

## **The tragedy of two grizzly cubs**

By Larry Hyslop



The grizzly yearling named after Theodore Roosevelt is on display at the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center

The sibling cubs had been named Roosevelt and Grant, after U.S. Presidents. They are on display at the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone, Montana, where their rambunctious yearling behavior is a favorite of visitors, especially children. They are at the center because of a string of tragedies.

The first such tragedy took place on July 6, 2011, Brian and Marylyn Matayoshi of Torrance, California hiked the Wapiti Lake Trail in Yellowstone National Park. The couple was unlucky enough to come between a sow grizzly and her cubs, these same cubs. The couple may have compounded their bad luck by attempting to run away as the sow charged. Brian Matayoshi was killed, the first bear-caused death in Yellowstone in 26 years. The park determined that the sow was doing what mothers do, protecting her young, and was not removed.

On August 24 or 25, 2011, John Wallace of Chassell, Michigan hiked alone into the Mary Mountain Trail, in the same general area as the Wapiti Lake Trail. He was unlucky enough to approach a dead bison being alternately fed on by as many as nine grizzly bears. He definitely compounded his bad luck by hiking alone and not carrying bear spray. He was attacked and killed by a bear, but the details are unknown. What is known is several bears visited the body, and one or more fed on the body. DNA evidence showed the same sow and cubs visited the body but whether she killed the hiker is unknown. It was enough for the park to decide she needed to be removed and in October, she was trapped and killed.

The park felt adults would not adapt to captivity, but cubs do much better so her cubs were also captured and placed in the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center. The center now has nine bears on display. Groups of two or three bears enter an outdoor display area for 90 minutes at a time. The bears spend the rest of their time in what the center calls "dens", 12x12x12 cages that are not available to the public. Between each display period, workers hide food in the display area. The next bears eagerly search for and eat this food. It is evident they know where food is typically placed and if there is any doubt, the 30-40 ravens clustered around the food deposits should be good clues.

The yearling cubs are displayed and housed together. Given their young age and need for exercise, they also spend part of each day in an outdoor exercise yard out of view of the public. Most likely they will spend the rest of their lives as captive bears, representing one more in a string of tragedies.

Elko Daily Free Press, "Nature Notes", 6/14/2012

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