

BEaR Meeting – 10/07/08

Attendees: Kevin Nelms, Bo Sloan, Becky Rosamond, Glynda Clardy, Brad Young, Jason Ross, Jaysen Hogue, Shaun Williamson, Melissa Darden, Meg Cooper, Ray Aycock, Harry Fulton, Cathy Shropshire, Richard Rummel, Kathy Shelton, Rex Jones, Hunter Fordice, Jeanne Jones, Jane Farmer, Jerry Belant, Shauna Ginger, Alan Mumbower, Bill Hamrick, Justin Burger and Leslie Burger.

Meeting was called to order by Kevin Nelms, BEaR President, at 1:07 p.m. Attendees introduced themselves

Brief History of BEaR – Kevin Nelms

-founded in November 25, 2004, prior to that was MBBRTF – MS Black Bear Restoration Task Force – founded in 1996 as a subgroup of BBCC

- Mission
 - “Support the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks in restoration and management of ecologically viable and socially acceptable black bear populations in Mississippi.”
- Objectives
 - Inspire cooperation and assist in educating all entities about black bears in the state.
 - Encourage, support and assist in the successful restoration of black bears in Mississippi.
- Projects
 - GDBA – 2002 – education event. 100 year celebration of the famous Teddy Roosevelt bear hunt. Largest project
 - Bear Crossing Highway Signs
 - Website – information and membership
 - Black Bear SAFE – Conservation Reserve Program Practice – USDA – BEaR and TNC joint project. Money available to landowners within designated areas to reforest lands under CRP.
 - Entergy Grant – Education and support of bear monitoring
 - Aerial Telemetry – support of Brad’s work monitoring bear for state.

Mississippi Bears Update – Brad Young

- Research Update
 - Sightings are increasing throughout the state and are becoming more widespread
 - Bear in Yalobusha County near Water Valley and another near Enid Lake. Appear to be staying put.
 - More bear moving through Big Black River Corridor up to Attala County.
 - Have a number of females throughout the state that we cannot directly attribute to relocations occurring in LA or AR.
 - East side of state more lone males wandering around.
- Individual bears
 - F920 – Hunter Fordice’s female – collar malfunctioned and released when MS River flooded. Retrieved collar and downloaded data - spent a lot of time on 16th section prior to collar release.
 - I789 – male – Davis Island bear – Crossed back into Tensas NWR in LA. Collar malfunctioned. Collar found in middle of corn field. Bear most likely fought with another male who ripped off the collar. Several other bears currently on Davis Island as well.

- K515 – young male – Goshen, MS. Trapped in backyard. Property backed up to MS Sandhill Crane NWR. Moved to Ward Bayou but left. Photographed approximately 30 miles away in June. Unsure of current location.
- L12 – Horn Lake (downtown Horn Lake) – Female and yearling cub from Lake Washington. Originally trapped in Inverness and released on Delta NF. Cub lost collar and separated from female. Female took off and moved on to Horn Lake. Released on O’Keefe WMA. Last seen in community of Darling (north of Marks).
- N528 – male – Lauderdale County – within Meridian city limits. Could not find in July. Had moved south.
- O800 – older male – Jefferson County, Rodney, MS – got trapped in a goat pen – released. Moved 24 miles to northeast. Later sighted near Rocky Springs (late September)
- P16 – yearling male – unintentionally caught in a hog trap (trap wasn’t set) in Jackson County – have received reports he was seen with larger bear (mother), but not confirmed. Living in pasture near where he was captured.
- Q900 – one of cubs of F920 – female, Issaquena County – Entergy collar, Atwood salt lick, collared in August
- R621 – young male – origin unknown – Issaquena County – Entergy collar, Atwood salt lick, collared in August
- S19 – Bale’s Hunting Club – female, other F920 cub, collared in August, both cubs from F920 seen together in September.
- C610 – big Yazoo male – collared in November of 2005, collar lasted 1 ½ years then quit but did not come off. Had not been able to recapture prior to this. Retrieved data from collar (Nov.2005 – Apr. 2007)
- T20 – 215 lbs. male – Francis Landing Hunting Club – Bolivar County, inside the levee. Captured October 5. Female with cub photographed in the area. Cub captured but too small to collar so released. So far, unable to catch female.
- Technology is available for a higher grade of GPS collar, but cost is 2 – 3x price of current GPS collars – possibility of raising funds through landowners adjacent/near Hunter Fordice’s property (to be used in that area).

