



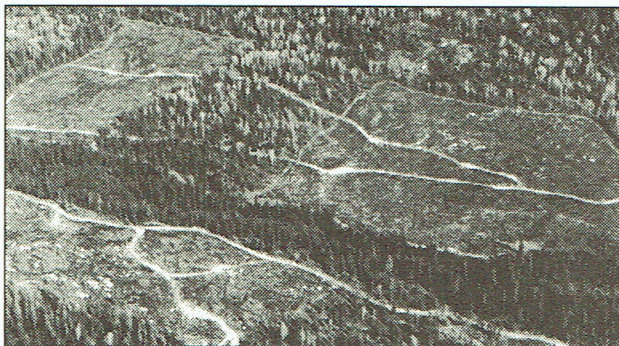
Idaho Department of Lands in Non-Compliance with Endangered Species Act in the Priest Basin

SCA members have, for years, expressed concern about the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) style of land management on the state forest east of Priest Lake.

Extensive road building, clear cuts, degraded streams, and a host of other problems plague state lands. Despite these conditions, the state forest provides valuable habitat for a number of Threatened and Endangered species such as the rare Mountain Caribou, grizzly bear, Canada lynx, gray wolves, and bull trout.

The Dept. Lands argues that their style of "intensive management" is necessary in order to comply with Idaho's Constitutional mandate requiring "endowment" lands be managed in such a way as to ensure the maximum financial return to the endowment fund.

SCA's position is that old ideas about forest management should not dictate how forests are managed now and in the future. When Idaho became a state, terms



Idaho Dept. of Lands slick clean the lands east of the Upper Priest Lake in the area of Bugle Creek (photo taken early 1990s)

Continued on page 5

PRIEST LAKE CELEBRATION

Saturday, Aug. 18

See you there!

Everyone is welcome! Bring the family and friends to SCA's annual potluck buffet and membership meeting. Come share a good time. Join us 1 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 18 at the Coolin Community Center.

Around 2 p.m. the annual meeting will begin with the introduction of directors, followed by election results and brief committee reports.

We are delighted to feature guest speaker, Ginger Gumm, who will present a colorful, educational and entertaining slide show of loons and other water birds, complete with the sounds of bird calls.

Following the presentation there will be a membership discussion focusing on the management of lands in the Priest Lake Basin.

As soon as the meeting concludes, board members will be available to discuss the group's activities and accomplishments. We end with a delicious

Continued on page 5

Stimson Lumber gets green light to doze roads Selkirks site in endangered species habitat

SCA recently received the Forest Service Record of Decision (ROD) for the Stimson ANILCA (Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act) Access Project on the Colville National Forest. As expected, the Forest Service decision is to allow Stimson Lumber Company to punch roads into some of the most valuable wildlife habitat left in the Selkirk Moun-

tains — on the west side of the Pend Oreille Crest just south of Monumental Mountain.

Stimson contends that under provision of ANILCA, the U.S. government is required to provide access across public land to private inholders such as Stimson Lumber Company. The inholdings in question date back to President Abraham Lincoln's 1862 railroad grant

of alternating sections of land across vast swaths of the West to help pay for the costs of building rail lines to the coast. The history of corporate fraud and corruption associated with the land grants is voluminous and the legacy of these "checkerboard" sections has resulted in fragmented wildlife habitat, a spider web of roads, and massive clearcuts across the western United

Continued on page 11

Executive Director's Message

Public apathy is what's killing the South Selkirk mountain caribou

Your past explorations of this wonderful area may have already spoken quietly to your subconscious, intuitively helping you understand that the Priest Basin truly is a rare, and unique place. We at the SCA feel the wild and beautiful South Selkirks ecosystem is one of a kind and is worth fighting to protect and preserve because this area is considered to be the last "intact" forest ecosystem left in the 48 states. I am told that this means we still have all of the original species here that one would have found in this area if one were to have visited it 200 or 300 years ago. Let's focus on that distinction for a moment – "the last intact ecosystem left in the 48 states." What does this mean to you? To me, it highlights just how much we have lost elsewhere in our country's once bountiful wild world, and how important it is for the SCA to continue to work on wildlife, water quality and forest health issues in the South Selkirks.

The SCA continues to focus its efforts on saving the South Selkirk Mountain Caribou herd – the last such caribou herd left in the entire United States – as we lead the way among area conservation groups interested in caribou recovery efforts. SCA board member Mark Sprenkel and I traveled to Nelson, British Columbia again this summer to attend the bi-annual meeting of the International Mountain Caribou Technical Committee (IMCTC). At that meeting, we learned that progress on this project has been a mixed bag this past year. The bad news is that the recovery plan for saving these mountain caribou, considered to be the most endangered large mammals in the entire U.S., seems to be moving forward at a snail's pace, mainly because of foot dragging at the highest levels of decision-making on this project. The good news is really good though: cougar-caused caribou mortalities are way down over the past two years

The Mystery of the Disappearing Caribou:

The Selkirk caribou herd is still declining, with successful calving and calf survival (referred to as "herd recruitment")

outpaced by disappearing caribou. What do I mean by "disappearing caribou?" Somehow during the 18 months, about 16 members of the Selkirk herd vanished into thin air. Aerial surveys failed to locate these animals – or locate any evidence of their demise. No piles of dead caribou or skeletons of the same were located. The animals just disappeared! Interestingly, these were all caribou that did not have radio collars around their necks, so they could not be located by radio monitoring. All of the collared animals were found and counted during the same aerial censuses that failed to locate the uncollared animals. And, the wildlife biologists doing the surveys felt strongly that they would have seen these uncollared caribou if the animals were alive and well and still in the South Selkirks.

So where did these missing animals go? Did they successfully migrate to other nearby caribou herds in B.C. – like the Central Selkirks herd or the Purcells herd? Censuses of those herds did not show any corresponding increase in those populations, so migration has been ruled out. Now we are left only with speculation. Perhaps the missing animals all just happened to be standing around together in some high elevation ravine and were wiped out by a sudden, massive avalanche? But again, no piles of caribou carcasses have been found. Maybe they all gathered together, went out onto the ice of some mountain lake in late winter, and proceeded to dance en masse until the ice broke, causing them all to fall into the cold waters and drown? That might explain the lack of carcasses, but again, why did only uncollared animals disappear?

