

DEATH OF A RADIO-MARKED GRIZZLY

The use of a special mortality-sensing transmitter aided to determine quickly the death of a translocated grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) in the Shoshone National Forest of Wyoming. The 285-kg male grizzly had been moved from West Yellowstone, Montana where it was trapped as a nuisance bear in the city dump.

On 15 August 1974, a large male grizzly estimated to be 12 to 14 years old was captured by a foot snare at the West Yellowstone city dump. The bear was transported about 70 airline miles from the trap site to the upper portion of Sunlight Creek in the rugged North Absaroka Wilderness of Wyoming. There, the drugged bear was measured, weighed, ear tagged, and instrumented with a mortality-sensing transmitter (Kolz, A. L., Proc. 12th Annual Rocky Mountain Bioengineering Symposium, Vol. 11:57-60, 1975) weighing 1.8 kg before its release just north of Stinkingwater Peak on August 16.

The movements of the bear were monitored closely by ground tracking for 3 days. The grizzly then moved into precipitous alpine country. Several flights were made to locate the bear, but contact was lost until September 14. The signal had been missed on previous flights because the bear was located in a steep-walled glacial cirque and signal reception range was limited. The signal indicated that the transmitter was stationary, and that the animal was dead or the collar had been dropped.

The bear carcass was located by a ground party in a boulder field at approximately 3,350-m elevation. The bear was lying head down on top of the transmitter antenna in a depression of rocks. Visual examination revealed abrasions and contusions about the head and a broken hind leg. From the state of decomposition, it appeared the bear had been dead about 10 days. An attempt to lift the carcass by helicopter to conduct a thorough laboratory necropsy was unsuccessful. While lifting the bear, the helicopter was caught in a downdraft and had to drop the carcass into an inaccessible location.

Based upon the type of external abrasions, the probable path of the bear into the cirque where the carcass was located, and evidence of a recent slide on a nearby talus slope, we speculate that the animal suffered internal injuries in a rock-slide. Unfortunately, loss of the carcass eliminated the possibility of substantiating this cause of death in what appears to have been an unusual natural mortality for a grizzly bear.

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