

Dismal Record for Alberta Grizzly Bear Deaths

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Grizzly bears in the Highwood. Photo: Alberta Wilderness Association

Grizzly bears deaths in 2016 marked the highest number of human-caused grizzly deaths since stopping the hunt in 2006. Last week, the Alberta Government released the [number of recorded grizzly bear deaths](#) over the last two years, showing that the threatened species is dying at a troubling rate. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) believes immediate action, including placing stringent limits on the amount of motorized access into grizzly bear habitat, must be taken to address the top reasons for grizzly bear deaths.

“Three of the past five years have seen significant spikes in the number of grizzly bears killed annually, with 29 bears killed in 2016. We are worried these increases will become ‘the new normal’ unless we do something immediately to address the issue,” said Joanna Skrajny, AWA Conservation Specialist.

When the Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan was written in 2008, it was estimated that there were fewer than 700 grizzlies remaining in the province. Since that time, a total of 224 bear deaths have been documented, with an average of 19 deaths a year; all but 17 have been caused by humans.

“The number of grizzly bears that have died over the past decade is significant, especially when you consider that these are only the known mortalities. Some researchers estimate that the true number may be twice as high,” Joanna added. “We fear that grizzly bear deaths will continue to increase unless we get serious about protecting their habitat and properly managing our public lands.”

Over half of grizzly bear deaths since 2008 have been due to illegal kills (i.e. poaching) as well as accidental deaths (i.e. motorized use).

In addition, while the province has recently announced that rehabilitation of orphaned black bear cubs will be permitted once again, AWA is concerned that the rehabilitation of grizzly bears, a threatened species, continues to be banned. This is especially concerning given that Alberta’s grizzly bears have some of the lowest reproduction rates in the world. Other wildlife continuing to be prohibited from rehabilitation efforts include bighorn sheep, mountain goats, wolves, coyotes, black bear adults, and cougars.

For more information:

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