One guess regarding the reason behind this mysterious mass disappearance we at the SCA are greatly concerned about is that these animals were chased down in mid-winter and killed by poachers. Is this guess any wilder than mass drowning? We think not, especially since we've heard indirectly (from credible sources) that poaching has been openly talked about in areas along the U.S./B.C. borderlands and we know that some folks in the caribou

recovery unit would love to see the mountain caribou all disappear so they can get back to cutting the last of the ancient forests that the caribou depend on for winter forage.

To deter such poaching, and catch and prosecute caribou killers if such activities are indeed taking place as we believe they are, the recently formed Selkirks Coalition, a confederation of about 15 local, regional, national and Canadian environmentalist groups (including the SCA), is working on raising money to fund a substantial reward to pay for information that results in the arrest and successful prosecution of caribou poachers. We will share more information with you about this program later as we progress towards the creation of this reward fund. But in the interim, you might call our office if you are interested in stopping the path to extinction of the South Selkirk caribou and participating as a sponsor of our mountain caribou recovery project or of this reward.

With only about 30-35 mountain caribou herd members left in our South Selkirk population, an emergency action plan is supposed to be enacted by the agencies coordinating caribou recovery efforts along the U.S./Canada border. That plan calls for "a preliminary population goal for the south Selkirk Ecosystem [of] 200 animals." More importantly, that plan requires that attempts be made to "augment" or add to our South Selkirk herd if "the total population in the southern Selkirks is less than or equal to 50 animals, which is currently considered the short-term critical threshold for augmentation."

But just how are the agencies on the recovery team going to increase the population of the South Selkirk herd? This is the big question we are struggling to deal with today, and the one where we most need the help of our members. In previous years, a herd augmentation program resulted in transplanting animals to the South Selkirks from the few, other healthy B.C. mountain caribou populations further north. We can no longer rely on this method though, to help our Selkirk herd grow stronger. Because mountain caribou

Continued on page 10

Chairman's Message

Present Opportunities, New Issues, Future Moves

Getting personal, a lot of us have received the IRS letter describing our coming tax rebate. Opinions vary about the best possible use for these funds. Nevertheless, the money will be sent and by now we've certainly gotten suggestions about what to do with it.

In my own case, after considering all the various alternatives, I am donating two-thirds of my refund to the Selkirk Conservation Alliance.

Many of us have received appeals from worthy causes we may have supported in the past. So why support SCA? As well as anyone, I'm familiar with how the SCA operates. We rely on scientific evidence; all budget allocations must receive board approval; our past accomplishments are on record; and I know that we have tried to work cooperatively with the community and for the ecological health of this region. I respect our integrity or I would not continue as chair of this organization. I certainly receive no financial benefit from the many volunteer hours I put in on SCA's behalf and I do admit to having a great commitment to our organization.

But a new and significant problem lies immediately ahead for our region, one having to do with development and uncontrolled growth, my next point. First, though, I need to make a comment about present opportunities.

Appearing at a particularly timely moment, a retiree who recently moved into the area has expressed his interest in our work. He has proven administrative skills, a career history and an educational and biological research background that could be of special benefit to SCA. Our staff has worked heroically to cover many fronts during these last years. Now we have a chance to bring in a part-time staff person whose credentials precisely fit him to take on what has suddenly become of major immediate concern, the current economic goals of the Idaho State Land Board.

The New Issue: Uncontrolled Development

Recently the state of Idaho passed legislation allowing the State Land Board to liquidate "underperforming assets" without legislative oversight and furthermore, without informing the public.

According to Idaho's "Dorn Report," which most of us had never heard about until this year, the three top-listed underperforming assets are state lease lots, state grazing lands and state forests, especially those in the north Idaho Panhandle. Timber revenues from state lands are now no longer placed in the State Lands Endowment Fund (dedicated to supporting schools and road improvements) they are incorporated into a "portfolio" of assets, much of which is invested in the stock market. Within the last year the state has lost \$76 million in stock market investments. Some of those funds have since been recovered, but not all; and losses not recovered within three years must be made up by you, the taxpayers.

One state official commented in the Spokesman Review that although state timberlands on the east side of Priest Lake had already been overharvested, logging there will be increased in order to make up the shortfall. Sustainable forestry is no longer an Idaho goal.

Where is all of this leading? What will be the consequences for

Priest Lake, Priest River, and the south Selkirks ecoregion? We foresee serious implications. SCA concerns have just expanded.

If state lease lots and forests north and east of Priest Lake are not bringing in the revenue required for the newly created investment portfolio, then according to current guidelines, logging and gradually selling off these lands to developers will be the way to maximize profits. And according to the State Land Board, nothing it chooses to do with its lands can be constrained by any local county ordinances such as planning and zoning.

Future Moves

In opposition to unlimited logging and development are the federal mandates protecting Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species, which take precedence over state choices. This is one avenue SCA is prepared to explore. We have data gathered over the past two years indicating that the state has not been following federal guidelines. This data could force the state to suspend logging in designated areas and come into compliance before proceeding with plans to divest itself of its lands around Priest Lake.

Issues about development are economic as well as environmental. All too often developers move in, take their profits and then move on, leaving the local people to deal with long-term consequences and costs. Over time, problems could easily involve not just water purity but also water availability in drought years, as well as septic drainage and sewage management ensuing from ongoing development. Who will pay for keeping roads open in the winters, and for road maintenance? For fire and police protection? Would another school or more school bussing be needed? Would utility costs rise? What would be the effect on existing local businesses? The state won't be dealing with these ongoing questions – those paying Bonner County taxes will.

Another avenue SCA might explore is to work together with a privately funded grassroots organization called "Idaho Smart Growth" (ISG) whose mission is to encourage "vibrant communities through sensible growth." Quoting former Idaho governor, Cecil Andrus, they propose that, "We should extend our conservation efforts to embrace protection not only of natural habitats, but also of human environments ... sustaining clean air, clean water and wild places - but also small town values." SCA recently met with an ISG representative to discuss ways of cooperating. Perhaps this topic might serve as a focus for a future community symposium.

SCA usually thinks "long-term" and tries to keep ahead of the curve. Other organizations from outside our area now say that they are concerned about the future of the Selkirk Basin, but only SCA has made an early, ongoing commitment to work with our communities when evaluating which future directions to follow. The best time to consider problems that may arise is before they appear, after which decision-making so often becomes polarized.

Could Priest Lake become another Payette Lake, with the State Land Board working in tandem with developers? Could our own region of unique forests and wildlife and a still-pristine lake be sacrificed to Idaho's demand to "maximize profits"? The state-adopted Lake Management Plan supposedly protects Priest Lake's water quality. Will it continue to do so?

