



SightLines

Winter 2005

Newsletter of the Selkirk Conservation Alliance

Jackson Creek Trailhead/Hughes Meadows Cabin Project — A Trojan Horse Paul Sieracki, SCA Program Coordinator

Hughes Meadows is a complex of wetlands and riparian habitats with high year-round importance to grizzly bears, mountain caribou, lynx, wolverine and gray wolf. The Hughes Fork of Upper Priest River flows through the wetland complex and provides spawning habitat for the endangered bull trout and sensitive cutthroat trout and possibly the Harlequin Duck. Expansive ancient forests occur on both sides of the meadows, providing Northern Goshawk nesting and foraging habitat. There have been two recent grizzly deaths from suspected poachings.

The Priest Lake Ranger District is resurrecting the politically motivated trailhead-cabin project; proposing a half-acre trailhead parking lot on the west side of the meadow and renting an old guard cabin. They claim it will decrease use of the area but their claims are deceptive and based on 1980's recreational use information, and feel-good wildlife biology.

In reality, improved trail access will increase use into grizzly bear habitat. It will increase the risk of grizzly bear mortality risk from poaching and accidental encounters. The cabin rental will increase human use from day visits to a 24-7 human presence. Use will skyrocket as the area becomes popular, and if the proposal to pave the road from "North of Nordman" to the Roosevelt Grove becomes reality, it may open the door to 24-7 winter recreation use in the future, negatively impacting caribou. Idaho Fish and Game's request to permanently close a trail on the west side of the meadows was ignored. SCA recommends

converting the road system to trails, constructing a smaller trailhead at the junction of the Hughes Fork Road with the main road #1013 and eliminating the cabin rental. This would increase grizzly bear core habitat, reduce mortality risk and keep trail use at levels that can be tolerated by bears. ■



Hikers take a break in the wild near Hughes Meadows

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Executive Director's Message — Mark Sprengel

As we start the new year I'm pleased to announce that SCA's membership is increasing, we've added staff, and we have several exciting projects in the works. Ironically, these gains have occurred despite a dramatic decline in foundation support for environmental organizations in the Northwest.

Essentially, the progress we've made has been largely attributable to the financial support of our members. This is very rewarding and I feel confident that the coming year will be equally successful. It will also, however, be one of the most challenging years in our history as the politically directed onslaught on the environment gathers momentum. It seems nearly every week brings news of yet another scheme to subvert environmental laws by corporations and their attendant politicians. Deviously cloaked legislation with misleading names such as "Clear Skies" or "Healthy Forests" routinely slithers out of the murky political swamp in Washington DC.

One of the most effective pieces of legislation, the Endangered Species Act, has, of course, been under constant assault for years by corporations, developers, and those who see endangered life forms as little more than impediments to the fulfillment of their financial schemes. Increasingly, loud and aggressive motorized recreation groups are leading the charge against the Act. Based on their rhetoric, these organizations' primary interest, (and it sometimes seems *only* interest), is roaring across the landscape on "off-road" vehicles (ORVs) and snowmobiles.

Many corporations generously support ORV groups because they serve as convenient cat's paws...useful in the battle to maintain and expand the vast network of roads on public land. Roads are a critical component in the infrastructure of resource extraction and absolutely necessary for continued exploitation of public assets. ORV groups, with limited popular support, are eager to join forces with public land exploiters in a marriage-of-convenience that creates a formidable force opposed to responsible land management.

In response to this threat, SCA's board of directors recently created a formal position paper that clearly outlines our organization's position regarding motorized recreation on public land. Essentially, it states that SCA is opposed to *any* motorized vehicle use off of existing open system roads.

This is predicated on sound science. It recognizes that the ever-increasing encroachment of man and his machines into once remote places is driving plants and animals into extinction around the world and the area



Snowmobile tracks on Chimney Rock: SCA Aerial Monitoring Program

ED's Message continued on page 7



Bog Lemmings and Where We Thought They Might Be

by Jerry R. Boggs, Wildlife Research Biologist and SCA Board Member

Nine separate sites in the Panhandle National Forests were surveyed for the presence of the elusive and rare northern bog lemming as well as for rare plant species. Grass Creek and Perkins Lake in the Bonners Ferry Ranger District and Armstrong, Sema, Packer and Hughes Meadows and Teepee Creek in the Priest Lake Ranger District were live-trapped in an attempt to capture this probably rare species.

We know from literature that bog lemmings have been captured in or near some of these sites in the last 20 years. However, despite over 3,200 trap-nights (1 trap for 1 night = 1 trap-night) not a single northern bog lemming was detected. There are several possible explanations for this: they may be extirpated from the area, they may have been excluded from certain meadows through inter-species competition; elevations of some sites may have been too low; they may be unwilling to enter into the confined space of a live trap. We just don't know enough about bog lemmings to say why we were unsuccessful. Their presence (or absence) remains a mystery.

