

Effects of Pedestrians on Grizzly Bears

An Evaluation of the Effects of Hikers, Hunters, Photographers, Campers, and Watchers with Reference to the Proposed Pacific Northwest Trail

David J. Mattson, Ph.D.

Report GBRP-2019-3



Doug Kelly



2019

**The Grizzly Bear
Recovery Project**

P.O. Box 2406,
Livingston,
Montana

1. Introduction

Researchers have documented broadly similar patterns in how grizzly and brown bears respond to people on foot throughout the Northern Hemisphere. Yet there is also substantial documented variation that is plausibly attributable to differences in individual bears, human-bear history, bear-bear interactions, distributions and abundances of people, behaviors of involved people, the predictability of human activity, and the distributions of food resources vis-à-vis humans. And variation can also be found in scaling up from responses of individual bears to responses manifest at an aggregate population level.

My goal here is to not only elucidate widespread commonalities, but also contextualize individual and population-level variation revealed in the corpus of research relevant to reactions of brown and grizzly bears to people on foot. My prospectus here pertains only to pedestrians or pedestrian-related infrastructure (e.g., trails and backcountry campsites), not motorized human activities (e.g., highway and ATV-track traffic or motor boats and planes), although the boundary is necessarily fuzzy given that some single-track trails support both foot and motorized traffic.

I use the term “pedestrian” in this report as a more succinct way of referring to foot-bound people. The term is not burdened by the presumed intentions of involved people—e.g., hunter, hiker, backpacker, viewer, walker, researcher, etc.—and instead is more neutrally descriptive. Moreover, my usage is consistent with Merriam-Webster’s definition: “going or performed on foot.”

Parenthetically, variation in reactions of bears to pedestrians might arise from intrinsic differences between European brown bears and Northern American grizzly bears, which are both of the same species, *Ursus arctos*. Nonetheless, I draw on research from both genetic lineages. The relatively minor differences in behaviors of bears on these two continents are, I will argue, more plausibly rooted in history and environment than genetically-driven predispositions. For convenience, I therefore refer to all *Ursus arctos* as “grizzly bears,” but, where relevant, identify the provenance of invoked research.

1.a. Clarification of Terminology

Because results of the phenomenological research on pedestrian impacts that I summarize here are varied, a contextualizing framework is essential for interpretation. Clarity of terminology is also important.

More specifically, I found that my synthesis benefited from deploying terms that emphasized descriptions of observable behaviors rather than the presumed motivations and antecedent experiences of individual bears. Judging cognitive and emotional processes for other humans is problematic enough, much less for animals. Unfortunately, many terms commonly deployed in bear research and management are mired in surmise about neurologic and cognitive phenomenon (e.g., Hopkins et al. 2010), none more so than “habituated” and “conditioned” as descriptors of individual animals (Herrero et al. 2005). Even though valuable for understanding and communicating about why certain behaviors

arise in certain bears (e.g., Aumiller & Matt 1994), such terms can obfuscate more than clarify when applied to synthesizing research.

Herrero et al. (2005) contributed to a much-needed conversation about developing a vocabulary that was more overtly descriptive of bear behaviors rather than their presumed motivations, although these authors ended up emphasizing the term Overt Reaction Distance (ORD). Unfortunately, ORD is premised on an inescapable spatial dimension that imposes substantial limits on use especially in application to avoidance of humans by bears at the scale of both individuals and populations.

For my purposes here, I therefore emphasize the terminology of reactivity to generically characterize responses of bears to people; e.g., more reactive versus less reactive. Greater reactivity manifests as greater proclivity to charge, run away, or avoid humans and human features altogether. Less reactivity manifests as more neutral immediate responses, or a greater tendency to use areas nearer people.

But I have also found it useful to invoke habituation and resulting tolerance of humans as an explanation for observed bear behaviors. As Herrero et al. (2005), Smith et al. (2005), and Blumstein (2016) emphasize, tolerance is an outcome, whereas habituation is a process, with tolerance manifesting among individual bears as a consequence of several phenomena, including habituating lifetime experiences, the drive to obtain resources near people, and cultural transmission in the form of learning from other bears, notably mothers. Of relevance as well, Stringham & Rogers (2017) argue that the native state for bears is likely one of ambivalence towards humans, and that fear—or heightened reactivity—arises from histories of persecution, adverse individual experiences, or transference of intolerance of other bears to intolerance of people (see also Smith et al. 2005).

1.b. Transference and Contingency

As a premise, tolerance for other bears is likely to transfer to tolerance for humans, with tolerance for other bears contingent on overall bear densities as well as the extent to which bears are concentrated near each other temporally and spatially by high-quality resources. Logically, the greater the bear densities, the greater the concentrations, and the greater the imperative to access a resource, the more bear-bear interactions there are, with a likely waning of intolerance for other bears as the individually-experienced or culturally transmitted outcomes of habituation.

Likewise, habituation of bears to people is likely to be accelerated under circumstances where there are high densities of benign people, especially when concentrated in predictable places at predictable times (Herrero 2002, Herrero et al. 2005); or even when lower densities of people are similarly concentrated in time and space (Aumiller & Matt 1994). This amplification of tolerance, when coupled with transference, likely yields bears that are unreactive to people, as in coastal areas of Alaska where bear densities are exceptionally high, spawning salmon contribute to concentration, and people are tightly controlled as part of bear-viewing programs.

Smith et al. (2005) offer evidence in support of these propositions. They found that the average distances at which grizzly bears initiated charges at people were negatively correlated with bear densities in Alaska (Fig. 1A). Similarly, as another proxy for high reactivity, they found that numbers of attacks by grizzly bears on people were far more common in areas with the lowest bear densities (Fig. 1B), in defiance of what one might expect from a comparatively low absolute number of encounters between humans and bears in areas where both are scarce.

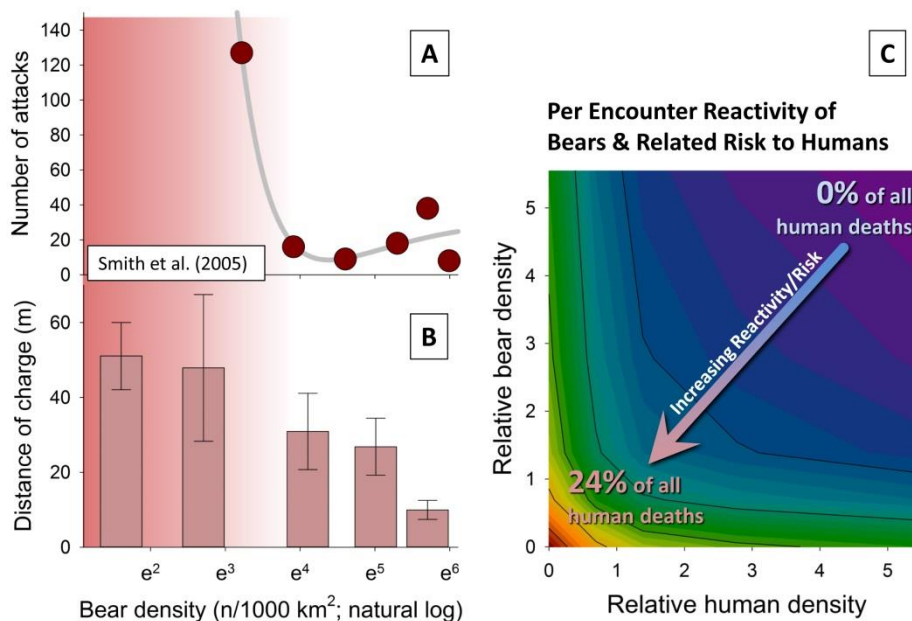


Figure 1. Relations between numbers of attacks by grizzly bears on people (A) and the distance at which a grizzly bear initiated a charge (B) relative to bear densities in Alaska. (C) portrays a conceptual relationship between grizzly bear and human densities and reactivity of bears involved in encounters with people; the percent of all documented human fatalities caused by grizzly bears is also shown for extremes of reactivity and risk.

I've synthesized some aspects of how density-related factors synergize to affect individual and population-level reactivity of grizzly bears in Figure 1C. By this reckoning, per encounter reactivity is likely to be lowest in areas where human and bear densities are locally highest. Prime examples are bear viewing areas in coastal areas of Alaska, such as at Brooks and McNeil Rivers, where large numbers of bears are concentrated at high-quality spatially-restricted resources, together with comparatively high local densities of humans who are closely regulated and restricted to spatially-confined areas (Fig 2A). Encounters are spatially and temporally predictable, routinely benign, resulting in remarkably few human injuries—which almost certainly reinforces tolerance and lowers reactivity (Aumiller & Matt 1994, Herrero et al. 2005).

At the other extreme, per encounter reactivity is likely to be highest where grizzly bear densities are lowest and encounters with humans and other bears comparatively uncommon. Even where people are spatially confined to trails or streams, encounters under such circumstances are still likely to be registered by the involved bears as unpredictable and hazardous. Prime examples can be found in the

high-latitude Arctic and boreal regions of Alaska and Canada (cf., Miller et al. 1997, Mowat et al. 2013; Fig. 2B). These regions correspondingly account for over 23% of all documented human fatalities caused by grizzly bears (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fatal_bear_attacks_in_North_America) under circumstances where, again, there have probably been comparatively few encounters between people and bears.

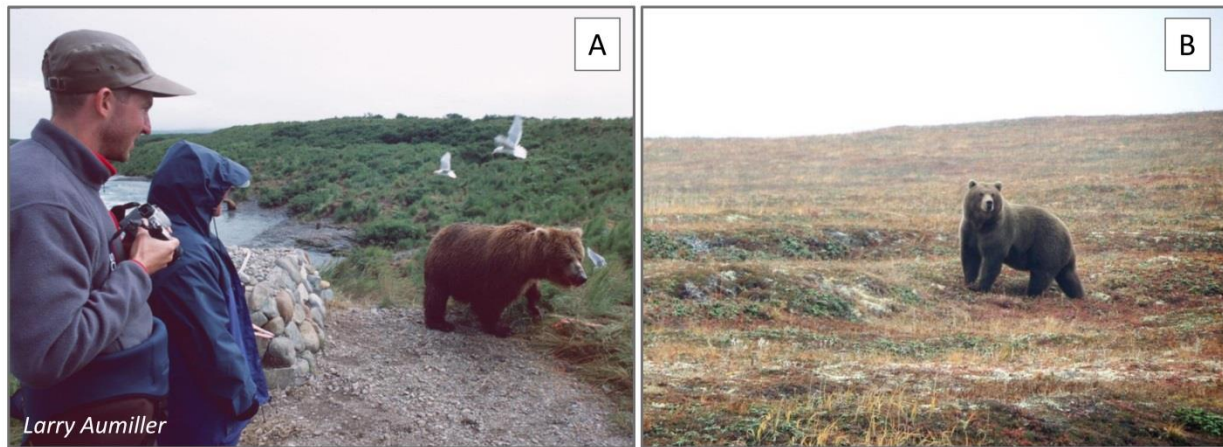


Figure 2. (A) A tolerant grizzly bear eating salmon within a few yards of people on a viewing platform at McNeil River, and (B) a vigilant grizzly bear on the tundra of Alaska.

This relatively straight-forward framework relating reactivity and risk to human and grizzly bear densities is central to interpreting differences in research results, especially from studies that focus on human-bear interactions along coastal rivers and streams in Alaska versus studies in interior regions where bear densities are lower and food resources more dispersed. This framework also specifies contingencies that are critical to judging whether research from coastal regions is applicable to areas with low bear densities—which is often not the case.

2. Organization of the Summary and Synthesis

In what follows I summarize and interpret results from research on reactions of grizzly bears to pedestrians according to a logical hierarchy. I start first with reactions of individual bears to encounters, including how they react, from what distance, and with what immediate and longer-term effects—if any. I follow with a less than exhaustive summary of factors affecting risk for people involved in encounters and then conclude with a review of how bears, in aggregate, disport themselves relative to landscapes and landscape features used by pedestrians—i.e., trails, campsites, and areas of dispersed recreation.

