



SightLines

Summer 2006 Newsletter of the Selkirk Conservation Alliance

Bear Creek — by Julie Goltz

With tall wild rushes, ring-necked ducks, moose, soaring eagles, and early morning mist rising through the narrow, twisting channel of Bear Creek one feels protected and in a sacred place.

When I first experienced Priest Lake 25 years ago I was struck by what a beautiful, peaceful lake it was; deep, clear water surrounded by high hills and stony peaks. Over the years as more and more people discovered the lake and wanted a share of this beauty and peace, traffic that was once only seen on a summer holiday weekend began to spill over to more weekends and now to weekdays as well. It is hard to escape the constant activity and noise, and increasingly, the activity and roaring noise of personal watercraft (PWC). Even in naturally protected and sacred Bear Creek.

When PWCs travel shallow waters, such as Bear Creek and parts of Bear Creek Bay, they suck water vegetation into the jet intake. Not only can this cause the PWC engine to stall (as witnessed on more than one occasion last summer), more importantly this damages the root structure of plants and may transplant non native plant vegetation from one body of water to another. 25 years ago, lily pads and reeds were abundant in Bear Creek Bay; there are few left today.

PWCs are the fastest growing segment of the boat sale market. According to the California Air Resources Board they emit two times the pollution as a conventional outboard of

comparable horsepower. The Board also found that one hour on a typical PWC produces more smog-forming emissions than a modern car produces in a year. Bluewater Network notes that PWCs release 25-30% of unburned fuel directly into the water. A two-hour PWC ride can discharge up to four gallons of fuel and oil into the water!

The noise produced by these machines is in the range of 85-102 decibels. The American Hospital Association recommends hearing protection above 85 decibels. Studies at Rutgers University show that noise made by PWCs is more disturbing to waterfowl and wildlife than that from conventional motors as PWCs change pitch as they go over waves. The North American Loon Foundation states PWCs are the greatest current threat to breeding loon populations. It has been a number of years since I have heard the distinctive warbling call of loons on Priest Lake.

Imagine a place of natural quiet, where the sounds heard are those of songbirds and geese and the splash of moose as it slowly works its way up a creek bed with calf in tow. Imagine lily pads in bloom with dragonflies lighting on top. How do we protect natural places like Bear Creek that replenish spirit? ■



If you are interested in helping preserve Bear Creek please contact Julie Goltz and Kent Larson at goltartz@cet.com

Photo by Julie Goltz

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A Message From the Executive Director — by Mark Sprengel

Remember the TV commercial where a bunch of guys are sitting around in the great outdoors drinking beer and the philosopher of the bunch opines that “*It doesn’t get any better than this!*”?

For years I’ve threatened to stage a backcountry beer-can round-up where we would choose a remote area and carefully tally the manufacturer of each discarded beer can we pick up. After ascertaining the brand of beer preferred by slob hunters and motorized “wreckreationists,” we would issue a press release and give the winning beer corporation some free publicity. While it might not be welcome publicity, I think an image problem is best nipped in the bud...no pun intended of course.

Discarded beer cans however are merely symptoms of the real problem which is the mentality of far too many motorized recreationists. At one time, the blizzard of beer cans was largely confined to the shoulders along roads. With the exponential increase in “all terrain vehicles” or ATVs, jettisoned beer cans are proliferating across the landscape. Technological advances now enable these noxious machines to go virtually *anywhere* and as a consequence, the trail of garbage and destruction is fast spreading *everywhere*.

I used to buy the argument that this was the work of “a handful of bad apples” and that the vast majority of ATV riders were conscientious about limiting the damage they cause... if not entirely successful in *eliminating* it. These machines are, after all, inherently destructive.

In other words, the beer can droppings in remote areas, the accompanying ruts and scarred vegetation, the appalling racket reverberating for miles, and the stench of these motorized toys was just the unfortunate legacy of a small minority.

