



Media Backgrounder – Grizzly Bears

Scientists believe that B.C. is home to as many as half of Canada’s grizzly bears and is one of the last safe havens for them in North America. In other parts of the world, grizzly populations have disappeared or are at risk of extinction.

Grizzly bears are an essential part of a healthy ecosystem. Known to scientists as a “keystone” species, grizzlies are ecosystem engineers that support plant and forest health by aerating the soil as they dig for roots and pine nuts and ground squirrels, and by distributing the nutrients, found in the flesh of the salmon that they eat, throughout the ecosystem. Grizzly bears also help regulate the populations of their prey and disperse important indigenous plants, such as blueberry and buffaloberry.

Despite the grizzly bear’s importance in nature and its vulnerability to human impacts, the B.C. government plans to open the sport-hunting season for grizzly and other bears in a few weeks – even though 79 per cent of the public are against sport hunting. Many First Nations also oppose the trophy hunt for cultural and spiritual reasons.

The extent to which trophy hunters are killing grizzlies in B.C. was never fully known until recent research conducted by the David Suzuki Foundation. Foundation scientists acquired and analyzed thousands of mortality records collected by the government over three decades and determined that:

- 1. A total of 9,484 grizzlies have been legally hunted in B.C. since the government began tracking death rates in 1977. Trophy hunting accounts for 88 per cent of all grizzly kills over the past three decades.**
- 2. The Foundation has identified more than 60 provincial parks where grizzly bears have been hunted for sport, including prized wilderness areas such as the Northern Rocky Mountains Park, Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Park and the Tatshenshini-Alsek Park – a globally renowned transboundary ecosystem.**

Although British Columbia has taken important steps to protect grizzly habitat in some provincial parks by banning resource extraction like logging and mining, these measures are nearly useless without laws that prevent the bears themselves from being shot and killed. The Foundation is calling on the government to protect B.C.’s grizzly bears and end the trophy hunt.