

Regional Biologist Program



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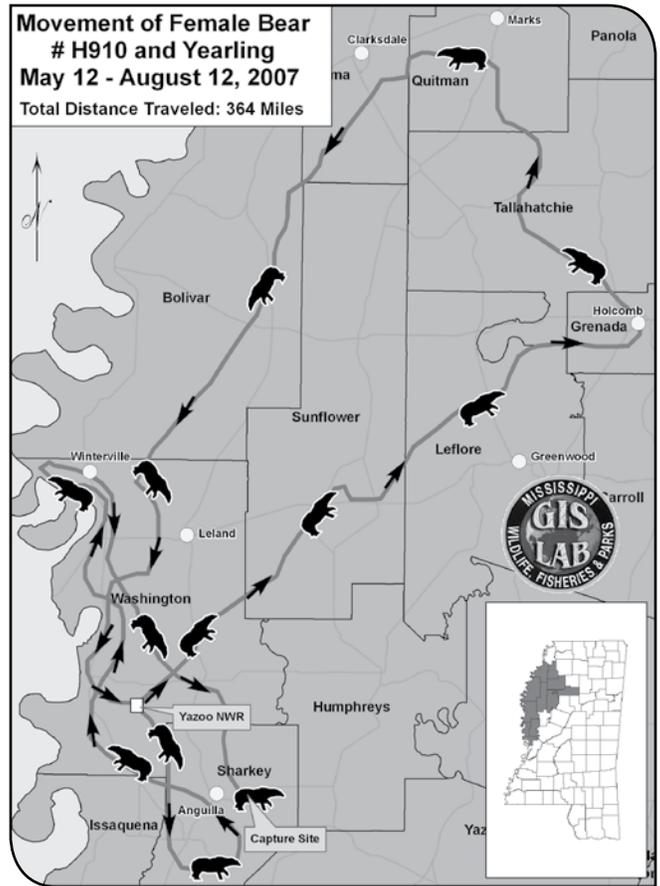
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WALKING TOUR

[Cont. from 20] The signal disappeared from the Refuge but I knew it was just a matter of time before someone saw that orange collar and called it in. Sure enough, a group of biologists working on Twin Oaks WMA spotted her crossing a road just north of the headquarters. Here we go again, I thought. The next week a telemetry flight found her in a cornfield on the northern edge of Delta National Forest. This was good news because we knew of at least two males that had been hanging out around that area. Our hope was that she would find herself a “date” and settle in the area. Once again, she would have none of that. Two weeks later calls came in reporting she and the yearling on the west side of Lake Washington and then further north into the Winterville community. As you can imagine, by now I was pretty much at my wits end with these two bears. She had seen the best habitat the Delta had to offer but still refused to slow down. I feared that it was only a matter of time before one or both of them were hit by a vehicle.

Around the time of the Winterville sighting, we had begun baiting and setting a trap for a big male on a 16th Section property in Sharkey County some 50 miles away.



We had taken trail camera photos of him and felt confident that we could catch him. On Sunday, August 12, I got the call from Sunflower WMA manager Jason Kerr that we had a bear in the trap but it was not the big bear we were expecting. The bear in the trap was wearing an orange collar. All I could do was shake my head in disbelief.

After immobilizing her in the trap, a full exam showed

that she was in fine shape, despite her marathon journey through the Delta. She was given a complete work-up and fitted with a new GPS radio collar that will record her locations on a daily basis for the next two years. My hope is that she will remain on some of the public land in Sharkey County and raise cubs there in the years to come but, of course, I've been wrong before. **WI**

NATIVE WARM-SEASON GRASSES

[Cont. from 1] ent in seedbanks and may be released by removing other cover types that prevent desirable plants from responding. This may be accomplished by thinning and burning in upland forests, allowing agricultural fields to fallow, or by using herbicides to kill non-native grasses. Results may vary depending on local seedbanks. NWSG may also be planted from seed. Native grass seed is very fluffy and may be broadcast into a properly prepared seedbed using a carrier (such as fertilizer that does not contain nitrogen) or drilled using no-till planting equipment specifically designed

for NWSG. When selecting a NWSG mixture for planting, be sure to consider your objectives. If your objective is quail or rabbits, keep the seeding rate low (2-4 lbs/acre), and be sure to add some forbs to the mix. A guide to establishing and managing NWSG for wildlife entitled “Native Warm-Season Grass Restoration in Mississippi” (Publication 2435) is available on the Mississippi State University Extension Service Website at www.msucare.com/pubs/index.html. For more information about establishing NWSG on your property contact John Gruchy at 662-274-1050 or Rick Hamrick at 662-320-9375. **WI**