I’m not buying it anymore. From what I’ve seen, the people that drive off-road tossing beer cans in their wake, go mud bogging in wetlands and tear up steep hillsides represent more than a small minority of ATV enthusiasts. Protestations to the contrary ring hollow when surveying the scope of the damage. Quite bluntly, this ain’t the work of a tiny handful of good-ole-boys on an alcoholic tear.

Let’s get something straight. The mud-splattered conquistadors are only acting out the message conveyed by the manufacturers of these machines. They don’t call them “*all-terrain-vehicles*” (ATVs) or *off-road-vehicles* (ORVs) for nothing. These things weren’t designed for a genteel cruise down a country lane but are built expressly to go...duh...*off roads*. In other words to tear up the landscape.



That would explain why manufacturers’ websites and magazine advertisements show them gleefully churning up muddy hillsides and driving through streams.

While I’m having this cathartic moment, allow me to get something off my chest. Some of these morons recently tore up a beautiful place near my home. They left beer cans and

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Our National Forests: Management by Scofflaws

by Joanne Hirabayashi

How long does it take for a tree to grow here in the Inland Northwest? According to the Forest Service about 80 years to make marketable timber. That's a low-end estimate for this drier interior region: 110-120 years is more accurate.

How long does it take to make a forest? A whole lot longer than that, because a forest is not just a stand of trees, it's a complex interweaving of soils rich with microorganisms, available moisture, related plant life and all other biological communities (insects, amphibians, birds and mammals) that depend on the forest. What often goes unrecognized is that the forest itself depends on this intricate web of life in order to grow and maintain itself in a healthy way.

What is forest health? These days it's a label that can mean whatever the speaker chooses. Scientifically however, it means the kind of forest just described, with a population that includes the new, the old, the healthy, the weak, dying and dead, just as a human population includes all those components. Curious but true, a healthy forest must include dead and dying trees because they are home to a host of necessary life forms, and because eventually they decompose to form the soils that nourish new growth. We tend not to recognize the importance of these interrelationships.

National Forests were officially established one hundred years ago. Originally called Forest Reserves (now including 19 western "grasslands") they were put under the

control of the Forest Service in 1905 and identified to serve six purposes: timber production, watershed land, wildlife preservation, livestock grazing, mining and recreation. According to official guidelines, decisions about management must be made on the basis of "best available science."

Over time the general public has shown strong support for the kind of management that serves all these purposes to some balanced degree and which maintains the National Forests as fully as possible in their original forms. Following World War II technological advances and pressure from the industry helped skew the Forest Service in the direction of timber production alone. Protests from the general public as well as from conservationists forced the Forest Service to modify some practices, for example clear-cutting huge swaths of forests.

Now, however, new developments, especially in this past decade, are bringing new and deeply serious threats. One is that industry has gained major lobbying power with the federal government, and more than ever National Forests are viewed as a disposable commodity for private profit. Environmental protections established after years of careful study have recently been reversed, regardless of public input. "Forest Health" currently translates into let's cut more trees. Need a little extra cash? Just sell off some chunks of National Forest; it's useless unless it brings in a profit according to thinking in Washington DC these days.

So often behind the curve, and wrong yet again, top Forest Service administrators have changed their slogan about preventing forest fires into a new, equally destructive approach: "National Forests – America's Playground." With the ever-increasing capability of off road vehicles

and snowmobiles to penetrate into formerly inaccessible areas, the Forest Service now has a tiger by the tail because it has shown that it has no capability of enforcing whatever feeble regulations it may impose. Even as the big timber companies like Weyerhaeuser are closing their lands to mechanized vehicles in

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Bear Creek mirror
Photo by Julie Goltz

Chipmunk Rapids Hike — by Mary Smith

The day of our first scheduled hike, the Chipmunk Rapids trail, was cloudy and rain was predicted. Five of us met at the rendezvous point, determined to hike “rain or shine.”