Throughout I present graphics adapted from individual publications that illustrate seminal results, together with other graphics summarizing results aggregated across relevant studies. In instances where I adapted graphics, I prominently credit the originating publication(s). Where appropriate, I offer on-going interpretation that augments and supports my concluding summary and synthesis.

3. Responses of Bears to Encounters with Pedestrians

Grizzly bears overtly react to encounters with pedestrians by running away, remaining neutral, approaching, or charging, with differences between initial and subsequent reactions, and all dependent on how close the encounter is, characteristics and behaviors of the involved humans, and the baseline tolerance as well as age and reproductive status of the involved bear. All of this has ramifications for the bear as well as for human safety.

A bit less dramatically, pedestrians can also displace grizzly bears or disrupt their activities, evident in negative spatial and temporal correlations between pedestrian and bear activity, as well as effects on foraging efficiencies of bears. Given the generally lower reactivity of grizzly bears along spawning streams, responses to pedestrians here are more often manifest in these somewhat more subtle forms compared to outright flight or charges.

In what follows, I decompose encounters and patterns of association and disassociation into behavioral facets that have been quantified by various researchers, but with reference to human- and bear-related factors that have been implicated in configuring outcomes.

3.a. Probability of Flight

Probability of flight is merely one behavior among several typifying reactions of grizzly bears to encounters with pedestrians, and yet, along with likelihood of charging, perhaps the most indicative of how reactive they are to people. Averaged over the 15 studies for which flight was reported, plus an additional five strata within, grizzly bears ran away from an encounter 72% (± 22 [1 SD]) of the time (Chester 1980; Gunther 1990; Haroldson & Mattson 1985; Jope 1985; Jope & Shelby 1984; Linden 2018; McArthur-Jope 1983; McLellan & Shackleton 1989; Moen et al. 2012, 2019; Naves et al. 2001; Ordiz et al. 2019; Revenko 1994; Sahlén et al. 2015; Schleyer et al. 1984). Given that some have theorized that flight may be more likely among hunted compared to protected grizzly bears, I also calculated average probability of flight by this distinction (Fig. 3A). Although flight was somewhat more likely among hunted compared to protected bears (by a difference of 13%), the variability among studies was large enough to debar any confident conclusions, as was the confounding of this distinction with results from Europe versus North America.

Apart from these broad generalities, there were differences among bears that could be attributed to levels of tolerance and broader conditioning factors. Bears that were judged to be “habituated” were less likely to flee (Herrero 2002), on only around 20% of occasions upon encountering pedestrians in the open habitats of Pelican Valley in Yellowstone National Park (Gunther 1990). Similarly, grizzly bears that more commonly used areas heavily used by people were less likely to move away compared to those that avoided these environs (Jope 1985; Fig. 4)), among which were tolerant adolescents that fled on only 30% of occasions (Jope 1983; Fig. 5). By contrast females with cubs-of-the-year (COY; Fig. 5), bears encountering pedestrians in open areas, and bears encountering people at shorter distances (<150 m, Fig. 6), more commonly fled, moved away, or were otherwise more reactive compared to bears without

COY, in cover, or at farther distances (Haroldson & Mattson 1985, Jope 1983, Linden 2018, McLellan & Shackleton 1989, Moen et al. 2012, Sahlén et al. 2015, Schleyer et al. 1984).

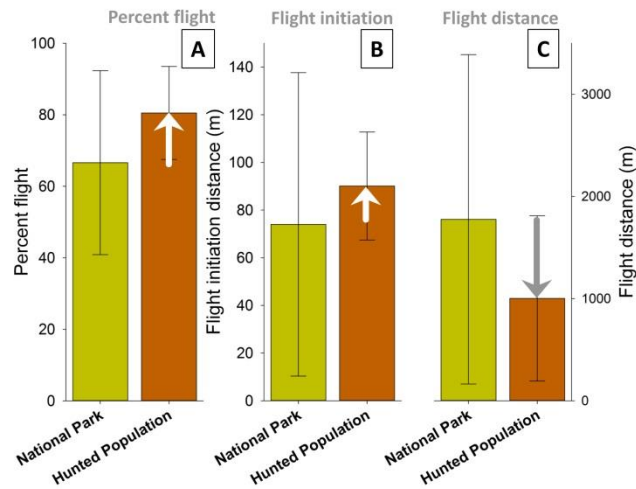


Figure 3. Summary of reactions by grizzly bears to encounters with people, averaged across all studies for which data are given, including (A) probability of flight, (B) distance at which flight was initiated, and (C) subsequent distance of rapid movement.

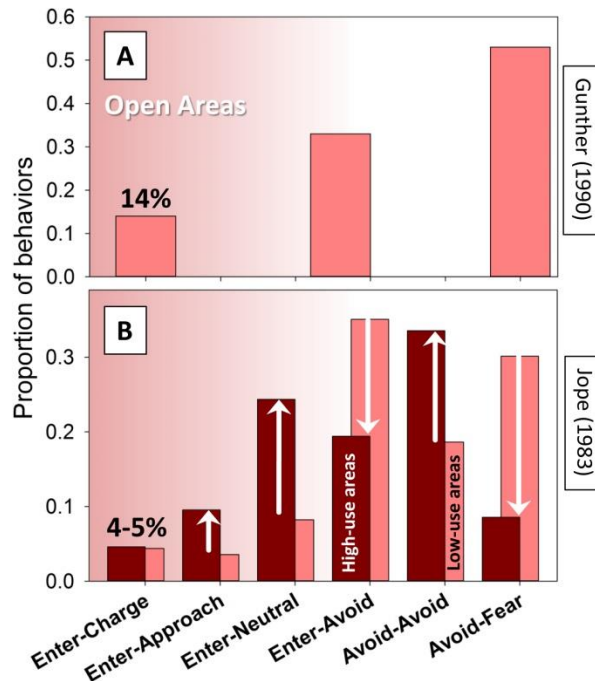


Figure 4. Probability that grizzly bears would display different behaviors (A) upon encountering pedestrians in open areas, and (B) as a function of whether they routinely used areas more or less heavily used by humans in Glacier National Park (e.g., < versus > 1.5 hiker/hour on trails).

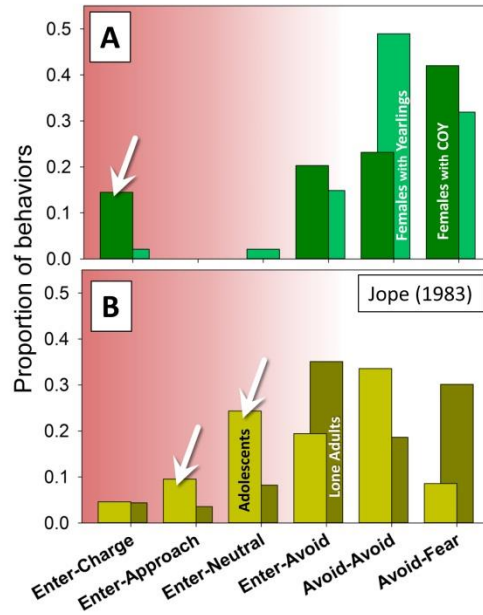


Figure 5. Reactions of different sex-, age-, and reproductive classes of grizzly bears to pedestrians in Glacier National Park, differentiating (A) females with COY; females with yearlings; (B) adolescents; and lone adult bears.

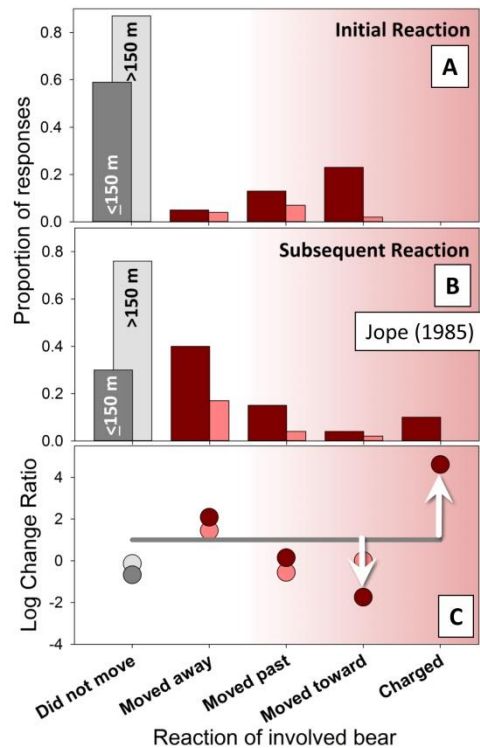


Figure 6. Reactions of grizzly bears to pedestrians in Glacier National Park, (A) initially and (B) subsequently, as a function the distance at which the encounter occurred (≤ 150 m v > 150 m). The change between initial and subsequent reactions is shown as a ratio in (C), differentiated by encounter distance.



3.b. Distance of Encounter and Initiation of Flight

The distances at which human-grizzly bear encounters occurred are also indicative of reactivity, but potentially contaminated with even more bias than observations regarding the probability that involved bears would flee. In studies based exclusively on visual observations by people (e.g., all the research conducted in Glacier National Park; McArthur-Jope 1983, Jope & Shelby 1984, Jope 1985, Nadeau 1987), the documented distances of encounters and reactions of bears are obviously contingent on the animals having been seen, which for radio-marked bears in forested regions of Scandinavia amounted to between only 15 and 24% of encounters (Moen et al. 2012, Ordiz et al. 2013, Sahlén et al. 2015). However, the results I summarize here regarding encounter distances are based almost exclusively on studies with radio-marked bears (Haroldson & Mattson 1985, Moen et al. 2019, Naves et al. 2001, Schleyer et al. 1984) or observations of bears in open areas (Gunther 1990).

Averaged across studies, grizzly bears encountered pedestrians at around 85 m (± 34 m), with that distance somewhat greater for bears in hunted populations (90 m) versus protected populations (74 m). Even so, this ostensible difference was well within the observed variability surrounding each estimate (Fig. 3B). In Glacier National Park, observed encounters were nearly 14-times more likely to occur under circumstances where visibility was <30 m or where near (<20 m from) running water, which was a commonplace occurrence in wet habitats with thick vegetation cover (Nadeau 1987). Otherwise, not surprisingly, bears that were active tended to be encountered at greater distances compared to bears encountered while bedded (i.e., “passive”; Haroldson & Mattson 1985, Moen et al. 2012). Bedded bears tend to be less visible and therefore likely to be encountered at closer ranges partly because they are more often sequestered in thicker vegetation (Mysterud 1983, Skuban et al. 2018).

3.c. Flight Distances

As with encounter distances, almost all results pertaining to distances of subsequent flight or other rapid movements away from people were obtained from radio-marked bears, which minimized observational bias (Haroldson & Mattson 1985, Moen et al. 2019, Naves et al. 2001, Schleyer et al. 1984). The one exception is results from Gunther (1990) of bears in open areas, which truncated his estimates of flight when bears moved into nearby forested habitats.

Flight distances averaged across studies were near 2 km (1740 ± 1317 m), with minimal basis for any conclusions regarding differences between hunted and protected populations given the substantial observed variability (Fig. 3C). Aside from these broad generalities, flight distances were greater for females with COY compared to other bears (Sahlén et al. 2015; Fig. 7); for bear encountered while active as opposed to bedded (Haroldson & Mattson 1985, Sahlén et al. 2015; Fig. 7); and in areas less intensively used by people (McLellan & Shackleton 1989)—none of which is surprising. Females with COY are known to be more reactive in defense of vulnerable offspring (Herrero 2002), whereas greater reactivity among bears less often exposed to people is consistent with the framework I describe in 1.b.

