

## **Grizzly and Wolf Qualitative Interview Results**

This report is derived from 96 guest surveys. The surveys were collected (thank you gift shop!) from approximately December 2022 – May 2023. The Closed questions are those that have a set and limited number of responses, for example, how many times has someone visited the Center. Open-ended questions are those that technically have an infinite number of potential responses and do not have to be limited to one response. The responses to these questions were coded by theme in a computer software program called Nvivo and then divided by 96 to get a percentage. Below you will find each question, and each associated response theme represented by a percentage. There are also a few direct quotes from the surveys as examples. Overall, I think the results have reinforced how amazing the Center is, how hard the staff works to keep it that way, and that our efforts are appreciated!

### **1. What was the highlight of your visit to the Center? Why?**

Wolves, generally (57%); bears, generally (33%); amazing habitats (27%); animals and center generally (5%); displays/museum (2%); bear intros (6%); Sam (8%); Bo (2%); Coram (2%); enrichment (17%); keeper kids (2%); otters (21%); staff and naturalists (13%); pack chat (20%); Fossil Butte (1%); fish (1%); ground squirrels (1%); salamanders (1%)

“Watching the bears eat and wrestle! I love seeing them play! Seeing them up close is so beautiful. Also, the staff explaining things was great.” I love the wolf habitats and how they are as natural as possible.”

“I loved watching Sam sift through all the logs to find food. He's just so so incredible, I literally stopped in my tracks with my jaw dropped, when I first saw him. I still have goosebumps from the experience.”

“How can I choose? The wolves and bears. We heard a great talk from the guide (naturalist) he was very informed and, to my surprise and pleasure, very apolitical! We heard such active and fascinating stories from the guide.”

“I really liked the otters; it was so amazing to learn about them and see how they swim and walk. I never knew how unique and fun otters are! The Riparian exhibit was an unexpected and wonderful surprise! Also watching Bo and Coram wrestle in the habitat was a special and rare opportunity!”

### **2. What did you learn is the most common reason the bears live at the Center?**

Habituation, comfort with people, human food (39%); they are unable to survive in the wild and must be rescued (no specific reason given) (21%); they were orphaned or injured (15%); people

not being responsible (14%); they have become a danger to humans/human conflict (10%); for education and/or to represent an example of Yellowstone bears (2%); for the bear's happiness (2%); due to habitat loss (2%); **it's the bear's fault, nuisance bears (21%)**

“The Center provides bears a sanctuary for those that are removed from the wild. Searching for unsecured food, wandering into human neighborhoods, and becoming habituated are common reasons bears end up living at the Center.”

“Interactions with irresponsible humans - humans not being conscious of bad habits with their food and humans infringing on their habitats or not respecting animals in the wild.”

“Because humans are careless and attract food-motivated bears with their trash/food to a point that they become habituated and therefore dangerous.”

Due to the fact that 21% of the public gave a reason that is a negative connotation or in contrast to our messaging, we should just be aware of working on this. Here are some direct quotes to exemplify this: Examples of areas we want to work on our messaging:

“Bad bears!!!! They are a nuisance and too used to being around people.”

“They become too comfortable with humans and put themselves in danger.”

“Delinquency, they got in trouble too many times their bad behavior of seeking human food.”

“Everything they need to survive is here and because they were misbehaving in the wild.”

### **3. What feelings did you experience when observing the bears today?**

This question was overwhelming in the responses received and reinforces why we do what we do.

Excited, happy, joy (42%); awe, amazement, wonder (41%); grateful bears are taken care of (19%); respect, humility (17%); amusement, fun, surprise (9%); sadness (9%); beautiful, cute (8%); compassion, empathy (7%); interested, engaged, curiosity (7%); calm, peaceful (5%)

“I felt humility, awe, and curiosity, but also sadness that because of humans they are not in the wild.”

“I felt happiness, this was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I felt proud and excited to be part of the keeper kids experience.”

“I couldn’t get over how majestic they are. Words can't express the beauty of just watching them. I could have watched them all day.”

“I felt their emotional depth. I also had feelings of wonder and connectedness.”

“I felt overwhelming joy and awe that they can be relocated here rather than euthanized. I am so happy they have a second chance.”

#### **4. What actions can individuals take to make living or visiting bear country safer for people and bears?**

Secure your food and clean up after yourself in bear country (49%); respect them and their space (45%); don't feed bears (21%); be responsible (19%); bear spray, make noise, stand ground (14%); education; (10%) preserve their habitats (4%); donate to good causes (1%); don't pet them (1%)

#### **5. What role do wolves play in the wild?**

Control/manage prey populations (48%); they balance the ecosystem, are part of the circle of life, are keystone species (34%); they are apex predators, important hunters (24%); control/prevent overgrazing (5%); their kills provide food for bears and other animals (5%); they are scavengers(4%); pass on important knowledge to their young (3%); competition to other predators (1%); provide money from tourism (1%)

“They are the apex predators. Their kills supply food for many other animals. Their presence brings in beavers, birds, and increases the growth of willows and aspens, improves streamside ground, and maintains elk herds”

“They serve as population control for many species, such as several ungulates. They provide a popular species for tourists to increase education funding.”

