



SIGHTLINES

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Spring 2013

Newsletter of the Selkirk Conservation Alliance

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SCA'S LITTER PICK-UP

MAY 19th

SEPTEMBER 15th

FEATURED PHOTO



WATERFALL ON TWO MOUTH CREEK
(PHOTO BY BRUCE CUNNINGHAM)

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Sightlines is the newsletter of the
Selkirk Conservation Alliance (SCA), a non-profit corporation
providing environmental
oversight and public information
for the Inland Northwest.

Lower Priest Project

BY LIZ SEDLER, SCA FOREST PROGRAMS COORDINATOR

The Forest Service has issued a decision for the Lower Priest Project. The goal of the project is to improve forest health by reducing hazardous fuels and modifying forest composition and structure and to create favorable sites for the establishment of western larch and blister rust-resistant white pine.

The Forest Service plan calls for 1010 acres of regeneration logging, one mile of new temporary road construction, 48 acres of thinning, 15 acres of improvement cut, 110 acres of fuel break, and 19 acres of under-burning only. The units are located in Cottonwood, Dubius and Murray Creek watersheds.

These treatments would be accomplished with approximately 1,120 acres of ground-based systems and 63 acres of skyline yarding. The proposed action would also put 8.2 miles of road into storage, decommission 2.3 miles of road, and maintain and improve 10.7 miles of road. The 1 mile of new temporary road is needed to access units 41 and 47 which are south of Cottonwood Creek in Sections 20 and 21.



Mosquito Bay at Priest Lake, seen through the morning forest. Photo credit: Eleanor Jones

The "regeneration" logging would leave about 30% of the standing timber in these units. At least five of the units are greater than 40 acres (the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) acceptable size limit for regeneration units). The largest unit (41) would be 163 acres. The regeneration logging would increase detrimental peak flows, in all three watersheds.

According to the EA, 416 out of 1010 acres

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A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

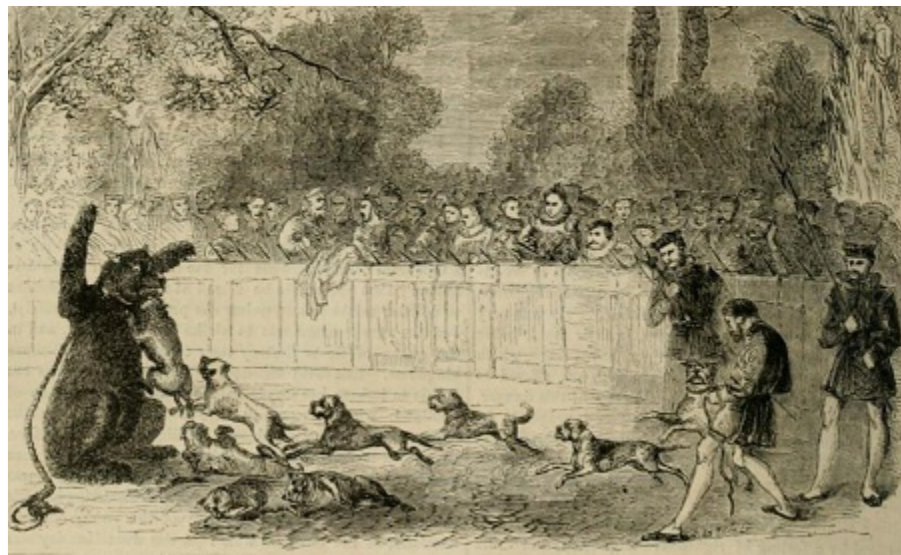
It started out as a perfect day.

Bright blue sky, birds singing, wildflowers in abundance. Hiking with my dog on this mountain we call home. It was unseasonably warm for early May and I was looking forward to the cool shade of an old stand of larch trees. The logging road we were on ended here and we intended to follow a linked series of game trails that contoured around the mountain to our destination at a spring on the moister north side.

with tail but minus front feet. (The hunter was obviously a trapper also.) The contented hum of thousands of flies contributed to the eeriness of the site.

It is difficult to write about this but it would be even more difficult not to.

Because this is the ugly reality of spring bear baiting or "hunting" in Idaho. The "sportsman" (that's what they call themselves) lures the bear in with the decaying meat and then shoots the animal with a high powered rifle while it is eating.