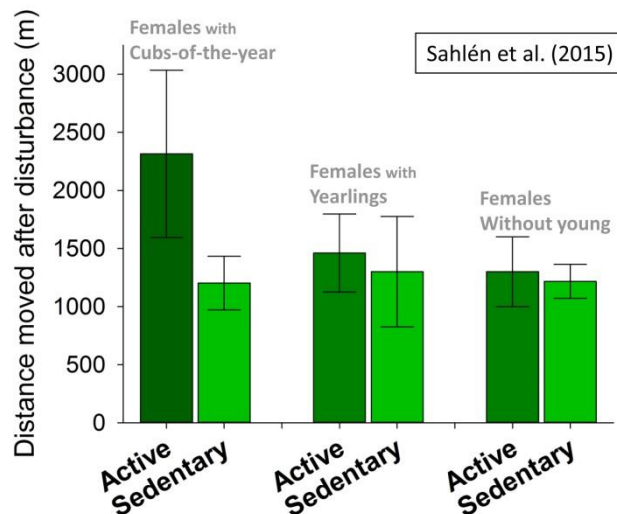


Figure 7. Effects of reproductive status and level of activity at time of an encounter with pedestrians on subsequent distance moved by adult female bears in Scandinavia.

3.d. Longer-Duration Effects

With the exception of highly tolerant individuals, reactions of grizzly bears to encounters with pedestrians were often evident for 24-72 hours, although sometimes obscured by or confounded with natural variation associated with fine-scale shifts in diets and foraging strategies (Haroldson & Mattson 1985). Most notably, movements generally increased above and beyond initial reactions, especially for females with COY, as did overall levels of activity—by as much as 1.5-fold (Schleyer et al. 1984, Sahlén et al. 2015). Bears also often reacted by becoming more nocturnal—for as long as 3 days afterward (Ordiz et al. 2013, 2019; Fig. 8). As a corollary, focal bears tended to select for areas with greater cover,

manifest as substantial reductions in use of open areas (e.g., 4-fold less use; Gunther 1990, Schleyer et al. 1984), as well as movement to habitats with lower line-of-sight visibility, especially when the initial encounter had occurred in a more open setting (Sahlén et al. 2015; Fig. 9). Overall, the pattern was one for affected bears to reduce the likelihood of further encounters with humans by selecting for times of day and habitats when and where people would be less active. And, as expected, the longer-term impacts were greatest on females with COY.

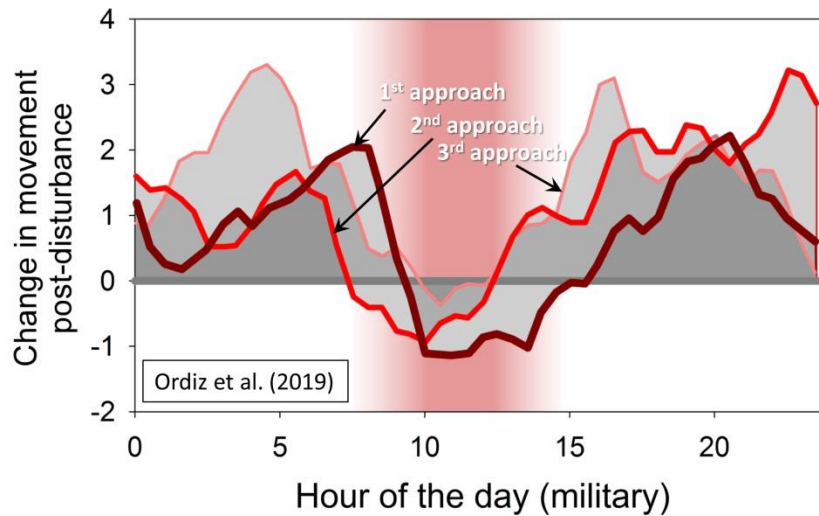


Figure 8. Changes in levels of diel activity relative to pre-encounter baselines for Scandinavian brown bears approached by researchers on 3 successive occasions. Daytime activity declined whereas nocturnal activity increased, without much waning of impacts even after the third approach.

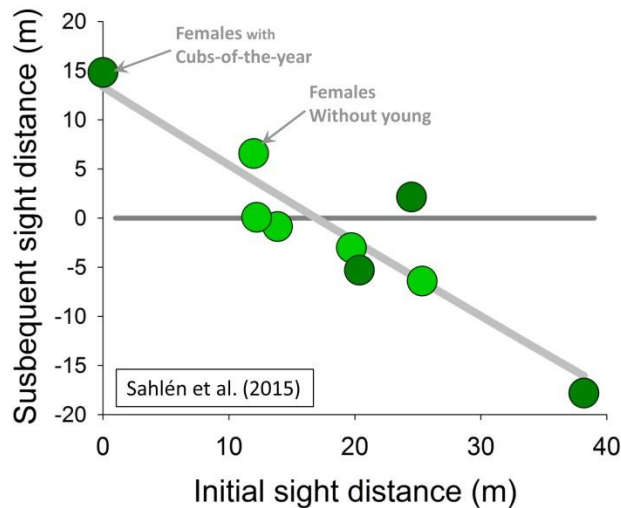


Figure 9. Changes in amount of vertical cover (i.e., line-of-sight distance) between sites at which encounters occurred and sites to which bears moved for females with and without COY. The greater the cover at encounter sites, the less the subsequent compensation.



4. Risk Factors for Pedestrians during Encounters

The extent to which reactions by grizzly bears to encounters with pedestrians translate into aggression—or even physical harm—is of obvious relevance to managers and the involved people. It is perhaps self-evident that heightened fear likely manifests in greater reactivity by a bear, and that accentuated reactivity includes both flight and overt aggression (Herrero 2002). Short-range surprise logically amplifies perceived threat for involved bears, as does, notoriously, perceived threat to attendant cubs. This is not to say that aggression arises solely from perceptions of threat. The other well-documented circumstance under which bears aggressively approach pedestrians is when natural or anthropogenic foods—or even space—are being contested (Herrero 2002). Nonetheless, during chance encounters injury is usually preceded by a charge.

4.a. Likelihood of Being Charged

The odds of a pedestrian being charged during an encounter with a grizzly bear are small, even under broader-scale conditions where bears are likely to be more reactive (e.g., Fig. 1). Actual estimates of these odds are necessarily contingent on fulfilling the difficult task of obtaining data on overall numbers of human-bear encounters, although several studies have done so. Even with such data in hand, problems axiomatically arise in defining exactly when an encounter has occurred and, even more vagarious, what aggression looks like. All of these phenomena defy definitional closure, as emphasized by my own experiences where a “charge” (by some people’s standards) encompassed, at one extreme, rapid movement towards me motivated by what appeared to be curiosity or confusion to, at the other extreme, apparent deadly intent. Even so, some generalizable conclusions are possible.

In more open habitats with lower grizzly bear population densities typical of interior North America, 6.1% (SD = 1.4%) of 279 documented encounters resulted in overt aggression by the involved bear (Chester 1980, Schleyer et al. 1984, Haroldson & Mattson 1985, McLellan & Shackleton 1989, Gunther 1990), although much of this result was driven by a single study area where food-conditioned bears were implicated (Leonard et al. 1990). Without this study, the percent of encounters typified by aggression dropped to 4.5% (± 2.2).

In Glacier National Park a somewhat higher 7-9% of all documented encounters resulted in “a charge” (Jope & Shelby 1984, Jope 1985, Nadeau 1987), typically in thicker vegetation where short-range (<30-50 m) surprise encounters were more likely to occur (Nadeau 1987). Even so, this percent was predictably inflated by the fact that encounters were reckoned only to the extent that the involved people were aware of them, which excluded encounters where the bear left with people unawares. If included, these encounters would certainly lower the percentage for Glacier Park, probably to within the range of results from other study areas.

Otherwise, odds of overtly aggressive responses by bears were essentially nil, notably in Scandinavia (Moen et al. 2012, 2019; Ordiz et al. 2013, 2019; Sahlén et al. 2015), and so small as to not warrant direct study in most coastal areas of North America where pedestrians were concentrated in specific locales. In fact, Aumiller & Matt (1998) reported only 8 “intense charges” during 21 years of close interactions with grizzly bears concentrated at McNeil River Falls in Alaska, consistent with the broader patterns documented by Smith et al. (2005; Fig. 1). As an exception proving the rule, Revenko (1994) documented aggression during 4% of encounters with grizzly bears in coastal areas of Kamchatka, but under conditions where human activity was quite low and bears probably not used to encountering pedestrians under any circumstances.

4.b. Factors Influencing Likelihood of Being Charged

Even given the generally low odds that grizzly bears will be aggressive towards pedestrians, some circumstances predictably escalate encounters. Most unambiguously, females accompanied by cubs-of-the-year (COY) are more likely to charge during an encounter compared to any other type of bear. In fact, McArthur-Jope (1983) found that females with COY were 4-7-times more likely to react in what appeared to be an aggressive manner (Fig. 5A). DeChano & Butler (2002) similarly found that females accompanied by young accounted for a disproportionate 31% of charges on trails in Glacier National Park. Likewise, even though grizzly bears were overall no more likely to charge when encountered in areas heavily used by pedestrians (Fig. 4B), the full charges that did occur were almost exclusively by females with COY (Jope & Shelby 1984).

In case of females with COY, a major motivation for aggression is obviously protection of young. But there are additional situational factors that predictably increase the odds that grizzly bears will react aggressively to an encounter. First and foremost is if they are surprised—or startled—at close quarters (<50-150 m; Jope 1985, Nadeau 1987, Herrero & Higgins 1999), which is more likely to occur in thick vegetation or where running water creates ambient noise (Nadeau 1987, Smith & Herrero 2018). Again,

whether a bear is “surprised” is prey to human interpretation, but surprise is a universal enough experience that most people can probably make a reliable determination. Relatedly, bears are seemingly more likely to be startled if people are moving quietly, which is plausibly less likely to occur if they are in groups (e.g., 2-3 or more people [Gunther 1990, Smith & Herrero 2018], although Kendell [1983] and Jope [1985] found no such effect) or even carrying noise-makers such as bells. In fact, grizzly bears in Glacier National Park did not charge pedestrians on any occasion when the involved people were known to be carrying bells, in contrast to on 14% of occasions when people were not (Jope & Shelby 1984).

Whether or not bears are used to encountering pedestrians in certain areas at certain times of day also plausibly affects levels of “surprise” or whether involved bears register an encounter as more threatening simply because the context is more uncertain. Aside from general propositions (Section 1), the best evidence for this effect again comes from Glacier National Park. Pedestrians on low-use trails were far more likely to be charged by grizzly bears during an encounter compared to pedestrians in areas more heavily used by people—by factors of 2-fold more (Jope & Shelby 1984, Jope 1985, Nadeau 1987). All of this is consistent with results of Smith et al. (2005) showing that grizzly bears in low-density bear populations were likely to charge pedestrians at roughly 5-times greater distances compared to bears in high-density coastal populations (Fig. 1A).

4.c. Likelihood of Being Injured

It probably goes without saying that people who are on foot are far more likely to be injured by a grizzly bear compared to people in vehicles or hard-sided lodgings—who are not altogether immune (Herrero 2002). For example, in Scandinavia, British Columbia, and Alberta pedestrians accounted for 59% to 100% of all people injured by grizzly bears (Herrero & Higgins 1999, 2003; Støen et al. 2018). The remainder of victims is largely accounted for by people in tents or on foot around a campsite or cabin, which is not my focus here given that most of these incidents involved anthropogenic attractants.

Leaving aside the perhaps obvious fact that pedestrians are more vulnerable to injury compared to people sequestered in hard-sided shelters, the odds that a pedestrian will be mauled during an encounter with a free-ranging grizzly bear are so small as to defy calculation. For example, in Scandinavia where researchers directly approached grizzly bears on literally hundreds of occasions, overt aggression was never documented, much less an attack (Moen et al. 2012, 2019; Ordiz et al. 2013, 2019; Sahlén et al. 2015). The same holds true for coastal study areas in North America centered on areas of concentrated pedestrian activity along or near salmon spawning streams (e.g., Aumiller & Matt 1998). The best estimates available for interior habitats come from Glacier National Park (Nadeau 1987) and by amalgamating results from multiple studies elsewhere (Chester 1980, Schleyer et al. 1984, Haroldson & Mattson 1985, McLellan & Shackleton 1989, Gunther 1990, Leonard et al. 1990). In the first case, only 6 of 1000 encounters resulted in human injury; in the second, only 3 in 1000 did.