Update on Bears in Neighboring States – Shauna Ginger

- Federal update – USFWS sued to list critical habitat. Currently in Federal Register. Economic analysis out for public comment within next 30 days. Should all be finalized in next few months. All critical habitat within Louisiana. Based on distribution when species listed in 1992.
- Service beginning 5-year review process. Should start once Critical habitat is completed
- Louisiana - Joe Clark – University of Tennessee.
 - 2008 - moved 7 females and 12 cubs from Tensas to Red River. At Red River, at least 14 litters have been produced since 2005. Over the life of the program (8 years), 43 females and 92 cubs have been released. Focus now is on evaluating the success of repatriated populations.
 - Have also been collecting hair samples and telemetry data (24 females overall with collars).
- Arkansas – Ricky Eastridge – state coordinator – moving to Felsenthal refuge as complex biologist.
 - Done moving bear for now. Looking at data to determine whether to move more.
 - Bear archery season in Ouachitas beginning 2 weeks earlier. Looking to increase harvest from 100 to 150 bear. Expanded bear hunting zone around Ouachitas as well as expanding zone around White River. Goal is to reduce the number of human-bear conflicts.

- Bear poaching in George County, body dumped in DeSoto N.F. Defendant indicted on 4 felony counts. Court date tomorrow, pled not guilty. Plea agreement on the table. If accepted, money would go to BEaR. Probably need to focus some outreach in SE Mississippi. State officer, Billy Smith, who worked case, awarded officer of the year.
- Kevin's comments – Board was charged in April with trying to expand efforts to SE MS to increase outreach.

BBCC Report – Richard Rummel

- Critical Habitat – BBCC believed designation not necessary to help bear recovery. Believes designation could jeopardize voluntary landowner participation in program as a result of landowner perception of critical habitat designation. Private landowners are key to LA black bear restoration. Over 830,000 acres voluntarily restored since species listed. Concern that CH designation may limit activities of private landowners or add several layers of bureaucracy to process.
- May 17, 2008 – BBCC awarded National Wildlife Federation's Special Achievement Award
- September – 3rd annual membership banquet – raised about \$32K, sponsors for the banquet included BP, Pennington Oil and Gas Interests, and Diamond B Construction Company.

Mississippi Beekeeper's Association Update on Africanized Honey Bees – Harry Fulton

- Beekeeping in MS
 - Facts about beekeeping
 - \$250 – 350 million in pollination (probably much more now) in MS
 - in US - \$15 billion in pollination
 - World wide - \$217 billion in pollination
 - 16% of plants in worldwide pollinated by bees (not just honey bees)
 - Approx. 1000 beekeepers in MS
 - 2006 and 2007 MS had highest production per hive in country
 - Interest increasing throughout the state.
 - Workshops held to help people get started
- Africanized honey bees
 - When came into country in mid-90's, predicted they would spread up through Mississippi
 - Have expanded but not yet in MS
 - Problems
 - Stinging/deaths (2 human deaths in TX in recent months)
 - Do not appear to lose aggression in successive generations
 - Viability of bee keeping industry at risk
 - Public concern
 - Impt – bee keepers first line of defense
 - Male drones carry aggressive genes
 - Keeping good supply of "good" drones can dilute the aggressiveness
 - Expanded trapline along LA border this year Greenville south to Woodville, along ports, and along LA-ms border in coastal MS – trying to detect Africanized bees moving into MS.
 - Developing reference material
- Colony Collapse Disorder
 - Adult population suddenly gone without any accumulation of dead bees.
 - Brood, pollen and honey present
 - Little evidence of stealing honey after colony abandoned (unusual).
 - Some type of pathogenic organism – spreads through apiary and can move when bees are moved.