Bear baiting in the 17th century. In 2013 Idaho, the practice as a "sport" remains completely legal.

While female bears with cubs are not supposed to be targeted, it is not that unusual for mother bears to hide their cubs when approaching a suspect site. If the mother is shot the helpless cubs are then left to starve or be killed by predators.

Just as we entered the stand of old larch I spied a faded yellow 55 -gallon oil drum strapped to a tree. I'd been to this site just a few days earlier and the oil drum wasn't there then so I knew it had just been brought in. Not knowing what to expect, I cautiously approached the drum thinking that it might be some sort of animal trap. That's when it hit me.

The stench. The overpowering stench of decaying meat. As I circled the site I could see a pile of rotten meat on top of the drum and more meat on the ground around it. There was a rectangular hole cut in the side of the barrel where, inside, the rib cage of something dangled as obvious bait. Nearby, hanging from a log tripod was the skinned purple and black carcass of a small beaver complete

A call to the Idaho Department of Fish & Game confirmed the complete legality of the operation. After all, reason our state's politicians, "sportsmen" buy licenses and spend money on gas and bullets so what's the problem?

Hound hunting, trapping, bear baiting. Idaho. So rich in natural resources. So impoverished in enlightened thinking.

Thank you,
Mark Sprengel
Executive Director, SCA
sprengel@scawild.org

LOWER PRIEST PROJECT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of regeneration logging would take place in land within big game winter range.

However, the extent and type of logging proposed conflicts with the following management direction in the Priest River area which states that "winter cover will be emphasized within winter range in the Priest River drainage." This is because high average winter snow depth limits access to forage for big game in areas that are cleared. Leaving adequate cover provided by standing timber should be the primary consideration in the Priest River area. Leaving 30% cover is contrary to the above stated management direction in the Forest Plan.

Fuel breaks would be created along Forest Roads 239 and 334. The EA states that the fuel breaks would act to slow advancing fires and provide firefighters and the public with better access and egress in the event of a wildfire. The exact width of fuel breaks would be determined on a site-specific basis taking into account slope, stand density and fuel loading— but generally would be approximately 66 feet from the clearing limits of roads. This treatment is proposed on approximately 110 acres. This will reduce roadside hiding cover (security) for big game and other wildlife that routinely cross roads when moving to better or seasonal habitats.

The proposed action will also eliminate over 200 acres of goshawk suitable nesting habitat as well as existing habitats for other sensitive native species.

On April 29th, SCA and Alliance for the Wild Rockies (AWR) filed an administrative appeal to the Regional Forester, United States Forest Service Northern Region of the proposed "Lower Priest" project on the Priest Lake Ranger District. SCA and AWR are concerned about the project's detrimental impacts to wildlife, water quality and fisheries. Appellants are requesting that the project be withdrawn until appropriate measures are taken to safeguard the public's resources.

We'll keep our members informed.

Liz Sedler is SCA's Forest Programs Coordinator. For questions about this or other current Selkirk goings-on, please contact Liz at 208-448-1110.

Join the SCA

Support the Selkirk Conservation Alliance with Your Membership!

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 or Renew 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



SCA bull trout t-shirt

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

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Priest Lake Fisheries Re-Defined

BY STEVE BOOTH, SCA BOARD MEMBER

Lower Priest Lake has been managed as a lake trout (mackinaw) fishery since the 1980s. Meanwhile, the Idaho Fish and Game has been trying to manage the upper lake as a bull trout, cutthroat, and possible kokanee fishery. They have done this by trying to keep the lake trout out of the upper lake. Some of the methods used are nets across the thoroughfare as well as underwater strobe lights, etc.

Unfortunately, the two lakes are connected and Idaho Fish and game came to realize that managing the two lakes as distinct and separate fisheries is not going to work and is very expensive.

For that reason and the fact that many anglers have advocated the restoration of bull trout, cutthroat, and kokanee throughout the whole Priest Lake system, Idaho Fish and Game proposed that they would like to do just that by actively suppressing the lake trout population as they have done successfully on Pend Oreille Lake. There is some resistance to this program, mostly by anglers who prefer the lake trout fishery.

There are a number of questions that need to be answered before they proceed and there is a graduate research project under way to answer those questions.

Idaho Fish and Game plans to convene a group of stakeholders to help guide the development of a long term management plan for the upper and lower Priest Lakes. The plan will not be implemented until the current six year plan expires in six years.

