



SightLines

Winter 2003/04 Newsletter of the Selkirk Conservation Alliance

National Forests...Motorized Playgrounds? By John Stuart

The latest motorized fad, 4-wheel all-terrain vehicles, are quickly becoming a major issue for lovers of public lands. Following in the historic tread marks of dune buggies, dirt bikes and 4-wheel drive pick-ups, off-highway vehicle (the more inclusive term) operators are literally running amuck. They are churning up wetlands, driving up steep banks that then wash out into waterways, pioneering trails into wildlife refugia and assuming that because they are on public lands; No Problem, Dude!

Because of our long history of logging and road building on public lands, we already know what the uncontrolled incursion of an entirely new set of machines and requisite roads could mean. The dryer forest and arid public lands in the U.S., with few trees to hinder access, are already experiencing a major invasion of these machines and, as a consequence, are suffering extreme soil erosion and destruction of wildlife habitat.

With the exponentially increasing numbers of OHVs it is necessary for those of us in the inland northwest to protect our home forests by watchdogging this issue. The Forest Service has a legal mandate to protect public lands against this kind of damage but for various reasons, almost all of which are political, the agency refuses to take substantive action and continues to drag its heels.

One of the main findings of wildlife research in the last few decades is that *roads kill wildlife*. Since the OHV users are pressuring the Forest Service to increase trail mileage and open closed roads for their use, we need to stay aware of this relationship. The subtle ways that roads cause wildlife decline are just as real as the canary in the coal mine. Roads allow human access into areas that

serve as refugia for threatened and endangered species. Intentional killing of grizzly bears or killing by misidentification during black bear season is a direct result of roads enhancing access in these diminishing back country areas. Even out of hunting season, some animals like elk and wolverine will try to avoid people and their roads.

The new 4-wheel ATVs are unique in that they can be driven around, over, or under gates. Areas that were assumed off-limits to motorized travel, are no longer safe but are now accessible. Though dirt bikes have always been

able to circumvent gates, they were not typically used during hunting season. Hunters are much more likely now though to hunt behind locked gates, knowing they can retrieve an animal with their machine, without having to pack it on foot to the gate.

Mature forests that are more prevalent in roadless areas provide shallow snow pack in winter for many species. Furbearers, like martin and fisher are most abundant in mature

forests but are easily available for trapping if roads are there to provide access. Native fish eggs are smothered by increased sediment running off of roads in wet weather. The inclination of OHV users to test the steepest hills



ATV damage to a creekbed in the Selkirks.

Executive Director's Message:

What's New for 2004

The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once said "We have art in order not to perish from truth." Not known for his sunny optimism, Nietzsche nevertheless recognized the transcendent power of art...the power to create an altered state of awareness...if only for a moment.

Being somewhat more optimistic, I believe that art has the power to *actualize truth*...to help us recognize truths not seen... or perhaps even, to imagine truth into being. While man can learn the *laws* of things, the *meaning* of things remains elusive. Many believe that art can provide an evanescent glimpse into the darkness...illumine a fragment of the great mystery.

Metaphysical ponderings aside, in our continual quest to improve the quality and appearance of our newsletter I thought it would be interesting to incorporate the work of area artists in *Sightlines*...to introduce some of the talented individuals who share our love of wild places while adding an aesthetically pleasing visual component to the publication.

This edition of *Sightlines* features the work of local artist Kate Drum. Kate is the creator of the Canada lynx found on our new promotional SCA coffee cups and t-shirts. She also designed our new logo and generously volunteered to redesign our newsletter. We hope to make contributions by area artists a regular component of our newsletter and so encourage submissions for future editions of *Sightlines*. Please tell us what you think of our new format. We want to hear from you.

Also under the heading of "What's New" we now have a domain name and host (thanks to TITONCORP's Tina Montague and FasTrak's Stephanie Perry) and are currently working on our new SCA website. This will allow members who are hooked up to the internet to keep abreast of SCA projects and will, we hope, be a good reference source for detailed information on political developments as well as scientific research. We hope SCA members will use this site to gather useful information for writing letters to their congressmen as well as local newspapers. Please go to www.scawild.org to access our website which we expect will be up and running before Spring.



