



SIGHTLINES

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Winter 2013-14

Newsletter of the Selkirk Conservation Alliance

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SCA'S 2014 LITTER PICK-UP

-MAY 18th

-SEPTEMBER 21st

FEATURED PHOTO



SELKIRKS IN SNOW
(PHOTO FROM SCA FACEBOOK ALBUM)

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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.

Priest Lake Fishery Advisory Committee Represents Varied Interests

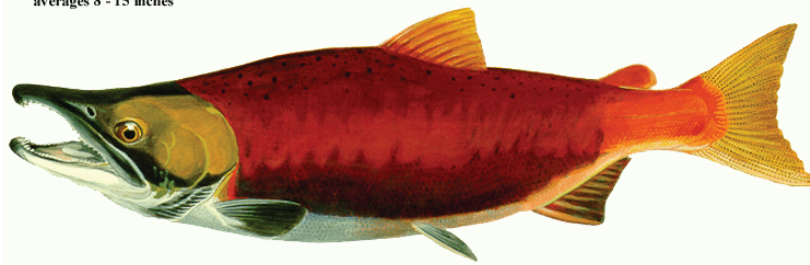
BY STEVE BOOTH, SCA BOARD CHAIR

The Priest Lake Fishery Advisory Committee has met a total of four times. Also termed a stakeholders group, it is composed of approximately twelve members who represent a number of interests, including a representative from the Kalispel tribe and including myself as an SCA member.

The committee's purpose is to develop a management plan for the next six-year fishery plan that will take effect in 2019. We have another five years to work on it.

Currently, we are at the information and familiarization stage of the process. There are a number of unknown factors that there is little information on or are under study. Some of the more interesting facts that have come to light are:

Kokanee (Sockeye) Salmon- *Onchorhynchus nerka*
averages 8 - 15 inches



1. The mysis shrimp population has collapsed in Priest Lake as it has in other local lakes.
2. The Kokanee population is rebounding.
3. The Priest Lake basin is excellent habitat for Bull Trout because of our climate and cool waters. This may make the Priest Lake Basin the best habitat in the Columbia Basin for Bull Trout.
4. Lake Trout can live up to 65 years of age.
5. Lake Trout tag returns indicate a harvest rate of about 6%; but it requires about a 50% harvest to decrease or control their population.
6. Allowing for a lower lake level before Ko-

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photographs and links,
go to our website
www.scawild.org

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Welcome to SCA's New Executive Director

BY MARK KABUSH
SCA BOARD MEMBER

Welcome to Tim Layser who has been selected by the SCA Board as our new Executive Director.

As most of you know, Tim has served as our wildlife biologist for the past few years and came to us after retiring as the US Forest Service Wildlife Biologist for the Priest Lake region. Tim has maintained valuable contacts with US Fish and Wildlife and also with Idaho Fish and Game.

I speak for the SCA Board in saying that we have enjoyed our relationship with Tim in the past, and look forward to working with him in his new capacity as Executive Director.

We feel lucky to have Tim on board since he has the background necessary for the job and can lead us into the future.

Thank You Mark Sprengel

BY MARK KABUSH
SCA BOARD MEMBER

It is with mixed emotions that I, and all of SCA, bid the fondest of goodbyes to Mark Sprengel who has admirably served as SCA's Executive Director for these many years.

Mark guided us through many hard times and has always been a steady influence in times of crisis. His environmental expertise has led us through battles which we usually won, and his strong sense of indignation regarding the threatened degradation of the Selkirks has proved infectious to me and to SCA.

Mark has worked for little pay, has put in countless extra hours on our behalf and been a tireless exponent of the importance of protecting the environment which we all enjoy. Beyond all that, he has been a close friend to me and I will miss his rants and his rather dark sense of humor. I know that he will continue to be a strong influence on SCA's policies and growth as we look to the future. We wish Mark the deepfelt joy of what he loves, hiking the backcountry with his dog and trekking friends. It's not really a final goodbye to Mark, just hasta luego amigo.