- Two migratory beekeepers with large losses
- Generally don't have problem in state.
- Much funding has been dedicated to this problem
- Suspect combination of factors
 - New virus, new parasite, stress, and other factors

Previous Bear Research and Future for Bear Research in Mississippi – Dr. Jerry Belant

- Southeast portion Denali NP – Brown and American Black bear
 - Sympatric in this area
 - Looked at coexistence at population level
 - Salmon runs July – Sept. – good food supply, very energy efficient
 - Hypothesis – brown bear will displace black bear when compete for same resource
 - 1,000 square miles study area.
 - Find bear in open area and dart bear.
 - Weigh, measure, radio collar (GPS)
 - Diet analysis – draw blood and look at c:n ratio or clip claws and look at ratios and could determine whether feeding on salmon, plant, or terrestrial food.
 - Claws – can get estimates for diet over the last year
 - Looked to see if avoidance between the two species
 - Found brown bears within ¼ mile of streams during salmon runs. Black bears only within ¼ mile of streams 15% of time.
 - Brown bears get what they want regardless of low or high salmon abundance (over 50% of diet)
 - Black bear get almost no salmon in low salmon abundance and about 20% of diet in years of high salmon abundance.
 - Mean body fat – in years of low salmon abundance, black bear had low body fat, years of high abundance, black bear had excellent body fat
 - Reproduction – brown bear reproduction generally good regardless of salmon. In years of low abundance, black bear reproduced poorly, while they reproduced above the expected level in years of high abundance.
 - Essentially, because there are enough years of high salmon abundance, offsets bad years for black bear and enables them to remain competitive with brown bear
- Black bear on Apostle Islands NP – Wisconsin (Archipelago of islands, focused on Stockton and Sand Islands.
 - Look at genetics of black bear in the National Park – National Park Service is required to maintain long-term viability of all species and protect the full range of genetic types of native plant and animal populations in the parks.
 - Why bear?
 - Inherent value as part of ecosystem
 - Harvested species
 - Bear-Human interactions
 - Objectives
 - Estimate density on Stockton and Sand Islands
 - Assess genetic variation throughout archipelago
 - Determine feasibility of DNA – recapture techniques for genetic monitoring
 - Most of island habitats are northern hardwood forests. (Much of area logged through 1970's).
 - From previous research, found that females had very small home ranges (7 km²) while males much larger home ranges (33 km²).
 - Open or closed populations
 - Probably closed – island populations, low mortality (previous research), low immigration/emigration.

- Hair snares – barbed wire set up around a scent station – each barb individual sample
- Used 6 microsatellites to recognize individuals and 10 additional to identify populations.
- Sampled 32 individuals in four sessions. No new individuals captured after session 2 on one island or session 3 on other island.
- Overall small but dense populations.
- On Stockton Island, higher degree of genetic variability than expected (means constant influx of new genes coming from mainland)
- Genetically distinct populations on Stockton and Sand Islands.
- Determined 3 distinct populations on Apostle islands.
- NPS modified harvest to preserve 3 populations
- Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Michigan
 - Estimate effects of visitation and harvest on black bears
 - Estimated population size – 100 black bears
 - Avoidance within 400 m of roads, varied by season
 - Avoided more during late summer (high visitation) and during hunt season
 - Not all evenly avoided
 - Presence of gravel or sand road correlated with likelihood that bear will be killed
 - Local method of hunting - drag roads then search roads for bear tracks, and use dogs to track bear
 - 91% annual survival, hunting only mortality source
 - Road distribution influenced harvest
- Black bears in MS
 - Relatively little known about black bear in MS
 - Represents a colonizing population – rare opportunity in wildlife ecology
 - Substantial support for this work
 - Focus –
 - Basic ecology and demography
 - Movements
 - Resource use
 - Survival/reproduction
 - Condition
 - Validate and refine habitat model – probably complete within next 4 years
 - Delineate areas of high suitability
 - Delineate corridors/connectivity
 - Role of MS river as partial barrier – will be on-going most likely
 - Population modeling
 - Estimate abundance
 - Estimate bear-human interactions
 - Road crossings
 - Agriculture – corn, apiaries, aquaculture
 - Human attitudes – May be able to start within next year or so
 - Revisit public acceptance in high suitability areas
 - Assess public acceptance in areas of relative high abundance
 - Efficacy of black bear education
 - Will be bringing a PhD student on in January, look at habitat use from radio collars at population levels.