We are also introducing a regular "SCA Outings" program which will offer our members and guests an opportunity to meet new friends while hiking, birdwatching, animal tracking, kayaking and canoeing and learning more about the area's ecology with expert guides. SCA board member John Stuart will lead our next outing on February 28 which will explore the world of animal tracks. Please call the SCA office for details as to time and place.

Also new (whew), we are seeking input/volunteers for a Priest Lake Monitoring Program as well as an Aerial Monitoring Program for the Selkirk Mountains. We are currently working with LightHawk on the aerial program but are also hoping to recruit volunteer pilots from the area. If you are a pilot and are interested in helping, please contact our office.

We also want to give our members an opportunity to voice their opinions in *Sightlines* and this issue introduces our new "Member Forum" feature. If you are interested in writing a guest editorial, please contact us.

Shifting gears, this edition of *Sightlines* has a thematic element... the rapidly growing problem of motorized abuse of public lands. ATVs, motorcycles, snowmobiles, jet skis... the gasoline-fueled invasion expands exponentially.

With each passing year, the roar of engines increasingly devours what little is left of the silence and tranquility of nature.

The aural and aesthetic blight is bad enough but even more worrisome are the long-lasting impacts these machines have on wildlife and the environment. They are inherently destructive and no political compromise regarding their use can alter that fact.

Numerous SCA member complaints over the years led us to compile a voluminous photographic record of "off road" vehicle damage to streams, meadows, wildlife habitat, hiking trails and sensitive areas on state and federal land.

Concurrently, we amassed an extensive library of scientific research identifying off-road vehicles as one of the single greatest threats to wildlife and the ecological health of our public lands.

ED's Message continued on page 3

Recognizing that land management agency officials are unwilling to seriously address the problem of motorized recreation, SCA directors, at our November 4th board meeting, voted unanimously to adopt a policy statement opposing the use of all motorized conveyances on public lands other than on established system roads regularly open to cars and trucks.

This action represents a positive step forward in a campaign to end misuse of public lands as motor vehicle playgrounds. Obviously, this will not be a popular position with certain interest groups. The motorized lobby is politically connected, well funded, and loud and aggressive in demands for expanded access for their machines.

Motor groups disingenuously claim that they are being "locked out" of public lands conveniently ignoring the fact that no one has ever been locked out of one single acre on state or federal property.

*If certain roads are closed to motor vehicles
to protect wildlife or sensitive areas, it is
the machines that are restricted...not people.
As always, anyone is free to go anywhere
they choose on public land.*

For millennia the human species has traversed the globe without benefit of gasoline-powered conveyances yet the laments of the motorfolk suggest mobility without motors is now suddenly inconceivable.

Physical and aesthetic benefits of muscle-powered locomotion aside, the numerous detrimental impacts of off-road vehicles clearly indicate restrictions are necessary.

Among their many destructive impacts, off-road vehicles exacerbate erosion and sediment delivery problems leading to pollution of streams and impairment of fisheries. They spread noxious weeds, disrupt wildlife movement and utilization of preferred habitat, create fire ignition risks, pollute the air, compact and degrade soils, destroy wetland and sensitive plant communities, impair hunting opportunities and diminish the recreation experience of individuals who do not choose to depend on a gasoline engine for transport across the landscape.

Snowmobiles for instance have been implicated in altering predator-prey dynamics by creating packed trails allowing predators such as coyotes, mountain lions and bobcats to access non-traditional high elevation habitat where they can prey on, or compete with, rare creatures such as woodland caribou and Canada lynx.

ED's Message continued on page 7

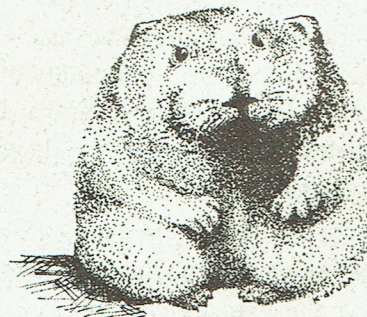
Northern Bog Lemmings and their Habitats in the Panhandle of Idaho

Dr. Jerry Boggs, a member of the Selkirk Conservation Alliance since 2001, has been awarded a small non-game grant by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to study the northern bog lemming (*Synaptomys borealis*). The northern bog lemming is just one of several rodents that utilize the wet meadows of the northern Idaho forests. It is listed as sensitive by the State of Idaho and is on a "monitor" list by the State of Washington.