Parting Thoughts from Mark Sprengel

As some of our members already know, my last day as SCA's executive director was July 30th. My decision to resign was difficult but knowing that SCA was going to be in good hands made that decision much easier since Tim Layser agreed to take on the ED position in addition to his duties as SCA's wildlife biologist. Tim has already proven to be a huge asset to the organization and I know our members join me in wishing him further success in meeting challenges that at times seem overwhelming.

Parting thoughts:

I've been involved in environmental work for over twenty years. My decision to step back

from the day-to-day fray was motivated in part by the desire to contemplate the big picture which essentially, to me, means answering two fundamental questions..."Where are we (as a movement) going...?" and "Why are we going there...?"

As many of you know, the past few years have been characterized by a widening rift among environmental groups with some activists arguing that it is folly (if not sacrilege) to jettison our ideals in order to achieve short-term objectives, curry favor with wealthy funders, and/or mollify critics and resource extractive interests.

PARTING, CONTINUED TO RIGHT

FISHERIES COMMITTEE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

kanee spawning begins has a negligible effect on the Kokanee population. That is a big turn-a-round from previous thinking.

7. Sediment in the streams is a detriment to spawning Bull Trout.

Jim Fredericks of Idaho Fish and Game has done a good job of putting this group together and at this point I have confidence in their ability to do what is best for Priest Lake. I'll keep you posted.

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.

PARTING, CONTINUED FROM LEFT

Other individuals, marching under the much-lauded banner of "compromise and collaboration," favor a (so-called) "pragmatic" approach, working to construct politically inspired "deals" designed to appease or garner support from those same funders, critics, and resource extractive interests.

I've already tipped my hand as to where I come down in this debate so I'll close by saying that "cutting the baby in half" doesn't work for babies and it won't work for our environment. In a nutshell, given the severity of the environmental problems facing humanity, I believe we no longer have the luxury of crafting deals that legitimize incremental degradation (versus wholesale degradation) of our environment... our air, water, forests and wildlife. Quite simply, there are no remaining "sacrifice areas."

At the local level, the Priest Lake ecosystem is a priceless treasure that can best be protected by people who care passionately about it. That job can't be farmed out to big national organizations or those whose first instinct is to barter and compromise. I am confident that the Selkirk Conservation Alliance will continue to lead the struggle to protect this place we all cherish.

Please support SCA.

Former Executive Director Mark Sprengel can be reached at hoodoo40@gmail.com

Selkirk Conservation Alliance • www.scawild.org

Give A Holiday Gift That 'Gives Twice'

Special Holiday Rates For SCA Merchandise and Shipping Offered Through 2013



Those beautifully crafted Caribou Mugs, designed by local artist Deborah Stafford, make wonderful gifts for family and friends.

We also have our Bull Trout t-shirts designed by SCA's late Board of Director's Bob Harwood. Every purchase of these SCA mementos—now offered at our special holiday rate—helps the

Selkirk Conservation Alliance in its efforts to protect the beautiful and unique Selkirk Mountains and Priest Lake Basin.

Give a gift of membership at our regular rate and receive one SCA merchandise item of your choice for free, either a Caribou Mug or Bull Trout t-shirt.



We invite you to contribute to this very valuable cause to save this wonderful place that we all enjoy and that we want to preserve for our children and grandchildren.

Consider Making a Tax-Deductible Year-End Gift to SCA

SCA is involved in a number of important projects which protect Priest Lake and the Selkirk Mountain ecosystem. For those who have so generously helped SCA continue its efforts to keep this area pristine and environmentally sound, **THANK YOU!**

Your support has made it possible for SCA to continue its Caribou Aerial Monitoring Program, Remote Wildlife Cameras Program, Priest Lake Water Quality Program, Grizzly Bear Sanitation & Outreach Program, and more. Funds also support office overhead and production of our newsletter *SightLines*.

Keeping your membership current with the SCA is another simple way to send support. A tax-deductible gift given in the name of a loved one is also a grand gesture for family members who love the Selkirks.