Continued on page 5

Loons still rare at the lake

*Even though good
habitat abounds here*

Mated, nesting pairs of common loons still seem to be a too rare sight on North Idaho lakes, including upper and lower Priest Lakes, even though some of these water bodies offer adequate habitat for the black-and-white patterned birds. For example Priest Lake has unusually good water clarity, and clear water is a key element of good habitat for these sight-guided diving birds. Upper Priest Lake and Lake Pend Oreille, as well as a few lakes spanning the Idaho/Wyoming border to the south, have been the only lakes where loons have been known to nest in Idaho in the past 10 years.

Studies have shown that the decreasing population and shrinking breeding range of the common loon has been in large part attributable to human disturbance. People are very likely to see loons at Priest Lake during their brief spring and fall migrations, where they rest and fish while taking a break in their travels to other lakes. But why aren't mated pairs found here later in the summer?

Other main threats to nesting loons are fluctuating water levels (dam controlled lakes), shoreline development and disturbance from boats and jet skis, or personal watercraft. Loons that try to nest on water bodies where there are high levels of boat and personal watercraft traffic usually don't succeed. In fact, in a study done in Alaska, 87 percent of loon chicks survived long enough to leave their nests on lakes with low disturbance levels, but only 13 percent survived on high disturbance lakes!

We at the SCA desperately want to add mated common loons back into our beautiful but threatened basin environment. To encourage boaters to respect the loon's need for undisturbed space, this spring SCA directors John Stuart and Steve Wilson put loon warning, information and identification signs up at boat launches and marinas around the basin lakes. Read-



SCA Board Member, Steve Wilson, tacks on an information sign to alert the public of the need to avoid and protect the Common Loon.

ers might recall that SCA raised money from generous members last year to help the Panhandle Loon and Wetlands Project purchase these signs for North Idaho and Northeast Washington waters.

Each year we also help sponsor fun and informative loon watch outings on northern Idaho lakes. This year, we had to cancel the first loon survey trip because we didn't have enough interested volunteers with boats to participate in the outing. We did hold a second survey in late July, in coordination with International Loon Count Day, and had a better turnout. Mark your calendars for next year, on the second Saturday of July, because we will once again be leading loon counts in northern area lakes.

In the meantime, you can do a few things to try to help the common loon return to its historic waters on Upper Priest and Priest Lake. Call our office if you spot any of these rare birds to report your sightings. Remember to stay at least 300 feet away from them if you see them on the water – even non-motorized canoes and kayaks can disturb them! Avoid their nests if you find any, and use only lead-free lures and weights while fishing on the lakes. Also, please make sure to retrieve all used fishing line and tackle from the water and shore when fishing. Properly

dispose of line and tackle so that birds and water creatures won't get tangled in it. With your help and commitment to saving the declining habitat of the common loon, we may once again be thrilled to hear the eerie, laughing call of this great Northern diving bird all summer long. ♡

Highway 57 Litter Pickup

Mark your calendars and join us Sunday, Oct. 7, for the next litter pickup. SCA does two Highway 57 litter removals annually. They are always on the first Sunday of June and the first Sunday of October. We meet at the High Bridge crossing the Upper West Branch Priest River on Highway 57 at 10 a.m. It takes less than two hours to help out, and you don't have to be a SCA member to participate. Call Amy Daniels at (208) 448-9001 for more information. Hope to see you there! Thanks to all who have helped in the past. Your efforts do not go unnoticed! ♡

State lands

Continued from page 1

such as ecology, biological diversity, nutrient cycling, aquatic health, etc. were not priorities.

We contend that the state cannot protect the long-term viability of the trust estate by adhering to an outmoded mandate while ignoring modern precepts of forestry and conservation biology.

As part of our campaign to remedy this situation, SCA recently requested copies of all past correspondence between the IDL and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in order (for instance) to ascertain if the IDL had ever obtained an Incidental Take Permit or developed a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) with the USFWS for proposed activities in Threatened and Endangered Species habitat.

Under the provisions of Sections 9 and 10 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the IDL is legally obligated to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop an action plan that will ensure that Threatened and Endangered (T&E) species are not pushed closer to extinction.

Our research proves the state has been in non-compliance with the Act since its inception. The state's argument that they have talked with the Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game in the past doesn't result in compliance and is a clear violation of Federal law which stipulates that the state has a legal obligation to take steps to protect

T&E species on state lands. This must be accomplished by obtaining an Incidental Take Permit from the USFWS and developing a USFWS approved Habitat Conservation Plan ... which the IDL has previously never done.

In order to present as compelling an argument as possible, SCA has been building a Geographical Information Systems database. (GIS essentially is a computerized model that shows various layers of information about state and federal lands in the basin.) We can now call up information and maps on existing and proposed roads, habitat and cover types, stream locations and classifications, wildlife habitat, administrative and management boundaries, topographical features, timber sale unit locations, and a wealth of other information useful in determining if Federal and State agencies are complying with the law.

In the case of the Idaho Dept. of Lands, for instance, we found that the grizzly bear management unit on state land is well below federal minimum standards in every category despite being classified by the USFWS as a "priority one" Bear Management Unit. (The state disputes its obligation to meet federal standards.) In a recent public meeting, the USFWS publicly agreed with our contention that the state must comply with the requirements of the ESA and work with the federal agency to ensure protection for all listed species found on state land.

In another example, we discovered that stream classifications and categorized fish bearing stream data on the state forest differ greatly between Idaho state agencies. For instance, we discovered vast differences between the IDL's data and Idaho's Dept. of Environmental Quality.

We also uncovered discrepancies and anomalies in the state forest timber inventory, problems with inventory procedures and methodologies, and in the management of forest resources.

We recently presented this material to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service at a meeting held at our offices in Priest River and have discussed with our attorneys possible strategies to remedy the situation.

SCA has compiled an enormous amount of information on the Priest Lake State Forest and will be publishing our findings in the near future. This material will present a compelling argument that state forest management practices must be changed.

Modern science makes clear that an emphasis on "maximizing revenues" cannot take precedence over basic biological requirements which act synergistically to ensure protection of ecosystem resilience and the sustainability of forest resources.

