



Bear Activist and Companion Mauled to Death in Alaska

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(AP) Timothy Treadwell, 46, and his girlfriend Amie Huguenard, 37, both of Malibu, California were killed by bears on Oct 6 in Katmai National Park and Preserve. Park officials immediately closed the campsite in Kafia Bay and said they would now

1. Who was Timothy Treadwell?

Hollywood Hype: Timothy Treadwell sometimes claimed that he was an orphan from England, or sometimes from Australia.

THE REALITY IS: Timothy Treadwell was born Timothy Dexter to a middle class family in New York. He and his siblings were raised in New Jersey and Treadwell was a member of the high school swim/dive team. Both his parents are alive.

Treadwell tells in his book *Among Grizzlies* that he had been a drug addict and alcoholic, but bears saved him from these vices.

2. What was Treadwell's supposed "research" and who requested it?

Hollywood Hype: Treadwell's supposed "research" was to demonstrate that he could get close to bears with his gentle and non-threatening personality and communicate with them. Treadwell boasted that he could understand their communication and they could understand him. He claimed that he knew 21 bear vocalizations and various different body languages. He wanted to see if he could be accepted by 1,000 pound wild coastal brown bears.

THE REALITY IS: The National Park Service at Katmai denied Timothy Treadwell a permit to do research on bears. Bear biologists have stated that there was no meaningful value to Treadwell's supposed research. Treadwell had only a high school education, and was not qualified to conduct research on bears and bear behavior. He has never published a professional scientific paper or presented his information for

peer review by biologists, or professional associations such as the Wildlife Society or the Park Service. He had claimed that his book *Among Grizzlies* was his published report; however, the book is full of inaccuracies, misinformation and material that has been previously published by qualified bear biologists over the past 40 years.

No university, wildlife or land management agency has requested that anyone adopt the methods used by Treadwell to gain information on bears. The National Park Service made it clear that he was not to conduct any kind of research without appropriate protocol and a permit.

His supposed research included the following:

- Entering dense brushy areas and standing next to bears
- Approaching bears for photographs
- Deliberately, in a confrontational manner, challenging bears
- Crawling on his hands and knees up to bears while chanting "I love you", or singing, or reading poetry
- Having sex near areas where bears had mated
- Camping in dense brush where bear trails converged
- Attempting to pet or touch bears, even cubs

These inappropriate behaviors have no benefit for the survival of wild bears. The reality is that all wildlife and land management agencies consider these activities to be the stressing and harassing of wildlife, and interfering with their normal activities.

3. Where did Treadwell perform his "research", while supposedly protecting bears from poachers, hunters and development?

Hollywood Hype: Treadwell was in secret, mysterious, remote parts of Alaska that he called "The Forbidden Zone" and the "Grizzly Maze". He boasted that it was just him, the bears and the poachers.

THE REALITY IS: Treadwell was actually in Katmai National Park, established 85 years ago. Katmai is a world-renowned bear viewing area, where thousands of tourists, fishermen, biologists and photographers have traveled for decades. They arrive by floatplane or boats to camp, view and photograph the spectacular scenery and the bears. The area is closed to hunting and protected by Park Rangers.

The National Park Service, Alaska Fish & Game, tour operators and local fishermen all act as a buffer to prevent poaching. The poaching of bears has not been a problem in Katmai for the past 30 years. Remarkably, though Treadwell had a 35mm camera and video camera with telephoto lens, in 13 summers he was never able to get any photographs or film footage of these menacing poachers (who Treadwell claimed carried machine guns), their boats or their floatplanes.

Treadwell once published a picture of what he called a poacher. It was actually a tour operator Treadwell knew. When Patagonia, Inc. learned of this fact, Treadwell had to destroy all brochures with the misleading picture and apologize to the tour operator. Treadwell had deliberately created a false and misleading impression for fundraising and self-promotional purposes.

Katmai National Park is not under threat from developers' bulldozers. National parks are preserved from development, so Treadwell was not protecting bears from development.

4. What kind of bears was Treadwell supposedly "researching"? Were they grizzly bears, or brown-grizzly bears, or grizzly-brown bears, or were they brown bears?

Hollywood Hype: They were "Grizzlies the most dangerous and ferocious animals in the world with 4 inch claws, huge and menacing" as noted per Keith Morrison on Dateline NBC, and as described in Treadwell's book Among Grizzlies.

