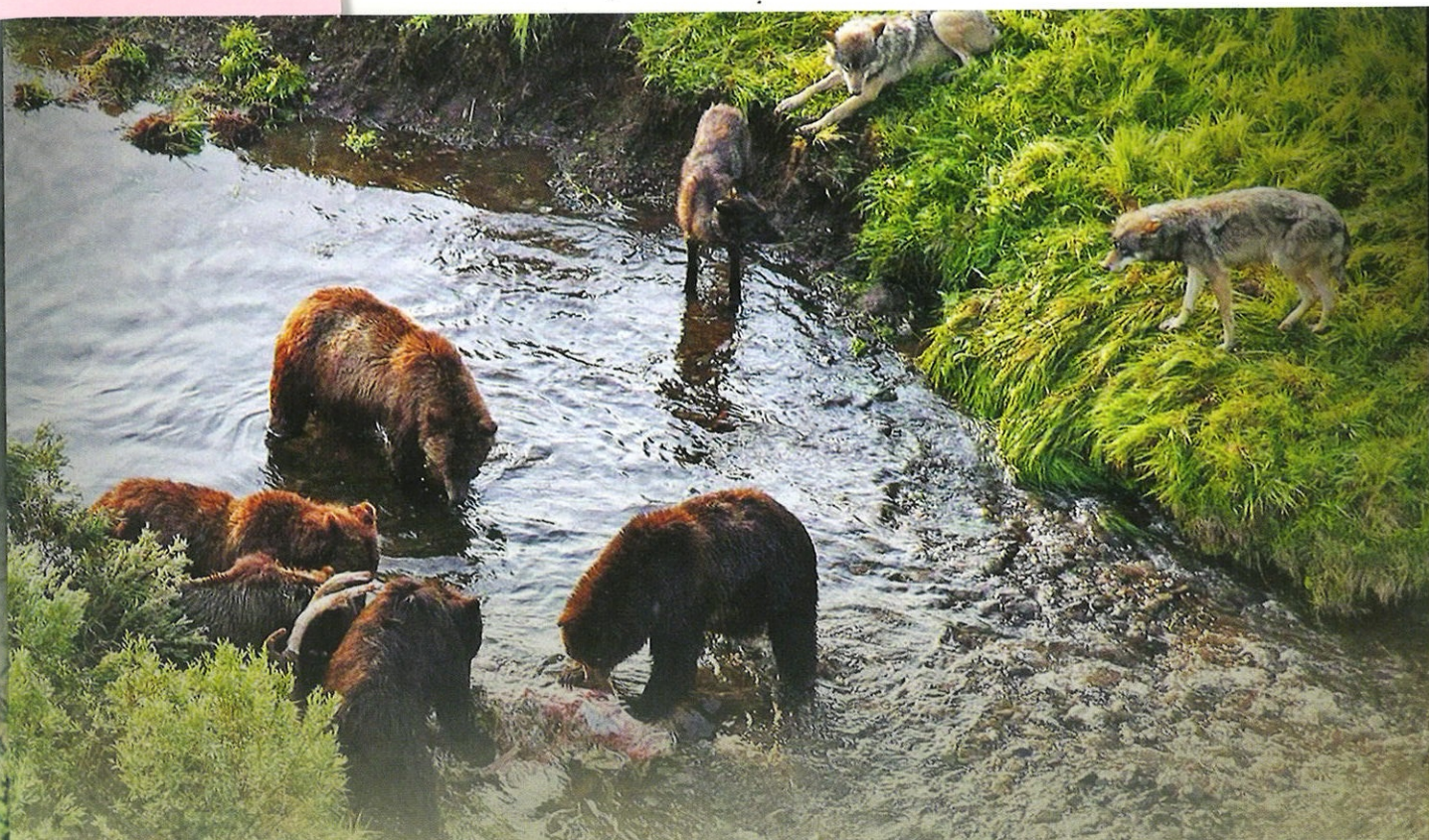


Bear Predation...





New Insights On An Old Problem

As Wolves and Grizzlies continue to go unchecked in the North, and western states managed for more black bears, Mule Deer and Elk populations will continue to decline. Facts show Black Bears will drive Mountain Lions off their kills, which forces the big cats to kill an average of 48% more game! Below is a sad reminder that growing Bear populations are also responsible for shrinking deer and elk numbers across the West!

