DENNING OF EAST TAVAPUTS BLACK BEARS—2006

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In 2006 we visited dens of 3 older females originally collared during the long-term study and young bears rehabilitated at the Idaho facility and then released into the East Tavaputs Plateau (Book Cliffs) in early June 2005. Our objectives were twofold: to continue the monitoring of the three older bears which included collar inspection and observation of cub production and repair and or replacement of collars on the rehabilitated bears (initially the break-away collars were only intended to "survive" until denning but UDWR has since decided to monitor these bears to age of 1st reproduction, which may be at 3 or 4 years because growth was accelerated during rehabilitation—see 2005 report and below.)

METHODOLOGY

Location of den sites and protocol for handling bears followed the same pattern as previous years. Sedated bears were processed in dens or immediately outside the dens as conditions permitted. In addition to collar inspections and as necessary replaced tissue chair and tips of a claw were removed for stable isotope analysis.

RESULTS

Seven bears were seen in dens: Heidi (#8030), Xina (#8220), Mariah (#8700) and 4 rehabilitated bears (Table 1). One young female was processed by Dr. Kevin Bunnell on Ute Indian Land—Hillcreek Extension and 3 were seen by BYU students, Dr. Janene Auger of BYU, Dr. Bunnell, and Dr. Hal Black on the BLM lands on the southeastern portion of the Plateau. Two of the adult females had a single cub each, and the other had triplets.

Rehabilitated bear #8300 ran from her den immediately after being injected. She walked through snow ~280 m before falling asleep. Her collar was damaged beyond our ability to repair it in the field. She was wrapped in a space-blanket and covered with conifer limbs before being left. This bear weighed 187 lbs., a gain of 117 lbs. from her release weight in June 2005.

Rehabilitated female #8310 weighed 108 lbs. She weighed 90 lbs in June 2005 when originally released.

Rehabilitated female #8270 weighed 156 lbs. She had gained 46 lbs. from her release weight of 110 lbs.

Three rehabilitated bears were not visited because of time and weather constraints.

Future Expectations

We will continue to visit the dens of the 3 older bears until their natural deaths. The weight gains of the rehabilitated bears would suggest that they might reproduce at an early age as a result of their having been fed throughout what would have been their 1st year of denning. To our knowledge no female black bears in Utah have had cubs as 3 year olds. If the supplemental feeding does in fact produce these results, managers could augment populations using this tool and enhance the rate of population growth in reintroduction efforts (examples might be the Henry, Raft River, and Deep Creek Mountains).

Table 1. Female bears with active collars—March 2000

Bear #	Weight (lbs.)	Right eartag	Left eartag	Age	Collar
8700	200	0400 (green)	0397 (green)	9	New in 2006
8220	200	0236 (yellow)	0214 (yellow)	18	New in 2006
8030	225	0445 (yellow)	0444 (yellow)	21	New in 2006
8270	156	0350 (white)	0373 (white)	2	Active
8310	108	0380 (white)	0375 (white)	2	Active
8300	187	0359 (white)	0319 (white)	2	Damaged, removed
8250[a]	—			2	Active

[a]Data recorded by Kevin Bunnell.