The Selkirk Conservation Alliance will continue to insist and ensure that the long-term viability of the Idaho trust estate be protected for future generations. ♡

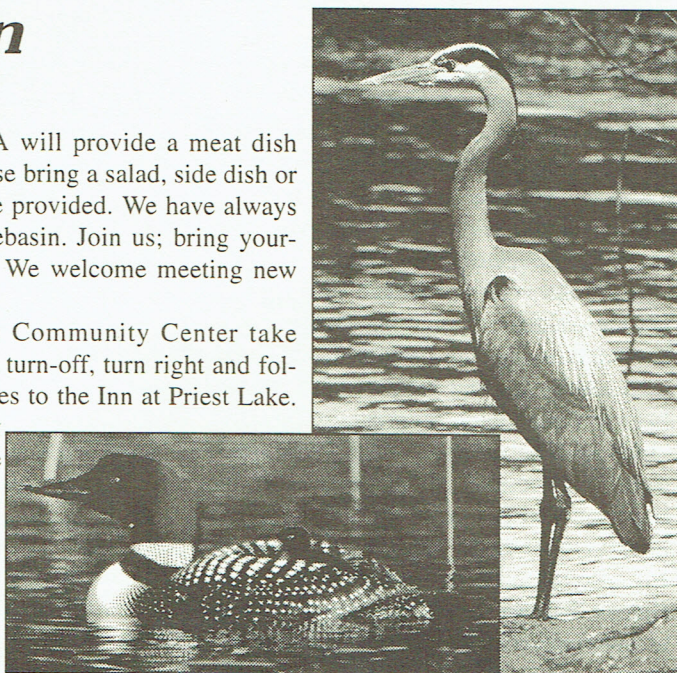
Celebasin

continued from page 1

potluck buffet. The SCA will provide a meat dish and those who wish please bring a salad, side dish or desert. Beverages will be provided. We have always had a royal feast at Celebasin. Join us; bring yourselves and your friends. We welcome meeting new people.

To reach the Coolin Community Center take Highway 57 to the Colin turn-off, turn right and follow the road about 6 miles to the Inn at Priest Lake. The Coolin Community Center is just across the road. ♡

This year's featured guest will educate us on loons and other water fowl.



Future moves

continued from page 3

We ought to start dealing with all the possibilities right now. We could do that a lot more effectively if we could fund some of the cost of adding one more part-time person to focus specifically on growth and development.

I don't have a lot to give, but this is why I'll put my money into SCA. Will you help? ♡

— Joanne Hirabayashi
SCA Chair

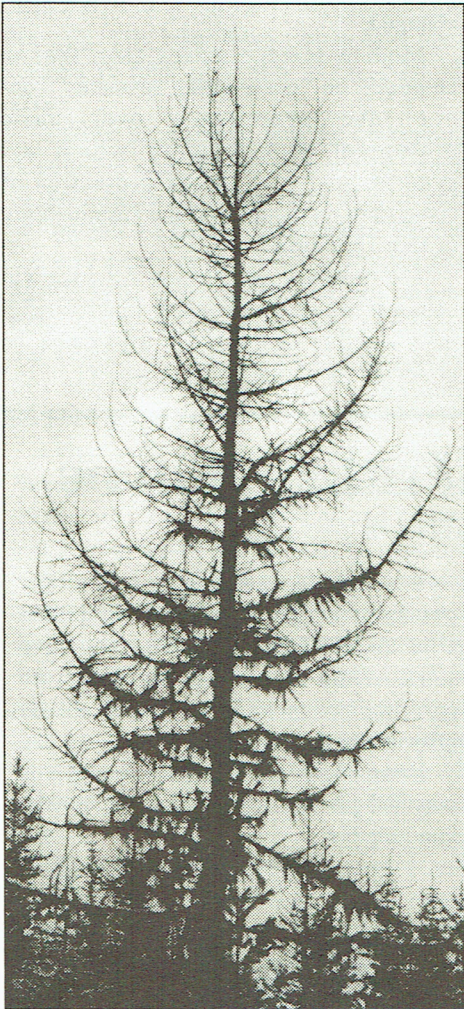


Western larch (*larix occidentalis*) – aka tamarack

A tree worthy of restoration

By Steve Wilson

Western larch is the only deciduous conifer – a cone bearing tree that sheds its leaves annually – native to the Inland Northwest, except for some high-elevation areas that produce another species of larch. Larch is one of the most disease resistant and long-lived native conifers. It is also the most shade intolerant and the most fire resistant. Mature larches have thick, fire-resistant bark, deep roots and usually a high crown with self-pruned lower branches. The foliage is less flammable than the evergreen conifers, and it can better survive crown scorch because live buds can still initiate new leaves after being scorched.



A larch in late fall that has lost its needles and, although dormant, will return in spring with vibrant-green needles.

Life History

Historically, larch was one of several seral (the mid phases of a forest) species that dominated the forest following major disturbances such as fire. They were gradually replaced by more shade-tolerant climax (mature forest) species over time in a process called forest succession. Larch must maintain a dominant or co-dominant position in the upper forest canopy because of its intolerance to shade. Thus, it will not successfully reproduce and survive in the understory of closed forests.

For many decades following a fire, larch, white pine and other seral species dominate the even-aged upper canopy, while the understory is dominated by shade tolerant climax species such as hemlock, cedar and grand fir. Given enough time these shade tolerant species will eventually replace the trees in the upper canopy as the larch and white pine die out. However, true climax forests, made up entirely of climax species, were probably quite rare and confined to very moist sites with very long fire intervals. Fire usually intervened while some old seral trees were still present in the stand. Being more fire resistant, these seral species had a better chance of survival, thus, restarting the process of forest succession.

Decline

Since logging and fire suppression have emerged, the species composition of many forests has changed. The result has been a decline in the presence of Western larch. Only one other seral species, white pine, has declined more. In natural fire cycles the three elements necessary for larch to reproduce and survive were usually present: (1) Enough of the old dominant trees usually survived to provide a seed source. (Stress on those trees from the fire may have also resulted in heavier than normal seed crops.) (2) The fire prepared the site for successful larch reproduction. It provided ash and exposed mineral soil without a lot of competing vegetation. (3) The fire created openings large enough for larch to outcompete the more shade-tolerant species and become dominant in the canopy. Following logging operations, one or more of these elements are often miss-

ing. More often than not, it is the seed source.