SCA would like to be a part of the stakeholders group and I have thrown my hat into the ring as a representative for SCA.

We'll see what happens!

Steve Booth is a former teacher, coach, historian, and forest service firefighter. He is a long time resident of Priest Lake and has owned his small construction business for 28 years. Steve has been on SCA's board since 2002.

Caribou Critical Habitat—Back to Court

BY TIM LAYSER, SCA WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

In January, SCA and five other groups filed a Notice of Intent (NOI) to sue the US Fish & Wildlife Service for violations of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) regarding the designation of Critical Habitat for the south Selkirk Mountains population of woodland caribou. Essentially, we contend that the Service's final designation of critical habitat was arbitrary and capricious and violates the ESA in several important ways.

The filing of an 'Intent to sue' was a consequence of USF&WS' failure to act on our original petition in 2002 to designate critical habitat for caribou. The ESA requires the agency to designate Critical Habitat "for any species listed as threatened or endangered to the maximum extent prudent and determinable." SCA and other groups were finally forced to sue in 2009 and a settlement of that suit resulted in a proposed critical habitat rule in November of 2011 and a final rule issued in Novem-

ber of 2012. Amazingly, while the proposed rule originally designated 375,562 acres, the final rule reduced that figure to a mere 30,000 acres... far less than a recovered population would require to survive. Additionally, the final rule only designated areas above 5,000 feet elevation while the proposed rule considered 4,000 feet as the elevation cut-off. SCA believes the draconian reduction in critical habitat acreage was the result of political pressure on the agency as it clearly was not supported by any research in the scientific literature.

SCA intends to pursue this matter in the courts. We will keep our members informed as events progress.

Tim Layser, former chairman of the International Mountain Caribou Technical Committee (1990-1996), served as the scientific advisor to the caribou recovery team from 1996 to 2002. layser@scawild.org

Border Patrol Project

BY TIM LAYSER, SCA WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

The U.S. Border Patrol in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service is jointly proposing the East-West Access Project. This project proposes to reconstruct forest service roads #1013 and #2450 around Continental Mountain, from the guardrail barrier on the Priest Lake Ranger District to the gate on the Bonners Ferry Ranger District.

This segment of road has been closed to motorized vehicle use since 1986 when it was closed to enhance grizzly bear habitat and to facilitate grizzly bear and caribou recovery. Currently this segment of road is severely bushed in with vegetation and has a major washout

on one of the stream crossings.

The proposal that has been put forth by the Forest Service and the Border Patrol is to reconstruct 5.6 miles of this road system and to repair the existing wash-out, so that motorized vehicles could ostensibly protect the northern border and to reduce the time for patrol officers when traveling from the Priest Lake area to Bonners Ferry.

Selkirk Conservation Alliance has submitted comments to the Border Patrol regarding this proposal. SCA identified potential mitigation alternatives to the agencies' proposal.

Jules C. Gindraux: “Onwards and Upwards”

BY KAREN (GINDRAUX) SHILL, SCA MEMBER/SUPPORTER

June 10, 1918 – March 14, 2013

Jules Gindraux: man of integrity, environmentalist, citizen of the world, extraordinarily good person. His sparkling personality, ingenious mind and boundless curiosity lit up lives as he adventured all over the globe, making lasting friendships and achieving remarkable success during his almost 95 years. The lives and times described in Jules’s memoirs “Tale of No Two Days Alike” are truly unique.

Jules helped his mother raise his three siblings in Spokane. He flew many missions as a U.S. Army Air Corps Air Transport Command pilot during World War II. While stationed in Cairo, Jules met the lovely and vivacious Emily Miller, who became “Pinky” and his wife for 67 years.

Following the War, Jules co-founded Middle East Airlines and became a top international executive with Trans World Airlines. In 1978, Jules concluded his amazing career as a modern aviation pioneer and became an environmental activist/gardener/civic volunteer/bon vivant at Priest Lake, Idaho.

Protecting Priest Lake and its natural surroundings quickly became his most passionate avocation. Jules and his peers established a tradition of conservation in the Priest Lake Basin. From that consciousness grew the Selkirk-Priest Basin Association, now the Selkirk Conservation Alliance. Jules tells the story in his memoirs:

“I felt a call to action and joined forces with other concerned individuals who were dedicated to the environmental integrity of Priest Lake and its watershed, which were threatened by irresponsible development schemes. From there lay the course of my active dedication to the protection of Mother Earth’s sanctity.”