Even so, managers and backcountry users are interested in knowing the odds that aggressive reactions by grizzly bears will result in human injury, realizing that odds of an aggressive reaction are small in the first place. With that proviso, roughly 6-8% of aggressions resulted in injury to a pedestrian in interior

regions of North America outside of Glacier National Park (Chester 1980, Schleyer et al. 1984, Haroldson & Mattson 1985, McLellan & Shackleton 1989, Gunther 1990, Leonard et al. 1990, Bertch & Gibeau 2009). In Glacier Park that figure was around 6-14%, depending on how aggression was defined by investigators (Kendall 1983, Nadeau 1987).

Leaving aside generalized rates, there are again certain factors that amplify risk of human injury during an encounter with a grizzly bear, most of which mirror factors amplifying risk of aggressive reaction, but with the proviso that much of the relevant information is based on tallies rather than rates. This last qualifier arises from the simple fact that data suitable for calculating rates are rarely available once risk is decomposed into underlying processes.

As Herrero (2002) identified more than 30 year ago, encountering a female with COY is clearly a major risk factor for pedestrians. A disproportionately large number of maulings have been attributed to females with young in Scandinavia (61%, Stoen et al. 2018), Alberta (59%, Herrero & Higgins 2003), Glacier National Park (33%, DeChano & Butler 2003), and Alaska (26%, Smith & Herrero 2018). Nadeau (1987) similarly found that confrontations with family groups were 1.3 to 1.6-times more likely to result in human injury compared to confrontations with lone adults or adolescents, but with this estimate confounded by variation in how investigators in Glacier National Park have defined a “confrontation” versus a “close confrontation” versus an “aggression.”

Otherwise, as with aggressive reactions in general, encountering a grizzly bear in areas used less intensively by pedestrians is more hazardous for involved people, presumably because unpredictable events are more likely registered by bears as a threat. For example, given a confrontation, injuries were nearly 10-times more likely off-trail and 4-times more likely on low-use trail compared to on high-use trails in Glacier National Park (Nadeau 1987). The percentage of injuries from close confrontations was similarly estimated to have been as high as 40-50% in the backcountry and on low-use trails compared to 10% on high-use trails (Nadeau 1987). Related to the factor of “surprise,” maulings in North America have overall been more common in areas of poor visibility (Herrero & Higgins 1999, Smith & Herrero 2018) or with pedestrians traveling as singletons or duos (Herrero & Higgins 1999).

4.d. The Hazards of Hunting

Hunting on foot for big game such as moose (*Alces alces*) or elk (*Cervus canadensis*) in areas occupied by grizzly bears seems to be remarkably hazardous for the involved people. There are no data from which risks can be explicitly calculated (for example, odds of being charged or injured as a function of exposure), but all of the available evidence points to elevated hazards relative to most other pedestrian activities.

Some evidence comes from simple tallies of humans killed by grizzly bears. For example, of the 72 people who were killed in North America since the mid-1950s, 21% were hunting big game—a number that almost certainly far exceeds the proportion of hunters relative to other pedestrians active in areas occupied by grizzly bears. Of the seven fatalities where relevant information is readily available, six

involved the presence of an animal recently killed by a hunter—in other words, an attractant. Looking at all recorded human fatalities going back to the early 1800s, an additional eight were attributable to people who were actively hunting grizzly bears, including five who were hunting over some sort of bait. When these fatalities are included, roughly 29% of the total involved hunters.

A handful of studies provide information regarding circumstances under which pedestrians have been injured that is also relevant to judging the hazards of hunting. Again, hunters account for what is almost certainly a disproportionately large number of the injured—25% of the total in British Columbia (Higgins et al. 1999); 59% of the total in Alberta (Herrero & Higgins 2003); and 75% of the total in Scandinavia (Støen et al. 2018). Of the last, 79% had shot at or wounded a grizzly bear, consistent with the raw number of fatalities involving bear hunters in the contiguous United States prior to widespread extirpations of grizzly bears. Of additional relevance, 20% of all incidents where people were injured by grizzly bears in British Columbia involved bears either defending or attempting to appropriate an animal carcass—again, often involving hunters (Herrero & Higgins 1999).

The disproportionate numbers of hunters among those injured or killed by grizzly bears is not surprising. By first principles, hunters behave in ways that magnify rather than diminish risks. They are often moving stealthily, which increases odds that bears will be surprised during an encounter (see 4.b. and 4.c.). They are also typically active in areas where bears plausibly associate people with the availability of food in the form of hunter-killed carcasses (e.g., Haroldson et al. 2004; Section 6.d.). Moreover, hunters are often closely associated either in the field or in camp with the remains of animals they have killed. Under such circumstances, bears are likely actively searching for hunter-associated kills in hunter-frequented areas with the intent of appropriating available edibles. Involvement of attractants under such circumstances unambiguously increases the odds that grizzly bears will aggressively contest food and space (Herrero 2002).

Given these data, it is remarkable that there have been no explicit studies of factors configuring risks for hunters. The closest approximation is in several white papers produced by managers in the Yellowstone Ecosystem who were tasked with developing recommendations for reducing levels of conflict between bears and people, including hunters (Toman et al. 1991; Servheen et al. 2004, 2009). The results either directly identified—or tacitly implicated—risk factors for hunters, including hunting alone; archery hunting, especially when done with an audio aid designed to attract bulls; contesting carcasses claimed by bears; leaving carcasses out overnight; and otherwise “improperly handling” carcasses. All of these factors relate to either increased odds that bears would be startled or encountered under circumstances where food was contested. Either way, aggression by bears would be likely.



5. Displacement

As I use it here, “displacement” denotes coarser-grained spatial and temporal reactions of grizzly bears to increased levels of human activity. Displacement is a phenomenon that transcends the resolution of individual encounters, yet is subsumed within less dynamic population-level patterns. By definition, displacement is manifest in statistical summaries that incorporate the responses of multiple animals, not the reaction of an individual bear to an individual encounter, which has been my focus so far. Even so, I differentiate displacement from avoidance. I treat “avoidance” as a phenomenon that manifests in population-level data, especially in relation to geospatially static features such as trails and backcountry campsites. Displacement and avoidance are not unambiguously distinct, but rather mid- and higher-order partitions of a hierarchical continuum of both data and ecological and behavioral processes.

The finer-grained and comparatively more immediate behavioral nature of displacement versus avoidance makes displacement more easily documented in—as well as more relevant to—areas with higher densities of both bears and people. Because of this, most of the research pertaining to displacement comes from observational and intensive telemetry studies of grizzly bears along coastal streams in Alaska and British Columbia, whereas most of the results pertaining to avoidance come from radio-telemetered bears tracked with varying degrees of resolution in interior regions. Moreover, higher densities of bears and people in coastal study areas have allowed for *de facto* or deliberate designs that allow comparison of bear behaviors during periods (or areas) with versus without human activity.

5.a. Spatial and Diel Displacement

Figure 10 summarizes the results of before-after and control-treatment studies of reactions by coastal grizzly bears to the presence of humans (e.g., Olson et al. 1994, 1997; Pitts 2001; Crupi 2003; Smith

2002; Van Dyke 2003; Smith & Johnson 2004; French 2007; Rode et al. 2006a, 2007; Marshall 2008). In each instance, humans were either absent or relatively scarce in contrast to being present in substantial numbers. The results of these coastal studies were measured in diverse ways, including numbers of bear present, levels of bear activity, proportions of bear behavior, and ingestions of nutrients and energy. I standardized these various measures to a common scale amenable to comparison across studies. I also grouped results according to whether they applied to all bears without distinction, female bears only, or animals that were more rather than less evidently tolerant to humans (e.g., habituated versus not habituated).

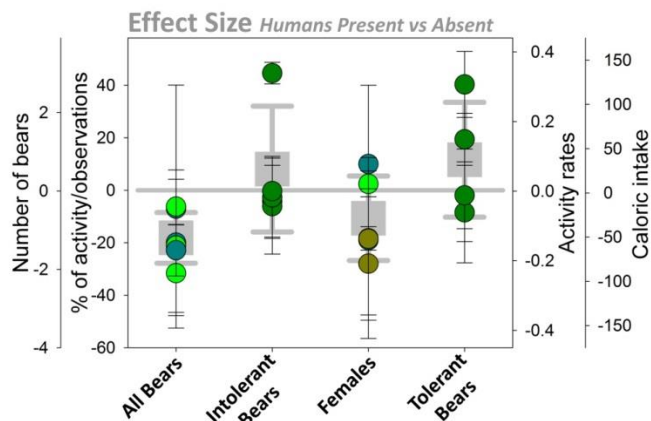


Figure 10. Mean and standard deviation (in gray) of differences in reactions of coastal grizzly bears (i.e., effect sizes), to the presence versus absence of substantial numbers of people, differentiated by whether results applied to all bears, female bears, or bears evidently intolerant versus tolerant of people. Each dot and bracketing uncertainty interval pertains to a specific study; each color pertains to a different standardized measure reckoned against vertical scales to the left and right.

These studies of contrasts yielded variable results. In instances where reactions of all grizzly bear were pooled, the presence of substantial numbers of people unambiguously resulted on average in a negative impact on bears, however measured. Effects parsed out for females and intolerant bears were more ambiguous. At the other extreme, bears judged to be tolerant of humans were relatively unaffected—or even plausibly benefited by—the presence of substantial numbers of people. Of relevance to extrapolation, these results are qualified by being in context of high densities of bears within which there was a dominance hierarchy typified by adult males at the top, lone bears somewhere in the middle, and adolescent males towards the bottom; with females accompanied by young functionally disadvantaged by self-evident concern about the safety of their offspring (Stonorov & Stokes 1972, Egbert & Stokes 1976, Mattson 1990, Ben-David et al. 2004, Gende & Quinn 2004, Suring et al. 2006, Gill & Hellfield 2012). Under such circumstances, smaller tolerant bears and females with young likely benefited from human activity that displaced otherwise dominant and potentially hazardous adults—especially adult males (MacHutchon et al. 1998; Fischbach & Reynolds 2005; Nevins & Gilbert 2005a, 2005b; Rode et al. 2006b).

In addition to spatially and temporally coarse-grained contrasts framed in terms of whether people were or were not present, displacement has also been shown to cause diel shifts in bear activity. Figure 11 summarizes the results of several relevant studies, featuring, again, contrasts framed in terms of the presence or absence of people, but in this instance manifest as changes in aggregate levels of bear activity by time of day—notably in panels A, B, E, and F.

