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It's a bear market for research

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du Toit, Johan T., "It's a bear market for research" (2008). *Human–Wildlife Interactions*. 46.
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Columns

The Director's desk

It's a bear market for research

JOHAN T. DU TOIT, Co-Director, Jack H. Berryman Institute (West), Department of Wildland Resources, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322-5230, USA

HUMAN–WILDLIFE INTERACTIONS are not a series of random events. They are characterized by patterns of causal factors, and the scientific study of those patterns enables management plans to be developed, conflicts reduced, and the net benefits of wildlife, thus, enhanced. Unfortunately, however, there are some wildlife species that get caught up in human–wildlife conflicts that are particularly difficult to resolve, even though the causal factors are well-known. Such conflicts commonly occur with wildlife species that use the same main food types as humans. In North America and Europe, the problem is exemplified by brown and black bears (*Ursus arctos* and *U. americanus*) that frequently come into conflict with humans who raise free-ranging livestock, keep bees, grow crops, build houses and roads, and camp out in bear habitats. It is, thus, highly appropriate that this issue of *Human–Wildlife Conflicts* focuses on human–bear interactions.

In addition, the Berryman Institute is collaborating with the National Wildlife Research Center on a project to investigate a new application of aversive conditioning to reduce black bear visitations to camping sites. We have allocated a Berryman Institute intern to assist a graduate student on this project in the Manti-Lasal National Forest of central Utah, and I anticipate some of the results of that research to appear in a future issue of this journal. In coming years, we hope the Berryman Institute will be able to increase its support for research into such issues as human–bear conflicts, but for the current fiscal year our Congressionally-directed budget is somewhat reduced.



Johan T. du Toit

Because of the bear market trend in the U.S. economy, we at the Berryman Institute (West) are tightening our belts and allocating research funds only to long-standing projects that need to be completed. We have not launched a request for proposals this year, but university faculty members thinking of taking on graduate students in the fall of 2009 should keep an eye out for updates on our new website (currently under construction). Keeping the activities of the Berryman Institute (including this journal) going would not be possible without the excellent relations we enjoy with our colleagues in USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services. I will take this opportunity to single out Dr. Rick Bruggers, who recently retired after 30 years of distinguished service, most recently as Director of the National Wildlife Research Center in Fort Collins, Colorado, where he was a stalwart supporter of the Berryman Institute. As much as we look forward to working with his very competent and well-qualified successor Dr. Larry Clark, we will miss working with Rick, who is apparently planning his retirement around fishing and exploring trips in the mountains. Well, I hope he still subscribes to *Human–Wildlife Conflicts* and reads this issue—there are bears out there! *