Tribal leader walks new ground

By JOHN STROMNES
of the Missoulian

PABLO – Rhonda Clairmont Swaney, newly elected leader of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, wasn't marked by birth, background or personality for political office.

She grew up in Polson in the 1950s and '60s, when women, Indian or non-Indian, were expected to be a homemakers and mothers, and a schoolgirl's place was in the background.

"I used to be very shy, and didn't talk very much, didn't express my opinions. I lived in the country and wasn't involved socially," she said Thursday during an interview at the tribal headquarters in Pablo.

In fact, she is still reserved. Her bearing is dignified, and when she speaks, her speech is deliberate, after thought. In fact, she articulates her views with a concise clarity that a law school professor might envy. (She is a 1984 graduate of the University of Montana with a major in political science). While these qualities are admirable, they are not exactly the glad-handing skills notable in the larger American political arena.

THOMAS BAUER/Missoulian

Rhonda Swaney is the first woman to head the tribal council of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

Yet after only two years as a council member, Swaney was elected last Friday by the 10-member council to serve as chair for the next two years. She is the first woman to hold that office, and one of only seven women ever to serve on the Tribal Council itself.

As a schoolgirl, she was so disengaged that "I sought not to be noticed. I don't think I appear in my senior annual," she said.

A lot has changed since then. Since starting work as a clerk typist at the Flathead Agency in Ronan in 1974, Swaney has molded herself into a competent administrator and popular leader at a time when Indian issues have become more important and controversial in Montana than ever before. It has also been a time when legitimate tribal aspirations have conflicted, sometimes it seems intractably, with state and local government powers, as Indians have sought greater self-determination as granted by Congress and universal recognition of treaty rights long ignored.

Now, it's hard for Swaney not to be noticed. She is council chair of the largest confederation of Indians in Montana; her public statements

See **SWANEY,** *Page A-12*

Swaney

Continued

are scrutinized from Helena to Washington, D.C., for their implications on public policy in a host of sensitive arenas from legalized gambling to the Endangered Species Act; and her powers of persuasion can influence the destiny of 4,000 Indian people on the Flathead Indian Reservation – a land as large and with as many natural resources as some Eastern Seaboard states.

Swaney was born in Polson 43 years ago, daughter of Ernest Clairmont, a businessman who served one term on the Tribal Council in the mid-1940s. Her mother's name before marriage was Olive "Kelly" Dupuis, a woman who resisted the restrictions of her role as a homemaker, but never completely broke free of those restraints.

"She lived from 1906 to 1976, a 70-year period in which Indian women, and women in the United States and in the world, when those women enjoyed, or suffered, if you will, a rather diminished role of importance in leadership in government," Swaney said.

Even so, Swaney's mother had great knowledge of the events of her own time, a time of overwhelming change in Indian-white relationships in western Montana, when Indian land on the reservation was opened illegally to white settlement, and when tribal government was reorganized, the confederation's constitution approved and the first Tribal Council elected in 1935.

Her mother did not speak at council, or to Congress, as some of her male counterparts might have done. But her mother spoke up and shared her opinions in the home.

"She was able to give me a lot of history and advice about how things came about, things involving Kerr Dam, the establishment of the first council under the Indian Reorganization Act, and the first election of Tribal Council members," Swaney recalled.

Women's roles in tribal government diminished after European conquest, Swaney said. But before white settlement of the West, Indian women had a powerful role in governance of their communities, and Indian women often played significant roles in formulating policy and even making executive decisions.

"Traditionally, Indian women acted as watchdogs. They were very vocal about their opinions, they participated in governmental decisions, and they sometimes served as council members," she said.

In the last few years, especially since the 1993 election which brought Swaney and two other women to serve on the Tribal Council, women have again become leaders in tribal politics in the Salish and Kootenai confederation.

Why did Swaney seek any elective office? After all, she had already risen to one of the top administrative posts in the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes.

As head of the Natural Resources Department from 1987 to 1994, she oversaw some 120 employees and 19 programs vital for the tribes' welfare, including fisheries, wildlife, agriculture, real estate, leasing, minerals, Flathead Lake shoreline protection, administrative and safety of dams programs. She administered a multimillion-dollar budget, and was one of the most powerful tribal executives in a very powerful tribal confederation.

