



Grizzly biologist visits Rocky to encourage public participation in the scat app project

Foothills research institute hopes to continue the program in the years to come

BY BRITTANY FONG
SUMMER REPORTER

Members of the Foothills Research Institute (fRI) hosted a public information session on August 6 at the Rocky Mountain House Provincial Building for the grizzly bear scat project.

The program urges members of the public to be on the lookout for and collect grizzly scat while out in the backcountry this fall with a smartphone app.

"Our major goal is hoping to encourage as many people as we can to cover as much area as we can," says fRI wildlife biologist Sarah Rovang.

This pilot project's objective is to get public participation, record grizzly activity and manage research in a cost-effective way in hopes that it will be continued in the years to come throughout the province.

The grizzly bear program last took DNA hair samples of the Bear Management Area 3 (BMA3) in 2004, which is bordered by Edson, Drayton Valley, Rocky Mountain House, Nordegg, Banff and Jasper.

This year the fRI wants to include the public in the project and for them to pass on the information to others who are potentially heading out into the backcountry.



Sarah Rovang, wildlife biologist with the Foothills Research Institute (fRI), speaks with Rocky Mountain House residents and organization members about the grizzly bear scat project in hopes to encourage the public to participate in the program.

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The program that will be launched in the next two weeks and carried through the fall is based on a similar Scandinavian project that had success in accounting for their bear population.

Rovang says that participation in the grizzly scat project won't take up a lot of time or use a lot of equipment.

Before heading out, the fRI asks that individuals pick up scat collecting kits at one of the four collection depots and download the app to their smartphones.

The grizzly bear scat kit can be picked up at one of the regional fish and wildlife offices in Rocky Mountain House, Drayton Valley, Hinton

or Edson.

The kits include vials for scat storage, rubber gloves and a sample stick.

The smartphone app will include features such as a scat collection record, a sightings function if the user spots a rub tree or grizzly and a trip monitor of the route taken.

Rovang says there is no need

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Sarah Rovang
Wildlife Biologist

to be connected to service while using the app in the backcountry and there are a limited number of GPS units available for those who do not have a smartphone.

Rovang also assures that the information provided by the app will be used strictly by the fRI for the grizzly scat project so hunters should not be discouraged in sharing their routes on the app.

Once a sample is submitted, smartphone users will receive updates about the status of their bear as well as an end summary that will include facts such as relatives of the bear that are in the fRI database, if the bear's scat was collected at another location and its identity logistics.

The fRI is a government funded research institution based out of Hinton. For more information on the grizzly bear scat project visit their website www.grizzlyscatapp.ca.

Disregard for Others: failing to consider those who arrive next

I was going to call this column "Littering - What a Shame," but after some thought I changed it to what it really is - disregard for others.

We were camping in the west country a few weeks ago, and the random campsite we've used often over the years had quite a bit of garbage in it when we arrived. Not litter scattered all over as I have seen at other times and places, but a bunch of partly burned stuff in the firepit, a broken lawn chair, and garbage left in bags. Not only an aesthetic disregard for others, but in this case a source of odour that could attract bears and cause a safety issue for the next campers.

When we pulled in I said to my wife, "Look at this, can you believe it?" Quite a discussion followed on the subject of why people do that. We landed on the fact that some people just don't care about those who arrive after them. Presumably they go out to a scenic spot to enjoy it, but then leave it with little regard for those who show up next.

I'm always surprised at that - perhaps I shouldn't be, as I've witnessed it countless times - but it just doesn't fit my frame of reference. I simply don't understand the logic of bringing a bunch of stuff along to an enjoyable



THE OUTSIDE STORY
ROCKY KONYNENBELT



Bagged garbage and a broken camp chair were left behind in the west country. PHOTOS SUBMITTED



A messy firepit the author came across while random camping.

place and then leaving some of it behind. They wouldn't do that if visiting the backyard of their grandparents' house - or would they?

I suppose the same logic applies for a number of vehicle operators based on the amount of litter we see in road ditches. Garbage belongs in a proper garbage receptacle or municipally-approved landfill. Laws exist to penalize those who recklessly discard it anywhere else, but aside from getting a ticket for littering, there is a good reason why it shouldn't happen.

The speed limit on Hwy. 11 is not just to draw a line in the sand and penalize

those who step over it. There's a good reason why - the safety of others. Similarly, the proper handling of garbage boils down to one thing - consideration for others.

Now I could keep verbally "laying the wood" to those who would litter the back country, but I don't believe that will change anything. I want to challenge those who tend to leave a mess in public spaces to consider a few things. Think about those who use a site after you, as if it were your kids using those spots, and eventually training their kids to be respectful, and so on. Others deserve to find a site in the same or bet-

ter condition than when you arrived, without having to witness or clean up a mess (as we had to do).

I'm not trying to blow my horn, but I always leave outdoor sites in a better condition than when I arrived, and I know many people who do the same.

The bottom line is really very simple - extend some care and respect for those who arrive after you. Trust me, you'll feel much better about your actions in the end.

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