



Evolution of Bear Management in the Mountain National Parks

- 1885 Following the completion of the transcontinental railway, a small reserve is created around hot springs near the town of Banff. It marks the start of Canada's national parks system and will become Banff National Park. A year later, other reserves are set aside west of the Continental Divide. They mark the establishment of Yoho and Glacier National Parks.
- 1887 First park regulations outline protection and preservation of all game, but are not much regarded until about 1911 when they are more strongly enforced.
- 1890 The park regulations are revised. A clause prohibits the killing or injuring of any wild animals – except predators such as wolves, coyotes, cougars, lynx, wolverine, hawks, eagles and bears.
- 1895 Waterton Lakes National Park is established.
- 1901 Banff townsite's population is ~271 people.
- 1902 The park regulations are again revised; all animals and birds are again protected.
- 1904 The promotion of bear hunting in Glacier National Park is dropped from the Canadian Pacific Railway's marketing literature.
- 1906 Poaching is a major concern for park managers.
- 1907 Jasper National Park is established.
- 1909 The first fire and game guardians are hired and evolve into the full-time warden service. Revised park regulations direct wardens to destroy predators, considered "noxious, dangerous, and destructive animals", control forest fires and enforce anti-poaching regulations.
- 1910 The Dominion Forest Reserves and National Parks Act is passed. James Bernard Harkin becomes the first commissioner (1911-1936) of the new Dominion Parks Branch. Harkin spends the next 19 years working to create a National Parks Act to gain better protection for parks.

"The day will come when the population of Canada will be ten times as great as it is now, but the National Parks ensure that every Canadian, by right of citizenship, will still have free access to vast areas . . . in which the beauty of the landscape is protected from profanation, the natural wild animals, plants and forests preserved, and the peace and solitude of primeval nature retained." James B. Harkin

- 1911 Automobiles reach Rocky Mountains Park (later Banff) by road from Calgary. Park regulations no longer prohibit their use inside parks. A road is pushed west of Banff to Lake Louise by 1920. A road from Lake Louise reaches Field, B.C. in Yoho National Park in 1926.

With the advent of the automobile, people begin to feel safe – and bold around bears. It becomes popular to take photographs of friends and family feeding a begging bear. Bears quickly learn to identify people with food and, in turn, lose their wariness around people. When the cars are not around, bears enter campgrounds and towns to look for food.

- 1915 Rocky Mountains Park's Chief Game Guardian Howard Sibbald shoots and kills an old adult female black bear reported raiding camps. He turns her two cubs over to the Banff Zoo, which exists until 1937.
- 1918 Wardens are authorized to destroy bears found within any park townsite. They also destroy 'problem' bears beyond townsites, citing no alternative.

Wardens are officially allowed to sell the pelts of any predators they kill in the line of duty, with the exception of bear skins, which must be turned in.