We did capture several other small mammals including lots of the aggressive meadow vole, western jumping mice (the sole resident rodent of Grass Creek) and the almost ubiquitous deer mouse. In smaller numbers we saw the red-backed vole and the masked shrew.

The good news, especially for botanists, is that my partner, Sherry Wood of Gonzaga University, verified or discovered the location of several rare plants, including one that appeared to be not so uncommon, the bristle-stalked sedge, which we found in every site. Less frequently found were poor sedge and Sitka clubmoss.

In summary, we discovered or verified the presence of several species of rodents and plants but never caught the target species, i.e. the northern bog lemming. The success of this project is that we did discover and describe significant attributes of several peatland sites. These data, especially on rare plants, should enable land managers to have a better grasp of the ecology and sensitivity of these sites, allowing them to provide the positive management that such sites require. ■

If you would like to learn more about the rare plants and wildlife of our area, Pend Oreille County Extension is offering the following two classes at The CREATE Place in Newport, 900 W. 4th Street. 509-447-9277. \$5 per class.

Wildlife of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Then and Now ■ Thurs, February 24; 6:30pm

From Great Falls, Montana, to the coast these explorers met and discovered a variety of wildlife. Join Howard Ferguson, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Biologist, for a slide show discussion of how these populations are faring 200 years later.

Have You Seen A Moonwort Lately?... Rare Plants of Pend Oreille County Tuesday, March 15; 6:30pm

Instructor, Kathy Ahlenslager, Colville National Forest Botanist, will give a close look at rare plants and learn where to find them. Pressed specimens and photos will guide participants through a survey of 36 plants rare to our area. Come hear stories of Moonworts, orchids, sedges, clubmosses, adder's tongues, blue-eyed grasses and violets.



Border Caribou ■ Barbara MacNulty

Some Basic Stuff About Conservation Easements *by Steve Wilson*

Someone once said that property rights are like a bundle of sticks and any stick or combination of sticks can be removed from the bundle. One common way to remove rights from property is through an easement. We are all familiar with easements for powerlines or roadways that give others rights for the use of property that then restrict the landowner's use.

Another type of easement that may restrict the landowner's use of the property is called a **Conservation Easement**, which is designed to protect certain conservation values on the property. For those persons or families who have devoted their lives caring for and improving their property and want it to be a legacy for future generations, a conservation easement may be the best way to prevent it from eventually becoming a housing project or shopping mall. The government's Wetland Reserve Program protects wetlands on private property with conservation easements and there are many private land trusts around the country that enter in conservation easement agreements with private landowners. Removing certain rights from property can significantly lower its market value. For example, removing the development rights will reduce the market value proportionate to the development potential of that property. For this reason, and

because private land trusts are classified as non-profit organizations, "donating" a conservation easement to a land trust may have tax benefits including lowering or eliminating estate taxes.

I wanted my land to be protected from development after I was no longer around to protect it and signed a conservation easement with a ^{private} land trust ~~company~~ a few years ago. Unfortunately at that time I was too trusting and was manipulated into signing an agreement which I didn't fully understand and ended up losing far more property rights than I ever intended to give up. The struggle to regain those property rights resulted in many months of futile negotiations followed by approximately two and one half years of litigation and an out of court settlement. Much of my life's work was destroyed in this process, but in spite of this terrible experience I still believe that conservation easements are one of the best ways to save land for future generations, and that most land trusts won't deceive and manipulate landowners.

The purpose of the following advice is not to discourage others from considering a conservation easement, but to help them avoid falling into a trap as I did.

1. If you are concerned about what may happen to your property after you are no longer around to protect it, **seek advice from an estate planning expert who is not affiliated with any organization.** Only then can you get unbiased advice as to the best option for your situation.

2. If you decide that a conservation easement is the appropriate means to protect your property **be aware that there is a vast difference in land trusts.** Before you make a commitment or agreement with any land trust find out as much as you can about them. Ask for names and addresses of all landowners who have signed conservation easements with them. If the land trust refuses to give you that information, or gives only limited information, **drop them.** When talking to other landowners find out as much as you can about the easement they signed and try to get a copy of it.

3. No matter how nice the representatives from the land



Priest Lake Wildcat ■ Barbara MacNulty

Conservation Easements continued on next page

Adopt-A-Highway Litter Pick-up: Sunday, May 1

The Selkirk Conservation Alliance has been participating in the Idaho "Adopt-A-Highway" program since 1990. Twice a year, we pick up trash along two miles of State Highway 57. On average, we fill 9 or 10 large bags each time we meet. The litter pick-up usually takes about two hours with an extra 1/2 hour to enjoy refreshments and visit with our fellow trash collectors.