True, a council member's job certainly carries prestige and considerable power as a member of the legislative and policy making group. But an individual council member has no executive authority, since each council member has only one vote. As council chair, Swaney is not an executive comparable to a mayor or governor of a state. She is first among equals, and possesses great influence. But the chair still has only one vote, and does not have the executive authority of a governor or a mayor.

Swaney is circumspect about her decision to seek political office. As in many internal tribal matters, Indians prefer to avoid confrontation, consensus is highly valued, feelings are easily hurt by dredging up past divisions. Swaney just says she chose to run because "It was my reaction to some of the decisions a prior council had made. I choose not to discuss these."

She is not so circumspect about the Confederated Tribes' relations with other jurisdictions.

Here are some of Rhonda Swaney's comments about issues facing the tribal government in its relation with non-Indians who live on and off the reservation in western Montana:

■ On the tribes' refusal to renew the Yellowstone Pipeline lease last year: "I think it should tell the public that we are committed to environmental protection and safe land use. I regret that in making our decision, people don't think we have the same kind of concern for all areas of Montana. That's not true – particularly those areas which we consider aboriginal territory, and that is an area through which the new pipeline is proposed to go."

■ On the tribes' control of fish and game regulations and recreational permits on land within the reservation boundaries, but not necessarily under tribal or federal ownership: "I think it has worked. It has solved serious problems. The agreement circumvented the need for a long, drawn-out, costly court battle and additional hard feelings, without limiting any governmental authority on either side."

■ On Montana's current effort to change the state welfare system (an effort in which the governor has invited Indian tribes in the state to join): "We're doing that on our own. Our activities predate what the state has been doing. Our focus is hopefully to get these able-bodied workers back to work, rather than to focus on continued welfare payments. We would like to see everyone who can, work."

■ On the perception by many non-Indians that tribal government is overreaching itself by assuming jurisdiction in areas previously under state, federal or county control. "I view it as a government exercising inherent authority and responsibility. As our (tribal) finances have improved, and the opportunity to operate federal programs was increased by federal law, we've maybe increased our visibility. But we've always had this authority."

■ On the tribal proposal to assume responsibility for the National Bison Range at Moiese. "We've tried as a Tribal Council to alleviate people's fears as they are raised. We do have extensive natural resource management experience and capability, and we have indicated to folks that we don't really intend to change a lot of things at the Bison Range. Those who are (employed) there will be offered jobs. I believe we can make an important contribution to the Bison Range with our staff and expertise."

■ On the tribes' assumption of jurisdiction over water quality on the Flathead Reservation, including the southern portion of Flathead Lake: "When we proposed our water quality standards, they were identical to the state's at that time. The state has since decreased their water quality standards, and we did not. I don't believe citizens of this area support economic development to the detriment of water quality."

Swaney says she has molded herself from a shy schoolgirl to an assertive leader of strong tribal confederation through a variety of influences. Her parents, particularly, inculcated a strong sense of values – of people, of land, of honest dealing and good-faith negotiations.

"My parents, although they weren't well educated, offered me a lot in terms of being able to use my common sense, being able to speak my feelings, and they were just very ethical, moral people who taught me good things by which I try to conduct my life," she said.

More recently, her second husband, Daniel Swaney, has been influential on her development, she said. (The Swaneys, married nine years, live in St. Ignatius, with one foster child still at home. Daniel Swaney is a retired federal government forester and a tribal member.)

But make no mistake, she is her own woman, at home, at Council, or before Congress, where, as tribal chairman, she may be required to visit to defend tribal interests – something she is prepared to do.

She points out that the 1,250,000-acre Flathead Reservation was illegally opened to non-Indian settlement early in the 1900s, contrary to the Treat of Hellgate. By 1934, only 33 percent remained in trust or tribal ownership. Now, fewer than one of five residents on the reservation is a tribal member.

"So the illegal opening of the reservation, the loss of our land, and the movement of people coming in reducing us to a minority on our own reservation has caused a lot of hurts.