Reasons for restoring larch

In addition to being a valuable commercial species, larch is resistant to root disease and grows very rapidly with adequate moisture and sunlight. A substantial component of larch in the forest canopy may reduce the risk of crown fire. When removing trees to reduce the risk of fire around homes and other structures, larch should be the preferred species to leave. Being deciduous it intercepts much less snow than the evergreen conifers, thus allowing more moisture to reach the forest floor. Snags and broken topped larch can persist for many decades and provide preferred habitat for many species of cavity nesting birds which in turn are an important element in forest health. Finally, larches intermixed with evergreen conifers add color and beauty to the landscape in October when the foliage turns to shades of yellow and gold. ♡

— VERBATIM —

Restoring grizzly bears to Idaho is too important to be sacrificed for political reasons. It is a misuse of power to contravene the Endangered Species Act, the scientific community, and the majority of the public. According to a poll contracted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 62% of the people local to the area, and 74% of people nationwide favor grizzly recovery in Idaho.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should live up to its promise to improve grizzly bear protections within and between the Greater Yellowstone, Northern Continental Divide, Cabinet-Yaak, Selkirks, and North Cascades recovery areas. A high priority should be to protect our remaining roadless areas, linkage zones, and other areas threatened by the Administration's energy and logging proposals. ♡

— David Gaillard
*Predator Conservation Alliance,
Bozeman MT*

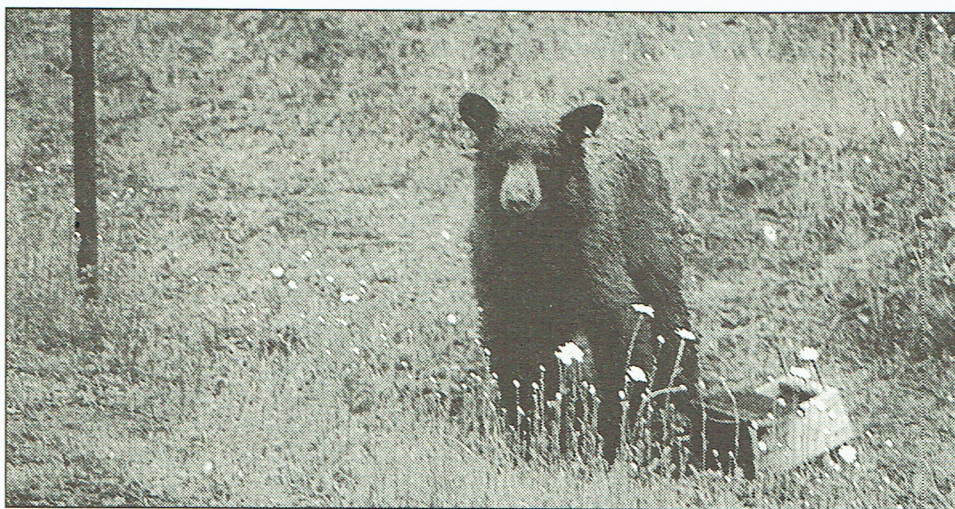
SCA Board Member in Search of the Bear Facts

SCA board member, John Stewart, is experiencing a very busy summer seeking griz and black bear demographics and behavior in the northwest. He began working with the University of Washington zoologist, Sam Wasser and his team to search three sites within the designated North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone for evidence of grizzly bears. This area is being restored and protected as bear habitat. The research team uses dogs to sniff out bear scat that is collected and sent to Wasser's UW lab for DNA analysis to determine the type of bear – grizzly versus black bear, and such things as gender, individual grizzlies and hormone analysis to determine stress levels. Wasser's study was prompted by his identification of bear scat found a few years ago near Mazama in Okanogan County as grizzly scat. Only five to twenty grizzlies are estimated to remain in the state of Washington.

Thus, SCA board member, Stewart traveled the north Cascades in May and June from the Chilowack River Valley on the north side of Mt. Baker, through the Pasayten River Wilderness and on to the White River north of Stevens Pass in search of bear scat. About this area he reflects, "Amazing waters. They, all three, are beautiful gravel and cobble bedded rivers with super-clean water and no sediment, even during spring run-off. I drank from all of them without filtering the water. People everywhere should be able to see these streams to understand what real rivers should look like – and what most rivers in N. America once were."

Since the first of July Stewart has been working in Canada, east of Jasper Park. This project has different objectives, but his job, searching for bear scat, remains the same. In mid July he sent us this report:

We all have become better at knowing when we are in good bear forage, by what is growing in a particular spot. If there are bears in the area, we can tell where we



A young black bear visits a backyard bird feeder.

will find the scat and where we won't. Focusing on these high elevation areas is, of course, going where the bears are. What we have to realize is that, even if there are bears here, this is still low-quality habitat. With their backs up against a wall of rock and ice, there is nowhere else to go. All the high-quality habitat is already being used by the bi-pedal species that has a tough time with bears appearing anywhere but on calendars and T-shirts.

The grizzlies are here (Canada) and still doing fairly well, so verifying the existence of griz is not the point. But academics who are running the project are using the scat to do both DNA and hormone analysis and then are attempting to interpret several different things from their results. One of the main ones being, stress levels in bears depending on how close they are to human activity. But some of the techniques are still in the trial period. A lot of what we are doing is actually trial and error science to establish ways to study bears without the traditional macho drug 'em and collar 'em schemes. If this works, it will be much easier on the bears and will cost probably one-tenth as much as the bear handling.

What should be of interest to all of us south of 49 degrees north is that it is a myth to imagine that the species that are in trouble in the U.S. have a safe haven in Canada. This area is forested with a mixture of black spruce, lodgepole pine and sub-alpine fir, but from a timber point of view, it is of very marginal market value. But that is not stopping the Canadian gov't from giving it away to the local pulp mill. This forest is about exactly the equivalent of what grows in Pend Oreille and Bonner counties above 5,000 feet. It is

very slow growing and once it is cut, it will take at least 150 years to re-establish. But it makes paper and chipboard and if you can get your raw material for free, why argue about such a deal.

The forest is not only fractured by endless clear-cuts but is cross-hatched with seismic lines and roads used for searching for and developing oil and gas wells. Oh yes, I almost forgot lots of coal mines too. At the present, Alberta is making plans to open up lots of new mining rights to take advantage of the new high prices. This demand is coming from where??? Well, duh!!

On Friday, ten kilometers south of town (I'm learning to talk Canadian), some of our group (traveling in work rig) came upon 2 griz siblings having a boxing match right in the middle of the road. They are only 2 year olds. It was visually exciting but not so good for the bears. They are apparently without a mother. Mom griz wouldn't leave young this early and wouldn't allow them to be getting in people's way. Messing around this close to town and on the highway doesn't bode well for their future. It is exciting to know that they are here. We have also found wolf tracks and last week our dog, Murphy, picked up a new scent and showed us a marten den. It was only 3 feet off the ground in an old lodgepole snag. Two young pups took turns sticking their heads out of the hole, unable to hide their curiosity.

