



Project Background

Since 2004, Yukon Government, in partnership with Parks Canada, the Aklavik Hunters and Trappers Committee and WMAC (NS), have been working on a large scale research project on Yukon North Slope grizzly bears. The 6 year study is made up of several different studies and activities. Together they will give wildlife managers the kind of information they need to know when determining the conservation requirements of this population and in reviewing harvest quotas. All research activities are partly funded through the Inuvialuit Final Agreement.

2008 Summer Fieldwork

Collaring

This summer we captured and collared 34 grizzly bears. Seventeen collars were set to drop off this year so we had to recapture those bears that were still wearing those collars and replace the old collars with new collars. We picked up 10 collars that had already fallen off bears. This summer was very warm while the collaring work was going on, so biologists could not complete the work – biologists do not collar bears if it is warmer than 15 degrees Celcius – it is too stressful for the animals. We aim to have at least 30 bears collared at a time so that we can maintain a proper sample size for analysis.

Billy Archie helped out with the collaring work this summer and was extremely helpful in digging a collar out of a bear den. Biologists biopsy darted some bears that they found but did not need to collar.

Biopsy darts collect small samples of fat tissue that we can send for DNA analysis to find out which bear it is and which other bears it may be related to in the area.



DNA Work

DNA lab work is almost finished and results should be ready in the spring time 2009. New population estimates will be available by next year but biologists will still be monitoring bears to see how many cubs they produce, how long bears survive, and what habitats they use in 2009 and spring of 2010.

Hunter-Bear Interactions

Hunters took tracking units out with them on their spring grizzly bear hunts from Aklavik. Two hunters returned their tracking units with a track of their hunt on it. Both hunters got very nice colour screen GPS units for their efforts – many thanks go out to them for their cooperation. We will continue to run this program next summer as well because it helps biologists determine where hunters go on the land in relation to where bears are on the land.

How You Can Be Involved

If you want to participate next year you can receive your own new GPS unit. Come to the HTC before your grizzly bear hunt in 2009 and sign out a tracking unit. Take the tracking unit with you on your hunt and return it to the HTC when your hunt is over. You will be mailed a new GPS unit to keep if your tracking unit was returned with a useable track on it. YTG is missing one from last year, so if you know of its whereabouts please get in touch with us.



Note – GPS units may not be exactly as shown

Fieldwork 2009

Next summer we plan to finish up bear survival and denning work. Biologists are trying to find out where bears choose to den and if changes to the permafrost might affect the availability of denning habitat. We will pick up any collars that dropped off since last summer to collect the data that is stored in the collar and will check on the females bears to see how many cubs they have with them.

Grizzly Bear Traditional Knowledge Report

During the winter of 2006, Kyle Russell visited Aklavik to interview people who have been active on the Yukon North Slope for many years and know about grizzly bears. This work allows researchers to understand grizzly bears and their environment from the local perspective, knowledge and experience, as well as through science. Kyle also spent time in Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Inuvik looking for written traditional knowledge that documents grizzly bears.

The final report will be available in January 2009.

For more information contact

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Also see - www.wmacns.ca