STORY BY **DR. CHARLES E. KAY**

It has long been known that bears, both black and grizzlies, can have a negative impact on ungulate numbers by killing newborn fawns and calves. Many people, though, believe that this is not much of a problem because young animals are thought to lack scent, making calves and fawns difficult for predators to locate. Research, however, has shown that bears can readily find hidden young, be they mule deer, elk, moose, or caribou. In the past, it was necessary for biologists to capture and radio collar a large number of newborn ungulates, which were then tracked to determine if and how they died. In general, such studies are difficult, costly, and as it turns out, not very accurate.

Recently, though, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has developed a new technique to study bear predation on calves.

During mid-May adult grizzlies were captured by darting from a helicopter in Alaska's Nelchina Basin. Next, each bear was fitted with a GPS collar that contained a small digital camera. The collars were programmed to take a GPS reading every 15 minutes and 10 second video clips at 5 to 15-minute intervals during daylight hours. All data was stored on board and the bears were recaptured a month later to remove the collars and to retrieve both the GPS data and video clips.

With this new system you can actually

SEE the bears killing and eating moose and caribou calves! Four bears were also documented killing adult ungulates.

On average each bear killed 1.2 calves PER DAY! That's an unheard of kill rate! One bear killed 44 calves in 25 days, while another grizzly killed only seven. The mean kill rate per bear, though, was over 34 calves per month! In addition, within an hour, the bears had completely consumed each of their victims. In short, the bears ate all the evidence, which is why it is so difficult to locate fawn or calf kills in the field and why earlier studies reported such low kill rates. Is it any wonder that most of Alaska has so little game? When I worked for Alaska Fish and Game back in the 1970's, I ac-

tually traveled to Montana each fall to hunt mule deer and elk. This was before wolves were turned loose on a largely unsuspecting public in the West. Alaska, of course, is also home to a large number of ungulate-killing wolves. I never was able to get one in the crosshairs, however, though I tried.

Moreover, bears, again both black and grizzlies, have an additional negative effect on ungulate numbers and hunting opportunities via kleptoparasitism. Parasites are very small animals that live off their larger hosts, while kleptoparasites are very large animals that live off of other large animals. Grizzly bears, for instance, can and do live off wolves, while black bears can and do live off mountain



Left: While videoing a rare Lion sighting, hunters were surprised when a Bear appeared to be following the Lion's same trail. Studies in California show black bears will drive Lions from mule deer and blacktail kills, causing mountain lions to increase their kill rate by an average of 48 percent! Right: Collar studies in Yellowstone show grizzlies routinely drive Wolves from their kills, forcing them to kill more often.

lions. In Yellowstone and Alaska, grizzlies routinely drive wolves from the latter's kills. This forces the wolves to kill more often to make up for the meat appropriated by the bears. The same is true of black bears and cougars.

As documented in both California and Colorado, black bears commonly drive mountain lions from mule deer and blacktail kills. To compensate for the lost prey, mountain lions increased their kill rate by an average of 48%! Contrary to what most people think, mountain lion kill rates are actually higher during summer, when bears are active, than during winter when bears are in their dens. Likewise, in Patagonia, scavenging by Andean Condors has also been shown to increase puma kill rates. While closer to home, on Cedar Mountain in Southern Utah, ranchers claim that coyote kill rates on domestic sheep have increased since introduced California Condors have been feeding on coyote-killed lambs.

This all makes perfect sense. Predators live by killing other animals and if that food is usurped by another species, be they predators or scavengers, the original predator has to kill more often if it is to survive. Thus, bears have both direct and indirect effects on ungulate populations. First, by killing large numbers of fawns and calves, and second by stealing mountain lion or wolf kills, thereby forcing the primary predators to kill more often. The solution? More bear rugs!

