

PANEL 5: BEARS AND HUMAN BEINGS

Bears and Man in Glacier National Park, British Columbia, 1880–1980

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INTRODUCTION

Work on the topic discussed in this paper stems from more general research on recreation development and planning in Glacier National Park,¹ but I think it is independently justified in several ways. First, Glacier Park is an increasingly valuable ecological resource that continues to be a stronghold of the grizzly bear, a species markedly diminished over much of its former range. Secondly, Glacier is also an increasingly important national recreation area. Sound management of the park as an ecological and recreational resource can only be achieved if the bear/man relationship pertaining there is fully understood. Thirdly, the time period 1880–1980 provides a considerable time perspective on the problem. The white man's invasion of the area began in 1881; hence by starting then one can assess the nature and degree of man's impact on the primeval landscape and its components, such as bears, in the cumulative long term. The work is projected to 1980 because it is felt that certain positive actions can, and should, be implemented very soon if the resource values outlined are to be safeguarded. Finally, there is a dearth of information available for interpretive and educational programmes in the park.

FOCUS OF INTEREST

In my work on the man/bear relationship in Glacier Park I am concentrating on three main areas of interest. First, park visitor behavior and attitudes regarding bears; second, park resident behavior and attitudes; and third, Parks Branch policies and actions. The current stage of research necessitates that in this paper I concentrate on the first area—the history of visitor behavior and attitudes regarding bears in Glacier Park. The information available for research includes visitor accounts, log books of hotels and mountain huts, Parks Branch reports, ecological studies and public opinion surveys.² The material thus varies considerably in accuracy, and in temporal and spatial coverage, but cross checking and evaluation of sources serve to minimise errors. Before proceeding to a chronological survey of the bear/man relationship in Glacier Park a brief description of the study area is in order.

1 Undertaken in connection with the author's Ph.D. thesis, entitled: *Man, Landscape and Recreation, Glacier National Park, British Columbia, 1880 to Present*.

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Glacier National Park

Glacier National Park, founded as a small reserve in 1886, now encompasses 521 square miles of the rugged, glaciated, central Selkirk Mountains, centred on Rogers Pass. The area, lying within the bend of the Columbia River, is drained by four main streams, the Beaver, Mountain Creek, Illecillewaet and Flat Creek. The topography ranges in height from 3,000 to 11,000 feet, and the climate is marked by short summers and high precipitation, averaging 65 inches, the bulk being snow. The vegetation ranges from dense, virgin stands of cedar, hemlock, spruce and fir at the lower elevations to alpine meadows above 8,000 feet. There are also areas of swamp, cottonwood, alder and berry patches that are of special importance to bears.

The first major impact on man on this environment resulted from the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway via Rogers Pass in 1885. The following year a small area around the pass was set aside as the Glacier Park Reserve. Within this area a hotel, the Glacier House, and other recreational facilities were quickly provided by the railway company and a flourishing tourist trade established. Despite avalanche damage a railway town continued to exist at Rogers Pass until the track was relocated via the Connaught Tunnel in 1916. The tourist business was curtailed abruptly in 1925 with the closure of the hotel and for the next thirty years there was little development or use of the park, which by 1930 had acquired its current boundaries and size. Renewed development, mass visitation and new bear problems have occurred since the opening of the Trans-Canada Highway via the park in 1962.

EARLY VISITORS AND BEARS

Some of the names in the park indicate the early recognition given to bears in the area, thus, we find: Bear and Grizzly Creeks, and the mountains, Ursus Major and Minor. The first known white explorer in the area, Major Rogers, said little about bears other than noting that his party had shot them while travelling up the Illecillewaet River. However, subsequent explorers of the region all comment on the numbers of bears found there. Fleming (1884), noted that the surveying party before him in the Beaver Valley had seen as many as fifty. A later report (Anon. 1885, p. 887), assures sportsmen that in the area surrounding the railway construction camp in Bear Creek:

the bears are still there for the engineers were too busy to do much hunting.

The eminent naturalist, John Macoun (1922, p. 230) recalls time spent near Rogers Pass in 1885, and notes when climbing Avalanche Mountain:

By good luck we never saw a bear but smelt them very often. The day before we reached the mountains a wounded grizzly had attacked two men when one of them was drinking at a little creek.