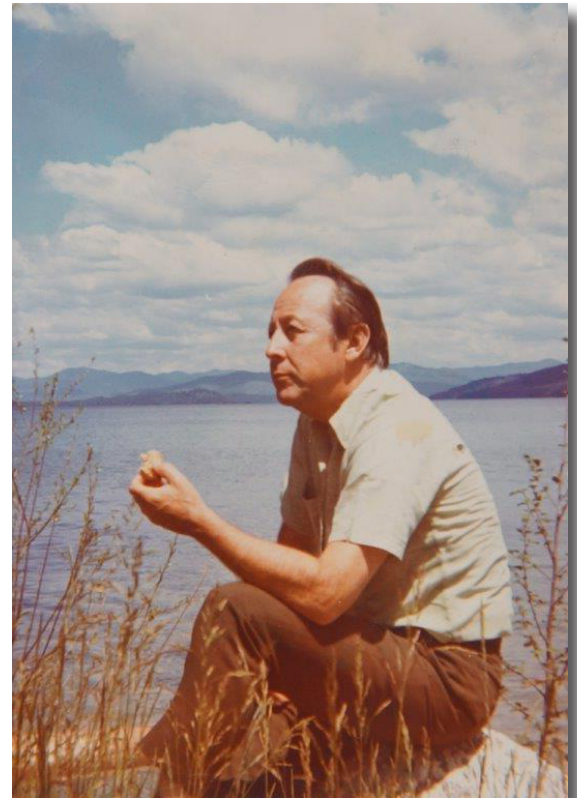
blockade of pickup trucks to stop Independent Power Development from digging more illegal trenches to divert streams for co-generated hydropower. Consequently, IPD restored the damaged areas, its permit application was denied and Idaho revised its policy concerning co-generated waterpower. That incident sparked formation of Concerned Residents of Priest Lake.

In 1984, CRPL became the Priest Lake Coalition to oppose Diamond International’s plans for “an enormous development at Huckleberry Bay on Priest Lake. After two years, Diamond threw in the towel and sold 1600 acres at Huckleberry Bay to Don Barbieri, who planned a less grand development. We were not able to stop it but succeeded in lessening its scope.”

CRPL’s and PLC’s objectives had run their courses. A new organization dedicated to environmental protection of the entire Priest Basin from Canada to the Pend Oreille River was needed. With Barry Rosenberg, Jules gathered a Board representing the Basin and created the Selkirk-Priest Basin Association.

In 1989, the Idaho legislature called for a Priest Lake Management Plan to preserve Priest Lake as an outstanding water resource. As a member of the Planning Committee, Jules testified before the Senate in Boise and worked with Glen Rothrock to gain approval of the Plan, which passed unanimously as HB319 in April 1991.

“I was a director on the SPBA board until moving to Hayden, Idaho, in 1998, after 19 years at Priest Lake, and was made Director Emeritus. I continue doing what I can to be helpful to the good of the cause.”



Jules Gindraux contemplates at Priest Lake.

In Hayden, Jules served as advisor to various environmental groups. His last big environmental project involved the Burlington-Northern Refueling Depot. At 88, Jules sounded the alarm about threats to the Rathdrum Aquifer from the fuel leaks at the depot.

Wanting to nourish the Earth as his final act, Jules chose green burial at White Eagle Nature Preserve Cemetery. Jules set a very high bar for “walking the talk.” He was an extraordinary person, friend and role model and will be deeply missed by many. His motto “Onwards and upwards!” inspires and motivates us every day.

In 1982, Jules help spearhead a

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Clean Lake Waters Need YOU!

SCA begins its fifth year monitoring water quality in Priest Lake. Data and water samples are collected at predetermined locations with the objective of measuring variables such as water clarity, temperature, and dissolved oxygen.

Water samples are delivered to a laboratory in Coeur d'Alene for further testing and the results are shared with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality.

This year SCA must purchase expensive new equipment as our old testing meter is now considered obsolete.

If you are interested in helping fund this program or are interested in volunteering, please call our office at 208-448-1110.

Our clean waters need you!

