



## *Living With Wildlife in the Northern Rockies*

# Coexisting With Grizzly Bears

**G**rizzly bears once roamed much of the North American wilderness, from the Great Plains to the California coast and from Canada to Mexico. By the 1970s, persecution by human settlers had reduced populations in the lower 48 states from an estimated 50,000 to 100,000 to about 400 bears living in less than 2 percent of their historical range. However, thanks to protections afforded by the Endangered Species Act, 1,400 to 1,600 grizzly bears now inhabit five of the six recovery areas identified for the species in the northwestern continental United States by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The biggest factor affecting grizzly bear recovery is human-related mortality. Suburbs, highways, campgrounds, ranchlands and garbage dumps are now part of the landscape in grizzly country, leading to conflicts between people and bears. Defenders works with landowners, ranchers, government agencies and other partners to find solutions to these conflicts and to promote coexistence.

*For more than a decade, Defenders has been funding coexistence projects to prevent conflicts between people and grizzlies. We have invested more than \$400,000 in well over 100 projects—the largest investment of any wildlife conservation organization.*



### Helping ranchers

Defenders spearheads a variety of coexistence projects to prevent conflicts between livestock and grizzlies. These include helping our partners hire range riders, purchase livestock guarding dogs and install electric fencing to protect sheep, goats, pigs, chickens and other livestock. We also provide incentives to ranchers to retire sheep grazing allotments that experience chronic predation in grizzly habitat. Defenders' Grizzly Bear Compensation Trust reimburses ranchers for the cost of verified livestock losses to grizzly bears. As of 2012, we have invested more than \$400,000 in well over 100 coexistence projects—more than any other conservation organization—and reimbursed ranchers for more than \$350,000 for lost livestock.



A captive grizzly bear participates in a test of bear-resistant trash containers at the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in Montana.

### Working with communities

Grizzlies are opportunistic omnivores, meaning they will eat a wide range of foods—it all depends on what they encounter. Garbage bins and dumps, stored food, fruit trees and beehives are major bear attractants. Bears that frequent these food resources can come to associate people with food “rewards,” leading to safety concerns for people and bears. (Bears that become habituated to humans often must be killed.) To help avoid potential conflicts, Defenders offers funding for fencing around beehives, fruit trees and community garbage dumps. We also purchase bear-resistant dumpsters and bins for communities and, when appropriate, support the use of rubber bullets and other nonlethal means by authorized managers to teach bears to associate close proximity to people with a negative experience.

### Keeping recreationists safe

To help reduce conflicts between bears and people enjoying the outdoors in bear country, Defenders buys bear-resistant storage boxes for pack animals and electric fencing kits for loan to guides and outfitters. We also help install poles or bear-resistant boxes so that hunters, hikers and campers can safely hang or store their food out of reach. These measures help prevent bears from becoming habituated to campgrounds, hunting camps and recreation areas.

### Spreading the word

Promoting coexistence through community outreach is an important part of building acceptance and reducing conflicts with grizzlies. Defenders disseminates accurate, up-to-date information to the public and the media about effective solutions through workshops and education events. Throughout the year, we talk to hundreds of people of all ages about how to live, work and recreate safely in grizzly country.



Proven tools of coexistence in grizzly country: electrified fencing around a chicken coop (top) and a food storage locker at a campground (bottom).



1130 17<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
202.682.9400

To learn more about Defenders' coexistence work, visit [www.defenders.org](http://www.defenders.org)