This appears to be the first of very few attacks on humans recorded in the Glacier Park area. During the first thirty years of tourism in Glacier visitors apparently regarded bears with a mixture of fear and sportsmanship. Thus, a painter vacationing at Glacier House was said (Cumberland, 1887, p. 160) to be:

in raptures over the scenery, but he appeared to be highly regretful at not having brought his rifle with him as bears were in sufficient numbers to cause him uneasiness, when going out on a lonely sketching expedition.

Such attitudes were fostered in the literature of the Canadian Pacific Railway (Canadian Pacific Railway, 1888, p. 26, 1889, p. 58), which, while declaring that at Glacier:

bears can always be obtained

also stated that:

the grizzly. . . is always looking for trouble and when he digs up the hatchet, look out for squalls.

Things have changed with time, the rifle has supplanted the bow, but nothing has supplanted the grizzly; he is there yet and king of the wilds. . .

It is little wonder that while most visitors probably only saw tracks, and although virtually no one was injured, many people carried rifles or revolvers in the backcountry.

To ensure the satisfaction of all Glacier's visitors, the C.P.R. had one and later two bears chained to posts next to the station and Glacier House hotel. Rev. Green (1890, p. 65) described one as:

a black bear cub, which at first made night horrible by squealing for its mother, but, nevertheless, was a most intelligent, playful and amusing little animal.

At least one of the bears escaped, its collar later being found on the top of one of the snowsheds. The practice of exhibiting animals, often exotics, in the national parks was continued for a long time, there being a zoo at Banff and, even today, a buffalo paddock in that park. Perhaps even more grotesque and inappropriate was the exhibition of dancing French bears at Glacier in 1895. They had given displays all across Canada, but at least one bear got his revenge on man by hugging a spectator to death in Winnipeg.

HUNTING

For a long time the hunting of bears in the park was encouraged by the C.P.R.'s promotional literature, and there are numerous examples of hunts quoted in the literature. Most were unsuccessful there being many difficulties, as noted by Stutfield (1903, p. 148):

Bears, black, brown and grizzly are by no means uncommon in the Selkirks, but hunting for them in those vast, dense and trackless forests is like looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack.

Some bears were shot in the backcountry of the park but most were killed near the railway. Thus, Sladen (1895, p. 296) notes:

We never saw or heard any grizzlies while we were at the hotel; but that they do exist is certain, for they get killed in the immediate vicinity when there are not too many tourists about to frighten them. There was one killed just before we went there that weighed over twelve hundredweight.

According to Feuz, one of the Swiss Guides, later at the Glacier House, the hotel garbage was quite an attraction. This may well have contributed to an incident, noted by Wilcox (1897, p. 131) in which:

One gentleman had the good fortune to shoot a black bear from a window of the hotel

Bears were also reported attracted to explorers supply camps and the railway

settlements in the park. Arthur Wheeler, the surveyor, reports (1905, p. 91) that in the Asulkan valley:

On the way up, the tracks of a huge bear had been noticed along the path worn by our ponies and investigation showed the same tracks all around the tent. . . . the bear hung around for some days and was seen by the packers on the trail lower down, at which time they were within fifty feet of him but without a rifle.

Later, Wheeler recalls:

We had three visits of this sort at main cap at Rogers Pass. As a rule (the bears) bore charmed lives, or else the local sportsmen were very bad shots.

Of all the characters associated with bears in Glacier, one, Charles Deutschman, otherwise known as 'Old Grizzly' was the most prominent. He prospected and hunted throughout the Selkirks and while doing so in Glacier Park discovered the Nakimu Caves, in 1904. The caves are located in the Cougar valley and Deutschman doubtless shot a number of bears in this area. Wheeler (National Parks, 1914, p. 6) states that:

During one of our visits a grizzly bear (*Ursus ferox*) was killed by Deutschman. The black bear (*Ursus americana*) is plentiful at the head of Bear Creek across Balu Pass, and it may be safely assumed that he does not fail to visit Cougar valley.

A later caretaker at the caves did, however, note that grizzlies were quite infrequent in the Cougar valley. Hopefully Deutschman's memoirs will be published, thus providing much new information on his activities and the history of bears in the Selkirk Mountains.

