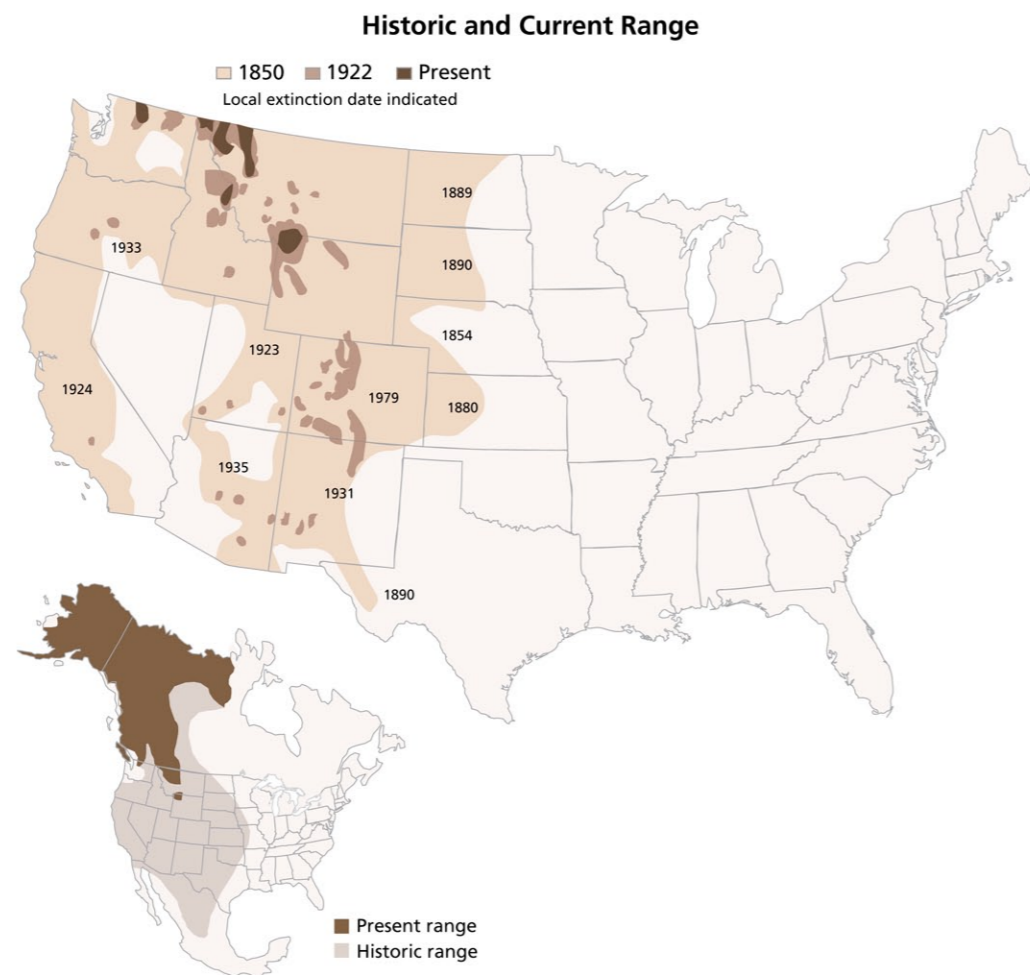


# Grizzly Bears

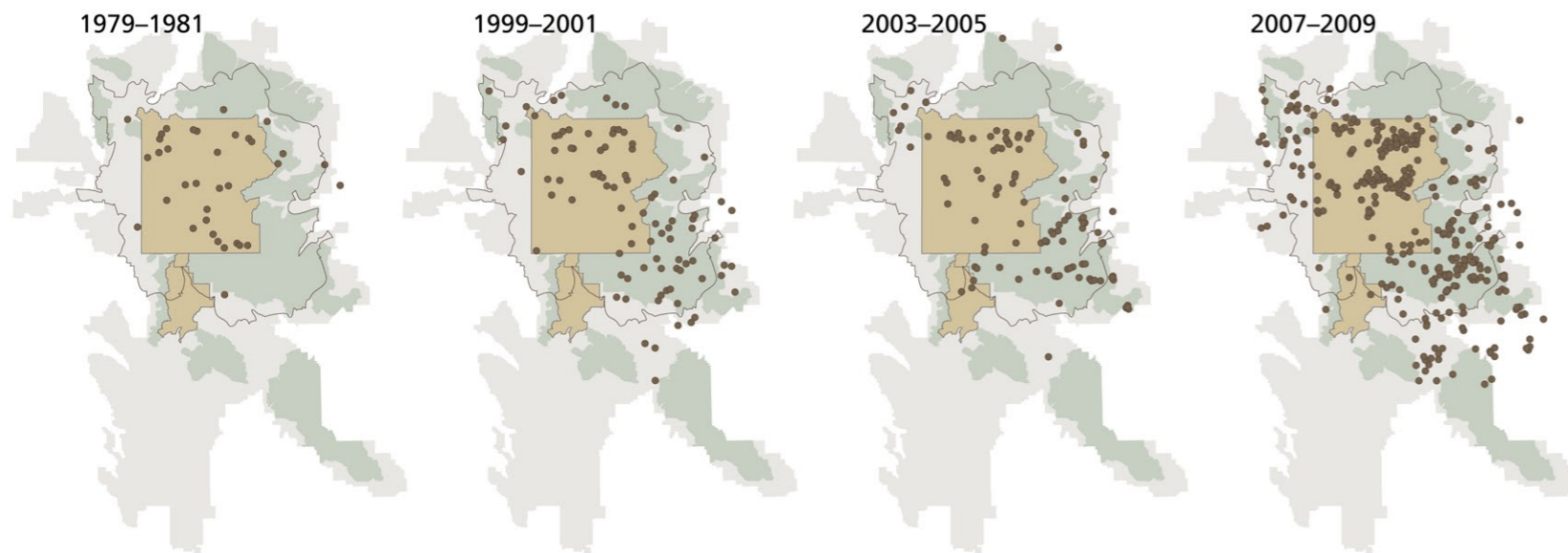
## Grizzly Bear Range

North American grizzly bears once roamed from northern Alaska to northern Mexico and from the Pacific Coast to western Missouri. Bear numbers and range decreased dramatically following European American exploration and settlement west of the Mississippi River. Ranches, farms, and cities encroached on grizzly habitat; people shot, trapped, and poisoned bears to protect cattle, sheep, and poultry from attack. Important bear foods such as salmon, bison, and elk grew ever harder to find as humans built dams, hunted, and introduced livestock. By 1975, grizzly bears had been extirpated from Mexico and all but 2 percent of their historic range in the lower forty-eight states. Bears remain abundant in Alaska and northern Canada, their populations stable except in a few areas of rapid human settlement and development. Farther south, however, habitat