Bear Sanitation Projects

BY TIM LAYSER, WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

As you may remember, last year, SCA was successful in completing a project at Priest Lake State Parks. That project entailed the purchase and installation of nine bear proof food storage lockers at Indian Creek and Lions Head State Parks. Funding came from grants or assistance received from the Yellowstone to Yukon Initiative, Equinox Foundation, Defenders of Wildlife, Kalispell Tribe, and the Boy Scouts of America.

This year we have reapplied for various grants to fund the purchase and installation of additional bear-proof storage lockers at more locations within these parks and also to install bear-proof food storage lockers at Dicken-sheet campground.

If we are successful we again may coordinate with the regional scouting program for help with the installation. We may also be looking for volunteers to help with this project. If you think that you may be interested, please contact our office at 208-448-1110.

Bismark Meadows—A Positive Venture by Vital Ground

BY TIM LAYSER, SCA WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

In the past several years, Vital Ground has worked towards the purchase of many private lands that have been for sale within the Bismark Meadows area for the purpose of conservation of wildlife and rare plant species.

To date, Vital Ground has been able to acquire 496 acres of the 1200-acre meadow complex in a series of four separate purchases. Their future plans are to purchase up to a total of 1100 acres of this important wetland habitat for conservation, if possible. Vital Ground operates as a land trust with a mission of protecting and restoring North America's grizzly bear population by conserving habitat.

Bismark Meadows has always been important wildlife habitat and especially important for grizzly bears and the recovery of grizzly bears within the Selkirk Ecosystem. The first formally documented use of Bismark meadows by grizzly bears was in 1983, when Sly, a female grizzly bear that made frequent use of the meadows with her young cubs. Sly was the first grizzly bear in the Selkirks to be captured and affixed with a radio collar.

In 2007, twelve different grizzly bears were documented using Bismark meadows during the spring season, which included up to three females with cubs. The use of this wetland meadow complex by grizzly bears likely depends of a combination of influences such as: winter severity, date of spring arrival, and

human influences. Also, research has shown that female grizzlies with young of the year are less likely to utilize areas where the chances of encountering other grizzly bears are high because of their instinct to protect their young.

Bismark Meadows is one of 45 high priority peatland sites identified

in a conservation strategy for Idaho's valley peatlands. Most of the meadow was ditched and drained beginning in the early 1900s and until recently was used for hay production and pasture. In 2002, nearly the entire wetland became a conservation easement under the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

Vital Ground
operates as a land trust
with a mission of
protecting and restoring
North America's
grizzly bear population
by conserving habitat.

Under the program, agricultural use of the meadow has ceased and the Natural Resources Conservation Service has undertaken to disable drainage ditches in order to restore natural hydrology and wetland values.

A vegetation survey of the meadow was conducted in 2002 and 2003 to document rare plants and describe the existing vegetation of Bismark Meadows. Eleven rare plant species of state conservation concern were found in the meadows area.

Tim Laysen worked for the U.S. Forest Service for more than 30 years and was the Priest Lake Ranger District wildlife biologist for the past 20 years. layser@scawild.org. More about Vital Ground's programs and efforts can be found at www.vital-ground.org.

Aerial Monitoring—Update!

BY TIM LAYSER, SCA WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

Selkirk Conservation Alliance has again this year, continued the aerial monitoring program.

So far this winter we have been able to complete three monitoring flights over the Selkirk Mountains and have documented numerous violations into areas that are closed to snowmobile use during each flight.

The areas that are closed to snowmobile use were identified through court proceedings with the intent of protecting caribou from disturbance and displacement by the machines and to facilitate caribou movements within the ecosystem especially from British Columbia into parts of the Recovery Area that are within the United States.

From our monitoring flights over the past years and including this season, snowmobiles have routinely entered closed areas... especially within those areas that were desig-

nated to facilitate movement from British Columbia into the United States. In addition to documenting snowmobile violations in closed areas, we have also documented wildlife tracks from several species such as wolves, wolverine, mountain goats, and grizzly bear this season.

Selkirk Conservation Alliance has also been contacted by the Colville National Forest to conduct an aerial survey for wolverine tracks within identified wolverine denning habitat on the Sullivan Lake Ranger District. We have been able to make one aerial survey over flight of the area they wish to be surveyed, and hope to be able to have the weather conditions necessary to get a second flight in an attempt to provide a complete and comprehensive survey.

We will provide a report of our findings once our surveys are completed.