Partnering with Jerry on this project will be Ms. Sherry Wood of Gonzaga University. Ms. Wood is Coordinator of Biology Labs for the University and also manages the Work Study program for that department. Sherry will provide botanical expertise and provide Work Study students to help with the project while they learn. In addition to Gonzaga, other partners include the Kootenai Tribe, Idaho Fish and Game, The Environmental Trust and the U.S. Forest Service.

The importance of this project is not only in detection of the presence/absence of bog lemmings but, also, in description of the habitats that will be surveyed. Meadows are an important but relatively rare microhabitat within the larger forest ecosystem. Bog lemmings prefer wet meadows with a significant sphagnum moss element, an even rarer occurrence. Dr. Boggs and Ms. Wood will provide not only descriptions of the plant and animal communities detected within sphagnum-moss dominated meadows but, also, a determination as to how these microhabitats intermix with the larger forest(s) and how forest management practices may affect them.

*There may be opportunities
for volunteer assistance from SCA members.
If interested, please call Jerry (208) 623-2147.*



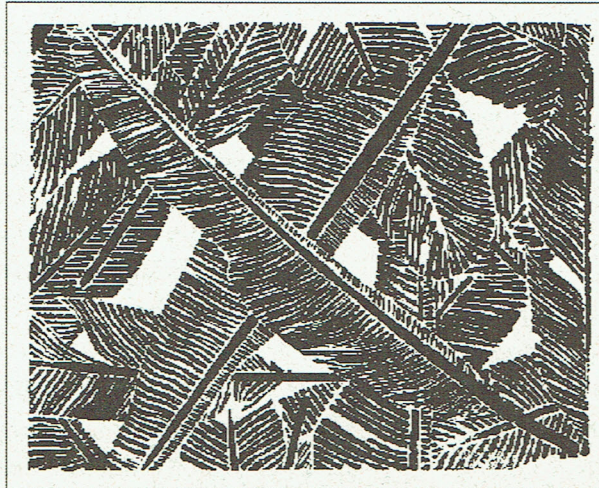
Idaho Department of Lands Lawsuit

As SCA members are well aware, one of our organization's major tasks is to reform state land management in the Priest Lake Basin.

For over 3 years now SCA has been gathering information, documenting and photographing land management abuses, compiling a Geographic Information Systems database, working with scientists and our attorneys and attending meetings with state and federal officials in preparation for either a reasonable settlement with the state of Idaho or, if necessary, litigation.

This has been an arduous process and there have been numerous, frustrating, and unavoidable delays in implementing our action plan. At long last however, we are about to move decisively forward.

In the very near future we expect to make a major announcement. We will keep you posted as developments proceed. ■



blockprint by Dan Drum

MEMBER FORUM

— Kate Batey

Harrowing the soil as the rancher does and harrowing of the snow by snowmobilers have something in common.

They both prepare a surface for something to come. In the case of the rancher it's for a crop. In the case of the snowmobiler it's for those to follow whether on roads designated for such, or off-road, not designated or illegal.

Which snowmobile racket and noxious fumes do to about everyone who goes into off-road places for the quiet and serenity.

The rancher may find his farm machine noisy enough to cause mental distress but just as likely it is sweet music for looking to a great harvest.

These chaps of course don't go careening off into a nice wilderness or a neighbor's field for thrills and jollies.

They have to respect limits or be in deep do do. A harrowing experience should be one where the machine operator respects limits and leaves the environment to recover in peace and quiet.