Our next scheduled pick-up will be on Sunday, May 1st at 10:00am at the High Bridge on Highway 57. Volunteers are always welcome! It's a good excuse to get out of the house, get some exercise and meet some really nice people. For more information, please call Amy Daniels at 208-448-9001. ■



Go into the wilderness and show us what you see!

Sightlines is always looking for artwork. Submissions may be sent as an attachment via email (TIFF or EPS) or through the regular mail. If submitting hard copy, artwork should be black & white and no larger than 8 1/2 x 14. Send copies (no original work, please) as they will not be returned to you. Feel welcome to submit what you think would work well for *Sightlines* and the newsletter staff will then take it from there. Please deliver to: 4drums@surf1.ws or K. Drum, 4441 Baker Lake, Newport WA 99156.

Conservation Easements continued from previous page

trust seem to be, never be deceived into believing that they are your friends and will look out for **your** interests.

4. If the easement is going to be a "no development" easement only, it's pretty simple; but if the property has significant natural resources then most land trusts will want some management guidelines included in the easement for those resources. But remember that **verbal promises mean nothing**. If they say that your Conservation/Forest Management Plan will be approved after the easement contract is signed **don't believe them**. You may find out too late that their ideas of management are far different than your's. **Insist that your plans for managing your property are approved before the contract is signed.**

5. If the land trust wants you to pay them an "endowment fee" for overseeing the easement insist that the amount and terms be mutually agreed upon **in writing** during the early stages of discussion.

6. If the land trust presents you with a lengthy and/or complicated contract, **be wary**. Never trust their representative to explain the contract to you and advise you. **Retain an attorney not affiliated with the land trust** who understands contract language to review the contract, explain the details to you, and to advise you.

7. Never allow yourself to be pressured to sign by a certain date or deadline.

Anyone who follows the above guidelines should never find themselves in the dilemma which I faced. Please take this advice from a person who learned the hard way, and good luck in protecting your property for the benefit of future generations. ■

Bear Encounter — by Rebecca Gordon

It had rained the day before and the roads were still sticky when I went out for my afternoon ride. My mountain bike, an old plug, is still willing to take me on these climbs, away from my work-a-day desk and out of our sequestered valley, climbing higher and breathing deeper into the expanding horizon. The sky was ominous gray with a bit of blue showing through the cracks. I smelled smoke, probably someone at the high cabin, a line of tracks pressing yellow-gold leaves into the mud up their road.

I was geared down and pedaling slowly and quietly up a rise, when a bear stepped out in front of me. He was looking before he crossed, the other way.

Instinctively, I grabbed the brakes and skidded, making a racket on the slick clay and gravel.

The bear was mid-sized, a two year old maybe, and every time I see one I have several reactions. There is the body/fear/head thing of fight or flight, and then there is the other deeper reaction, of delight in finding a sentient being out in the deep woods. I love bears and am fascinated by them, but an encounter is always so charged with ambivalence.



Bear ■ Kate Drum

When he heard my commotion, the bear had the flight reaction. He didn't even look around but launched into a hard gallop up the road and around the bend. I could hear his bare feet slap on the wet clay. His deep fur rolled back and forth like a black shoe-shine cloth across his haunches.

Sorry bear. I didn't mean to scare you like that. It's just my edginess, riding through bear county, never knowing when bruin and bike might intersect — when woman and bear might need to decide about each other. I realized from his full out run, that he's already wise to the most hostile presence in the forest.

I pedaled beside his bare-footed tracks and around the corner I found the place where he'd turned and scrambled up the steep bank. I stopped again. No sound escaped the forest looming over each side of the logging road. The bear disappeared into that other world, invisible now from this hard-packed by-way between coniferous walls.

Those walls are the dark edge of wild places which have felt, especially during my first few years here, watchful and aloof — even hostile. Lately, however, the wildness seems to invite, even beckon me to enter. This change occurred gradually with each new bike ride into the Selkirk foothills, with every stride away from my house.

Someday I'd like to meet a bear and not be afraid. I'd like a bear to meet me and maybe roll his nose, then proceed along without the full-out terror I seem to incite around here. Whenever I go bike riding up the back-roads, all around me in the forest, I hear the sounds of fleeing. It gets lonely sometimes. ■

Looking Back, Looking Forward

Last November the SCA board met in a planning session to review previous goals and how well they have been accomplished and to set a course for the coming years. As always, we are indebted to you, our membership, for your support, both moral and financial, and for keeping us informed about your concerns and interests. Knowing these helps the board shape SCA's future efforts. Your encouragement reinforces our determination to push for action on the part of various

state and federal agencies rather than allowing them to slide along merely maintaining the status quo. It is going to be particularly important in these times to keep conservation issues in the forefront of public awareness, not just as information but to emphasize how much is at stake. We will need your help. We can provide the facts. We hope you will join us in speaking out. — Joanne Hirabayashi, SCA Board Chair

we live in is no exception. Home to several rare and endangered species, we have a fast-diminishing opportunity to preserve sufficient secure habitat to give these creatures a chance to survive and recover biologically sustainable populations.

