

Into the Den: Investigating Hibernation

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Can bears and bats lead to biomedical discoveries and boost space travel?



Huckleberry and other berry bushes cover a slope along the Grinnell Glacier Trail in Montana's Glacier National Park. In late summer and fall, the berries attract grizzly bears looking to find food before winter hibernation. Photograph: Ilya Raskin.

“Bear!” The warning echoes off multicolored rock strata lining the steep Grinnell Glacier Trail in Montana's Glacier National Park. Dead ahead, a grizzly is crossing the

path. Hikers stand stock-still, waiting to see what this grizzly, also called a North American brown bear, will do. Ignoring the paparazzi, it soon ambles down a hillside.

Among those watching is scientist Jeff Kuhn, of the Glacier Institute, an organization that promotes a research-based understanding of the area's ecology. It is mid-September, and the