- 1920 Kootenay National Park is created with promised construction of the Banff-Windermere Road (completed in 1923).
- Hunting is made illegal in Yoho National Park.
- 1921 The *Edmonton Journal* prints an article titled “Feeding Bears Popular Pastime at Jasper”, which promotes visiting Jasper to feed the bears.
- 1928 Predators gain protection in National Parks.
- 1929 A lone Jasper warden is killed by a sow grizzly bear with cubs near his patrol cabin in the Tonquin Valley.
- Banff reports its first control kill of a grizzly for molesting horses and charging a warden.
- 1930 Canada’s *National Parks Act* is established in legislation. The Dominion Parks are renamed Canadian National Parks. Rocky Mountains Park becomes Banff National Park.
- 1930s A wheeled steel cage to catch and relocate bears is introduced as an alternative to shooting ‘problem’ bears in Yellowstone National Park (U.S.A.).
- In response to a request for feedback about newly introduced bear traps in the U.S. Parks, Chief Park Warden for Yoho, Glacier and Mt. Revelstoke National Parks comments: *“Bears which develop the garbage habit, soon degenerate into poor specimens and become troublesome. Viewing the bear situation from this angle, I think probably the annual ‘crime wave’ could be more effectively controlled by installing incinerators in all road camps and positively destroying all garbage.”*
- 1930s Construction of the Banff-Jasper Highway (1931-1940) provides increased access throughout the parks. As park visitation increases, so do bear-human conflicts.
- 1936 Four grizzly bears are shot at a highway construction work camp dump at Hector Lake.
- 1938 Park Superintendents are reminded to ensure signs warning the public not to feed bears are posted.
- A tourist approaches a grizzly for a photograph and is bitten.
- 1939 In correspondence about ‘the bear problem’, Jasper’s Superintendent writes, “ ... *the only solution to the problem that I can see, is the inauguration of an intensive educational campaign whereby information on the habits of wild animals will be available to the traveling public and also the erection of suitable signs calling the attention of tourists to the fact that all animals are dangerous if irritated.*”
- 1939 A sow grizzly with two cubs injures two men hiking in Yoho National Park.
- 1943 Yoho’s Superintendent is bitten by a grizzly bear that he and his young son encounter while hiking in the park. He believes it’s the same bear involved in the 1939 incident. He directs all wardens in Yoho and Glacier to destroy any grizzly bears they observe on sight in busy visitor areas. This becomes wide spread policy in all the mountain parks until the early 1950s.
- Concerned about this policy, Dr. C.H.D. Clarke of the National Wildlife Branch notes, *“Grizzly bears are not common anywhere and are seldom seen by tourists. They require wilderness conditions. They have every right to be considered as a fundamental element of the wilderness of our National Parks, and as such entitled to our protection. They also merit from human wanderers into their domain the observance of simple cautions that will avoid trouble with them.”*
- 1944 Fliers titled, “Keep Away from Bears” and “Bears are Dangerous” are distributed to discourage feeding of bears.
- A bear pamphlet, “Don’t Blame the Bears”, is distributed (mid-1940s).

- 1940/50 Bear viewing at dumps is a popular pastime. Banff Avenue sports a large sign directing visitors ‘to the bears’ – at the town dump (mid to late 1950s). Hand feeding of bears along roadsides and in campgrounds results in a growing number of human injuries.
- 1950s The use of culvert bear traps and relocation becomes a common bear management tool from 1950s into 1980s. Relocated garbage conditioned bears often returned, and repeat offender were destroyed.
- 1951 An amendment to the National Parks Game Regulations makes the act of touching, *feeding* or enticing bears unlawful.
- 52-53 A rabies outbreak in Alberta results in an extensive predator control program, and an undocumented number of grizzly bears are trapped, shot and poisoned in Banff National Park. The program continues in the province until 1955.
- 1957-58 The National Park Interpretive Service is created.
- 1958 A young child killed by a black bear at tourist bungalows south of Jasper focuses increased attention on garbage and bear management.
- A policy to bury garbage at park dumps is initiated.
- 1959 The *first* charge is laid for bear feeding.
- The first bear management guidelines are issued to provide direction on use of bear-proof garbage bins, garbage management, enforcement of ‘no feeding’ regulations, visitor and park resident education, and the destruction of bears frequenting public areas.
- John and Frank Craighead begin a 12-year study of grizzly bears in Yellowstone National Park. They pioneer the development and use of radio-tracking collars and telemetry.
- The first grizzly killed by a car on the Trans-Canada Highway in Banff National Park is documented.
- 1960s Park visitation doubles in Banff National Park (one million to over two million) and Jasper National Park (300,00 to 600,000) from 1960-1966.
- Large concentrations of grizzly bears begin to gather at garbage dumps at townsites and other developments.
- Signs are erected along park highways warning against approaching and feeding bears. A pamphlet entitled “Bear Facts” is distributed.
- Animal immobilizing drugs become available to park wardens. This allowed bears caught in culvert traps to be closely examined and data collected on age, sex, weight, etc., along with use of coded ear tags.
- 1961 The use of bait to hunt grizzly bears is outlawed in Alberta.
- 1962 The Trans-Canada Highway is completed.
- 1963 Research on grizzly bear ecology is completed in Glacier National Park, B.C.
- 1964 The first comprehensive National Parks Policy is released.
- 1967 The use of bait to hunt grizzly bears is outlawed in British Columbia.
- Two young women are killed on the same night in two separate incidents by two different grizzly bears in Glacier National Park, Montana. Bear management comes under intense scrutiny in national parks.
- 1968 National Parks Garbage Regulations are passed. A “Carry In – Carry Out” program for backcountry garbage becomes policy. A publication titled “Bear Facts” is printed. Efforts to develop a bear proof garbage bin continue.