Byrne lives in Spokane; Nancy, Pat, and Mark live in Sandpoint; and I live in Priest River. None of us had ever been on this trail before. We had a map, but we were somewhat confused, when we came to a convergence of trails, about which one to take. We referred to that map often. With a sense of adventure, we guessed (with a few jokes about whether we had enough supplies to survive for a week).

The Kaniksu Marsh is a beautiful and fascinating ecosystem. We were treated to views of a beaver dam, some kind of waterfowl that we couldn't identify, and a cow moose standing ankle-deep, dipping her head in the water, and coming up with mouthfuls of “spinach.” She ignored us most of the time, while we admired her through binoculars.

Along the trail we were scolded several times by anxious hawks and ospreys that were worried we were too close to their nests. Even so, we viewed the parents and the nests through binoculars.

The pretty little bunchberries and bead lilies, along with lupine, larkspurs, bistort, and other wildflowers were blooming along the way. We vowed to bring along our wildflower books on subsequent hikes, as we know there will be more flowers.

The trail was in pretty good shape, and was an easy five miles. We weren't rained on, as had been predicted. However, the myriad mosquitos feasted on us, especially when we stood still, until Byrne (bless him!) supplied us with enough of a potent repellent to finally bring relief.

All in all, we agreed that it was a highly successful and enjoyable hike, and we are anxious to hit the trail again. ■



If you had gone on the Roosevelt hike, you would have seen this bear cub along the side of the trail. Fortunately his mom was not in the immediate vicinity and we continued on our way without losing a single hiker. (Wouldn't have mattered anyway since we had everyone sign those 'liability release forms.')

The photo was taken by Karen Jurasin...one of our guests from Spokane.

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other refuse scattered in the tall grass. The lugged tires of their obnoxious toys tore up the vegetation and carved ruts in the hillside. The scars from their infantile whoopee thrills are everywhere and as a result, soil is washing down the mountainside and knapweed and toadflax are displacing wildflowers under the once remote ponderosa pines. All this is well off the nearest road in a place where one would expect to find peace and solitude.

I refuse to be charitable any longer because this place is damaged for a very long time. In my opinion, if these guys couldn't glue their hind-ends to a gasoline engine they would never have found this place because none of them

could, or would, muster the energy to walk that far.

I'm tired of listening to guys in their 20's whine like toddlers about being “locked out” of the forest because they can't get to some destination without the aid of an ATV or snowmobile. (No surprise that we are the most out-of-shape nation in the world.)

While not one *person* has ever been “locked out” of the forest, it's way past time we lock out these destructive machines. If we don't get a handle on the problem, the beer can philosopher will be right. It won't get any better than this. In fact, it will get a lot worse. ■

Take A Hike!

The Selkirk Conservation Alliance has scheduled a series of weekly hikes in the Priest Lake area. We would like anyone who is interested to join us. The schedule is as follows:

Date	Trail	Miles	Difficulty	Elev.	Description/Attractions
6/10	Chipmunk Rapids #192	5	easy-mod	2370-2500	Chipmunk Rapids, Kaniksu Marsh, wildlife, bushwhack to Mission Falls – shuttle
6/17	Granite-Roosevelt #301	4	moderate	3320-3600	Roosevelt Grove Ancient Cedars, Granite Falls - return on same trail
6/24	Binarch Creek #220	5	moderate	2600-2900	Beaver ponds and marshes, rock talus slopes
7/8	Lakeview Mountain #269	7	difficult	2560-2640	Views of Priest Lake — shuttle
7/15	North Lamb #204/ Hanna Cutoff #232	5.3	mod-diff	2600-3820	Hike into and through Bath Creek Gorge, formed during ice age – shuttle
7/22	Upper Priest River #308/ Continental Creek #28	11	moderate	3400-4200	Very scenic. Old growth cedar, American Falls – shuttle
8/5	Upper Lamb Cutoff #231	5	moderate	3850-4200	Gleason Mountain – loop
8/12	Kalispell Rock #370	5	moderate	3980-5000	Old cabin, view of Priest Lake and Kalispell Drainage – return on same trail
8/19	Blacktail Mountain #292	4	moderate	4150-5495	Views of Priest Lake – shuttle
8/26	Navigation #291/ Plowboy Mountain #295	10	easy/mod	2480-4190	Plowboy Mountain, stream crossings, views of Priest Lake — shuttle

** Before starting we will rendezvous at the parking area between the Chevron Station and the Village Kitchen Restaurant on Highway 2 in Priest River for directions and possible carpool.