1910-1960

The explorer, Howard Palmer, having seen a bear in the southern backcountry of the park, in 1910, was the first to express, in writing (Palmer 1910, p. 482), an interest in photographing rather than shooting bears. However, most people doubtless still hunted with a gun, some on a grand scale, as is indicated by the comments of one of Palmer's men, who, near Beaver mouth (Palmer 1914, p. 242)

had met a bear hunter on the river going back with the fruits of his seasons trapping, consisting of twenty-seven black and brown bearskins.

While the C.P.R. apparently discouraged hunting in the parks after 1904, it was not until 1919 that the federal government gained control of wildlife in the parks. Even then, with better law enforcement, hunting and poaching continued, at least until 1930. The last recorded big bear hunt in the area took place on the eastern edge of the park, in 1926.

While the emphasis in this paper is on park visitor relationships with bears, some comments on the attitudes of park residents in the 1920's are of interest. It was in the 1920's that resident complaints about bears came to be heard. A bear that had become a nuisance around the settlement of Glacier was shot in 1921. In 1925 the bear problem was so bad that the residents submitted a petition to the Park Superintendent (National Parks, 1925). It read:

Now that the snows have gone the bears are beginning to roam around as in former years. Apparently they seem to be more numerous and going

round in three's and four's. Now that Junkin's camp is closed down, where the bears used to be fed often and frequently, they are getting to be a bother and very destructive. We suggest if you would allow six or seven of these bears to be shot and ammunition let off around here it would scare the rest away and then we would not have this worry and trouble over them.

This statement indicates the prevailing attitude to bear control and further shows the continuing problem resulting from artificial feeding of bears and the withdrawal of such food supplies. The suggestion that bears had increased in number around 1925 is backed by the recollections of Warden Mann (pers. comm. 1969). Such a change in population or distribution might have been influenced by the decline in hunting, the closure of the hotel and fewer visitors, as well as by the closure of other park settlements. An estimate of animal numbers in the park, the first census of its kind in Glacier, gave the number of park bears in 1925 as: 10 grizzly and 100 others (National Parks, 1925a).

In 1942 (Munro 1945) a second, more substantial, inventory of the park's fauna was undertaken. It was estimated that there were then about 60 black and 35 grizzly bears, mainly along the railway route, in the park. While Munro knew of only one bear attack on a human in Glacier, he did note (Munro 1945, p. 185):

Nevertheless people admit an uneasiness and dislike of the animal. It is met often enough to cause apprehension and there seems little doubt that its presence deters some people from visiting the park.

Park residents, likewise, were still concerned about the bears to the point where they were said to be afraid of going out on the trails for fear of meeting grizzly bears. Not surprisingly a National Parks report (1943) reads:

The Grizzly Bear menace in the National Parks is largely confined to Glacier Park. . . . In Glacier Park there were six or seven grizzlies which came in very close to the townsite at Glacier Station. Three of these animals were killed by the wardens a few months ago.

Thus, in the 1940's, public attitudes and park policy were such that a number of bears considered a nuisance were shot, though by this time hunting them for sport had been terminated. By 1960 we have on record a minimum of four maulings and fifteen bears shot, with an unknown number killed by trains, in Glacier Park. In the 1960's both attitudes and action were to change.

The 1960's

In 1962, when the Trans-Canada Highway was opened via Glacier Park, the bear population was estimated (Mundy 1963) as 100. A compilation (Francis 1958) indicates that many of the park's bears were located along the line of the railway. It was along this route that the highway was built, hence many of the animals were affected by this development. Of 18 grizzlies handled by Mundy in 1961 and 1962, only three were trapped away from garbage dumps, mostly in association with construction camps. Apart from garbage, some bears even ate dynamite being used for avalanche research. One bear that 'bothered' a trail crew was blinded by a dynamite blast used as a bear repellent, and subsequently had to be destroyed.

To obtain data on current visitor attitudes and behavior regarding bears in Glacier Park an interview survey was conducted in the park in the summer of 1969. The results of this study have been reported elsewhere (Marsh 1970) but

will be summarised here to provide comparison with the historic evidence cited. Furthermore, the results of the survey provide a background to some current problems and possible solutions.