The detrimental impacts of roads and motorized incursions into wildlife habitat are well documented in the scientific literature. The scores of biologists involved with the multi-year, multi-million dollar Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) clearly summarized the vast body of scientific research by stating: *"In summary, no terrestrial vertebrate taxa appear immune to the myriad of road-associated factors that degrade habitat or that increase mortality"* and *"Efforts to restore habitats without simultaneous efforts to reduce road density and control human disturbances will curtail the effectiveness of habitat restoration, or even contribute to its failure..."*

The Selkirk ecosystem...this place we call home... is one of the most unique and remarkable places in the country. It is, for instance, the only remaining ecosystem in the conterminous United States where every species that was present when Lewis and Clark made their historic journey of exploration is still extant.

It is a place where grizzly bears wander among thousand-year-old cedars and mountain caribou roam the high wind-swept ridges of the Selkirk Crest. These animals, and several others, are now on the knife-edge of extinction.

Extinction is forever as they say and there is so little time left. With each turn of the earth, another quiet place vanishes, another unique and irreplaceable life-form slips away. Majesty and mystery succumb to the banal and obnoxious.

The Selkirk Conservation Alliance is dedicated to the cause of protecting *and restoring* the land, water, plants, and animals of the Selkirk ecosystem. Maintaining the status quo is not good enough. It is not enough to preserve the last vestiges nor is it acceptable to accommodate practices that diminish the quality of life for our children. We must, if we are to be successful residents of this place, learn to wisely inhabit the landscape...as members of a community of species rather than self-absorbed overlords.

It promises to be a busy year. ■

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

To help more, I'm enclosing an additional contribution:
☐ \$10 ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$500 ☐ other ____

* **SPECIAL OFFER** to NEW regular price members until 4/1/05:

(check one) ☐ SCA mug ☐ SCA t-shirt

Name(s) _____

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SCA WISH LIST

- Power point projector
- Digital camera with telephoto
- GPS
- High-speed copier

Ongoing SCA Projects & Events

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

Forest Service Timber Sales:

1. Chips Ahoy Timber Sale (PLRD)
2. Kalispell Timber Sale (PLRD)
3. High Bridge Fuels Reduction Timber Sale (PLRD)
4. Outlet Fuels Reduction Timber Sale (PLRD)
5. Benton Creek Title 4 (PL Exp. Forest)
6. Mission Brush Timber Sale (Bonner's Ferry RD)
7. Rising Cougar Timber Sale (Sandpoint RD)
8. Chloride Bush Timber Sale (Sandpoint RD)

Ongoing and Proposed Litigation:

1. Stimson 2 ANILCA Access (9th Circuit Court)
2. Idaho Dept. of Lands ESA (in negotiation)
3. Woodland Caribou ESA (pending)
4. Grizzly Bear Access Standards (suit filed)

Active Projects:

Priest Lake Breakwater Project
IPNF Forest Plan Revision
Lower West Branch Priest River TMD

Jackson-Hughes Meadows Cabin Project

SCA Aerial Monitoring Program

Events:

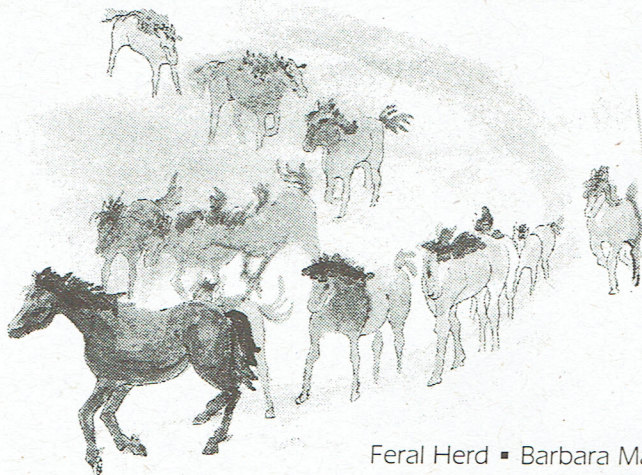
Highway 57 Litter Pick-up

Symposia Series (TBA)

SCA Field Trips (TBA)

SCA Monitoring Program (contact office)

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



Feral Herd ▪ Barbara MacNulty

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