#### **6. What value do wolves have for you?**

beauty, majestic (29%); bring balance to the ecosystem (24%); respect, admire, valuable (19%) appreciation for pack system (14%); amazing, awe-inspiring, impressive (11%); right to exist, part of nature (9%); fun to watch (8%); spiritual (7%); control prey population (7%); education (6%); fierce, brave, resilient (5%); empathy (3%); primitive/primeval (3%); intelligence (2%); mysterious (2%)

“They strike me as regal and primitive, and I feel blessed to have a window into their lives.”

“They are inspiring a desire in me to form my own pack and also be resilient and brave!”

“I value all wildlife intrinsically, but I especially admire their beauty and level of social intelligence and hunting abilities.”

“They help us to understand the complexities and hardships for animals in the wild, as well as family/pack dynamics and relationships. We need them to help keep the ecosystem working properly.”

**7. Did you observe the enrichment process in any of the animal habitats?**

(79-yes; 17-no)

**7a. What does this process do for the animals?**

Keeps them engaged, stimulated, provides fun (35%); fulfill natural instincts, mimics nature (28%); exercise, reduce stress, quality of life (16%); feeds the animals, provides important nutrients (7%); makes enclosure more interesting (5%); keeps them safe (3%); education opportunity (2%) no competition (1%); to clean enclosure (1%)

“Provides variety and helps them stay curious and engaged, offers stimulation for their natural behaviors similar to wild wolves.”

“Keeps them engaged mentally, removed the stress of the enclosure, it's fun, presents challenges.”

**7b. How did the animals respond to enrichment?**

Engaged, interested, curious (25%); excited, eager, playful (25%); very active (17%); favorably (10%); calm, safe (4%); couldn't tell (3%)

“They became super active and went around the whole environment to check out what changed. They were smelling around the habitat, running from one scent to another. They were very alert, I could tell it was an enhanced sensory experience for them.”

**7c. Why do you think the Center does this process?**

Keep the animals healthy, engaged, happy (41%); provide a natural habitat (19%); encourage natural instincts (18%); to educate/entertain visitors (18%); make sure they are not endangered (2%); to encourage feelings of empathy (2%); best way of feeding the animals (1%)

“Letting the bears play and interact allows them to get exercise and have fun as well as let guests admire their size yet see them as smart and social beings. It allows the bears to still fulfill their natural tendency to search for food.”

“Animals in captivity need time to exercise their minds and act more like animals in the wild would.”

**8. Did you have the opportunity to listen to a program or talk to a naturalist (staff in a red shirt)?**

Wolves, pack life, what they eat (40%); bears, their behaviors, personalities, history (30%); so much information, very knowledgeable (7%); enrichment, its importance (7%); Obsidian's future (6%); reintroduction of wolves in Yellowstone, wild wolves (4%); the history of the otters (1%); territorial habits of ground squirrels (1%); Fossil Butte (1%)

**8. Did you learn that there was another bear den and habitat being built?**

(yes 39; no-56)

**9a. What do you think is the main reason another den/habitat is being constructed?**

More space to save more bears (neutral or positive) (39%); improve habitat, add variety for bears (19%); so the current resident bears can have more space can be on the habitat longer (14%); opportunities for public engagement and education (3%); more space for problem bears (negative sentiment) (2%); rehabilitation (2%); perhaps save black bears (1%)

**10. Did you come to the Center for a specific exhibit/animal? If yes, which one?**

no, everything (48%); bears (33%); wolves (27%) otters (5%); sam (2%); eagles (1%); ground squirrels (1%)

**Questions 11 – 14 were closed/quantitative questions that collected demographic data**

**15. Other comments?**

amazing, beautiful exhibits/facility (38%); thank you for all you do, keep up good work (24%); wonderful experience (13%); very friendly, informative staff (10%); great learning experience (6%); look forward to returning (5%); animals well cared for (4%); open viewing areas, animals up close (3%); loved riparian exhibit (2%); loved visiting in winter (2%); great gift shop (2%); amazing family spot (2%); raffles are so fun (1%); loved pack chat (1%); loved cooler testing (1%)

“Thank you all so much for what you do! Your work will make impacts far into the future. Such great people and we are so thankful to be able to experience this amazing place!”

“I am so impressed with the knowledge of the naturalists. They were so friendly and willing to visit and assist – I want to be friends with them! Lol!”

“The gift shop is really great and also really enjoyed all the pictures that were taken of the animals that live here.”

“This is a beautiful center! So well run - so well staffed! Wonderful mission, keep up the good work!”