- 1969 In the fall, 23 different grizzly bears are recorded during a six-hour period at the Lake Louise dump.
- 1970 The Jasper dump is moved east of town and fenced. An electric fence is built around it in 1981; it later becomes a trade waste pit and composting area. Starting in 1992, Jasper's garbage is shipped to a regional landfill outside the park.
- 1971 The Lake Louise dump is closed.
- 1970s The first scientific research on grizzly bears is undertaken in Banff National Park. A number of bear related research projects in national parks begin to provide factual data that will help refine bear management.
- Bear proof garbage bin design is refined.
- Ottawa issues a series of operational policy directives concerning bear management, which increases consistency in bear management across parks.
- 1972 In Yoho National Park, the annual bear management report notes five grizzly bears were relocated, two destroyed, and two killed on the highway (one a 'return' bear). Eight black bears were relocated and five were destroyed – four were 'return' bears. The report notes an increased number of grizzly bear observations and links this to the closure of the Lake Louise dump.
- 1973 Kootenay National Park begins hauling its garbage to a dump outside the park.
- 1974 A pamphlet titled "You are in Bear Country" is produced.
- The National Film Board of Canada distributes the film "Bears and Man", which relates bear issues and management in Canada's national parks.
- 1977 Large signs warning of wildlife and other hazards are posted at all park entrances.
- 1979 The National Park Policy is revised to strengthen preservation goals. Under the Wildlife Regulations, it becomes unlawful to disturb or destroy wildlife, their lair or den or to touch, feed, or entice wildlife. Human activities within the natural habitat of bears begins to be managed to promote the regulation of bear populations by natural processes. A Superintendent can now limit the number of hikers on trails, or remove visitors from specific areas, and regulate visitor activities to prevent human-bear conflicts.
- 1980 Over an 11-day period, three bear attacks occur at Whiskey Creek near the town of Banff. A large 10-year old male grizzly bear is destroyed. The bear is identified as one that had been observed feeding on improperly stored restaurant garbage just prior to the attacks. A necropsy reveals the bear had fed on garbage for many years.
- 1981 The landfill at Banff is closed to all but trade waste and the first garbage transfer station is set up for household garbage. Residents are asked not to put their garbage out until the day of pick-up. Residential bear-proof garbage bins soon become standard. The 'dump bears' shift to another garbage dump five miles away; it is soon closed as well.
- 1983 All western parks are directed to prepare bear management plans according to a specified outline.
- 1984 Banff, Jasper, Kootenay and Yoho National Parks and British Columbia's Mount Robson, Mount Assiniboine and Hamber Provincial Parks are designated UNESCO's Rocky Mountain World Heritage Site, one of the largest protected areas in the world.
- 1985 The book "Bear Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidances" by Dr. Stephen Herrero is published.
- 1988 The first management plans for Yoho, Banff, Kootenay and Jasper National Parks are tabled in Parliament. A review of the plans begins in 1993, but is postponed until 1996 when the Banff-Bow Valley Task Force will submit its recommendations concerning protection of the Bow Valley corridor in Banff.
- An amendment to the National Parks Act legislates maintaining ecological integrity or protecting "intact ecosystems" as the first priority in park management.

Alberta government wildlife biologists make the first province-wide population estimate for Alberta grizzly bears.