SCA Merchandise, Holiday Rates

- ☐ **SCA Caribou Mug** ☐ 4 for \$60 // or ☐ \$17 each + free shipping
 - ☐ **SCA Bull Trout T-shirt** #__ \$10.00 each + free shipping / Size __
We have a very limited supply of large & x-large so don't delay! While supply lasts.
 - ☐ **Give a gift membership** at our regular rate and receive one SCA item of your choice for free, either a Caribou Mug or Bull Trout t-shirt.
- I'm enclosing an additional contribution in the amount of \$_____, given in Honor Of _____ (name) and/or in support of _____ (specific SCA project).**

Questions? Ready to Order? Call the SCA Office at 208-448-1110
or send an email mikki@scawild.org



2013 Celebasin Annual Meeting & Auction: In Review

Selkirk Conservation Alliance's annual membership meeting and auction (Celebasin) was held on September 14, 2013, at the Beardmore Building in downtown Priest River Idaho.

Mark Kabush, the incumbent SCA Board Chairman, led off the festivities and welcomed and introduced Steve Booth, the newly elected board Chairman. Afterwards a brief presentation outlined SCA projects that are ongoing or were completed in the past year.

During the potluck a movie titled 'Land of the Lost Wolves' was shown which attempts to portray the story surrounding the recovery of wolves within Washington State.

Following lunch and the movie, SCA's annual fundraising auction was lead by SCA's own esteemed auctioneer, **Mark Kabush**.

Many items for the auction were gathered from various vendors by **Barb Williams**. A special thank you to Barb for all the hard work that she continues to do for SCA.

Also we would like to thank **Nancy White** and **Babs Egolf** for their help with setting up for Celebasin.

*Stay Tuned for the
2014 Celebasin date.*

*If you would like to help plan or
contribute to the 2014 Celebasin
Celebration & Fundraiser, contact
the SCA office.*

CARIBOU CONTINUED FROM RIGHT

League, The Lands Council and Selkirk Conservation Alliance. They are represented by Laurie Rule of Advocates for the West.

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

Caribou Critical Habitat

BY TIM LAYSER, SCA WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

SCA along with a coalition of six conservation groups filed a lawsuit on September 30, 2013 challenging the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services decision to cut more than 93 percent of protected critical habitat for the endangered mountain caribou --- from a proposed 375,562 acres to a mere 30,010 acres.

The November decision was a major setback for the struggling animals, which in recent decades have only survived in the lower 48 states in a small area in northern Idaho and northeastern Washington. Caribou numbers have dwindled due to logging of old-growth forests, road construction and growing recreational use of snowmobiles.

Caribou once ranged across much of the northern lower 48 states, including the northern Rocky Mountains, upper Midwest and Northeast. The last remaining population in the northern Rocky Mountains was protected under the Endangered Species Act in 1984. The Fish and Wildlife Service, however, never has designated critical habitat for the caribou, and in 2002 the groups filing today's notice petitioned, and eventually litigated, to obtain a designation.

In keeping with a scientific recovery plan for the caribou, the proposed critical habitat issued in 2011 included more than 375,000 acres, which

encompassed a majority of the area specified in the scientists' plan as necessary for the animals' recovery. In cutting this proposed acreage by more than 90 percent, the Fish and Wildlife Service appears to have abandoned the goal of recovering caribou in the contiguous United States.

Mountain caribou are a
unique form of woodland
caribou adapted to surviving
winters of deep snow, with
dinner-plate-sized hooves
that work like snowshoes
and an ability to subsist
for three to four months on
nothing but arboreal lichens
found on old-growth trees.