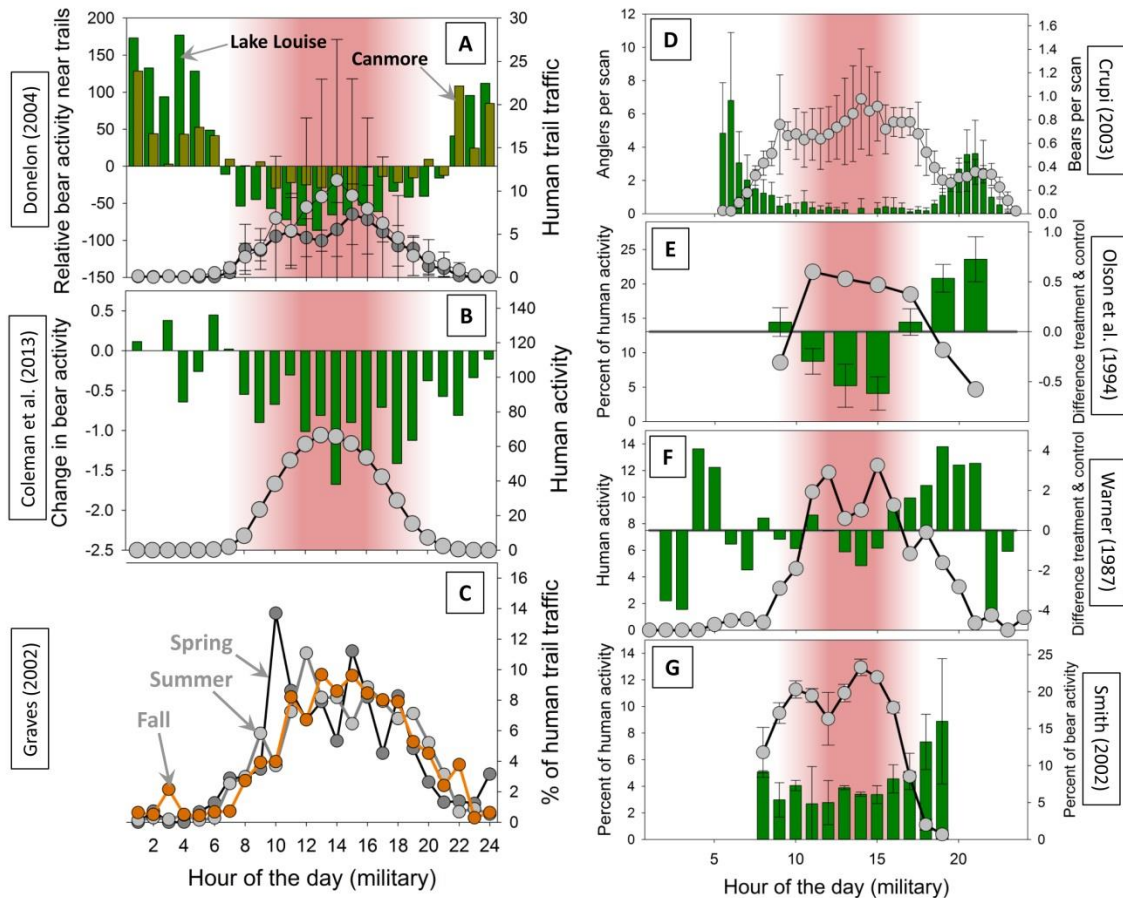


Figure 11. Relations between diel patterns of grizzly bear (green bars) and pedestrian (gray dots) activity. Results for grizzly bear activity in (A), (B), (E), and (F) are presented as differences between patterns during pre- and post-exposure to substantial numbers of people, with levels of human activity shown only for exposure periods. Results in (D) and (G) are not based on contrasts, but rather show proportional diel distributions of contemporaneous human and bear activity. Levels of human activity on a trail system in the northern US Rocky Mountains during spring, summer, and fall (C) were stationary among seasons. Results in (A)-(C) are from studies conducted in interior regions, whereas results in (D)-(G) are from coastal study areas.

In every case, grizzly bears became more night active and less day active with the introduction of greater pedestrian traffic (see also Nadeau 1987, MacHutchon et al. 1998). This held both for coastal study areas with high densities of grizzly bears (E & F), as well as for interior regions with lower densities of bears and both fewer (B) and more numerous (A) people. One proviso is warranted regarding the study from Yellowstone National Park where levels of daytime activity dropped most dramatically (Fig. 11B). Part of this diel shift could have been caused by a natural gravitation of bear activity to crepuscular

hours with progression of summer (Schleyer 1983, Harting 1985), which coincided with opening of focal areas to pedestrian traffic.

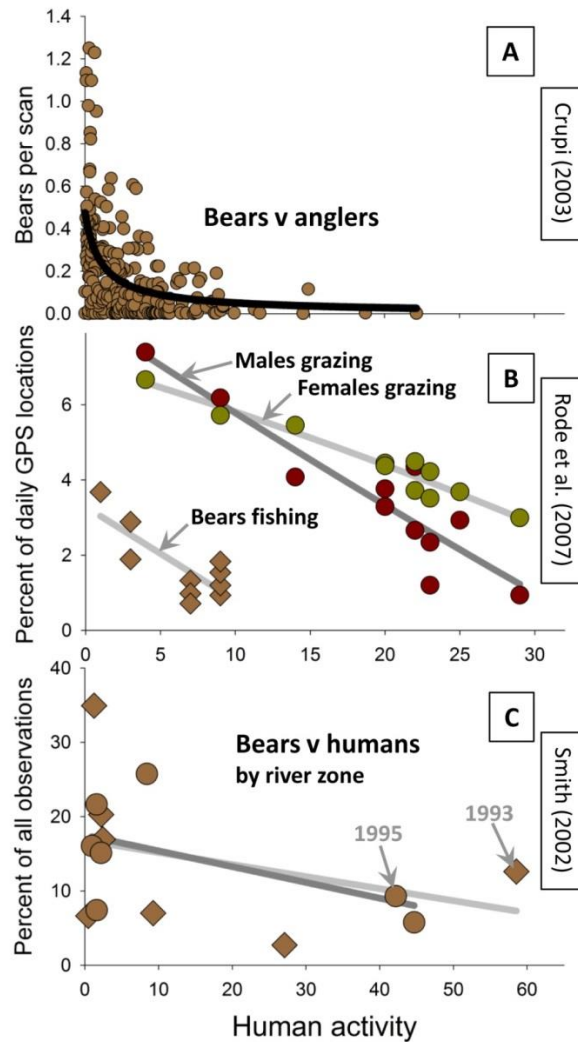


Figure 12. Relation between aggregate levels of bears and human activity in coastal study areas of Alaska. Results in (A) and (B) were based on temporal differences whereas as those in (C) were based on spatial differences. Trend lines in (B) denote reactions for males (burgundy dots) versus females (green dots), and for bears engaged in different feeding activity (grazing versus fishing). The diamonds and circles in (C) denote data obtained from two different years (1993 and 1995).

In addition to results based on stark contrasts in numbers of pedestrians using areas occupied by grizzly bears, additional research has revealed more graduated population-level responses of grizzly bears to more graduated increases in pedestrian activity (Fig. 12A and 12B). Although these results are confined to coastal study areas, they show responses that are consistent with results obtained from research in both interior and coastal regions that contrasted periods or areas with and without people. Aggregate levels of grizzly bear activity declined as human activity increased, regardless of the activities or diets of involved bears. In the study by Crupi (2003) the aggregate reaction of bears to anglers was dramatic (Fig. 12A).



5.b. Effects on Foraging Efficiencies

Regardless of whether grizzly bears are physically displaced by people or not, effects of disturbance can manifest physiologically as well as in the behaviors of bears that choose to remain in areas where pedestrians are active. Unfortunately, the very few field investigations of physiological responses to humans have so far been restricted to areas impacted by motorized activity (e.g., Bourbonnais et al. 2013,), which cautions against extrapolation to impacts of pedestrians. Comparatively more research has focused on aggregate changes in behaviors of bears exposed to increased levels of human activity, but almost wholly in areas typified by the greater visibility needed to collect requisite data—notably, coastal Alaska (Pitts 2001; Smith 2002; Crupi 2003; Rode et al. 2006a, 2007; French 2007, Marshall 2008) as well as one study in alpine areas of Glacier National Park (White et al. 1999)—which cautions against unqualified extrapolation to areas with more visual cover. Even so, the available research supports some generalizable conclusions.

Here, again, there is a distinction between research based on before and after or control and treatment contrasts versus other research based on graduated responses in time or space. Figure 13 shows changes in either caloric intake or directly relevant feeding behaviors for three studies that contrasted periods with and without humans present. Although Rode et al. (2006a) argue that changes in mean energy intake with exposure to pedestrians were not each statistically significant, the consistent observed decline (Fig. 13A and 13B) matched similar consistent declines in foraging or fishing activities in her study as well others (Pitts 2001, Crupi 2003). Averaged over 6 studies where changes in foraging efficiencies were in some way measured, the presence of pedestrians resulted in a 29% ($\pm 17\%$) decline.

A notable exception to this pattern pertains to females with COY using areas subject to controlled viewing of a level sufficient to displace adult male. Nevin & Gilbert (2005a, 2005b) estimated that energy intake of females with COY *increased* by around 66% when adult males were displaced, most likely as a

result of controlled pedestrian viewing. This three-way interaction of humans, females with COY, and potentially infanticidal adult males not only yielded prospective foraging benefits for females, but also adolescent bears willing to tolerate humans as means of escaping predator risk from other bears (Herrero et al. 2005), but, notably, under circumstances with high densities of bears and spatially and temporally circumscribed human activity.

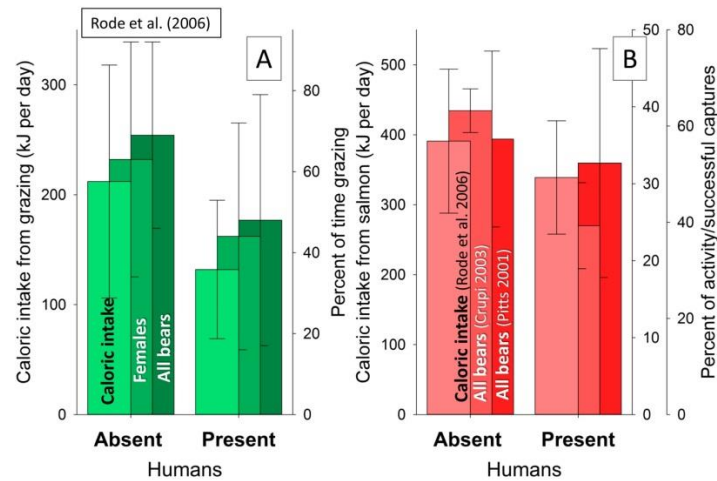


Figure 13. Measures of caloric intake or foraging activity and efficiencies during periods with and without pedestrians present, including grazing-related measures in (A) and measures related to consumption of spawning salmon in (B). All of these results were obtained from grizzly bears observed in coastal Alaska study areas.

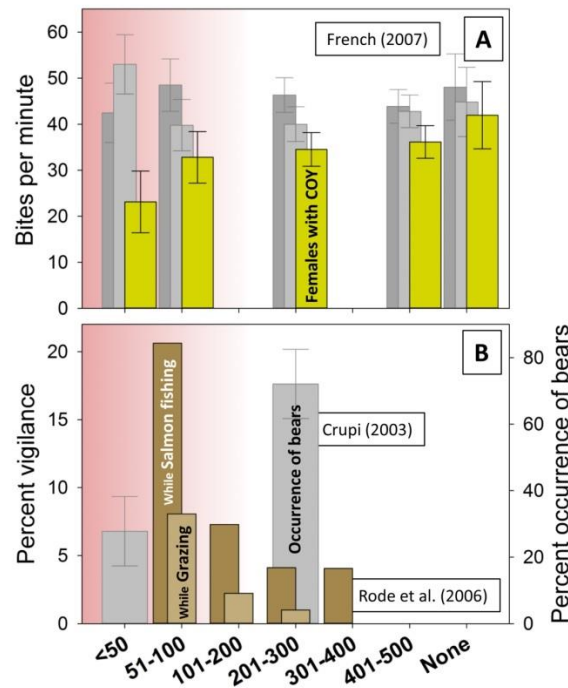


Figure 14. Grizzly bear behaviors and activity as a function of nearness of pedestrians, differentiated by (A) foraging rates of sex-, age-, and reproductive classes and (B) vigilance or overall levels of bear activity while grazing or salmon fishing. All three studies occurred in coastal areas of Alaska.