Kate Batey is a long-time SCA member and former member of the board of directors

Gardin-Taco and Rising Cougar Timber Sales By Joanne Hirabayashi

At the annual membership meeting last August, posted at the front of the room was a list of 21 projects SCA is/was then currently involved in. The list included some timber sales many people had never heard of, such as Gardin-Taco and Rising Cougar, both out of the Priest Lake area. What do they have to do with SCA and Priest Lake, some have asked. Quite a lot. Here's why:

Gardin-Taco was appealed jointly by SCA and two other environmental groups. Mark Sprengel wrote the section of the appeal disputing the Forest Service's soils analysis and their conclusion that the logging operations would have no negative impact on soils. Mark demonstrated that their data was inaccurate and their conclusion incorrect. Faced with the possibility of an appeal they were sure to lose, the Forest Service asked to be allowed to negotiate and to redesign the sale with input from the environmentalists.

The **Rising Cougar** sale would permit logging in two inventoried roadless areas which contain the greatest ecological integrity in that area, as even the Forest Service admits. At the same time, the current Forest Service claim is that logging actually benefits the forest — but that is

merely their unproven theory; the large bulk of evidence shows otherwise. Should the Forest Service be allowed to go in and log important roadless areas merely because they say it would be beneficial, without having first to demonstrate the truth of their theory? We say, first prove scientifically...if it is.

The real point in these and other cases is accountability. The Forest Service has a sorry history of ignoring their own guidelines. Their mandate is to operate on the basis of "the best possible science" but often (usually) that does not happen. The Forest Service must be held accountable, and every case where they have to admit they are in the wrong shifts them in the direction of having to be more honest and more accurate in the future, both locally and regionally. In the end this really pays off for Priest Lake. ■

Rising Cougar Timber Sale

Logging in Inventoried Roadless Areas

On November 26, SCA submitted formal comments on the 'Rising Cougar' project on the Sandpoint Ranger District. Rising Cougar is particularly important to SCA members because logging is proposed in the Beetop and Scotchman Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs). As is becoming common, the Forest Service is justifying the logging as a means to reduce fire risks and to restore 'ecosystem health.' (Ironically, the three largest fires in North Idaho this past season were all started by loggers or located in active logging units.)

While SCA agrees with the Forest Service that the past 75 to 100 years of active management has resulted in impairment of ecosystem health and resilience, we do not approve of plans to log in roadless areas. The scientific evidence is overwhelming that roadless areas comprise some of the healthiest remaining forests in the National Forest system. Our position opposing roadless area incursions is predicated on this fact.

If the agency is so confident that logging is the means to rectify historic abuses, then managers should first focus on repairing the damage they created in previously logged and roaded areas. The few remaining stands that haven't been thoroughly trashed should be off-limits to agency experiments.

SCA has a number of other concerns about the Rising Cougar project and these include exacerbation of existing fire danger to the communities of Hope, East Hope, and Clark Fork, degradation of Lightning Creek and its population of bull trout, spread of invasive plants and root diseases, detrimental impacts to grizzly bear, enhanced access for off-road vehicles, and impairment of forest soils.

We will be closely following this timber sale and will keep our members informed as the project proceeds. ■