By Brad Young, Black Bear Program Leader

Bears Take Walking Tour of Delta

THIS WHOLE ORDEAL STARTED in July 2006. I received an e-mail from Mike Hooker, University of Tennessee research associate, telling me that a radio-collared female they were monitoring had crossed into Mississippi and was now located somewhere around the town of Percy. "She's wearing a bright orange collar, so you'll probably get a few calls from people seeing her," he said. I had no idea at the time just how true that would be!

Female bears are a rare commodity in Mississippi. In fact, we are only aware of around five or six in the entire state. I knew that she had a newborn cub in Arkansas but doubted that the cub had made the journey across the River with her. I was wrong. Trail camera photos taken on private land showed the cub was still by his mother's side and the two were staying near the Yazoo National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).

The pair denned in a hollow willow tree on Yazoo NWR during the following winter. My plan was to tranquilize the female in her den tree and replace her Arkansas collar with a new collar that would download GPS coordinates of her location on a daily basis.

As luck would have it, the day I picked to replace her collar was one of spring's warmest, and the female and yearling were looking at us from an adjacent tree as we approached. Needless to say, the gig was up!

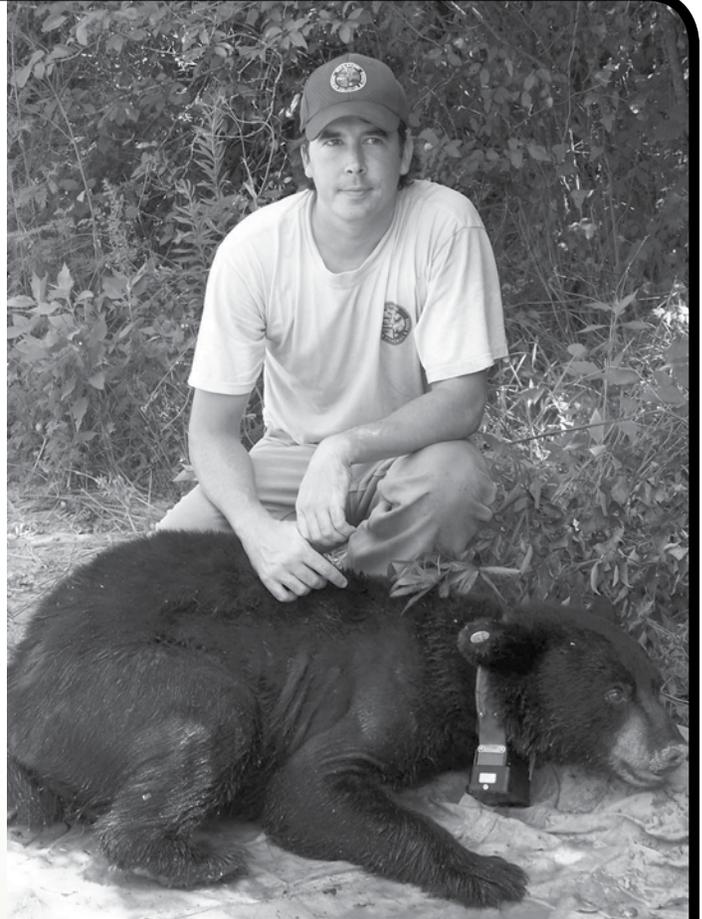
I wasn't worried. We could wait until

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she and the cub came out in a couple of weeks and set traps for her on the Refuge. Wrong again. The pair came out later that spring, but did not stay on the Refuge. Not even close. The first call I got was from the Money community north of Greenwood detailing two bears crossing a soybean field, one of which was wearing an orange collar. She and the yearling then traveled through Malmaison WMA and into a wooded area just south of Holcomb. The pair then took an unex-

pected north turn and were sighted just below the town of Marks. They then turned due west and were located just off Highway 61 below Clarksdale. I lost track of them after that and assumed they had crossed the River again and were back in Arkansas. Wrong again. About a week later, calls came in about two bears crossing a field around Stoneville, west of Leland. From there they slowly made their way back down to the Yazoo Refuge. Surely they would stay put this time, right? I should have known better.

[Cont. on 19]



Wildlife Issues

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