Changes in bear behaviors as a function of distance between bears and pedestrians are a corollary to differences in behaviors with and without people present. Several investigators, again in coastal Alaska, documented changes in bear behaviors or overall levels of bear activity relative to increasing nearness of pedestrians (Crupi 2003, Rode et al. 2006a, French 2007), exclusive of the more overt responses that I cover in Sections 3a-3d. Rode et al. (2006a) documented increased vigilance of bears in their study area both while both grazing and fishing, with increases most pronounced when people were within 50-100 m (Fig. 14B). Crupi (2003) similarly found a pronounced drop in overall bear activity within 100 m of where humans tended to concentrate (Fig. 14B). On the other hand, French (2007) found that only females with COY exhibited a substantial but gradual decrease in foraging activity, albeit most pronounced when people were within 50 m (Fig. 14A). Foraging by other bears seemed unaffected. Taken altogether, this research suggests that pedestrians have a substantial impact on bear foraging and vigilance when nearer than 50-100 m, and that these impacts tend to be greatest for females with COY.

The one proviso to this conclusion again pertains to bears that are tolerant of pedestrians, in most instances judged to be “habituated” by the involved researchers (Aumiller & Matt 1994, Smith 2002, Nevin & Gilbert 2005a, Marshall 2008), but also including bears otherwise motivated to abide people as means of occupying spaces vacated by less tolerant bears (Herrero et al. 2005). Crupi (2003) scored individual bears for their intolerance of pedestrians based on the time they spent at different distances from people, which avoided the pitfalls of a binary approach based on judging whether a bear was “habituated” or not. Compared to foraging by more tolerant bears, Foraging by less tolerant animals was far more impacted by people when within 500 m (Fig. 15).

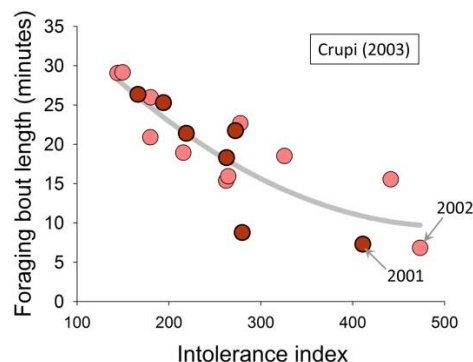
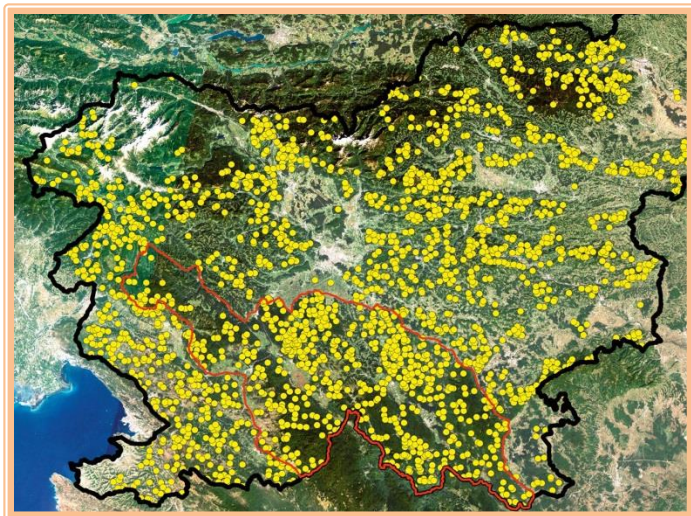


Figure 15. *Relation between length of foraging bouts and level of tolerance (i.e., intolerance) for humans among bears exposed to humans nearer than 500 m in a coastal study area of Alaska.*

White et al. (1999) report results from research conducted in alpine areas of Glacier National Park that support conclusions relevant to foraging efficiencies that would otherwise be based solely on research in coastal areas. They investigated the impacts of pedestrians on grizzly bears consuming moths in alpine talus and found that bears spent 53% less time foraging after people had been detected, while aggressive behaviors increased 23% and time spent moving increased by 52%. Estimated energy expenditures increased by around 12 kcal per minute after disruptions, amounting to a major energetic toll on affected bears.



6. Avoidance of Pedestrians and Pedestrian Infrastructure

I use “avoidance” here, not as a phenomenon categorically distinct from “displacement,” but rather as a term encompassing reactions by grizzly bears to pedestrians that are more durable and more often transmitted inter-generationally compared to transient responses. By this distinction, displacement is a finer-grained response by individual bears to the varied presence of pedestrians at the scale of weeks and months, whereas avoidance manifests as individual bears choosing whether or not to be in areas typified by human activity in the first place.

Given this resolution of response, avoidance necessarily organizes around specific places and even times with enough pedestrian activity to engender predictability and allow for codification in memory. As a result, investigations of avoidance can employ coarser-grained methods such as radio-telemetry to document patterns of bear activity in relation to static features such as trails and campsites that are proxies, not only for the presence of people, but also for spatially-explicit histories of interactions between people and bears. Even so, the conceptual boundary between “avoidance” and “displacement” is inescapably muddy.

Given the centrality of the pedestrian infrastructure to habitat management, I’ve organized what follows according different human features, including trails, campsites, and broader-scale areas either subject to closures designed to benefit grizzly bears or overrun by people during certain times of year.

6.a. Responses to Trails

With one notable exception, the handful of studies that investigated broad-scale distributions of grizzly bears relative to trails showed avoidance (Kasworm & Manley 1990, Graves 2002, Donelon 2004; Fig. 16). These results held for both daytime-biased studies that relied on VHF technology for radio-tracking (Kasworm & Manley 1990; Mace & Waller 1996), as well as the two studies that deployed GPS collars

with round-the-clock data collection (Graves 2002, Donelon 2004). This 24-hour tracking controlled for diel bias in data collection that potentially arose from grizzly bears selecting for crepuscular and night-time hours when exposed to pedestrian traffic—including on trails (Coltrane & Sinnott 2015; Figs. 11A & 17). Averaged over studies, grizzly bears avoided areas within 270 m (SD = 81 m) of trails, with maximum documented avoidance of around 450 m for bears exposed to a single-track trail that had both pedestrian and motorized activity (Graves 2002, Fig. 16B). Mace & Waller (1996) similarly showed that grizzly bears ranged during summer and fall at distances that averaged 1.4-1.8 times greater than would have been expected if bears were distributing themselves randomly relative to trails (Fig. 16D).

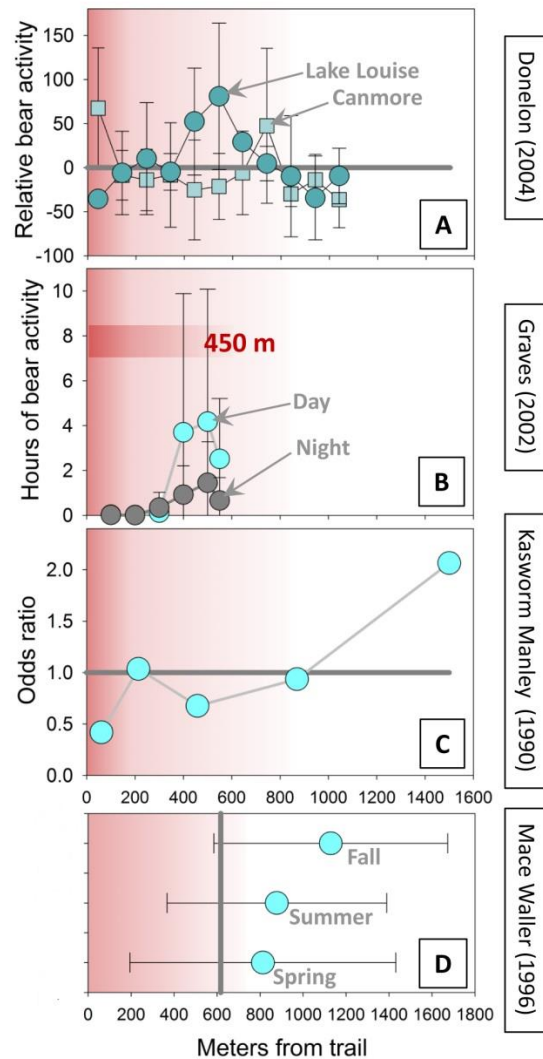


Figure 16. Distributions of grizzly bears relative to trails, with distance increasing from left to right. Results in (A) and (B) are from GPS-based studies, including distributions relative to random (the benchmark horizontal gray line) in two different study areas (A), and levels of bear activity during both day and night after controlling for extraneous effects (B). VHF-based results in (C) likewise show levels of bear occupancy relative to a random expectation, and in (D) average distances of radio-tracked bears from trails during three seasons, likewise relative to random, shown as a vertical gray bar.

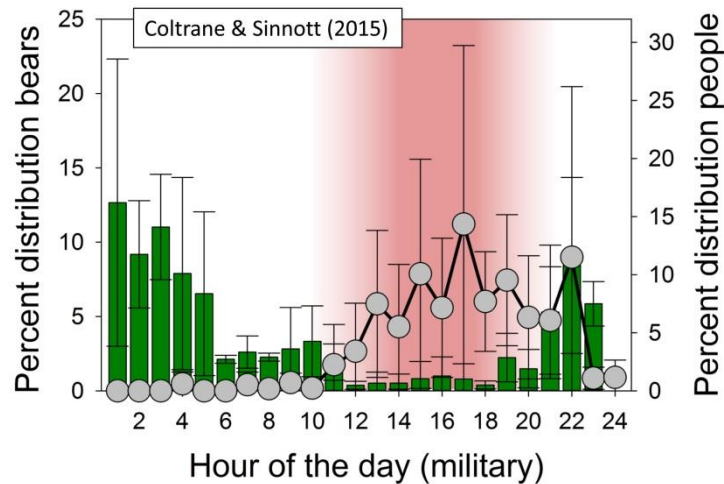


Figure 17. Percent distributions of grizzly bear and pedestrian detections on trails near Anchorage, Alaska, by hour of the day. Bear detections are shown as green bars, pedestrian detections as gray dots, and time of non-overlap in burgundy shading.

The noteworthy exception to what would otherwise be a consensus among studies comes from data collected near trails around Canmore, Alberta, just outside of Banff National Park, where grizzly bears selected *for* areas near trails (Donelon 2004; Fig. 16A). This result is somewhat inexplicable given that data collected during the same study from around nearby Lake Louise showed avoidance (Fig. 16A), and in both areas grizzly bears were displaced to nocturnal hours by pedestrian traffic (Fig. 11A). The most likely explanation for this oddity is that the data were collected from highly tolerant bears, with tolerance facilitated by the exceptional levels of pedestrian activity around Canmore (Donelon 2004) and the nearness of protected areas in Banff National Park.

6.b. Responses to Backcountry Campsites

Backcountry campsites warrant being differentiated from trails simply because people are more often present 24-hours a day at campsites rather than solely during daytime hours as on trails (Fig. 11, including 11C; Fig. 17). This matters functionally because grizzly bear otherwise gravitate towards crepuscular and nocturnal hours as a primary compensatory reaction to pedestrians—whether reckoned as displacement or avoidance.

Research is unanimous in showing avoidance of campsites by grizzly bears, but by distances even greater than evident around trails. Averaged across studies (Zunino 1981, Nadeau 1987, Gunther 1990, Mattson 1990, Coleman et al. 2013a; Fig. 18A), bears avoided campsites by around 550 m (SD = 300 m), or, during fall in one study area, ranged at distances more than 1.8-times greater than expected by chance (Mace & Waller 1996; Fig. 18B)). Within these areas of avoidance, bear occupancy was as much as 65-67% less than would have otherwise been expected (Gunther 1990, Coleman et al. 2013a).

One potential caution against unqualified acceptance of these results, again, arises from potential bias towards daylight hours introduced by visual observations (Gunther 1990) or by radio-telemetry data collected using VHF technology (Mattson 1990). Nonetheless, results from Coleman et al. (2013a) based on GPS data (Fig. 18A) and from Nadeau (1987, 1989) using night-vision equipment show high levels of campsite avoidance comparable to that evident from VHF-based investigations, albeit with the proviso that Nadeau (1987, 1989) found increased levels of nocturnal activity by grizzly bears when campsites were occupied by people.