THE REALITY IS: Internationally the common name is brown bears, *Ursus arctos*, and they are found in Italy, Spain, Russia and many other countries. In North America they are also called Alaskan brown bears or coastal brown bears. Often these Alaskan coastal brown bears have abundant food sources such as salmon runs, berries and sedges, and as a result are somewhat more tolerant of each other and humans. When bears are fishing they may encounter 40 other bears, as well as tourists per day, and because of this they have developed "social skills".

Grizzly bear, *Ursus arctos*, was once the regional name for brown bears found in the interior of North America. This is the common name used in places like Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks, or Banff and Jasper Parks in Canada. They share a similar DNA with brown bears, but they do not have the same abundance of food available, and they are generally much smaller. They do not have the huge salmon runs and do not learn to socialize the way that Katmai coastal brown bears do. Grizzlies have gained an exaggerated reputation for ferocity, but they probably are more likely to confront visitors. Their name is actually derived from the silver-tipped hairs giving them a "grizzled" appearance.

The interior grizzly bear has to work much harder at survival and has a much more competitive environment in which to survive. Misleading readers and viewers that the coastal brown bears of Katmai National Park are the same as "grizzly bears" found in the interior creates a false impression. It leads millions of visitors in grizzly habitat to falsely believe that they can walk up to a grizzly bear the same way as Treadwell walked up to severely habituated, well-fed and tolerant brown bears in Katmai National Park. His misleading information and images put people and bears at risk.

Treadwell titled his book Among Grizzlies because of the cache' and promotional hype value. They are not grizzlies.

Also; regarding bear research it should be noted that it was the two brothers Drs John and Frank Craighead, who did important long term scientific studies on actual grizzlies (in the Yellowstone Ecosystem,) not Timothy Treadwell, as some may erroneously believe. Their wildlife research during the 60's and 70's through the 90's still stands as some of the best pioneering field research into the ecology and behavior of wild brown bears.

5. What measures did Treadwell take to protect himself and the bears?

Hollywood Hype: Amazingly, Treadwell faced the "grizzlies" alone and did his supposed research without a weapon, bear spray, or an electric fence for his tent.

THE REALITY IS: Treadwell was not allowed to carry a gun because it is against National Park regulations. Every year, thousands of tourists and photographers, including senior citizens and children visit Katmai National Park, and hike and camp without carrying guns. Annually, across North America, millions of visitors travel in brown bear, grizzly bear, polar bear and black bear habitat without carrying guns as well.

In Katmai National Park, the Park Service recommends carrying bear pepper spray and using electric fences. This is not only for the visitors' protection but to prevent bears from being destroyed. Not using bear pepper spray or an electric fence jeopardizes the bears. Treadwell did not use either of these when he, Amie, and two bears were killed.

This was a promotional boast. In order for Treadwell to appear larger than life he had to demonize the bears by saying he could live among them without a gun. This creates a false fear of bears and discredits Treadwell's supposed efforts to prove that bears aren't dangerous. Treadwell didn't really have a special gift with bears. The brown bear population he camped near had been habituated to human presence for over 50 years, and to large concentrations of other brown bears for millennia.

Larry van Daele, a biologist for Alaska Fish & Game who investigated the mauling site, wrote that "a person could not have designed a more dangerous location to set up a camp". He added, "I'm kind of surprised he lasted as long as he did". There were suitable camping areas nearby that would not have been in dense brush.

Special Note: Treadwell stated that if a bear ever killed him, he had a special agreement with the National Park Service that no bears would be harmed. This was false. The Park Service made it clear that he was not to conduct any activities that were inappropriate and in violation of park regulations.

6. What about Treadwell's methods of photography and videography and their value?

Hollywood Hype: Treadwell was the first person to photograph and videotape these brown bears. He got closer than anyone before. He alone had special permission to get close to bears. He was given a special permit and the area was then closed to tourists.

THE REALITY IS: Treadwell did not have special permission to get closer than any other tourists did. All non-park personnel need to get a permit to go into the backcountry. All photographers are supposed to stay 50 yards from individual bears and 100 yards from mother bears with cubs. This is for the safety of both people and bears. He was not the first person to photograph these brown bears. Every year, thousands of amateur, semi-professional and professional photographers and others travel to Katmai National Park to photograph spectacular landscapes and bears.

The value of his photographs is questionable, because they included his up close and personal, hands-on message. This has become a management problem in our parks, forests and refuges. More and more tourists are duplicating the inappropriate actions shown on TV or included in books. This is now a national crisis, resulting in disposable wildlife.

7. What part did the media play in the deaths of Treadwell, his girlfriend and the bears?

Hollywood Hype: Dateline, People magazine, Lettermen, Rosie O'Donnell, Discovery Channel. Once again Treadwell is ready to tell his story about living among the fierce bears. Full celebrity status was given to Treadwell and his book Among Grizzlies - a man who was described by some after his death as "The Bear Whisperer".