Most of the 114 park visitors interviewed had seen bears in the wild but under 10% claimed to have seen a grizzly, and virtually no one reported having been bothered by bears. Under 20% of those interviewed said bears discouraged them from hiking, and under 10% said bears discouraged them from camping. As regards management, only 2% wanted all bears removed from the parks, though 19% thought all grizzlies should be eliminated in the park. Hunting of bears and the carrying of firearms for protection in the parks were disapproved of by the majority. Most of those interviewed considered the present practice of removing noxious bears away from people to be the most appropriate course of action. While few people displayed any detailed knowledge of bears most had read something, usually non-technical, and seen films about bears.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Since the 1880's there have been marked changes in the Glacier Park environment and consequently changes in the behavior of both man and bear. Likewise, the relationship between the two species has changed during this period. Today, we find, at least amongst that segment of the public that stops in Glacier Park, an interest in, and appreciation of, bears that results in high toleration of them despite the occasional human injury and inconvenience. It would appear that the fear and ignorance of bears, expressed by park visitors and residents alike at the turn of the century, have declined. The aggressive sporting interest in bears has given way, in the park, to a more passive, observational and photographic enthusiasm.

Such changes in human behavior and attitudes have not, unfortunately, eliminated long standing problems due to man/bear interaction. Thus National Park managers, in Glacier and elsewhere, still have to tackle the problem of trying to maintain bears as natural components of the park habitat while ensuring the safety and satisfaction of park visitors and residents. In the past there has been a failure to anticipate, and cope adequately with, problem situations; the blame falling on both park managers and visitors alike. Furthermore, the tendency has been to divert problems for a short period rather than provide long term solutions. For example, relocation of noxious bears has often failed to solve problems, as has the substitution of one garbage source for another.

Given this continuing unsatisfactory situation a brief look at the future, at least to 1980, and some positive suggestions seem in order.

THE FUTURE

Unless there are improvements in the knowledge and management of bears, and in the education and behavior of visitors, there seems every reason to believe that man/bear relationships in the park will deteriorate further causing undesirable stress and danger to both species. The situations in other parks in Canada and the U.S.A. can serve as warnings and guides on which to base action. Technical solutions to many of the problems are available but implementation has been tardy. To ensure the optimum use of Glacier Park's resource potential, as outlined at the start of the paper, requires that some action be taken

within the next ten years. More specifically, it is suggested that the following points relating to man/bear management in Glacier Park be considered and acted upon as soon as possible.

Further research on bear ecology and visitor recreation behavior and attitudes should be undertaken in the park to provide sound facts on which to tackle the individual problems. Such research should be on a continuing basis so as to provide management with up to date information on a changing situation.

Full advantage should be taken of practical and theoretical knowledge obtained elsewhere, by exchange of research reports and park personnel, and participation in conferences such as this.

In Glacier, garbage equipment, collection and disposal needs improvement. Burning garbage is no use if bears get to it at campgrounds prior to this. Furthermore, even incinerated garbage, as is found near Rogers Pass, attracts bears, unless the area is effectively fenced.

Visitor facilities, especially campgrounds, like those at Mountain Creek, need to be better designed and located to minimise the chance of bears feeding in them and subsequently becoming troublesome.

Noxious bears need to be dealt with more effectively. This means quick recognition of a problem situation and immediate, long-term effective action. Lack of access roads in Glacier prohibits the trucking of noxious bears to remote areas of the park, like Flat Creek or Mountain Creek. In the past many bears removed have returned and caused further trouble and expense. Consideration should be given to helicopter removal.

In view of the fact that Glacier Park is considered a prime refuge of the grizzly it may be desirable to zone part of the park, say Mountain Creek, specifically for this purpose, and manage bears and visitors accordingly.

On the human side many improvements should be made or initiated immediately. Laws regarding the feeding or intimidating of bears should be adequately publicised and zealously enforced, with press coverage given to such enforcement.

A more extensive and intensive educational campaign concerning bears in the parks should be undertaken. This survey has indicated that attitudes and behavior of visitors have changed, so why not further change—for the better? Education and interpretation regarding parks and bears should be extended into the cities, for this is where most park visitors are from, and this is where the media and public, during their weekday leisure time, are available. Park literature on bears needs to be more detailed and specific to each park and should be based on more thorough ecological research as outlined previously.

Finally, park personnel at all levels should be more familiar with bear ecology and problems. This applies especially to those meeting the public in the campgrounds and at interpretive talks, when advice and information on bears is often requested. This calls for greater training of such personnel and their improved availability to the public.

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