Administrative

- Approval of previous minutes and membership report – Becky Rosamond

- Copies of minutes sent out via email
- Prior to meeting, had 23 paid members. 4 members paid today
- Meg moved, Cathy seconded, approved
- Financial report – Bo Sloan
 - Balance about \$8000
 - Majority money spent on collars, monitoring, and educational booth (from Entergy Grant)

Project Progress

- Entergy Grant – Becky Rosamond
 - To date have approximately \$2,400 left of the original \$15,000
 - Breakdown (approx.):

GPS collars	\$6,300
Flight fuel	2,000
Education materials (tent, booth, tablecloths, graphics)	4,300
- BEaR Booth – Kevin Nelms
 - Have tablecloths (2), tabletop booth, need more pictures and text
 - Also got 10x10 tent with logo and website
- Black Bear SAFE CRP – Kevin Nelms
 - Have written plans on at least 450 acres.
 - Won't have updates for another month or so.

Great Delta Bear Affair 2008 Update – Meg Cooper and Melissa Darden

- Has improved attitudes in area
- Great educational experience
- Education day 10/24 – soil and water conservation district organizes. That evening ticketed party at Lynne Mosby's house.
- Festival begins with bird walk at 7:30 at Yazoo refuge
- Wildlife Olympics – sponsored by Academy sports
- Run/walk, bike ride
- Seminars
- Refuge dedication of new TR NWR – main stage at 11:30 a.m.
- Music
- Games
- Can use volunteers – contact Meg

Old Business – Action items from previous BEaR meeting

- Safari Club (bear mount) – Cathy/Kevin – at extravaganza, offer to donate skin but donator did not follow up. Still action item
- Bear booth – Kevin - done
- Collars – Brad/Kevin - done
- Website – Shauna – turn in if not done yet.
- Gun Raffle/GDBA – Kevin/Bo – could not get a gun donated, may be able to pursue next year.
- Elementary curriculum – Kevin – done
- Annual report finalized and on web site

New Business – Kevin Nelms

- Aerial Telemetry Project – Submitted by Brad
 - \$1,500 to support flight time
 - Discussion

- Still want to buy table and couple easels (\$200)
 - Shaun motioned that after purchasing table and couple easels, remainder of funds go to telemetry project (roughly \$2,200). Bo seconded. Motion approved.
- Education Products
 - Needs to be tied to state curriculum
 - We have state framework and NC DVD.
 - Possible funding sources
 - Wildlife Challenge grant through Wildlife Forever! – Group Challenge Grant - \$1 K – 15K in funds. Supports habitat management projects and educational projects – Due in January.
 - Entergy grant as well (due Mar.1).
 - Discussion
 - Terri Jacobson – educational programs. Materials are out there, just need to collect what’s there. Need to have workshops for teachers as well. Need education committee.
 - Kevin recommends get money first, then form committee (Terri, Jane, Becky, anyone else interested.)
 - Jane Farmer – bear experience, Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mtn NP – interpreter, may be able to help develop material.
- Logos – Bo/Kevin
 - Monogrammed t-shirts – Charleston free set-up and \$5 logo on whatever shirt we want.
 - Kevin will get several made and have for the next meeting.
 - General consensus – t-shirts better for public, polos better for members.
 - Stickers – Internet site that will put logos on anything you want (cafepress.com)

Action Items:

- Continue looking for bear mount to get folks to donate – **Kevin**
- Education curriculum – **Becky, Terri, Jane**
- Shirts with logos – **Kevin**
- Website write-ups for Shauna
 - **Terri** – Education
 - **Brad** – Research
 - **Kevin** – Landowner Assistance, History
 - **Bo and Brad** – Beekeeping and Conflict Management
- Wildlife Challenge Grant – **Kevin/Becky/Terri**
- Entergy Grant – **Kevin/Bo/Becky/Brad**
- Table and easels for education booth – **Kevin**

Concluding Remarks – Kevin Nelms

- Kevin’s term ends in December, Bo assumes presidency in January
- Location for next meeting: Rolling Fork
- Date (ten): April 21, 2009
- Board meeting prior to general meeting

Meeting adjourned at 4:42 p.m.