Rendezvous Time: 9:00 A.M. except for the Upper Priest River/Continental Creek hike on 7/22, when we will rendezvous at 7:00 A.M.

BE SURE TO BRING:

Extra clothing such as raingear and extra socks
 Food – snacks and/or a lunch
 Water – canteen, water bottle, or other hydrating system
 Bear spray if you have it and are familiar with its use
 Sunglasses Camera
 Sunblock First aid kit
 Insect repellent Toilet paper
 Whistle Headgear – hat, visor, or...

June Tunes — by John Stuart

June 3 was a beautiful, sunny day for strolling through the crowds of birds that were fighting over a chance to get in front of our binoculars. We strained our ears, trying to pick up the subtle nuance of the almost non-existent song of the savannah sparrow and stood back in awe at the brilliant colors and no-doubt-about-it song of the male oriole and his bright yellow sweetheart. The effervescent wind-chimes broadcast by the male bobolink easily shouted down the above-noted savannah sparrow, as they intertwine their lives in the same river-bottom grasslands.

Playing hide and seek and confusing everyone with its barely audible sssstttt! song in the thick alders, the American redstart's salmon-colored tailfeathers eluded us but not so the other 60 species we found in about 5 hours time. T'was a great day for us and the birds. Although we wonder about the lonely rock wren we found stranded like it was on Mars. Instead of up in some high-elevation rock pile, it was lolling about in the hawthorn wetlands of the Pend Oreille River. Maybe it just needed a vacation from all that biological destiny. Join us next time, SCAers, for a good feathery time!



Return to Wonderland

by Jules Gindraux

I first saw and experienced the wonder and spirituality of Priest Lake in the summers of 1933 and 1934 when I was a companion of Don Blanchard, a nephew of "Doc" Blanchard, who owned a large log house, still there, nestled in virgin forest along Priest River opposite the Outlet Resort. It could be reached only by boat or by swimming if river current permitted...

Twice weekly visits to the Leonard Paul Store at Coolin for mail and food were across the lake by row boat. From those leisurely and blissful trips vivid memories linger of prevailing quietude and of gently welling clear water, at times disturbed by the splash of a hooked trout on a trolling line. Added to the visual drama was the dramatic backdrop of forested mountains, some snow capped.

Hiking trips to visit fire look-out stations were through thick forest accompanied by soft forest sounds. Gurgling streams, twittering birds and rustling leaves. Wildlife though abundant was furtive but rarely seen, though once I did have a glimpse of a startled cougar leaping from a large tree branch. Overview from the fire look-out stations dramatically revealed extensive wildness around Priest Lake, the centerpiece of it all.

My adult years took me and my family to far and distant lands where for thirty years we lived and traveled extensively to countries over much of the world. None had extensive natural attributes such as those that we are surrounded by. Some did have special places held sacrosanct by the people and by their governments but none could parallel the majesty of Priest Lake and its natural surroundings.

When time came for retirement, lasting memories

of Priest Lake determined the decision to return to its unequalled wonderland. In 1979 we set up residence overlooking Sherwood Bay and a panorama to the north.

Very little had changed other than more lake front dwellings and boats. In 1982 Priest Lake's long lasting tranquility was shaken by discovery of an illegal attempt by a rogue power company to dam 16 streams along Priest Lake's eastern watershed to produce co-generated power for sale to Northern Lights. Threatened were riparian areas, water purity and fish habitat. Residents whose ingrained protectionism of Priest Lake's integrity arose collectively in opposition and formed Concerned Residents of Priest Lake (CRPL) an entity that destroyed the company's plan. Other development or environmental threats to Priest Lake followed and have also been effectively opposed by a series of newly formed associations succeeded in turn by Selkirk Conservation Alliance (SCA), a group dedicated to the preservation of the spirituality and essence of Priest Lake and its surroundings that resides in the hearts and minds of its inhabitants.

