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Grizzly researcher blames bear attacks on 'wimps in the woods'

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JACKSON, Wyo. — There are too many "wimps in the woods," hunters who don't understand they are sharing the forest with grizzly bear, bear researcher Dick Knight of Bozeman told federal and state grizzly bear specialists today.

"I don't know of any unprovoked attacks" by grizzlies, he said.

"We need some education for hunters out there. They're not woodsmen. They don't know what the hell they're doing out there."

He said hunters who go "tip-toeing" around in grizzly habitat should realize that they are likely to surprise a grizzly, which can provoke an attack.

A hunter injured recently in the Bridger-Teton National Forest said the attack by a grizzly was unprovoked.

Knight, head of the Interagency

Grizzly Bear Study team, spoke today before members of the Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee of the Interagency Grizzly Bear committee.

The committee includes managers of each national forest and park in the Yellowstone ecosystem, state representatives from Montana, Wyoming and Idaho, and the federal Bureau of Land Management.

This year the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study team sighted 24 females with cubs of the year and 57 cubs, the highest number of cubs ever sighted, Knight said.

For the first time in six years, a grizzly with a cub was spotted in the Boulder River drainage, he said.

The grizzly bear specialist talked about contributing money to one fund which could be used to pay for a helicopter and crew that could move bears to more remote areas if they expand into areas where there is a potential for human-bear conflict.

The public is concerned about how boundaries for the 9,600-square-mile grizzly bear recovery zone were determined and whether or not they will be changed, the bear specialist said.

The grizzly recovery zone was determined by specialists who felt the 9,600-square-mile area is necessary to sustain a viable grizzly bear population, said Chris Servheen of Missoula, recovery coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Federal and state officials would have to request changes based on data showing that the changes were necessary to sustain the grizzly population, he said. No officials have asked thus far to change the recovery zone lines.

"The sighting of grizzly bears and curiosity about where they are, are no reason to change recovery zone lines," said Servheen. "Grizzlies will always exist outside recovery zone lines."