THE REALITY IS: Treadwell peddled the idea that he had a unique relationship with bears to producers and talk show hosts. This was to market his book and to solicit donations to his private organization, which did not have a 501 C3 non-profit status. The media people saw a sensationalized story with big, wild animals and never took the time to check the facts with the National Park Service, or bear biologists.

Media competition for up close and personal shows with wild animals is part of what led to Treadwell and his companion Amie's deaths. The need for these inappropriate personal interactions with bears, in order to get on TV shows is leading to increasing human-wildlife conflicts. Did Treadwell buy into his own Hollywood hype?

"The Crocodile Hunter", Steve Irwin kisses crocs on the snout on his show. Jeff Corwin dangles poisonous snakes or in another episode, sneaks up on a supposed wild grizzly bear at night in Glacier National Park. In actuality, this was a rented, captive bear named 'BJ'. The Disney Company did not inform the public that he was using a captive bear, not a wild bear.

Where was the media's responsibility in the deaths of Treadwell and Amie? They created the demand for thrilling and dangerous behavior. Why didn't television journalists who supposedly cared about Treadwell ask the National Park Service or Alaska Fish & Game about his activities in Katmai? Why didn't they ask if it followed appropriate protocol? Why didn't they ask if he was following appropriate safety guidelines? Why didn't they ask professional bear biologists or bear management specialists if it provided any meaningful research or was of value to bears or their survival? Or did they just throw money at it because it sounded like a novel and "in" thing to do?

Furthermore Tim Treadwell has been referred to as 'a bear whisperer' as if to draw some comparison to Monty Roberts - "The Man who could talk to Horses". The fact is, Mr. Roberts was a wrangler who has worked with domesticated horses for decades. Horses are animals which have been bred and cared for by people for thousands of years. It is inaccurate and misleading to call the late Mr. Treadwell a bear whisperer. Also, horses are herbivores, while bears being carnivorous, attack and kill prey.

"At best he is misguided," Deb Liggett, former superintendent at Katmai told the Anchorage Daily News in 2001. "At worst, he's dangerous, if Treadwell models unsafe behavior that ultimately puts bears and other visitors at risk."

Tom Smith, research ecologist and bear specialists with Alaska Science Center of United States Geologic Survey, visited Katmai several years ago and watched Treadwell interact with bears. "He was breaking every rule there was in terms of distance to the bears, harassing wildlife and interfering with natural processes." Smith said two days after the maulings. "Right off the bat, his personal mission was at odds with the Park Service. He had been warned repeatedly. It's a tragic thing, but it's not unpredictable."

8. What of the involvement of The Leakey Foundation, or comparing Treadwell's work to

Jane Goodall and the late Dian Fossey?

Hollywood Hype: The Leakey Foundation wrote to the President of the United States to endorse Treadwell's work. They said he was not intrusive to the bears. Writers and producers, as well as Treadwell himself, compared his inappropriate activities with the works of primatologists Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey.

THE REALITY IS: Imagine that his behavior was not considered intrusive! Treadwell camped on bear trails, touched wild bears, and approached bears in salmon streams foraging for food. He crawled on the ground close to females with cubs chanting, "I love you" He boasted of having sex while the bears were nearby. What part of this is not intrusive?

Jane Goodall's work and history doing research on the chimps of Gombe stands for itself. There is no comparison between Timothy Treadwell and Jane Goodall. When individuals exploit both wildlife and Goodall's notoriety, The Goodall Foundation should have spoken out immediately and insisted on no further comparisons. Recently, Jane Goodall did speak at a press conference and said wild animals are not to be exploited for our entertainment or profit. Why didn't Goodall speak out earlier about Timothy Treadwell's exploitative and inappropriate actions? Dian Fossey, who cherished her mountain gorillas, was deeply concerned about them being exploited in much the same way that Treadwell exploited the brown bears.

Furthermore primate societies, such as those found among the great apes like chimps and gorillas (which are social and form large groups) are entirely different from bears. To suggest there is a similarity in the behavior of these 2 kinds of animals is inaccurate and misleading.

9. What about Treadwell speaking in schools about bears?

Hollywood Hype: Treadwell did programs that reached over 10,000 kids every year.

THE REALITY IS: If the presentations reached 10,000 kids every year, and with an average class size of 30 kids, that would mean at least 330 presentations per year. Where did he find the time for that many presentations, even if he addressed multiple classes at once? Given his propensity for storytelling, did Treadwell really do all of these presentations, especially when he claimed to spend 5 months each year in Alaska? He used his school program to reach famous and wealthy parents for money.