Gardin-Taco Settlement

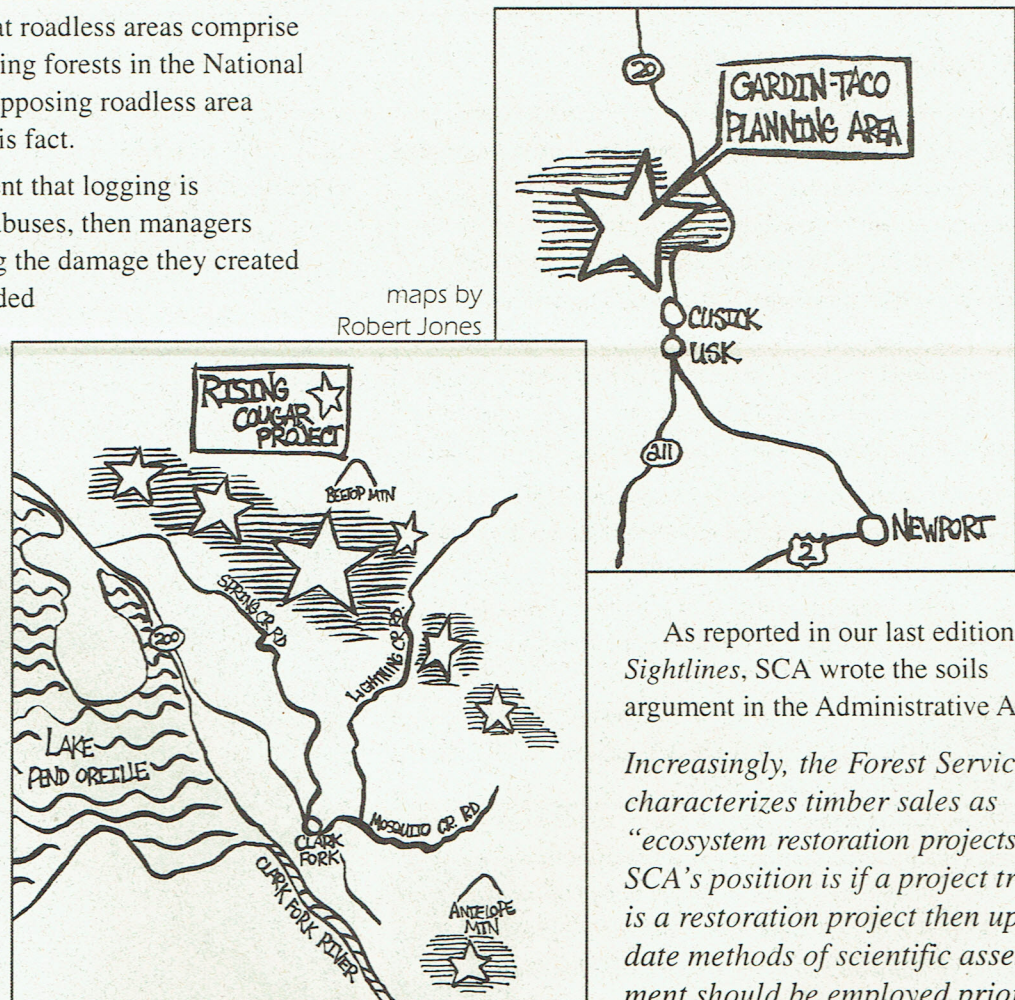
Forest Service Agrees...

SCA's Administrative Appeal Has Merit

Recently, the Colville National Forest asked to negotiate a settlement to SCA's Administrative Appeal of the Gardin-Taco timber sale on the Newport Ranger District.

Essentially agreeing with our contention that the agency failed to conduct scientifically appropriate soils analysis as required by law and the agency's own regulations, the preliminary settlement agreement drafted by the Forest Service states ... "Before any other aspect of the Gardin-Taco ROD (Record of Decision) can be implemented, the Forest Service will prepare appropriate NEPA analysis, including soil sampling and monitoring as required by the Forest Service Manual and Handbook ..."

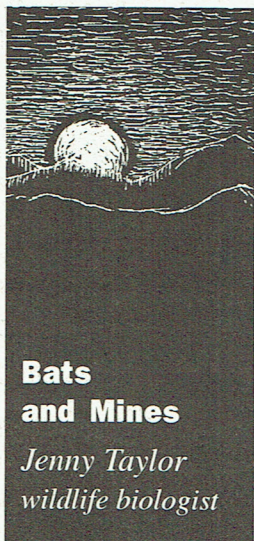
maps by
Robert Jones



As reported in our last edition of *Sightlines*, SCA wrote the soils argument in the Administrative Appeal.

Increasingly, the Forest Service characterizes timber sales as "ecosystem restoration projects." SCA's position is if a project truly is a restoration project then up-to-date methods of scientific assessment should be employed prior to the implementation decision.

When our monitoring efforts indicate appropriate science has been ignored, as in the Gardin-Taco Project, SCA will take steps to force the agency to obey the laws and regulations they are legally obligated to follow. ■



Bats and Mines

Jenny Taylor
wildlife biologist

Where are the bats? SCA received two grants in the last two years to help find out. Ten species of bats use North Idaho mines for roosting (resting) during the day or night, feeding, raising their young, and hibernating through our long winters. Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the National Wildlife Federation gave SCA grants totalling \$13,300 for the Bats and Mines Project. We were able to fund 3 wildlife biologists to survey the bats at 60 mines. Graduate student Sabrina Derusseau and bat experts Rick Sherwin (University of New Mexico) and Faith Watkins (Bat Conservation International in Texas) found eight different species of bats using our local mines! Seventeen people volunteered over 500 hours on these bat surveys.