In 2005 conservation groups sued the Forest Service and obtained a closure to snowmobile use for most of the caribou's critical habitat included in the proposed rule. The final designation, however, only includes a fraction of this area, and the Forest Service is already considering lifting the closure. With new technologies allowing snowmobiles to get ever farther into the backcountry, these

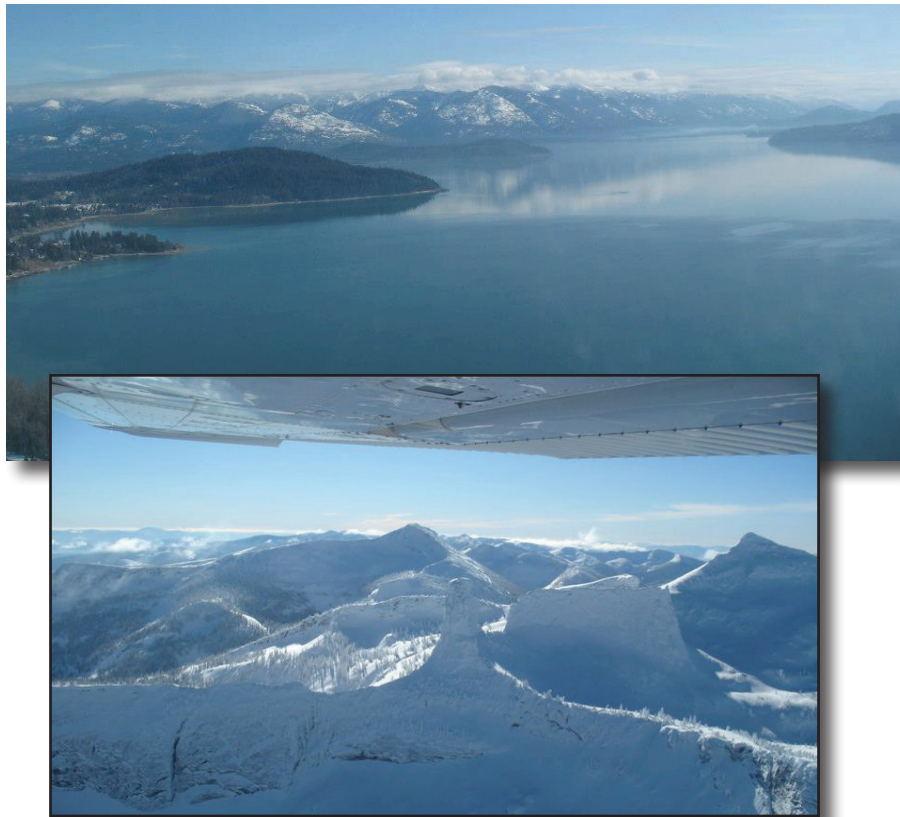
machines are a major threat to the shy, easily spooked animals.

Mountain caribou are a unique form of woodland caribou adapted to surviving winters of deep snow, with dinner-plate-sized hooves that work like snowshoes and an ability to subsist for three to four months on nothing but arboreal lichens found on old-growth trees. The caribou are part of a population that straddles the border with British Columbia and consists of fewer than 30 animals.

The groups on the lawsuit include the Center for Biological Diversity, Conservation Northwest, Defenders of Wildlife, Idaho Conservation

Aerial Monitoring Returns in 2014

Tracking Regional Wildlife Patterns and Keeping Tabs on Land Use Agreements



The SCA Aerial Monitoring Program will resume in 2014, thanks to the generous support of SCA members and your continued SCA Membership. The aerial monitoring program is vital to tracking wildlife movement in the greater Selkirk area, as well as vital to monitoring violations in land use agreements—which impact the wildlife of the Selkirks. [Aerial photos of Priest Lake and the Selkirks in winter, from past years' aerial monitoring]

Spring
Litter Pick-Up

May 18, 2014

10 AM

Meet at
Highbridge
parking area.



Thank you everyone who has helped before and hope to see you and others in the coming year.

The 2013 litter pick up gang enjoys meeting up and cleaning up.

SCA's Annual Litter Pick-Up

BY MIKKI RAVENSCROFT,
SCA OFFICE MANAGER

SCA's 2014 Spring litter pick-up will be the third Sunday in May (May 18); with the Fall 2014 pick-up being on the third Sunday in September (September 21).