"I don't want to be stuck in the anger or the hurt associated with that loss. I want to move forward and fulfill the promise of that treaty."

January 14, 1996 The Missoulian

“Beware of Swaney’s bison plan

Everyone be aware, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Council Chairwoman Rhonda Swaney has sent a letter to Washington asking that negotiations on the National Bison Range begin again as soon as possible, but under conditions, including: No information about the negotiations is to be given to the public until after the agreement is signed.

I am shocked. Rhonda, we pay the taxes supporting the range – the very same taxes you intend to be spending.

Taxpayers, please call Sen. Conrad Burns (1-800-344-1513) and Sen. Max Baucus (1-800—332-6106) about the negotiations and this “condition.”

Also, few people believe the tribes will keep the current bison range staff on the job after 1997. It is bad enough the tribes partake in racial discrimination at all, let alone being allowed to do it on nontribal land with federal dollars. Men and women should not lose their jobs because of the color of their skin.

Also, should the tribal government take over the exhibits completely? I have heard their current version of how the bison range and buffalo were acquired.

I have newspaper clippings and boos written during the time period, including Michael Pablo’s obituary, that tell differently.

If the tribes are to take on the exhibits, the exhibits should be OK’d by someone outside the tribe with an interest in straight facts. – Lisa Morris, Moiese.” January 24, 1996 The Missoulian

Speak up about bison range

Many of us are very concerned about this nation’s budget problems and deficit. We wouldn’t have to make unbearable cuts in much-needed programs, if we would do away with the ones that aren’t necessary anymore.

Example: The National Bison Range is located in our community. It was established in 1908 by the Congress under President Theodore Roosevelt. It was stocked with bison by donations from the American Bison Society and citizens across America. It now contains a great variety of wildlife. And we are very proud of it and how it has been managed by the U.S. Department of Fish & Wildlife Service

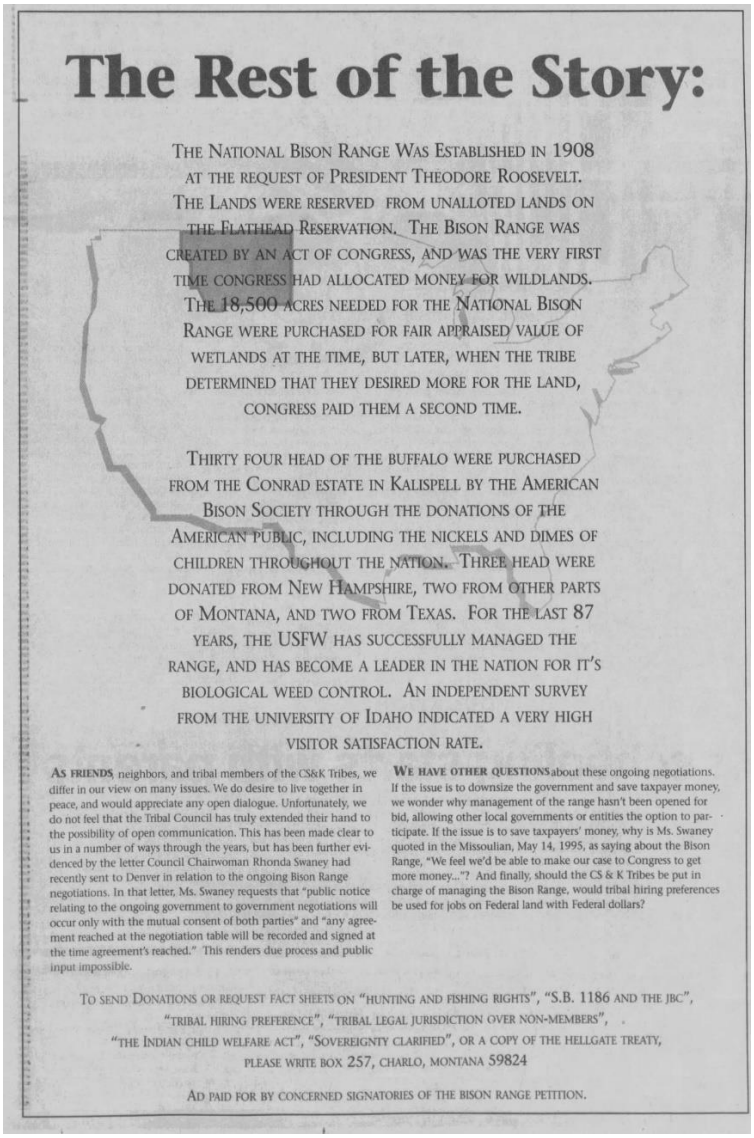
For almost a year now there have been ongoing negotiations between the FWS, under the direction of the Secretary of Interior for the Clinton administration o turn management over to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The federal government funds the present