*One species of bat they caught hadn't been trapped
in the previous 6 years of bat surveys at dozens of mines.*

Another important part of this project was building bat gates to protect bat habitat at four mines. The gates let the bats fly in and out, but keep people from going in where they would disturb the bats. The information from the bat surveys SCA has funded will help the Forest Service protect more bat habitat in the future.

Forest Planning Meetings

Forest Service planning meetings for the Priest Lake area are now being held, as a way of giving the public a chance to express concerns and ideas about how the forests in our own geographical area will be managed over the future twenty or so years. Topics covered so far include fire risks and water and aquatic issues (think watersheds, fish and amphibians as indicators of environmental health) and how we identify them as being important in our region. Results of the discussions will be taken back to the regional forest planning team to be considered for inclusion in the development of the upcoming "Forest Plan."

Who should attend these meetings, and why? YOU! National forests belong to all taxpayers, and it is important for the Forest Service to hear a range of views, not just the concerns of those promoting special interests. So far SCA members (thank you!), Mark as Executive Director and several board members, have

been there to ask questions and point out concerns, but more SCA members who will speak to what they see as important considerations would be a good thing for everyone involved.

Where and when? Monthly meetings are the first and third Wednesdays: in February the 4th and the 18th, at the cookhouse at the Priest Lake Ranger District, north of the Lamb Creek area. Call for background or more information to the SCA office, 448-2971. Please consider coming to these meetings to express your views. You are needed!

• VERBATIM

Earthjustice, IN BRIEF, Winter 2004

Pollution from snowmobiles is harming some of the most pristine, scenic, and ecologically sensitive areas in the country — as well as the people who recreate in them. Powered by two-stroke engines that spew 25 to 30 percent of their fuel unburned out the tailpipe, snowmobiles produce so much dangerous air pollution that Yellowstone Park rangers are forced to wear respirators to protect themselves.

Ridgelines, Issue 3, 2003; newsletter of the Northern Rockies Chapter of the Sierra Club

Between the White House and Congress, we've seen environmental safeguards attacked at unprecedented speed.

Even the most widely supported conservation measures are on the chopping block, including the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Clinton's Wild Forest Protection Initiative, and the Clean Water Act.

And, of course, they've done little to promote substantive energy efficiency and conservation.



Stream damage from ATV tracks

National Forests continued from front page

recreates erosion gullies, often right into streams.

One of the most detrimental impacts of roads can be described in only 3 words: *weeds follow roads*. Weeds quickly migrate along roads and into newly logged areas or campgrounds. Native wildlife food plants then are reduced in number because they are unable to compete with the invaders. Some weeds, such as meadow hawkweed, are seeding into existing vegetation without obvious ground disturbance, which means that they are coming in with roads but then can spread away from roads into the adjoining forest understory.

In a north Idaho elk study, 3 areas with different road scenarios were analyzed. In a heavily roaded area, only 5% of bulls lived to maturity (4.5 years) and there were only 10 bulls per 100 cows. The second area was in the same roaded condition as the first, but closed during hunting season. Here 16% of bulls lived to maturity with a ratio of 20 bulls per 100 cows. In a third area with no roads at all, 30% of bulls lived to maturity and the ratio reached 35 bulls per 100 cows. Referring to new machines in the back country, Jim Unsworth of the Idaho Fish and Game Dept., said recently; "It should really be no surprise to anyone that if more and more people can easily get deeper into important wildlife areas, we're going to have to compensate with shorter seasons, reduced bag limits or controlled hunts." ■

ED's Message continued from page 3

These machines also crush and compact the under-snow or "subnivean" travel corridors of small mammals thus detrimentally affecting rare species such as the northern bog lemming. As they roar around the landscape snowmobiles also damage the tops of small trees thus scarring entire stands of regenerating forest.