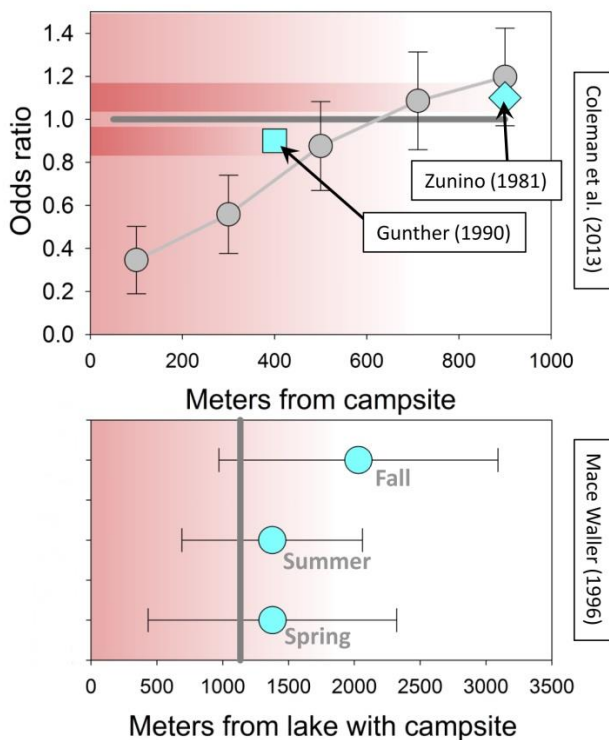


Figure 18. Distributions of grizzly bears relative to campsites, with distance increasing from left to right. Results from Coleman et al. (2013a) are based on GPS technology and feature distributions of bear locations relative to random (the benchmark horizontal gray line). The blue diamond and square in (A) denote zones of avoidance documented in two studies that did not rely on radio-telemetry. Results using VHF-based technology in (B) show average distances of radio-tracked bears from campsites during three seasons, likewise relative to random, shown as a vertical gray bar.

6.c. Responses to Seasonal Area Closures

Yellowstone National Park introduced an unusual program in 1982 that seasonally restricted or, in places, altogether precluded dispersed backcountry pedestrian activity in areas known to receive heavy use by grizzly bears (e.g., Hoskins 1975, Chester 1980). These Bear Management Areas (BMAs) encompass 21% of the Park's backcountry, including cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki*) spawning streams and open valleys and rugged mountains heavily used by grizzly bears for seasonal foraging.

Some BMAs are closed year-round whereas others allow for restricted or even unrestricted seasonal pedestrian use. These latter BMAs have provided researchers with a unique opportunity to investigate broad-scale reactions of grizzly bears in a lower-density population to dispersed pedestrian activity that is nonetheless seasonally highly predictable.

Most of the research documenting how Yellowstone grizzly bears have reacted to seasonal area closures comes from Gunther (1984, 1990) and, more recently, Coleman et al. (2013b), who found that grizzly bears increased the distances at which they ranged relative to landscape features seasonally used by pedestrians in lock-step with levels of human activity (Fig. 19B). The greater the activity in BMAs, the greater the avoidance of areas used by pedestrians. These authors likewise found that, as under so many other circumstances, bears shifted activity from daylight to nocturnal hours (Fig. 11B). Gunther (1990) similarly found that grizzly bears restricted their daytime movements into the open areas of Pelican Valley when this BMA was opened to human use (Fig. 19A). And, at a coarser-scale yet, he found that grizzly bear activity along a major cutthroat trout spawning stream tributary to Yellowstone Lake substantially increased after restrictions were imposed on angler activity, although with the beginnings of an upward trend occurring the year before (Gunther 1984; Fig. 20).

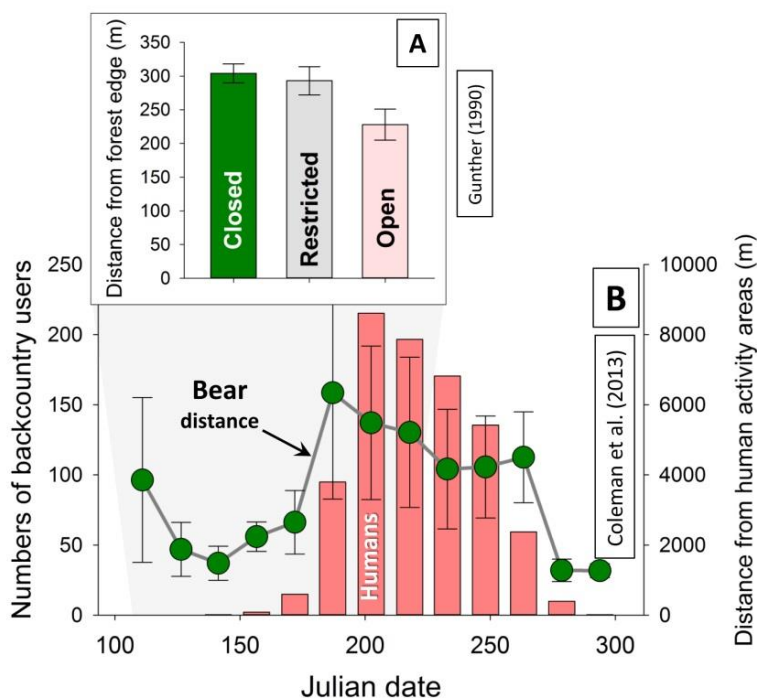


Figure 19. Responses of grizzly bears to seasonal closures of Bear Management Areas in Yellowstone National Park, (A) reckoned in terms of distances that bears ranged from forest edge in Pelican Valley during closed, restricted, and open periods (Gunther 1990), and (B) average distances of bears from areas of concentrated human activity in BMAs relative to levels of backcountry pedestrian traffic (Coleman et al. 2013b).

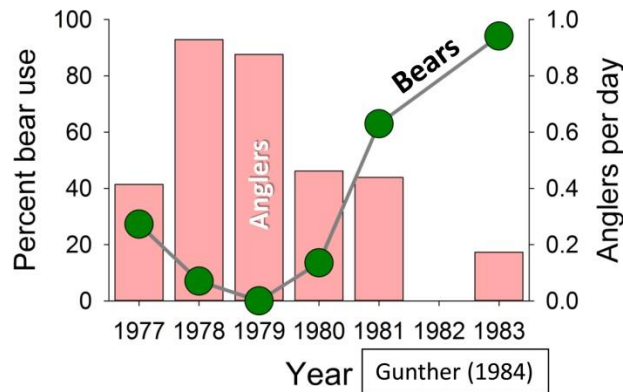


Figure 20. Numbers of anglers and grizzly bears active near the fish weir on Clear Creek in Yellowstone National Park annually between 1977 and 1983.

Although seasonal or year-round closures centered on BMAs were established in Yellowstone Park in the absence of unequivocal proof that they would yield benefits for grizzly bears, subsequent research demonstrated the efficacies of this proactive move by Park Service managers.

But this kind of foresight is not unprecedented or unique to Yellowstone Park. The Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes closed the McDonald Peak area in the Mission Mountains of Montana earlier yet, in 1981, to protect grizzly bears foraging on alpine insect aggregations (Klaver et al. 1986). Glacier National Park more recently instituted similar seasonal closures in areas with concentrations of bears on the Apgar Mountains (Kendall 1983) and flanks of Mounts Altyn and Henkel to reduce hazards for pedestrians and increase security for bears (Glacier National Park 2010).

In both of these latter cases, as in Yellowstone National Park, seasonal area closures were implemented in the absence of definitive evidence of prospective efficacy and, instead, largely on the basis of first principles; i.e., grizzly bear conservation will be aided and human safety enhanced by restricting dispersed pedestrian activity in highly-productive habitats heavily-used by bears.

6.d. Other Responses to Dispersed Seasonal Human Activity

Other than research focused on BMAs in Yellowstone National Park there has been few investigations of how seasonally predictable pedestrian activity dispersed over larger areas affects grizzly bears. Notably, MacHutchon et al. (1998) documented roughly 1.4-times more grizzly bear activity along coastal rivers in British Columbia that received relatively little pedestrian use compared to those that were heavily used, presumably because bears, in aggregate, avoided more impacted areas. Novikov et al. (1969) observed that grizzly bears in areas near Leningrad, as it was known then, were displaced by the numerous people who fanned out during summer in the backcountry collecting mushrooms and picking berries, with resulting avoidance of heavily-impacted areas by bears. Concerns about similar deleterious effects on grizzly bears led the province of British Columbia in Canada to restrict commercial picking of

huckleberries (*Vaccinium membranaceum*) in areas heavily used by bears (<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2019FLNR0186-001439>).

Otherwise, the most significant research on effects of dispersed pedestrians was reported by Ordiz et al. (2012) focused on seasonally regulated bear hunting in Sweden. Their most notable result was documentation, yet again, of a diel shift in activity of bears subject to hunting from daylight to nocturnal hours in defiance of what would have been otherwise expected with seasonal changes in times of sunrise and sunset (Fig. 21)—plausibly to avoid day-active bear hunters.

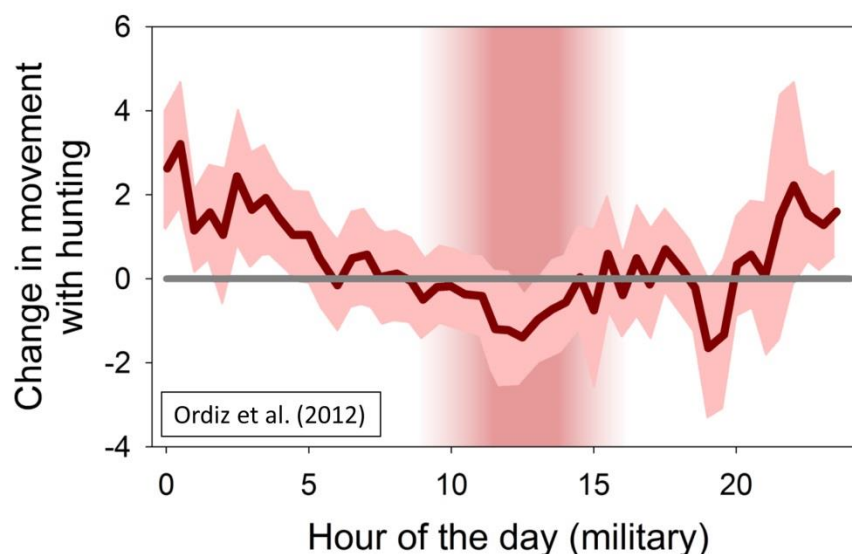


Figure 21. Change in length of grizzly bear movements during bear hunting season in Sweden relative to background periods and levels expected with the seasonal progression of sunrise and sunset. The horizontal gray line denotes no change; the dark burgundy line, mean observed change; and the light burgundy band 95% confidence intervals for the mean.

Conversely, research from the Yellowstone ecosystem of Montana and Wyoming revealed a net movement of grizzly bears from the protected environs of Yellowstone National Park into areas where elk hunting was underway (Ruth et al. 2003, Haroldson et al. 2004). Compared to other times of year, grizzly bears that ranged across the Park boundary were 2.3 to 4.4-times more likely to be outside of the Park during elk hunting season in areas where hunters were concentrated. The important distinction here in contrast to Sweden was that grizzly bears were not the animals being hunted. Rather, elk hunters who were not an overt threat were instead inadvertently providing bears with food in the form of residuum for kills, locally known as “gut piles.” Under these circumstances, where people were closely identified with food, bears gravitated towards rather than avoided dispersed pedestrians—with problematic consequences for both bears and people (see Section 4.d.; Herrero 2002, Haroldson et al. 2004).