management and will under tribal management. These tribes have a history of mismanagement in this area.

There are well over 400 federally recognized and funded Indian reservations in the U. S. In Minnesota you'll find tribal members who receive $50,000 each a month from investments. For the majority, they don't need federal involvement or funds.

This isn't only a local issue. These types of negotiations are going on in many states now and they will effect many parks and refuges.

Let your representatives know how you feel about these issues now. Call or write them soon or it may be too late. Thomas and Sandra Shook, Charlo." February 5, 1996 The Missoulian



The Rest of the Story:

THE NATIONAL BISON RANGE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1908 AT THE REQUEST OF PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT. THE LANDS WERE RESERVED FROM UNALLOTED LANDS ON THE FLATHEAD RESERVATION. THE BISON RANGE WAS CREATED BY AN ACT OF CONGRESS, AND WAS THE VERY FIRST TIME CONGRESS HAD ALLOCATED MONEY FOR WILDLANDS. THE 18,500 ACRES NEEDED FOR THE NATIONAL BISON RANGE WERE PURCHASED FOR FAIR APPRAISED VALUE OF WETLANDS AT THE TIME, BUT LATER, WHEN THE TRIBE DETERMINED THAT THEY DESIRED MORE FOR THE LAND, CONGRESS PAID THEM A SECOND TIME.

THIRTY FOUR HEAD OF THE BUFFALO WERE PURCHASED FROM THE CONRAD ESTATE IN KALISPELL BY THE AMERICAN BISON SOCIETY THROUGH THE DONATIONS OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC, INCLUDING THE NICKELS AND DIMES OF CHILDREN THROUGHOUT THE NATION. THREE HEAD WERE DONATED FROM NEW HAMPSHIRE, TWO FROM OTHER PARTS OF MONTANA, AND TWO FROM TEXAS. FOR THE LAST 87 YEARS, THE USFW HAS SUCCESSFULLY MANAGED THE RANGE, AND HAS BECOME A LEADER IN THE NATION FOR IT'S BIOLOGICAL WEED CONTROL. AN INDEPENDENT SURVEY FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO INDICATED A VERY HIGH VISITOR SATISFACTION RATE.

AS FRIENDS, neighbors, and tribal members of the CS&K Tribes, we differ in our view on many issues. We do desire to live together in peace, and would appreciate any open dialogue. Unfortunately, we do not feel that the Tribal Council has truly extended their hand to the possibility of open communication. This has been made clear to us in a number of ways through the years, but has been further evidenced by the letter Council Chairwoman Rhonda Swaney had recently sent to Denver in relation to the ongoing Bison Range negotiations. In that letter, Ms. Swaney requests that "public notice relating to the ongoing government to government negotiations will occur only with the mutual consent of both parties" and "any agreement reached at the negotiation table will be recorded and signed at the time agreement's reached." This renders due process and public input impossible.

WE HAVE OTHER QUESTIONS about these ongoing negotiations. If the issue is to downsize the government and save taxpayer money, we wonder why management of the range hasn't been opened for bid, allowing other local governments or entities the option to participate. If the issue is to save taxpayers' money, why is Ms. Swaney quoted in the Missoulian, May 14, 1995, as saying about the Bison Range, "We feel we'd be able to make our case to Congress to get more money..."? And finally, should the CS & K Tribes be put in charge of managing the Bison Range, would tribal hiring preferences be used for jobs on Federal land with Federal dollars?

