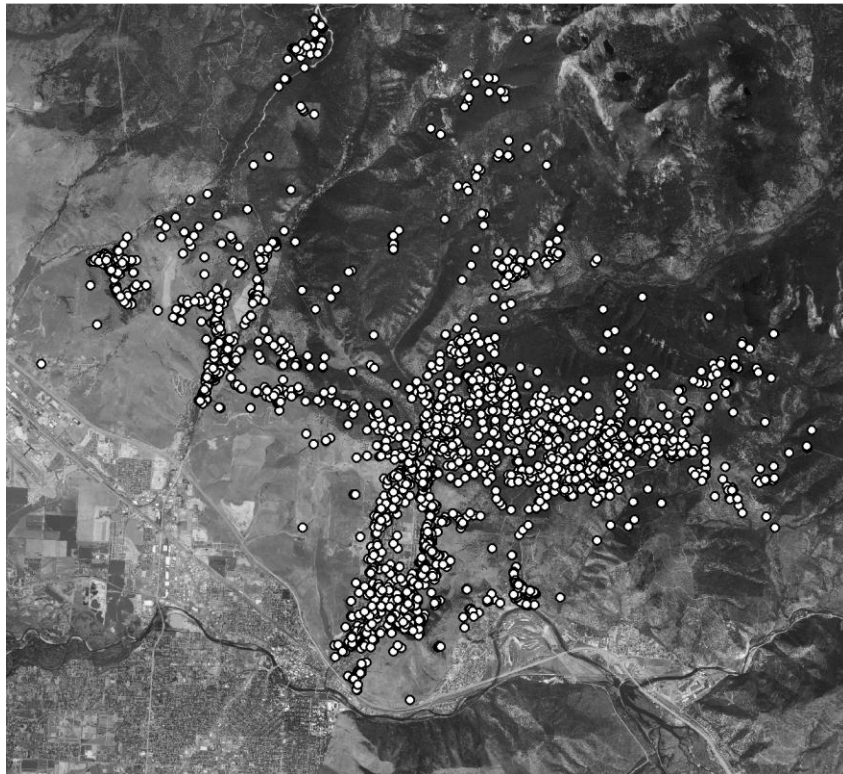


North Hills Black Bear Research Project Update 19 October 2009

We currently have 9 GPS collars out on black bears associated with the north hills: 3 female black bears that use Grant and Butler creek, 3 females that use Rattlesnake creek, and 3 males that use Grant, Rattlesnake, and Marshall areas. During summer most of these bears used natural habitats away from urban areas. However, since the end of August, the majority of bears shifted their habitat use and began using habitats that were within urban and suburban landscapes.

The GPS collars on these bears collect a location every 3 hours, and we have visited most locations within the urban area. The vast majority of urban feeding has been on fruit trees. However, many of the bears have come across available garbage containers and bird seed to which they have fed upon. As fall



progresses, and the fruit on the trees becomes less nutritious, bears will begin seeking out other sources of food. Native foods such as dogwood, mountain ash, snow berry, and bear berry are still available, but bears may not feed on them if garbage and bird seed are still available.

The collars on these bears are equipped with a “release mechanism.” This is an electronic attachment to the collar that is programmed to break the collar 10 October 2010. At this point, the collars will fall off, be retrieved, and the study will end. Data from the collars and feeding sites will be analyzed and written up into a thesis report.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has been instrumental in support and guidance throughout this project. And a special thank you must be given to all landowners who have helped, participated, and/or have been supportive of the study. Without your support, this project would not be successful. The information that we collect here in Missoula will help figure out ways to minimize human-black bear conflicts in other areas throughout North America!

If you have any questions, concerns, or just want to know more about black bears in Missoula, please feel free to contact Jerod Merkle (UM graduate student): jerod.merkle@umontana.edu. Other resources for information on Missoula bears can be found at: <http://www.rattlesnakebears.org>