The sky is still light here at 11:00 p.m. and so I usually get to bed before it is dark. And it is about that time. I will hope to see you all for the September meeting. Our stint here will use up just about all of August. ♡

– John Stuart

Land Board Concerned With Cd'A Lake Swimmers' Safety, But Not Yours

Growth Creates Competition Between Private Docks and Public Swim Areas

SCA's citizen watchdog suit against the State Land Board has finally reached the Idaho Supreme Court. In this case, the SCA is acting on your behalf in place of the state Attorney General (who, serving on the Land Board, has a substantial conflict of interest on this issue) to try to protect safe public use of public beaches on the eastside of the lake along Huckleberry Bay and Canoe Point. The physical beauty and serenity of these beaches are certain to be destroyed and swimmer safety along them will be severely compromised by the construction and installation of numerous huge private docks along these beaches if SCA does not prevail in this matter.

The protests and safety concerns of many of you – local residents and visitors alike – were callously ignored by the Land Board in favor of the influential few when the Land Board decided to grant permits for these enormous private boat docks – docks that would be placed right in the middle of your public swimming beaches at Priest Lake. If constructed, these docks will substantially increase the risk of danger to you and your visitors by greatly increasing boat traffic and congestion along the waterfront on these popular public beaches. Swimmers and distracted power boaters do not mix safely.

Oddly enough, this issue of swimmer safety does resonate with the Land Board, but only if, it seems, you are a Coeur d'Alene resident. This may be because if you were a Coeur d'Alene resident, you might be able to vote in Idaho elections. Recently, the Idaho Supreme Court heard another case challenging the State Land Board on a "docks decision" involving public swimming beaches. This time though, the docks were to be placed on the shores of Lake Coeur d'Alene. In that case, the Land Board had denied several private homeowners the right to build boat docks along two popular swimming areas. The Idaho Supreme Court upheld the decision of the Land Board to decline to process the homeowners' applications to build these docks – docks to be built on their own properties but adjacent to popu-

lar swimming areas.

Protecting the safety of the swimming public was an issue in that case, as it also is in our current Priest Lake case against the Land Board. Comparing the Coeur d'Alene case to ours, one might rationally think that Priest Lake residents and visitors would have an even better chance of convincing the Land Board not to allow private docks along Huckleberry Bay and Canoe Point because the beaches here are public lands. But no, somehow the Land Board has managed to determine that swimmers at Priest Lake should be afforded less protection than ones at Lake Coeur d'Alene. Large private docks on public land along public swim beaches at Priest Lake are okay, docks on private land near public swim areas on Lake Coeur d'Alene are not okay.

We must make the Boise-based Land Board more accountable to the voices and concerns of lake users at Priest Lake – even the ones who can't vote in Idaho elections. To do so though, we will need your help and support. You can help us set a legal

precedent that requires the Land Board to better listen to our needs up here by showing your strong support for the SCA in its role as a conscientious defender of your safety. Please contribute to our legal fund on this important legal challenge.

Recently, an eastside SCA member donated \$3,000 to help us keep our Priest Lakes dock case alive. Even with that wonderful and substantial addition to our war chest, we will still fall short of having enough money to pay off our mounting legal fees as this case proceeds, unless other concerned members step up and offer their financial support too. So far, our legal challenges have prevented construction of any new docks on these public beaches for the past three summers. With your help, the SCA can continue to fight to protect public interest – your interest – in clean, accessible, safe beaches on the lakes in our basin.

The state Supreme Court hearing for oral arguments in our case will be held sometime during the Court's fall term in Coeur d'Alene, on Oct. 1-3, 2001. ♡



SCA Chair, Joanne Hirabayashi (left) discussed the plan of the State Land Board to place large private docks on the public beach at Huckleberry Bay. Pictured are Spokesman Review Newspaper reporter, Susan Drumhaller (center) and photographer Kathy Polonka (right).

Beargrass

This Plant Attracts a Crowd

By Kate Batey

A magnificent creamy-white, multi-flowered globe on a 4-foot stalk with a graceful flounce of 30-inch-long, grass-like leaves at its base: that's beargrass. It is also a lily.

The stalk, flower and seed heads are eaten by rodents and by big game animals, especially elk. Native Americans have made baskets, clothing and blankets out of the woven leaves.

The tough, coarse leaves remain during the winter and are not eaten by wildfire. Hikers sometimes get a surprise when they step on a leaf clump in just the wrong way and find themselves upended on steep slopes.

Forest gloom is given a warm illumination by the tall flower heads. You will see this sight along a wooded road and on hiking trails.

We now have florists around

the world, particularly Japan, gathering these blooms and grasses out of our Northwest forests. Pickers harvested more than 422,000 pounds in 1999, the Spokesman-Review reported in June. These harvesters paid a total of \$11,600 for five-day permits in that year.

So much beargrass has been taken out of the Coeur d'Alene drainage, that the ranger district has stopped issuing commercial permits until a study measuring impact on wildlife is complete. (The permittees are also known to leave trashed campsites.)

Some years ago, two of our children, Anne and Barbara, tried their hand at making baskets. We still have one of their little baskets made of beargrass on a windowsill at Beaver Creek. Forest animals, Native Americans, tourists, kids, hikers, commercial pickers, florists, permit issuers – all have a lively interest in this compellingly attractive plant. ♡



Huff Lake – The Vandals Strike

Last summer SCA, the Washington Native Plant Society (northeastern chapter) and the Idaho Native Plant Society (Calypso Chapter) and the U.S. Forest Service jointly worked to build an informational kiosk, viewing platform and this summer a floating viewing platform over the fen at Huff Lake.

Huff Lake is about 10 miles north of Nordman (FS road 302) and is an excep-

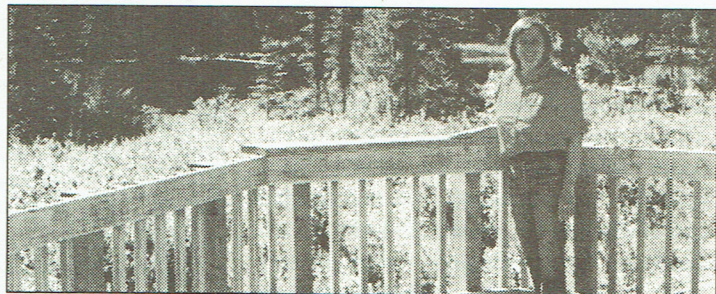
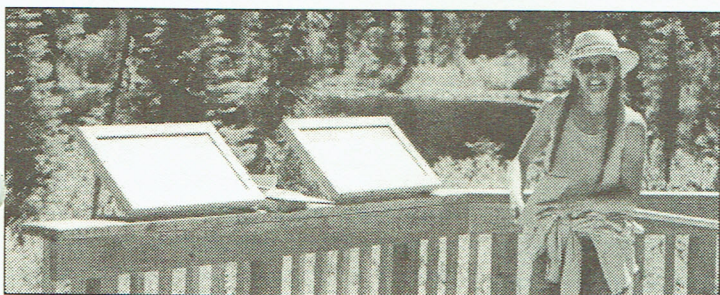
tional, rare and beautiful peat fen that is a jewel in our basin.