TO SEND DONATIONS OR REQUEST FACT SHEETS ON "HUNTING AND FISHING RIGHTS", "S.B. 1186 AND THE JBC.", "TRIBAL HIRING PREFERENCE", "TRIBAL LEGAL JURISDICTION OVER NON-MEMBERS", "THE INDIAN CHILD WELFARE ACT", "SOVEREIGNTY CLARIFIED", OR A COPY OF THE HELLGATE TREATY, PLEASE WRITE BOX 257, CHARLO, MONTANA 59824

AD PAID FOR BY CONCERNED SIGNATORIES OF THE BISON RANGE PETITION.

March 10, 1996 The Missoulian

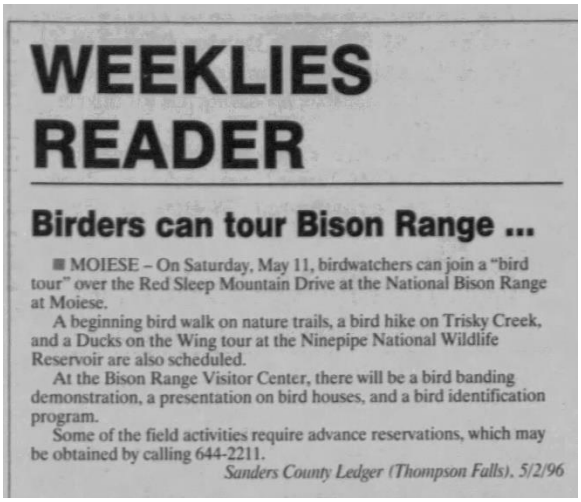
March 12, 1996 The Missoulian

"Lecture Series,

"Weed Management on the Bison Range –

Experiences of a Public Land Manager." 7:30 .m., Chemistry/Pharmacy Building 109.

Call Alan Knudsen, Missoula County Weed District, 721-5700, ext. 3287." March 13, 1996 The Missoulian



WEEKLIES
READER

Birders can tour Bison Range ...

■ MOIESE – On Saturday, May 11, birdwatchers can join a "bird tour" over the Red Sleep Mountain Drive at the National Bison Range at Moiese.

A beginning bird walk on nature trails, a bird hike on Trisky Creek, and a Ducks on the Wing tour at the Ninepipe National Wildlife Reservoir are also scheduled.

At the Bison Range Visitor Center, there will be a bird banding demonstration, a presentation on bird houses, and a bird identification program.

Some of the field activities require advance reservations, which may be obtained by calling 644-2211.

Sanders County Ledger (Thompson Falls). 5/2/96

May 5, 1996 The Missoulian

OUTDOORS

Birds and bison

Bison Range events help celebrate International Migratory Bird Day

Missoulian

MOIESE – In celebration of International Migratory Bird Day, the National Bison Range will offer several bird-watching tours and activities Saturday, as well as the season opening of its Red Sleep Mountain Drive.

Established by the Partners in Flight Program, International Migratory Bird Day is designed to increase awareness of all migratory birds, including songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors, and related conservation efforts.

The Bison Range events include:

■ A guided bird hike down Trisky Creek at 7 a.m.

■ "Ducks on the Wing," a presentation by Tom Fondell at the National Wildlife Refuge's Highway 93 site, 7 a.m.

■ A beginning bird walk with Pat Jamieson along an accessible nature trail, 8 a.m.

■ A bird tour (car caravan) on Red Sleep Mountain Drive, 8 a.m.

■ A bird banding demonstration at the visitor center, 1 p.m.

■ A talk on bird houses, Erv Davis, visitor center, 2 p.m.

■ A talk on attracting birds, Pat Jamieson, visitor center, 3 p.m.

The trips have limited participation and reservations are required. Call the Bison Range at 644-2211 to sign up or for more information.

The visitor center also will feature bird identification CD-ROMs on Saturday afternoon, a bird book sale, films, a poster giveaway and complimentary bird lists.

Summer entrance fees at the Bison Range will be the same as last year: day passes – $4 per family vehicle; commercial tours – $4 to $20 depending on size; Golden Eagle Pass – $25, good for a year at most federal areas.