fragmentation, alteration, and destruction threaten the bears. The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is the southernmost grizzly range as of 2007 and plays a key role in maintaining grizzly bear populations and genetic diversity.



## Female Grizzly Bears with Cubs

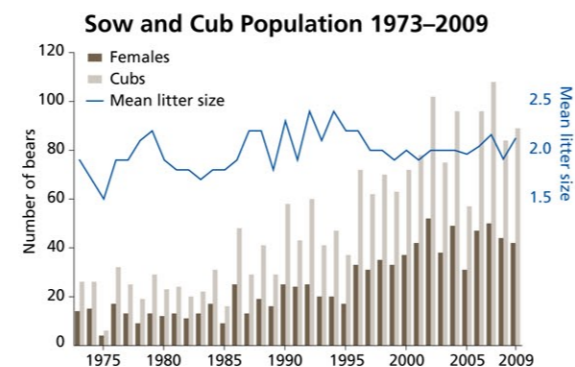
National Forest    Sighting  
 Wilderness area    Bear recovery zone  
 National Park



## Endangered Species Protection

Yellowstone area grizzly bears received federal protection as a threatened species in 1975. State and federal wildlife and habitat management agencies have worked to reduce both conflicts between bears and people and human-caused bear deaths as well as to increase cub production and survival. The area occupied by the bears has grown from approximately 15,000 square kilometers in the 1970s to 17,000 (1980s) to 34,000 (1990s) to 37,000 (2005). Annual counts of females with cubs are used to estimate grizzly bear population numbers

