

Grizzly bear poised to return to the West



A grizzly finds its salmon dinner in Alaska's Denali National Park. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Jim Yuskavitch, Sierra

It's been nearly 50 years since one of the last grizzly bears in Washington State's wild North Cascades was shot and killed. It's been even longer, more than 90 years, since the last known grizzly vanished from California, where the great bear's image is still emblazoned prominently on the state flag.

But they may be poised for a comeback. There are plans in the works to reintroduce grizzlies into the North Cascades ecosystem, initiated by the federal government in the early 1990s. Also, conservationists have proposed doing the same in the remote regions of the southern Sierra Nevada, which could also open the door for grizzly reintroductions into other

parts of their historical range beyond their current Northern Rockies stronghold.

Grizzly bear populations began dropping in the West in the mid-1850s, mostly from hunting. By 1920, they were gone from 95 percent of their historical range. Grizzlies were deemed extinct in California by 1924.

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