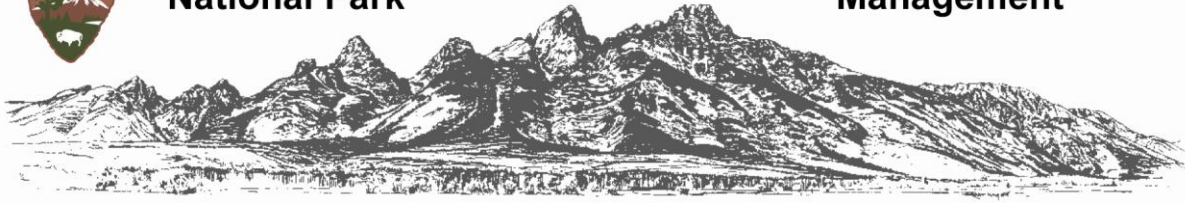




Grand Teton National Park

Science and Resource Management



2008 Wildlife Conservation: Wildlife Brigade



Wildlife Jam in Grand Teton National Park.

BACKGROUND

Grand Teton National Park (GRTE) experienced nearly a doubling of bear incidents involving human food rewards and/or property damage in campgrounds and a 10-fold increase in roadside wildlife jams involving large animals between 2005 and 2006. This represents an increased risk for both human injury and wildlife mortality at the wildlife-human interface. Park managers held several interdisciplinary meetings during the winter of 2005-2006 to address these concerns. As a result of these meetings a new “Be Bear Aware” campaign was initiated in 2007. This effort resulted in newly designed food storage signs and stickers to be placed throughout the park, and initiation of the Wildlife Brigade, a corps of paid and volunteer staff to respond to wildlife jams and enforce food storage at campgrounds, picnic areas, and other developed areas.

APPROACH

The Wildlife Brigade managed congested roadside wildlife jams, promoted ethical wildlife viewing, patrolled developed areas to secure bear attractants, and educated thousands of visitors about bear conservation, safety in bear country, and how to reduce bear-human conflicts.

The 2008 Wildlife Brigade, supervised by the new permanent bear management specialist, was comprised of 2 seasonal park rangers, 7 volunteers, and 2 interns.

The Greater Yellowstone Coalition (GYC), a non-profit advocacy group, partnered with GRTE to provide the interns, who worked with the Brigade for 10 weeks. To fill the internship positions, GYC recruited students studying parks and recreation management, wildlife biology, or a similar field from undergraduate and graduate colleges and universities in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho.

RESULTS

In 2008 we managed a minimum of 122 grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) jams, 48 black bear (*Ursus americanus*) jams, and 42 bear jams where the species was not specified. The Park also managed 67 moose jams and several jams for other species such as bison and elk. The Brigade patrolled campgrounds, picnic areas, and other developed areas throughout the park and wrote 1,060 food storage warning notices. The volunteers and GYC interns contributed nearly 4,000 hours of time toward this important bear conservation and public education program. With collaboration from the Interpretation Division, the GYC interns initiated a series of public bear safety briefings in the Colter Bay area where they contacted almost 400 visitors. In addition, Bear Management staff led several bear safety education and outreach programs in 2008 where they contacted about 250 people (concession employees, park employees, residents of Jackson and Teton Village, WY, and groups from the Teton Science School). Finally, the Wildlife Brigade continued to replace old or damaged bear information and education material throughout the park.

Noteworthy among the park’s increased efforts to enhance safety at the bear-human interface was a partnership with the Grand Teton National Park Foundation (GTNPF) to cost-share expenses for purchasing and installing bear-resistant food storage boxes at campgrounds and other developed areas. The National Park Service and the Grand Teton Lodge Company partnered with GTNPF to purchase and install 52 new boxes in GRTE. Twenty-eight boxes were installed in the Colter Bay Campground, 18 were installed at the Colter Bay Tent Village, and 6 were installed at String Lake picnic area. Because of the need for several hundred additional food storage boxes, this project will likely be continuing for years to come.



Bear-resistant food locker at String Lake, Grand Teton National Park.

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