The bottom line is, public lands belong to all of us and no single user-group has the right to destroy public property. Perhaps more importantly, public lands and the rare species that inhabit them are a trust held for future generations.

One hundred years from now, it is inconceivable that anyone will thank us for streams choked with mud, forests scarred by the weed-filled tracks of all-terrain vehicles or square plants and animals that inhabit only picture books on condominium coffee tables. SCA believes it is time to put

Join the SCA

*Support the Selkirk Conservation Alliance
by becoming a member!*

Our newsletter, funded entirely by member contributions, keeps you informed of natural resources issues within the Inland Northwest, and offers regular updates on the efforts of the SCA to promote environmental excellence. Now is the time to give to the environment that sustains us all.

Make a contribution and keep *SightLines* coming regularly. Dues and donations are tax-deductible.

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

	Individual	Family
Limited Income (living lightly)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> \$20
Regular	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35

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

☐ \$10 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$500 ☐ other ____

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Summer address (dates) ____/____/____ to : ____/____/____

phone: _____

Email address: _____

**Mail to: SELKIRK CONSERVATION ALLIANCE
PO BOX 1809 PRIEST RIVER, IDAHO 83856**

SCA WISH LIST

- Power point projector
- Digital camera
- File cabinets
- Fax machine
- GPS unit
- High-speed copier

an end to motorized mayhem on public land. Once again, we are interested in hearing from our members. What do YOU think? Call or email me at sprengel@scawild.org. ■

Ongoing SCA Projects & Events

▪ This newsletter includes articles regarding topics in **bold**.

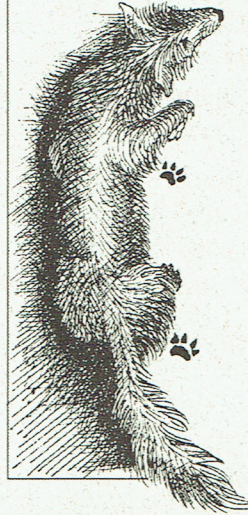
1. **Idaho Department of Lands lawsuit (IDL)**
2. Idaho Panhandle Forest Plan Revision
(Priest Lake and Sandpoint RDs)
3. **Priest Lake Motorized Access (PLRD)**
4. Colville NF Motorized Access (NRD-SLRD)
5. Lower West Branch Priest River TMDL (PLRD)
6. Chips Ahoy Timber Sale (PLRD)
7. Kalispel Timber Sale (PLRD)
8. **Rising Cougar Timber Sale (SRD)**
9. Lost Granite Squirrel Timber Sale (NRD)
10. **Gardin-Taco Timber Sale (NRD)**
11. Lakeface/Lamb Stewardship Project (PLRD)
12. Sullivan Lake Winter Recreation Plan (SLRD)
13. South Fork Mountain Stimson ANILCA (PLRD)
14. Grouse Grizzly Bear Management Unit FOIA (SRD-BFRD)
15. WA State DNR Monitoring
16. Bull Trout Critical Habitat
17. Quartz-Cottonwood Road Project (PLRD)
18. South Selkirk Habitat Mapping Grant Admin.
(PLRD-SLRD-NRD-SRD-BFRD)
19. **Special Outings and Events**
20. South Selkirks and Priest Lake Monitoring Program

▪ For further activity details - call the SCA office 208-448-2971

SCA Outing • Sat, Feb 28

Catch the Critter's Shadow

Come with us on Sat. Feb 28 and see where the wild ones have been. Biologist (and SCA member) Paul Sieracki and SCA board member John Stuart will lead an afternoon field trip to see what animal tracks and sign can be found. We will meet at 11:00am, at the Priest River Experimental Forest parking lot, which is about 12



miles north of Priest River on the East Side Road. Bring snowshoes (we have a couple extra pairs) or X-country skis. We will stay on forest roads or flat terrain. If you haven't worn snowshoes before, wear warm winter boots like Sorels to use with them. Ski poles are sometimes nice with snowshoes.

If during our hike, we come upon Sasquatch, it will be our best field trip yet!

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