Study examines salmon poisoning disease in grizzly bears

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Salmon in the northwestern continental US often carry a fluke containing bacteria that can produce a deadly disease in bears called salmon poisoning disease (SPD). Current recovery plans for grizzly bears in the North Cascades of Washington and the mountains of central Idaho, where infected salmon currently occur, call for using bears from several interior populations; however, a new study reveals that such bears with no history of salmon consumption are likely sensitive to SPD.

The Journal of Wildlife Management findings indicate that identifying a source of bears that would be resistant to SPD may be difficult.

"We are hopeful that the bears used in the initial restoration effort will feed exclusively on terrestrial-based foods as there are currently very few salmon returning to the North Cascades; however, any bear that moves into lower elevation areas where they might consume salmon will be closely monitored," said lead author Dr. Charles Robbins, of Washington State University. "If they eat salmon containing the bacteria, we suspect they will get sick. We are hopeful that they will be able to recover."

More information: Charles T. Robbins et al, Salmon poisoning disease in grizzly bears with population recovery implications, *The Journal of Wildlife Management* (2018). DOI: 10.1002/jwmg.21502

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