

Stormin' Norman's Soft on Bears

By SCOTT McMILLION

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, Wyo. - Grizzly bears and people can thrive side-by-side but people must learn to give a little, Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf said here Friday morning.

Speaking from a misty, 9,000-foot-high ridge on the shoulders of Mount Washburn as a grizzly sow and two cubs foraged in the distance, Schwarzkopf called for consensus among the many groups that argue about grizzly bears in a world that grows increasingly small for them.

"We used to have tens of thousands of grizzlies in the lower 48 states, and now we're down to...less than 1,000," Schwarzkopf said. "I just would like for them to survive as a symbol of the American wilderness."

He said he sympathizes with ranchers who lose livestock to grizzlies that still believe the great bear "has gotten a bad rap."

"Nature and humans can live side by side for the mutual benefit of both," he said. "It doesn't have to be exclusionary. It doesn't have to be only animals can be there or only humans can be there. I don't believe that. If you're willing to put out the effort to understand the needs of nature and wildlife and the needs of human beings, you can live mutually together."

Schwarzkopf spoke at a ceremony during which the Canon camera and optics company gave Yellowstone officials a \$300,000 donation, much of which will be used for grizzly projects like DNA monitoring and new radio callers that connect

bears to satellites, showing where they are 24-hours a day.

Schwarzkopf, who led American forces to their quick and decisive victory in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, said he has always been interested in conservation, but

since his retirement has become increasingly involved, especially in bear issues.

He said he is now the national spokesman for recovery of the grizzly bear in the lower 48 states.

The general, nicknamed "The Bear" during the Desert Storm attack on Iraq, said he is aware of current grizzly-related arguments over road density, wilderness and "migration corridors" between grizzly populations, but would offer no opinion, other than to say there must be a solution.



Cameras and questions are aimed at Gen. H. Norma Schwarzkopf during a press conference Friday on Mount Washburn in Yellowstone National Park. He said the grizzly is a symbol of the American wilderness and must

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Stormin' Norman's Soft on Bears (continued)

However, he said he is excited about the Yellowstone projects that Canyon money is funding.

The four new radio collars, which cost \$5,000 a piece, will be attached to sow grizzlies in various parts of the greater Yellowstone area. They employ Global Positioning System technology — developed by the military, Schwarzkopf noted — that will let biologists pinpoint a bear's location within 100 yards at any time of the day or night.

Many bears in and around the park already wear radio collars but can only be monitored during weekly airplane flights, which are dependent on weather.

The collars will also tell researchers a great many details about what bears do at night, when they are most active and the hardest to see.

“The more you know about the bear the better you are able to manage,” said John Varley, head of the Yellowstone Center for Resources.

The collars will be tested on non-problem bears this summer, but once the tests are complete. It may turn out that the best use for them is on “rogue” bears that are relocated after getting in trouble, Varley said.

Such bears often return to the scene of their indiscretions and heading off trouble might be much simpler than the new collars, he said.

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Tourist Slaps Grizzly Cub

By SCOTT McMILLION

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, Wyo. - An unidentified tourist slapped a grizzly cub on the rump Wednesday, narrowly avoided death or serious mauling from the snapping jaws of its mother and was called "stupid" by Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, a man famous for both guts and brains.

"Stupidity in some cases is its own reward and this guy was damn lucky to be alive," the commander of U.S. forces in the Gulf War said of the incident.

Yellowstone bear management specialist, Kerry Gunther, said the incident took place in the Roaring Mountain area south of Mammoth Hot Springs.

A sow grizzly and two cubs had been visible there for some time attracted hundreds of delighted tourists as the sow hunted down elk calves almost every day.

The bear was "habituated" to groups of people and paid no attention to frequent "bear jams" in the area, Gunther said.

The newly arrived to volunteer in the park, who was just leaving a training session in the Mammoth, came to the tail end of the bear jam and was watching the activity when she saw a man leave the road and approach the bears, all of which had their back to the road.

The volunteer was about 30 cars away from the man and started running toward him.

"By the time she got there, he reached out and touched one cub on the rump," Gunther said. "The mother went ballistic and charged within 3 feet of the guy."

The man responded by

yelling and waving his arms at the bear, which bear experts universally agree is exactly the wrong thing to do.

The increasingly agitated sow paced back and forth, roaring and snapping her teeth.

About 100 people witnessed the incident and Gunther said the wall of people 20 yards behind the "idiot" is probably what kept the bear from mauling or killing him.

Then to volunteer, who was seeking a grizzly for the first time, approached within 10 yards of the man, told him to quit yelling and got him to move back to the road.

"She risked her life to save that guy's," Gunther said. "In a case where somebody's doing something really stupid, it may not make sense."

Nevertheless, the volunteer probably did the right thing, Gunther said, it may have saved the bear's life. The volunteer's name was not available.

If the bear had attacked, Gunther said, managers probably would not have killed it unless it had started eating the man. Managers don't want grizzlies to develop a taste for humans as prey.

But Rangers probably would have moved the bear and that could have reduced the long-term chances of survival, both for her and her cubs. Grizzlies are a threatened species and enjoy federal protection.

Bears relocated within the park often return quickly to the place where they got in trouble, even if it wasn't the bear's fault.

Bears like this one, that show no fear of people, frequently are killed by poachers, cars or other means, if relocated outside the park.

The incident took place one day before, Schwarzkopf's arrival in the park, and he learned of it when he saw the same bears Thursday.

He said one good side of the incident was the number of people who were yelling at the man and telling him to stay back. Fifteen years ago, that probably wouldn't have happened, he said, but most people are better educated about bears today.

Nevertheless, it sometimes only takes one person like the cub toucher, described only as tall, American and driving a light colored van with Utah or North Carolina plates, to spell trouble.

"People like that can be the demise of the bear," Gunther said. "I would call him mentally challenged, at best. In the city, a person wouldn't even do that to a strange dog."

Moving the bear could also eliminate a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many park visitors: watching a grizzly hunt elk.

"People that have been watching her have been great, mostly," Gunther said. "It's just this one idiot."

There were no rangers at the scene when the incident occurred, Gunther said, and the volunteer had no radio, so the man just got in his car and drove away.

It cited, he would have faced \$100 fine.

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