Why didn't teachers do appropriate background checks? Teachers could have had the students, as a class project, go on the Internet and find out if Treadwell was acting appropriately and following the proper safety guidelines. They could even have contacted Katmai National Park to find out if they approved of his program.

Corporate contributions and private foundations. Private funds for special research projects are very difficult to find. Before corporations and foundations make contributions, they should verify that their money is being used responsibly.

10. What kind of example did Treadwell set? What is his legacy?

Hollywood Hype: Treadwell can help promote bears and bear safety.

THE REALITY IS: Tens of thousands of amateur and semi-professional photographers saw him break the rules and gain notoriety for it. Why should they follow the rules? Treadwell did this for 13 years without getting thrown out on his ear. Treadwell got away with it and was published. Treadwell went on national TV shows, was featured in magazines; he claimed, "bears are just big party animals." How will the Park Service justify enforcing rules in the future after Treadwell's success? The new superintendent at Katmai National Park, Joe Fowler, doesn't think they should have any new rules after Tim and Amie's deaths; after all, they didn't enforce the old rules. The question is not why Treadwell did these inappropriate activities, but why he was allowed to continue doing them for thirteen years.

Perhaps the final question after these tragic, unfortunate deaths of people and bears is not so much who is to blame, but have we truly learned anything? After all, as Nick Jans put it in his article 'Death in the Grizzly Maze', Alaska magazine, 02-04, "the bears just want to be left alone" What right do we have to steal the bears' wildness, so we can treat them as 'domesticated pets'?

Some Final Points to Ponder

- His name wasn't Timothy Treadwell; it was Timothy Dexter.
- He was not an orphan from Australia or England; he was raised with his family in New Jersey.
- He wasn't in a secret, remote part of Alaska with only bears and poachers; he was in Katmai National Park where there was no threat of poachers or habitat destruction. There were biologists, photographers, anglers, and backcountry campers traveling through the Park daily.
- There was no essential, meaningful study or research that Treadwell was conducting. The National Park Service denied him a research permit and told him not to conduct himself in a manner that broke park regulations (approaching bears).
- He did not carry a gun (he was a hero); he was in a National Park where guns are not permitted
- 'Grizzly People' is not a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
- He was very selective in where he targeted his school presentations to get donations from wealthy patrons
- Treadwell's book, television appearances, video documentaries, and presentations focused on him and not the welfare of the bears.
- People in the press and broadcasting industry need to seriously consider their role in building a Treadwell myth. Why did the media become an enabler of this false information?
- All of us have to think about how we can protect bears and other wildlife from this kind of exploitation, media manipulation, and profiteering in the future. Then take action to prevent more of it occurring in the future.
- Sadly Amie Huguenard was also fatally mauled. Tim Treadwell who did not use the recommended electrical fencing or bear pepper spray should have seen to it that she was properly protected even if he was careless about his actions around bears.
- Regarding the protection of people and wildlife, and basic responsible behavior in bear country, where were the television critics and media watchers to criticize this inappropriate programming on Dateline, Rosie O'Donnell, Letterman and Discovery Channel? The media must consider human and wildlife safety issues when producing future wildlife programs. The public at large needs to speak out about the garbage that

is being broadcast and printed that exploits wildlife, is inaccurate and promotes behavior that puts people and wild animals at risk!

State and federal agencies need to become pro-active. They can no longer passively overlook or approve programs, which degrade or abuse people and wild animals.

For further references, please see:

Joel Bennett and Craig Medred's writings, Anchorage Daily News

Book reviews of Among Grizzlies at Amazon.com

**Los Angeles Times article 'Grizzly activist, girlfriend victims of bear mauling',
October 8, 2003**

National Post article 'Demise of the Bear Whisperer'

Outside magazine, January 2004

Juneau Enterprise, date?

Associated Press article 'Was California bear advocate naturalists or con-man?'

'Death in the Grizzly Maze' by Nick Jans, Alaska magazine February 2004

People magazine, Oct 27, 2003

BBC News, Oct 8, 2003

Wild Things television show

National Park websites for appropriate information on behavior in bear country

'Grizzly People' web page and Leonardo DiCaprio websites

'Grizzly Diaries' Discovery Channel video documentary

Segments on Dateline-NBC, Tom Snyder, Late Night with David Letterman, Rosie O'Donnell

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Wolf Song of Alaska, P.O. Box 671670, Chugiak, Alaska 99567-1670

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