



Teacher's Guide

Yellowstone Bears' Ecosystem **NATURE Science Education Series**

Grade Levels:

5-12

Subject Areas:

Sciences
Life Sciences
Biology
Ecology

Synopsis:

Opens with recent live action photography of grizzly bear and human interactions in Yellowstone, capitalizing on our instinctive fascination with this greatest of all predators. Explains that not so long ago the grizzly was listed as an endangered species when their attraction to garbage dumps and aggressive behavior towards people made them targets for euthanasia. The sequences that follow decry all forms of land and economic development that are robbing the bears of their habitat. Scientific endeavors to restore the bear population to Yellowstone are reviewed in detail with surprising discoveries about the bears' natural food sources and the threat of any upset in the natural balance of vegetation, insects, or climate. With a plea for conservation of grizzly bear habitat, the wildlife experts conclude that hunting grizzlies should still be illegal in the Yellowstone ecosystem.

Learning Objectives: Students will:

- Explain why Yellowstone grizzlies were once a threat to visitors.
- Describe the grizzly's natural sources of food in spring, summer and fall.
- Explain the reasons why grizzly bear habitats should be protected.
- Appreciate the effectiveness of endangered species being listed.

Vocabulary:

predator, conservation, ecosystem, tranquilize, euthanized, carnivore, endangered species, refuge, aggression, peaks, army cutworm moth, Indian paintbrush, lupines, sustains, Clark's nutcrackers, caching, larders, white bark pine, hibernation, resilient, resourceful, marauding, brucellosis, cutthroat trout, pathogen, blister rust, backcountry, icon, delisting

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Pre-Viewing Discussion:

Where are grizzly bears found in North America? Are any of our national parks renowned for their grizzly bear populations?

Why are most people afraid of grizzly bears? What stories have been told about the ferocious nature of these animals? Do you think the stories are true?

Why would grizzly bears attack people?

Do you have any real-life stories of grizzlies to tell?

Post-Viewing Discussion:

How did wildlife biologists provide valid studies of Yellowstone's grizzly bears?

Why were Yellowstone bears once an endangered species? How have their numbers been restored?

In July and August why do the bears head for the high country? How could diseases of the white bark pine or the army cutworm moth affect grizzly bear populations?

What groups of people believe that grizzlies are a threat to their lifestyles? Do you think they have a right to kill grizzly bears? Why or why not? Do you think that grizzly bears should still be listed as endangered?

Further Activities:

Investigate the polar bear problem in Churchill, Manitoba to discover how this problem is managed today.

Investigate how global warming may negatively affect worldwide bear populations.

Investigate bear conservation efforts taking place in other countries.

Further investigate why hunters feel they have the right to hunt grizzlies or other bears that may be endangered.

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