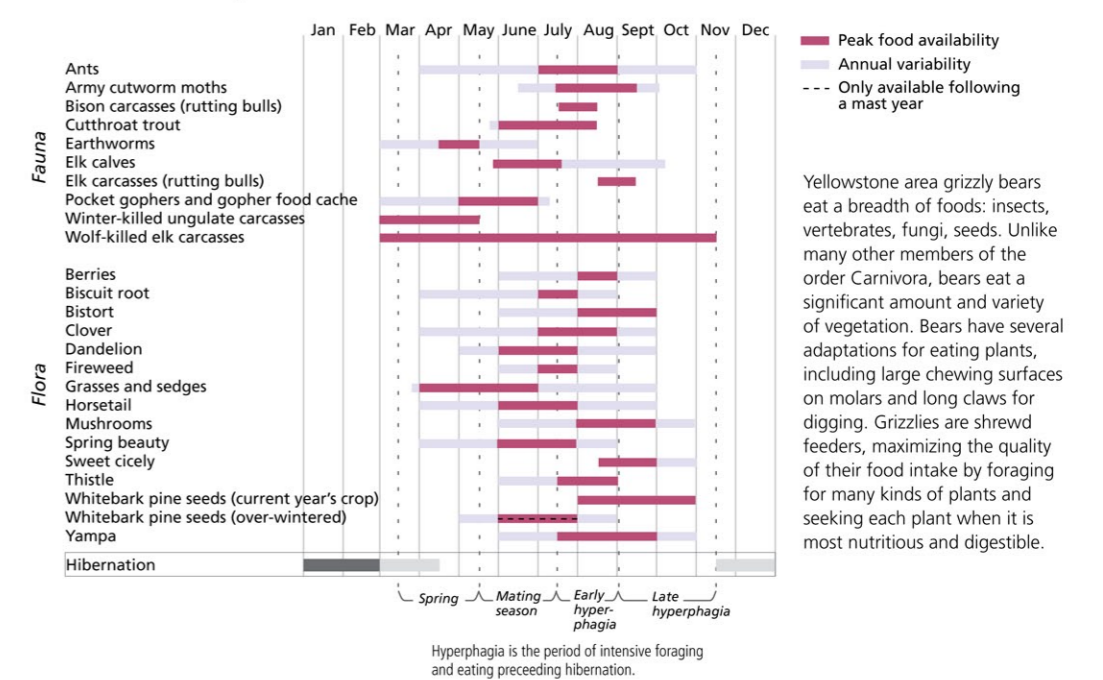
and trends. Both the number of females producing cubs and the total number of cubs produced annually has increased since the mid-1980s. Due to the significant increase in bear numbers and range since then, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service removed the bears from threatened status in 2007. The matter is not settled, however; in response to a lawsuit filed by bear advocacy groups, a federal judge ordered grizzly bears returned to threatened status in 2009—a ruling currently under appeal by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



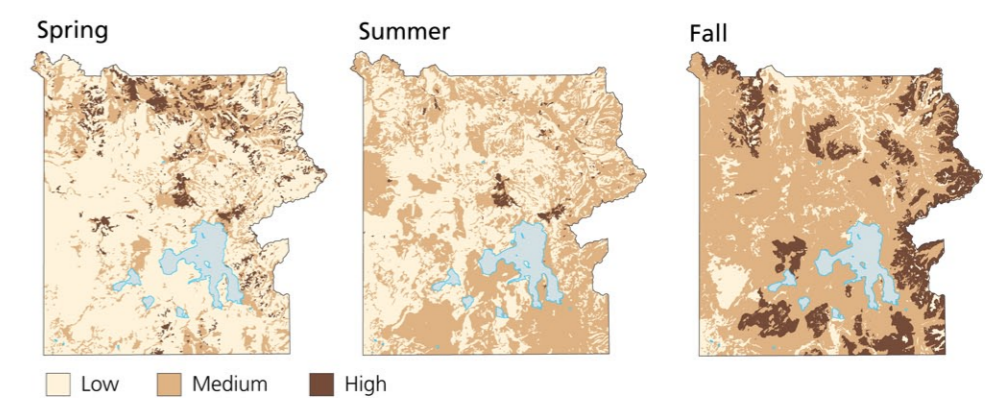
## Seasonal Habitat and Food

Grizzly bears are omnivores, eating a wide variety of plants, animals, and insects. In the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, grizzly bears prefer concentrated high-energy foods such as the carcasses of large mammals, elk calves, spawning cutthroat trout, army cutworm moths, whitebark pine seeds, and clover. Spending approximately five months without food while hibernating in winter dens, the bears must ingest a year's food supply in just seven months. Preferred bear foods are seasonal in nature and fluctuate in abundance from year to year. As a consequence, grizzly bears require large home ranges to ensure they can meet their energy needs. Prime spring habitat includes elk and bison wintering areas where bears scavenge winterkilled animals, and areas of early plant growth where bears graze succulent vegetation. In summer, bears favor elk calving areas, streams with spawning cutthroat trout, and high elevation talus slopes where they eat large quantities of army cutworm moths. Preferred fall habitat contains cone-producing whitebark pine trees. Grizzly bears obtain the fat- and protein-rich whitebark pine seeds by raiding red squirrel caches. In years of low pine nut production, grizzlies forage more extensively on biscuit roots and yampa and eat more meat. Grizzly bears scavenge wolf-killed elk and bison during the spring, summer, and fall.

## Food Availability



## Seasonal Habitat Preference



## Mortality

Grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem die from many causes including old age, starvation, drowning, avalanche, and den collapse as well as when killed by other bears, wolves, or humans. A larger proportion of dependent young bears (cubs and yearlings) than adult bears die from natural causes. Adult grizzly bear deaths—85 percent of which are caused by humans—result mostly from management removal of bears involved in conflicts with people, defense of life or property by private citizens, mistaken identification by black bear hunters, poaching, vehicle strikes, and electrocution by downed power lines. Bears come into conflict with people more often during years with poor availability of their preferred foods, especially fall foods; conversely, fewer conflicts and human-caused bear deaths tend to occur in years when food is abundant. The proportion of bear deaths due to natural causes as compared to human causes is generally higher within national parks, whereas the opposite ratio is generally found outside park boundaries.

## Deaths, 1975-2005