As might be expected, "watermelons" have been trying to limit bear hunting for years by outlawing spring hunts, hunting over baits and using dogs to tree black

bears. British Columbia, for instance, recently banned all grizzly hunting at the urging of city-bound watermelons. While a far-left, federal judge in Montana recently sided with watermelons and put Yellowstone grizzlies back on the Endangered Species List for a second time, precluding state hunting seasons that had been planned for the first time in over four decades. Watermelons argued that grizzlies should be restored throughout the entire West. Now if you think that sounds farfetched, no one thought that wolves would ever again run free throughout the West, but the feds and watermelons DID run wolves down our collective throats, and they DO plan to do the same with grizzlies. In fact, the Center for Biological Diversity has already informed a federal judge that griz-

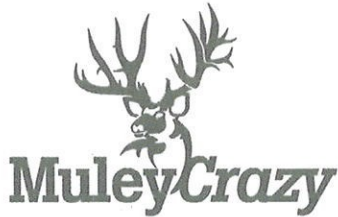
zlies need to be restored to California, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Washington, and Oregon.

You say you do not know what a watermelon is? Well, there are at least two books on the subject that you can consult. Hint, what color is a watermelon on the outside? – green. What color is a watermelon on the inside? – red. Wildlife management should not be a left/right thing, but that is what it has become, whether we like it or not. BC's ban on grizzly bear hunting does not apply to Native People, who have aboriginal or treaty hunting rights. If that US Senator from back East, who was running for President, is an Indian, as she has claimed for years, with only one percent, or less, of aboriginal blood, then I think we all should be able to claim aboriginal hunting rights!



New studies with digital cameras fitted into collars in Alaska alarmingly showed one bear killed 44 Caribou calves in 25 days! Closer to home, early summer grizzly and black bears will kill a large number of fawns and calves. The author suggests the only way to sustain ungulate populations...more bear rugs!

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Ryan Hatch

When I sit down to finish a magazine, sometimes it's hard to find the correct words to start my introduction. This happens to be one of those times. Well, here goes nothing... I always brag about hunters being the ultimate conservationists, and the proud heritage and brotherhood we have worked for generations to maintain. To say this lightly, we are being robbed by our State and Federal agencies! Robbed of countless generations of hunting and hard-fought conservation. It's heartbreaking that our children are being robbed of their chance to carry on our sacred sport. Worse than just being robbed, is the fact that our State agencies just continue to lie to all sportsmen. Heck, I guess it wasn't so hard to start this issue after all!

In the last two years alone, much of the West has witnessed what I can only describe as, a massive population explosion of big cats! State agencies in my home state of Utah have been bragging that mule deer populations are recovering. This is a complete lie, a lie that has been perpetuated by the State of Utah for more than a decade now. Read "Facts About Predation" by Chuck Hammond on page 7. I sure get excited to see someone younger than 40 that gets as pissed off as I do! It's a great article where most of the facts and data were pulled from the State of Utah's own recent collar studies.

Alicia and I had the great opportunity to see one of Alaska's wildest regions a few years back. I was disappointed to learn that the Caribou in the region were almost extinct. Alaska's Game and Fish website stated that pesky parasites had killed most of the Caribou on the Peninsula. Read the short story by Dr. Charles Kay, "Bear Predation" on page 15 and find out the truth. It's seems crazy to me that it would take new radio collar technology again to make the people we employ finally

start figuring out what is killing all the ungulates in Alaska. One bear eats 44 calves in 25 days! Parasites my butt! Do these game and fish agencies ever even leave the office? We simply have too many predators. Another horrible example is Michael Stewart's story on page 13. This story reminds us of the negative impact coyotes can have on mule deer populations. His 180lb buck was picked clean to the bone overnight! Imagine how many more deer each cougar kills to feed themselves on top of having to feed all of the coyotes and bears!

One of the most common calls I get lately is related to shooting further distance. As our business specializes in increasing shot distance without spending a million dollars, I wrote an article on page 25 explaining what is needed to "makeover" a rifle. The bottom line is, making the move to long range is not as easy as just placing a new scope on an old gun. In the same breath, I gave a few options to chew on about making your old rifle more accomplished at a distance. The basis of this article was to help you understand what types of accuracy is needed, and what some of the components cost to improve said accuracy. You can hop into long-range without spending a ton of money, the hardest decision is whether to fix up your current rifle or start new.

To each of the contributing writers, thank you for sharing your stories. It is great to see all of the girls killing big mule deer! And yes, that includes Aleia Michael with her cover story on page 57. It's hard to believe that she has drawn two tags, and they were both the best deer tag in the world. The video of the crazy scene showing her 237-inch giant sinking in the pond is absolutely amazing!