SCA's mission to retain and protect the irreplaceable legacy of Priest Lake is made possible by annual financial support from its members and property owners. Unlike the loss of one's possessions that can be replaced or recompensed by annual payment of insurance premiums. ■

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response to the damage they cause, the Forest Service is opening public lands to all kinds of lasting destruction.

Lost along the way has been the original charge to the Forest Service to manage for wildlife, watersheds, even timber production. What we must insist on is that the Forest Service be required to manage National Forests on a long-term basis according to all the original six goals, not allowing one to predominate if it will harm the others. The current congress and the current federal administration must recognize that they do not have the right to dispose of National Forests as they please. National Forests belong to the public as irreplaceable National Treasures. ■

The 3rd Annual
Green Blues Fest

Sat, July 15 from 5 PM - 1 AM

Performing Band Lineup:

Jim Boyd

Winner of NAMMY's Best Songwriter Award '06

Hot Flash

Waukon

Papa Glenn & Border Run

Fat Tones

"Best Blues Band in the Inland Northwest"

Join Us!

Proceeds will benefit these organizations:

Selkirk Conservation Alliance

KYRS - Thin Air Radio

The Lands Council

SHAWL (Sovereignty, Health, Air, Water, Land)

Kootenai Environmental Alliance (KEA)

LOCATION

Bluz at the Bend, 2721 North Market Street
Spokane, Washington

For links and advance ticket information,
visit www.scawild.org

Cost: \$10 at the door or \$8 in advance.

Call the SCA office or buy your tickets online
at www.scawild.org. Tickets are also available
at Misty Mountain Furniture in Sandpoint
and the Tin Man Gallery in Spokane.

See You There!!!

Join the SCA!

*Please support the Selkirk Conservation Alliance
by becoming a Member.*

Our newsletter, funded entirely by member contributions,
keeps you informed of natural resource 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 ____

TSHIRTS & MUGS \$15 each + \$3 shipping/handling

☐ SCA mug ☐ SCA t-shirt

Name(s) _____

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

phone: _____

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

phone: _____

Email address: _____

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

SCA Litigation and Legal Action

Grizzly Bear Access Lawsuit: (attorneys—Earth Justice Legal Defense) Court date—Pending.

Caribou ESA Lawsuit: (attorneys—Advocates for the West & Defenders of Wildlife) Preliminary Injunction successful. Snowmobile grooming program in mountain caribou habitat halted by federal judge. Court date-Sept 06.

Idaho Department of Lands ESA Lawsuit:
IDL has conceded; agrees to develop habitat conservation plan.

SCA Projects

- **Hughes Meadows:** US Forest Service, Priest Lake Ranger District: Rental cabin and parking area in grizzly bear habitat. Forest Service withdraws rental cabin proposal.
- **Comments** on numerous other Forest Service Timber Sales submitted on Priest Lake, Sandpoint, and Bonners Ferry Ranger Districts, Idaho Panhandle National Forests and Newport and Sullivan Lake Ranger Districts, Colville National Forest. Also on Idaho Department of Lands Timber Sales, Priest Lake State Forest.
- **Forest Plan Revision:** IPNF Draft.
- **Inventoried Roadless Areas:** Comments submitted.
- **SCA Aerial Monitoring Program:** Ongoing.
- **Lower West Branch TMDL:** Ongoing.
- **SCA Symposia Series:** Events scheduled
- **SCA Outings:** Events in planning.

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Priest River, Idaho 83856

PO Box 1809



Celebasiñ — August 12
SCA's Annual Membership Meeting and potluck

dress below.

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