An email will be sent out around the first of each month to remind everyone. If you don't have an email address on file you can send me a message at ravenscroft@scawild.org and I will add you to the SCA address book. You can specify if you only want emails concerning "litter pickup."

Things we can count on: death, taxes and... litter!

Join the SCA in May and September to help clean up a portion of Priest Lake roadside.

Amy Daniels who has coordinated this event for SCA since 1990 will supply vests and garbage bags and always has a variety of drinks and treats 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 average from 7-9 bags of trash each time. Amy says "things we can count on are death, taxes and litter!"

SCA Projects: Update & Overview

BY TIM LAYSER, SCA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR / WILDLIFE BIOLOGIST

Lower Priest River Project

On April 29th, 2013, SCA and the Alliance for the Wild Rockies filed an administrative appeal to the Regional Forester of the Northern Region of the U.S. Forest Service. This appeal requested that project be withdrawn until appropriate measures are taken to safeguard the public's resources. The appeal request filed by SCA and the Alliance for the Wild Rockies was denied, thus, this project will move forward.

This project is located on the Priest Lake Ranger District, within the Cottonwood, Dubius and the Murray Creek watersheds. This project plans to implement 1010 acres of regeneration type timber harvesting, construct one mile of new temporary road, implement 48 acres of timber thinning, 15 acres of timber stand improvement and 19 acres of underburning only. Regeneration harvesting is a type of timber harvesting where either all of the timber stand or a significant portion of the timber stand is removed to allow a new stand of timber to be reestablished. Clear-cutting is one method of regeneration harvesting.

Remote Cameras

SCA has continued to deploy several remote cameras throughout the Selkirk Mountains with the help of volunteers. Many thanks to volunteers: David Ernst, Karen Soenke and Katey Huggler for their help and for putting up with me and my stories. So far this year we have been successful in capturing images of black bear, cougar, bobcat, wolves, coyote, moose, elk and deer. A goal of the remote camera project is to document rare and elusive wildlife at various key locations.

A sample of the remote camera pictures continues to be posted to the SCA Facebook page. Anyone interested in volunteering next season, please call or email our office.



Idaho Panhandle National Forest Plan Revision

In December 2011, the Idaho Panhandle National Forest completed a draft of the Revised Forest Management Plan. The previous Forest Management Plan for the Idaho Panhandle National Forest was completed in 1987 and has been the guiding document for management of this forest for the past 24 years. Following the release of the draft Revised Forest Plan, SCA, as well as numerous other organizations and individuals submitted comments as was requested. SCA submitted numerous comments specifically focusing on issues surrounding the management of habitat for mountain caribou and grizzly bear and other wildlife species. Specifically our comments focused on either the lack of or weak management guidelines or standards for caribou and grizzly bear.

In August 2013, the final Revised Forest Plan was completed and submitted to the public for review. Because there are many shortcomings with the Final Revised Forest plans, SCA along with other groups will be filing an objection to the Forest Service and asking that the shortcomings for this new plan be addressed.

Bear Sanitation Projects

SCA received a modest grant from the Yellowstone to Yukon Initiative to implement improvements towards reducing the potential for bear/human conflicts within Priest Lake State Parks. We coordinated our efforts with the Defenders of Wildlife and with their assistance we were able to purchase 7 bear proof food storage lockers for the parks, which will be placed in Dickensheet, Indian Creek and Lionshead State Parks. Local Eagle Scout candidate from Priest River will take on the responsibility for coordination and installation of the food lockers. The Kalispel Tribe has also offered to help with the purchase of hardware and materials needed for installation. The Food Storage lockers will be installed either this fall or early spring.

Water Quality Monitoring

SCA has again implemented in coordination with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, another year of successful water quality monitoring on Priest Lake. SCA board and staff are currently in discussions with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality about implementing changes to the water quality program, which would be more thorough and provide a more comprehensive baseline information.

SCA staff and volunteers would like to express our thanks to board member **Bruce Yocum** for providing an outstanding boat that was used for our monitoring.

Moose captured on an SCA remote camera.