A three-year grizzly bear study begins in Yoho and Kootenay National Parks. Collared grizzly bears are found to use habitat in up to five different jurisdictions: Banff, Yoho and Kootenay National Parks, Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park and provincial lands in British Columbia; none stayed solely within Yoho or Kootenay National Parks. A high level of human-caused mortality is documented.

- 1990 A Committee on the Status of Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) review of grizzly bear populations and habitat finds that Canada's remaining grizzly population is at risk, with over 60% of the bear population either vulnerable or threatened.
- 1991 Aversive conditioning is first applied in the mountain parks to a young grizzly bear bluff charging people that approached it at bear jams on the Icefield Parkway.
- 1992 Canada signs the *Biodiversity Convention* at the Rio Earth Summit. One of the main objectives of the convention is the conservation of biological diversity. Less than 8% of Canada's grizzly population is protected in national parks.
- 1994 The Parks Canada Policy of 1979 is replaced with new policy to reflect changes such as the 1988 amendment to the National Parks Act.

The Eastern Slopes Grizzly Bear Project begins (1994-2002) based out of the University of Calgary. Its goal is to scientifically understand the cumulative effects of human developments and activities on grizzly bears in the Central Rockies Ecosystem.

The West Slopes Bear Research Project begins based out of Revelstoke, B.C. Its goal is to determine grizzly bear and black bear population numbers and causes of mortality in the Yoho-Golden-Glacier area of British Columbia.

- 1996 The Banff Bow Valley Task Force undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the state of the Bow River watershed in Banff National Park. The Task Force concludes that unless immediate action is taken, the qualities that make Banff a national park will be lost. Questions are raised about whether the ecological integrity of other parks is also under pressure.

Bear #16, a juvenile male grizzly bear with a home range in the Bow Valley is placed in the Calgary Zoo, but lost from the ecosystem. The young bear had become bold due to repeated exposure to people at bear jams along the Bow Valley Parkway and Trans-Canada Highway.

- 1997 The Banff National Park Management Plan is approved. It contains a strategic goal "To maintain viable populations of wary species such as grizzly bear, wolf, wolverine, and cougar by reducing the impact of human use, and working with surrounding jurisdictions.", and an objective "to reduce the number of grizzly bears killed as a result of human activity to less than 1% of the population annually." (estimated population: 60-80 bears)

The inter-agency Rocky Mountain Grizzly Bear Planning Committee is formed to address issues related to trans-boundary management of grizzly bear populations.

- 1998 The Panel of the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks (the Panel) is asked to review Parks Canada's management for ecological integrity in the national parks and provide recommendations.

- 2000 The Panel finds that the ecological integrity of virtually all of Canada's 39 national parks is threatened and provides a series of recommendations to the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The new Canada National Parks Act (Bill C-27) moves ecological integrity to the top of the parks' management agenda and provides for greater protection for wildlife and flora.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage approves the Yoho, Jasper, Kootenay and Waterton Lakes National Park Management Plans. The plans reflect the key themes and principles of the Banff National Park Management Plan.

- 2001 To help reduce the loss of wary bear behaviour resulting from exposure to high numbers of people, an electric fence is built around the Lake Louise ski hill parking lot and base of a summer gondola operation.

From 1996-2001, Alberta's human population rose 10.3%. The Calgary-Edmonton corridor is one of four major urban centres in Canada. It borders the eastern edge of the grizzly bear's current range.

Close to three million people now visit Banff National Park annually.

2002 COSEWIC designates Canada's northwest population of grizzly bears as "Special Concern" (may become threatened or endangered because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats), while the prairie population is designated "Extirpated" (locally extinct). (www.cosewic.ca)

2003 An electric fence is built around the tenting area of the Lake Louise Campground.

A Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy is approved as an amendment to the 1997 Banff National Park Management Plan upon its five-year review.

Canada's Species at Risk Act is proclaimed into law. (www.ec.gc.ca)

The Parks Canada Agency is moved from the federal Department of Canadian Heritage back to Environment Canada.

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