Sad to say, however, after hard working volunteers had given their good efforts using contributed lumber and the expertise of building contractors as well as Forest Service shops, the vandals arrived to add their special touch.

These less than decent folks fired their guns at the road sign, and by whatever

means pulled the timber and informational signage from the viewing platform in an act of mindless vandalism.

The SCA and friends are offering a \$500.00 reward for information leading to the arrest and successful conviction of the persons responsible for the vandalism of the Huff Lake site. For details about the reward call the SCA in Priest River at (208) 448-2971. ♡



Dianne Penny – USFS Forest Technician/botanist at Huff Lake informational viewing platform before vandalism (left) and Nancy White at platform after vandalism.

The new Secretary of Interior Gail Norton has announced that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will abandon efforts to restore grizzlies in Idaho, claiming that the agency needs to focus its resources within other grizzly bear recovery areas. This excuse rings false on two counts: (1) abandoning the

restoration plan would waste years of effort and thousands of dollars already spent to determine that grizzly bears should be restored in Idaho, and (2) rather than increasing its efforts to recover grizzly bears in other areas, the Bush administration is working as hard as it can to weaken grizzly protections every-

where possible. It is hard to imagine a more heavy-handed exercise of politics over both science and democracy, and it is up to all of us who care about the Great Bear to say this is not acceptable. ♡

– David Gaillard
*Predator Conservation Alliance,
Bozeman MT*

Caribou

Continued from page 2

are also doing poorly in B.C., that province's government is not willing to let caribou be taken from B.C. herds and added the South Selkirk herd. So where do we go from here? Can we really keep our South Selkirk herd from going extinct?

Protected Breeding Plan Needs Your Support:

The simple, cost-effective solution to this herd augmentation problem is now available. The solution is affordable and has a very high probability of success too. But, once again, key upper-level decision-makers in the agencies working on caribou recovery are dragging their feet and delaying a decision on this issue. Politics, not good science, seem to be driving this process now, stalling the implementation of the emergency action plan while our small mountain caribou herd (the very last one left in the entire U.S.) quickly shrinks towards extinction. That is why the South Selkirk caribou need your help, today – we need you to write letters of support for caribou recovery to get these agency decision-makers to declare unambiguously and unequivocally that they support mountain caribou recovery efforts for the South Selkirks. Please read on to see how your involvement can help save our mountain caribou herd.

The salvation of the South Selkirk herd lies in an uncomplicated protected breeding program that has been offered to us by a concerned donor in British Columbia. This gentleman, who has a history of success in the captive breeding of endangered animals, has graciously offered the free use of his fenced, protected lands for five years for the breeding of mountain caribou. He even has offered to bear all of the

costs of feeding and caring for the caribou while they are on his lands. If we accepted this incredibly generous offer from him, we could see new caribou added to the South Selkirk herd in as little as two years!

The only costs to the recovery agencies (and these are minimal, we are told) would be capturing a few caribou for breeding stock and transporting them to this western B.C. ranch, and then later transporting the new caribou back to the South Selkirks. This donor rancher would cover the great bulk of the expense of this project!

If this protected breeding program truly has a high chance of success and if it really would cost the recovery agencies very little money, why, you might ask, have the recovery project decision-makers not leapt at this last chance to save our dwindling South Selkirk Mountain Caribou herd? I asked that very question to the wildlife biologists at the IMCTC meeting in Nelson, B.C. in June. The answers I got should surprise and shock you. "The public doesn't care about the caribou," I was told. "No one is putting any pressure on the U.S. or B.C. governments to do what's necessary to save mountain caribou," one said. Another scientist summed up the problem quite simply, saying, "Public apathy is what's killing the caribou."

Your Letters Can Help Save Our Caribou:

Can it really be true that we don't care if yet another species goes extinct in the U.S.? Have we become so benumbed by the relentless devastation of our wild lands that we just have no room left in our emotions for sympathy for the plight of animals whose habitats have been destroyed by us – animals that are slowly disappearing from the face of our earth, one by one? And, is it possible perhaps, that even the people who share their own backyard forests with magnificent creatures like the

mountain caribou are so distracted by the demands of a complex modern life that they can't take a moment to write a letter in support of saving such a regal animal? Will no one make any noise or protest over the extinction of our mountain caribou? I refuse to believe that any of these suppositions are true.

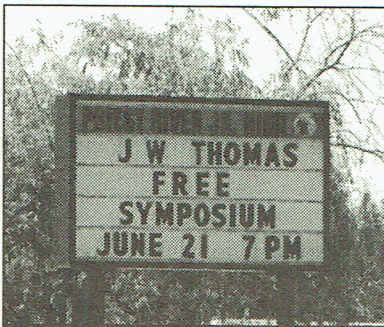
As pointed out above, the South Selkirks area is the last intact forest ecosystem left in the whole 48 states and our mountain caribou herd is the very last one left in the entire United States (even Alaska does not have mountain caribou). Obviously, we have way too much to lose if we remain silent in our support of mountain caribou recovery. That is why the SCA once again is asking you for your involvement. We can't succeed here without your help.

We have been told by agency staff committed to caribou recovery that it will be up to us, the public, to speak out loudly in support of their caribou recovery efforts if the South Selkirk mountain caribou herd is to survive. Please take some time this week to write a short letter in support of the need to go forward with the above-described protected breeding project in western B.C. Please address your letter to the "Mountain Caribou Steering Committee" and then send it to us at our Priest River P.O. Box. We will collect these letters and send them together to the key decision-makers for this project in both the U.S. and B.C. Call our office if you have any questions about this project. Lastly, please remember that the SCA's caribou recovery work also needs donor funding from you. Your financial support will help us continue to make progress on this and other projects important to preserving the wild beauty of the Priest Lakes Basin. ♡

– Guy Bailey
Executive Director

Jack Ward Thomas

Former Chief of U.S. Forest Service, Jack W. Thomas, Addressed Basin Community



Jack Ward Thomas (right), former Chief of the Forest Service, walking with SCA Forest Program Director, Mark Sprengel.