Remote Cameras

BY TIM LAYSER, SCA WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

Beginning this May, we will again be placing our remote activated cameras out at various locations throughout the forest. Our goals are to document rare and elusive wildlife at key locations. SCA is looking for volunteers who have an interest and the time to devote to this project. We will provide the overall guidance and training as to how to set the cameras up and maintain them.

Skills needed are, love of the outdoors, ability to hike trails, old roads and off trail environment, ability to carry a small amount of gear, knowledge of remote camera operation (we can teach you this) and ability to check and maintain cameras. Any valuable pictures we collect will be posted to our Facebook Page for all to enjoy. If you have an interest, please contact us for more details.

A fabulous photo captured not by SCA's remote cameras but by an SCA member/supporter who says, of the moose he calls Ma, "It's kind of hard to tell how big she is from this photo, but I was able to walk under her with my head just nicking her belly." Send your Selkirk photo submissions to sca@scawild.org Image credit: Dave Drum

SCA's Annual Litter Pick-Up

BY MIKKI RAVENSCROFT,
SCA OFFICE MANAGER

Due to persistent snow, SCA's Spring litter pick-up is now scheduled for the third Sunday in May which is May 19th this year.

Spring Litter Pick-Up:

May 19, 2013

10 AM

Meet at Highbridge
parking area.

Our Fall litter pick-up is the third Sunday in September which is September 15th this year.

Amy Daniels, who has coordinated this event for SCA since 1990, supplies vests and garbage bags and always has a variety of drinks and treats available when the task is finished.

SCA has been cleaning up the same section of Hwy 57 beginning at mile post 18.5 and ending at mile post 20.5.

We meet at the parking area on Highbridge at 10AM and we average from seven to nine bags of trash each time. Amy says, "Things we can count on are death, taxes... and litter!" Thank you to everyone who has helped before and hope to see you and others this Spring.



Loon Day Survey—Looking for Volunteers

BY TIM LAYSER, SCA WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

We are looking for volunteers to assist in conducting common loon surveys on selected lakes within the Selkirk Ecosystem. We are hoping to survey, if possible, Priest Lake, Upper Priest Lake, Chase Lake within the Priest Lake drainage and Yocum Lake, Mill Pond, Crescent Lake and Big Meadow Lake on the Colville National Forest. The selected dates for the surveys are between the 18th and 21st of July.

So mark your calendar if you want to participate—and remember...contact us!

These dates have been selected because it is widely used throughout the range of the common loon to conduct surveys within selected lakes and other potential habitat. Also several dates are considered to allow for a variety of dates for members and non-members to participate.

A variety of means can be used to survey for loons—motorized boats, canoes, kayaks or by observing the lake from the shoreline on the smaller lakes. Required equipment would include binoculars or spotting scope and a bird identification book if available. Our office will provide survey information. It would be ideal to survey all of the above-mentioned lakes, but that will depend on the number of participants who wish to volunteer their time with this survey.

The common loon is a rare summer resident within northern Idaho and northeastern

Washington; they spend the winter along the coastal areas of Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. The only documented loon nesting within the state of Idaho has been on the Upper Priest Lake. Adult common loons were observed with young in 1998, which indicated successful nesting for that year. It is suspected that loons may be nesting on Pend Oreille Lake near the Clark Fork Delta. Another nesting pair was documented on Yocum Lake on the Colville National Forests, but vandals shot one of the nesting adults.

Common loons arrive on our lakes after the ice has melted. They build their nests close to the water, often on small islands, muskrat houses, half submerged logs, or sedge mats. The same sites are often used from year to year. Loons will use mud, grass, moss, pine needles and/or clumps of mud and vegetation collected from the lake bottom to build a nest. Both male and female help with nest building.

Loon chicks are hatched usually in June or early July. Loon chicks covered in brown-black down appear on the water in late June or July. Chicks can swim right away, but spend time riding on their parents' back to rest, conserve heat, and avoid predators such as age fish, gulls and eagles.

If you would like to participate in our survey please call the Selkirk Conservation alliance at 208-448-1110 for details and potential survey assignments.

Join the Loon Day

Survey:

18th to 21st of July.

Required equipment

includes binoculars
and a bird identification
book if available.

Our office will provide

survey information.

Call the SCA at

208-448-1110

for details and potential

survey assignments.