6.e. Responses of Different Sex-, Age-, & Reproductive-Classes

Despite the amply generalizable responses of grizzly bears to the pedestrian infrastructure, there is also substantial subsidiary variation among bears that is largely related to an interaction between the predictability and intensity of human activity, and the sex-, age-, and reproductive-class of involved bears. Entangled with all of this, though, are idiosyncratic differences in tolerance of humans.

Resource-rich coastal spawning streams where people are predictably concentrated in time and space constitute a singular environment that precludes free extrapolation of associated research results to other contexts (see Section 1.b), although even here there is variability in results among studies. In the main, though, adult females, especially when accompanied by young, tend to be disproportionately represented among bears using areas near concentrations of people (Warner 1987, Van Dyke 2003, Rode et al. 2006b). Adolescent bears are also often disproportionately common (MacHutchon et al. 1998, Van Dyke 2003). Both of these classes of bears probably use humans as a shield to avoid potentially infanticidal or otherwise murderous adult males (e.g., Nevin & Gilbert 2005a, 2005b; Elfström et al. 2014; Steyaert et al. 2016) which, all else equal, tend to avoid people (e.g., Fischbach & Reynolds 2005, Rode et al. 2006b).

These sorts of results have been replicated in interior regions typified by lower densities of bears, but only under circumstances where people were likewise concentrated in predictable ways, almost always along roads and in residential areas (e.g., Mattson et al. 1987; McLellan & Shackleton 1988; Mueller et al. 2004; Roever et al. 2008; Graham et al. 2010; Cristescu et al. 2016). There are no studies showing that females with young used humans as a putative “shield” under circumstances involving pedestrians on trails or at campsites.

In interior regions most of the research of relevance to judging how different types of grizzly bears disport themselves relative to pedestrians once again comes from Glacier National Park. Here, the main pattern was a tendency for females with COY to avoid areas with heavier pedestrian traffic (e.g., >1.5 people/hour on trails)—by as much as 33-50% (Jope 1983, Nadeau 1987)—coupled with a tendency for adolescent and lone adults to be more common in these human-impacted areas (Fig. 22). Leonard et al. (1990) likewise found a tendency for solitary bears to become more common as numbers of pedestrians increased, but at a very low threshold in an area typified by overall low levels of dispersed human activity.

All of this, though, is conditioned on the differential extent to which individual bears are tolerant of humans, whether as a consequence of habituation or as a result of the drive to find security from other bears and related freer access to resources—although these two phenomena are almost always closely linked (Herrero 2002, Herrero et al. 2005). The results that I summarized in Section 5.a. (including Figure 10), although of more direct relevance to displacement, are also relevant to avoidance. Even within classes of bears evincing generally greater avoidance of pedestrians, more tolerant (e.g., “habituated”) bears can be differentiated from less tolerant bears, with tolerant bears more often selecting for areas near pedestrians (Olson et al. 1994, 1997; Smith & Johnson 2004).

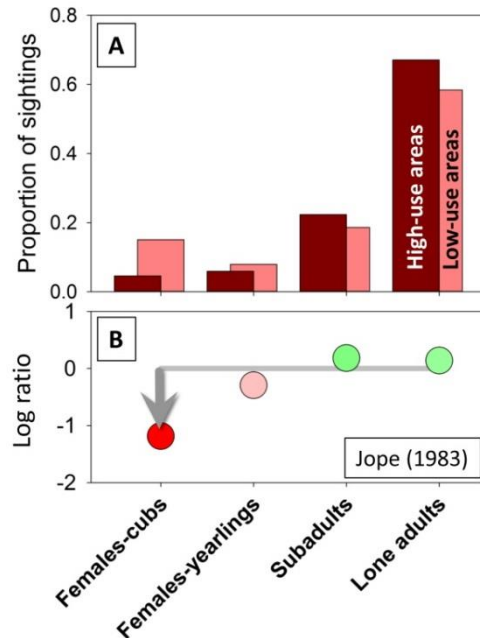


Figure 22. (A) Proportion of grizzly bear sightings in Glacier National Park comprised of different sex-, age-, and reproductive-classes differentiated by areas of heavy versus low levels of pedestrian activity, represented as (B) a log-transformed ratio of the proportions for each class.

Moreover, tolerant bears also can be differentiated by the degree to which they select for times of day when people are more or less active (Olson et al. 1998). Wheat and Wilmers (2016) offered perhaps the most compelling evidence (Fig. 23) for differences in avoidance on a diel basis between “habituated” and “non-habituated” bears that is not only relevant to the coastal study area where they collected their data, but also to interior regions with lower densities of bears. Not surprisingly, tolerant bears selected for times of day when people were more active whereas intolerant bears tended to avoid these same diel periods.

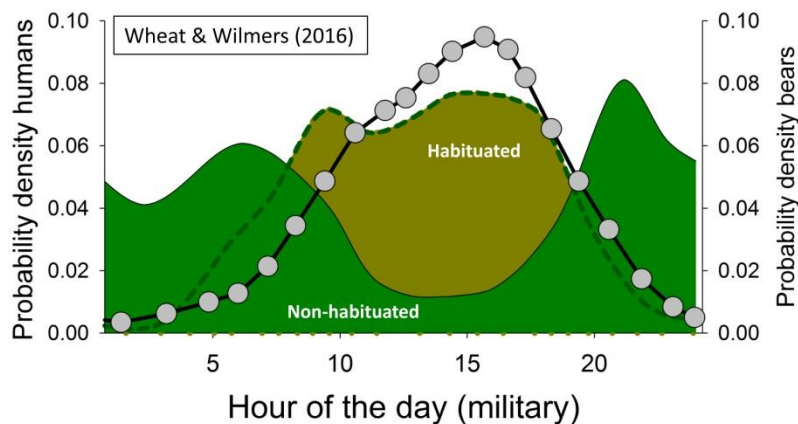


Figure 23. Diel distribution of activity by habituated and non-habituated grizzly bears (yellow-green versus dark green shading) relative to levels of human activity (gray dots) in a coastal study area.

7. Summary and Conclusions

With necessary allowance for subsidiary dynamics, the unambiguous main theme of the research I've summarized here is that the presence of pedestrians harms grizzly bears to some extent under most circumstances. This harm can be of shorter or longer duration, manifest in flight, displacement, or avoidance—but it is harm nonetheless.

With that having been said, reactions of grizzly bears to pedestrians are obviously conditioned on histories of persecution by humans, the nature and intensity of interactions with other bears, and individual life experiences. Cultural transmission and transference from experiences with other bears obviously influence how bears respond to humans under any circumstances. Importantly, the ground state of grizzly bears is probably not one of fear, but rather ambivalence towards humans (Russell & Enns 2002, Stringham & Rogers 2017). Fear is likely learned, either through immediate experiences or, perhaps most commonly, by learning from other bears. Likewise, fear can wane and tolerance increase as an outcome of benign experiences with people, with these experiences often catalyzed by bears gravitating towards human-impacted environs seeking safety from other bears or freer access to resources.

With these important provisos in mind, there are several generalizable conclusions that can be derived from research on how pedestrians affect grizzly bears:

- ❖ Grizzly bears manifest greater reactivity to pedestrians in several different ways, including greater likelihood of both flight and aggression during encounters, greater likelihood of spatial and temporal displacement, and greater avoidance of areas and times of day frequented by pedestrians.
- ❖ As a tautology, grizzly bears that are less reactive are more tolerant, with tolerance arising from either habituation to the presence of pedestrians or the need to abide nearby people as a prerequisite for accessing food or security from other bears.
- ❖ Grizzly bears likely transfer tolerance for other bears to pedestrians, with tolerance for conspecifics most evident in high-density coastal bear populations. The greater the intraspecific tolerance, the less reactive bears are likely to be during encounters with people.
- ❖ Benign human activities that are highly predictable in time and space lessen the likelihood of surprise encounters and allow for the emergence of tolerance among bears, both of which predictably lessen reactivity by bears.
- ❖ High levels of tolerance for pedestrians are most evident in areas with high densities of bears together with pedestrians concentrated in specific locales at specific times of day. The classic

example of this circumstance is supervised pedestrians angling or viewing bears along salmon spawning streams in coastal regions of North America.

- ❖ Under such conditions, adolescent grizzly bears and females with cubs-of-the-year (COY) often concentrate near pedestrians as means of escaping intraspecific competition as well as hazards posed by potentially predatory adult males. Under these circumstances pedestrians plausibly serve as a “shield” for more security-conscious or subordinate bears.
- ❖ In the absence of spatially and temporally highly-predictable activity, often engendered simply by heavy pedestrian traffic, there is essentially no evidence that pedestrians serve as “shields.” This important proviso covers almost all of the backcountry of interior North America.
- ❖ All other circumstances aside, individual bears that are more tolerant of pedestrians are less likely to be displaced by or avoid people. Compared to intolerant bears, tolerant bears are also more likely to be efficient foragers when pedestrians are nearby—i.e., within 50-100 m.
- ❖ Even so, there is ample evidence that grizzly bears in coastal regions are, in aggregate, displaced by pedestrians, most commonly to times of day that are suboptimal for foraging. Absent avoidance and high levels of tolerance, foraging efficiencies are also commonly impaired by the presence of pedestrians especially when within 150 m.
- ❖ In interior regions, grizzly bears react more strongly to encounters with pedestrians when they are “startled” or “surprised,” which more often happens at distances of less than 30 to 150 m, typically in areas with greater vegetation cover and the obscuring sound of running water. Strong reactions predominantly include flight (during roughly 70% of encounters), but also aggression (during roughly 4-6%). Human injury results in only 3-6 of 1000 encounters.
- ❖ Grizzly bears are also more likely to react strongly to encounters with pedestrians in open areas, as well as in areas less heavily used by people, both of which predictably result in a greater sense of surprise as well as perceived threat for involved bears.
- ❖ Compared to other bears, females with COY are far more likely to react strongly to encounters with pedestrians, most notably by 4 to 7-times more often charging the involved people. This greater reactivity almost certainly arises from defense of vulnerable offspring.
- ❖ After encounters, grizzly bears in interior regions flee on average nearly 2 km, increase levels of activity for 24-72 hours afterward, shift activity towards nocturnal and crepuscular hours, and select for areas of greater cover, all of which entail predictable energetic cost.
- ❖ Grizzly bears avoid areas near backcountry trails by an average of 250 m and backcountry campsites by an average nearer 550 m, while additionally selecting for night-time hours when

near backcountry pedestrian facilities, presumably to avoid day-time concentrated human activity.

- ❖ Grizzly bears also avoid areas seasonally closed to dispersed pedestrian activity when these areas are open to human use, with impacts compounded by their decreased use of open areas and more marked avoidance of areas where pedestrian activity is concentrated.
- ❖ As an exception to what would otherwise be a rule, grizzly bears are attracted to areas where big game hunters provision bears with food in the form of remains from kills of elk and moose, but with resulting increased risks to hunters arising from surprise encounters and the contestation of carcasses with bears.
- ❖ Compared to other bears, females with COY tend to exhibit greater avoidance of heavily-used pedestrian facilities, whereas adolescent bears tend to more often seek out areas more heavily used by humans, presumably to find security from dominant adult bears and more freely available food.
- ❖ Overall, the most consistent and even pronounced displacement and avoidance exhibited by grizzly bears in response to pedestrians is in increased activity during nocturnal and crepuscular hours and diminished activity during daylight hours when people are most active.
- ❖ Overall, females with COY are most impacted by the presence of pedestrians, with implications for human safety. The notable exception to what would otherwise be a rule is in areas with heavy, concentrated, and predictable pedestrian activity, where females with COY can find refuge near people primarily from threats posed by infanticidal adult males.

8. Evaluation of the Proposed Pacific Northwest Trail

9. References

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Effects of Pedestrians on Grizzly Bears

An Evaluation of the Effects of Hikers, Hunters, Photographers, Campers, and Watchers with Reference to the Proposed Pacific Northwest Trail

Report GBRP-2019-3
2019

**The Grizzly Bear
Recovery Project**

**P.O. Box 2406,
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