SCA joined other community organizations to host Jack Ward Thomas. He spoke at Priest River Junior High School and urged that local people work together to achieve forest restoration in the Priest Basin and to estab-

lish common interests and goals for our communities. His presentation was well attended by a diverse audience. Following his speech the press had an opportunity for questions and then Thomas responded to many questions from the audience. An edited version of the address aired on KPBX, National Public Radio in Spokane in July.

Jack W. Thomas's visit is the third in a series of symposia sponsored by SCA. Also joining SCA in hosting Thomas were the Priest River Development Corp., Priest River Chamber of Commerce, The Pend Oreille Environmental Team and the Newport-Priest River Rotary Club. ♡

Stimson

Continued from page 1

States.

Despite the Forest Service's determination that Stimson's activities would be "likely to adversely affect" Threatened and Endangered species such as grizzly bear, caribou, lynx, gray wolves and bull trout, the agency nevertheless decided to accede to Stimson's demands. The Forest Service admits in the Final Environmental Impact Statement that much of the Project Area has: highly unstable soils subject to landslides; watersheds already extremely impacted by past logging and road building; fisheries in severe decline; noxious weeds that are spreading rapidly across the area; excessively high road densities; and a host of other environmental problems. After a relatively accurate assessment of the damages Stimson's activities will cause, the agency incomprehensibly has now given the green light for the corporation to proceed with their plans to extensively log and construct roads across the best remaining habitat.

Using the argument that the ANILCA requires them to permit Stimson to build roads across public land, the Forest Service essentially maintains that ANILCA "trumps" the Endangered Species Act (ESA). SCA disagrees with this interpretation and will proceed accordingly.

SCA, along with several other conservation groups, filed a successful administrative appeal of this proposal in April

1998. The regional office of the Forest Service ruled that SCA's arguments were valid and stopped the project. Now, three years later, the same proposal is back, and the Colville National Forest is trying once again to comply with Stimson Lumber Company's demands.

SCA will oppose this scheme as well



with another administrative appeal. If the appeal to the chief of the Forest Service fails, SCA is prepared to fight this project in federal court. We will be represented in court, if necessary, by lawyers from Earth Justice Legal Defense Fund, a national environmental legal organization out of Bozeman, Mont. With our mountain caribou population down to around 31 animals and fewer than 50 grizzly bears left in the Selkirks, we simply cannot allow further assaults on this rare animal habitat.

If all of this weren't bad enough, Stimson is demanding another road be built in the South Fork Mountain Roadless Area on the Priest Lake Ranger District. This project would also detrimentally impact grizzly bears, mountain caribou, Canada lynx, bull trout and gray wolves as well as wolverine and fisher and a host of other species found in the area. Stimson's demand to rip roads across National Forest lands, will also result in a significant loss of inventoried roadless public land from the South Fork Mountain Roadless Area.

While the project decision has not been released yet, SCA will definitely appeal this proposal and litigate if necessary.

It should be noted that SCA has made a number of attempts to negotiate with Stimson Lumber Company to reach a compromise on this issue and has been rebuffed every time.

SCA Forest Program Director Mark Sprengel says, "It's far too often we hear vociferous complaints from corporations regarding their rights. It is time we started hearing about their responsibilities." ♡

POSTAL PATRON

Visit us on the Web!

www.spbainc.org

E-mail: spba@supersat2.net

PRINTED ON 50% RECYCLED PAPER

How about donating your unexpected tax rebate

This wasn't our idea – it was actually forwarded to us from a lady at the Greater Yellowstone Coalition annual meeting a few weeks back in Wyoming. But we do intend to spread the word about it because it's a GREAT IDEA that could really help us, especially as we gear up to fight to save the east side of the lake!

Her suggestion was to donate your tax refund to your favorite conservation and/or environmental group(s). You could send SCA some, say 10% of this windfall (or even all of it!), and earmark it for our work on Mt. Caribou recovery or for our rising staffing expenses.

Right now, we have only about 4 months of operations funding in the bank – and nothing on the horizon to cover our winter and spring funding needs. This hole in our finances is quite scary, especially as we look ahead to the increased work that will

be required for the SCA to fight the threatened divestment of our state public forests and shorelines on the east side of the Priest Lake. We will not be able to contest this without your help and we'll need your strong, continued support to fund this attempt to save the east side from over-development.

You could also help SCA with mountain caribou recovery efforts. (See related article page 2) So far, we have raised \$3,500 of the \$5,000 need to supplement the government's costs of capturing and transporting caribou to their new protected breeding facility in western B.C. We are leading private party efforts once again to help raise this supplemental funding for caribou recovery work in the Selkirk Mountains. Call us if you want to help out, and please remember, monies we raise go directly to science teamwork supporting caribou recovery. ♡

The Selkirk Conservation Alliance

Board Chair
Joanne Hirabayashi,

Executive Director
Guy Bailey

Board Members
Harry Batey
Mark Sprengel
Bill White
Sharon Sorby
Paul Sieracki

John Stuart
Steve Wilson
Bruce Yocum

Director Emeritus
Jules Gindraux

Forestry Program Chairman
Mark Sprengel

Editorial Committee Chairman
Bill White

Sightlines is the quarterly newsletter of the Selkirk Conservation Alliance, P.O. Box 1809, Priest River, ID 83856; (208) 448-2971. On the Web at www.spbainc.org.

E-mail: spba@supersat2.net.

Copyright © 2000 by SCA.

SCA is a non-profit corporation providing environmental oversight and public information for the Priest Lakes Basin of northern Idaho. Third-class postage paid at Priest River, Idaho. Permit No. 27. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SCA at the address above.

JOIN THE SCA

Support the Selkirk Conservation Alliance by becoming a member!

Our newsletter, funded by member contributions, keeps you informed of natural resource issues within the Priest Basin, and reports on the work of SCA to promote environmental excellence.

Your contribution helps us in our work. Dues and donations are tax deductible. Keep *Sightlines* coming regularly.

Enroll me as a member of the SCA. Enclosed are my dues:

	Individual dues	Couples
Regular:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35
Living Lightly	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20

To help more, I'm enclosing an additional contribution:

☐ \$10 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

☐ **Yes, I'm interested in volunteering for SCA work. Call me.**

SELKIRK CONSERVATION ALLIANCE
P.O. BOX 1809
PRIEST RIVER, ID 83856