The visitor center is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, and afterwards summer hours are from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekdays, and 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. weekends and holidays.

The Red Sleep Mountain Drive is a 19-mile, one-way gravel road that climbs 2,000 feet to the high point of the range, then descends along steep 10-percent grades.

May 9, 1996 The Missoulian

Corrections

Opponents in two Lake County legislative races were confused in a story in Friday's Missoulian. In Senate District 37, Mike Taylor, John Stokes and Dick Pinsoneault are opponents for the Republican nomination. In House District 74, incumbent Rep. John Mercer faces Roland Morris for the Republican nomination.

In addition, candidate Mike Taylor clarified remarks quoted in the story. He said he does not oppose a petition to keep the National Bison Range under current management of the National Fish and Wildlife Service, and in fact supports that view, rather than having management turned over to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. He does, however, oppose the change in mission of the group Concerned Signatories of the Bison Range Petition, from an advocacy group to a political action committee, which endorses candidates and contributes funds to political campaigns, as the story reported.

Due to incomplete information received by the Missoulian, Tyler Gilman's name was omitted from the list of valedictorians at Hellgate High School in both a story in Friday's edition and a special graduation section in Saturday's newspaper.

June 1, 1996 The Missoulian

Outdoors

'What a great animal to work with: I don't have to stalk them or struggle to learn the basics. As long as I keep my distance, they ignore me.'
– researcher Jack Hogg

With adult supervision never far away, a curious bighorn lamb looks up from the tall grass.

a band of bighorns

On the steep slopes of Moiese, researcher Jack Hogg documents the secret life of sheep

Written by SHERRY DEVLIN
Photographed by KURT WILSON
of the Missoulian

MOIESE – Jack Hogg is on Sheep Mountain this soft summer morning, looking across to the steep, south-facing slopes where the bighorns slumber.

To the left, he locates the nest from which bald eagles monitor the bighorn ewes and lambs, occasionally picking a newborn out of the nursery band and carrying it away.

To the right is Bobcat Draw, the boundary between the ewe and ram ranges. Straight ahead is the grassy bench where Hogg once saw a ewe looking and looking for her newborn lamb, back and forth, back and forth, for more than an hour.

On no particular cue and after Hogg was sure it had been taken by a predator, the lamb popped its head out of the grass, answering the ewe's cries. Hogg christened the little creature Mushroom.

Since 1979, Hogg has documented the life histories of every bighorn sheep on the National Bison Range, tracing their lineage, noting their progression from lamb to adolescent and adult, documenting their death.

He is, by his own admission, emotionally and intellectually attached to the animals. He knows each of the 47 bighorns by sight. He has given each a name. He knows them, he says, "as individuals."

Descending Sheep Mountain, Hogg walks up the draw he calls Twin Fir and finds six rams dozing in the sun. A seventh strikes a haughty pose higher on the hill, mid-point between a pair of cliffs.

The second ram from the right, he says, is Sundog. He has an albino nose. He was transplanted to the Bison Range in 1993 from Thompson Falls. Sundog is a handsome animal, but also feisty.

"One of my favorites," he says.

That's Droopy, the second from the left, the scientist continues. He is 8, clearly the biggest horned of the rams in this band. Droopy's father

See **BIGHORNS,** *Page C3*

Researcher Jack Hogg combs the hills of the Bison Range in pursuit of the sheep.

Bighorns

Continued from Page C1

was an introduced ram from Rock Creek, his mother a Bison Range-born ewe.

Hunkered low behind the bigger rams is Rabbit, a 2 year old born well into August, months after the other lambs. As a yearling, he reminded Hogg of Roger Rabbit – "a little bit touchy, a little bit wired." Thus, the name.

Bighorn sheep were first transplanted to the National Bison Range from Canada in 1922. Because the herd was so small and isolated, it was augmented with five Rock Creek rams in 1985 and another 10 animals from other Montana herds since.

The sheep use the southern half of the Bison Range, occupying an area from Dixon to Ravalli, the ewes and lambs in the center, the rams on the outer edges. Only during the rut do the rams approach the ewes.

This day, Hogg has parked his truck along Triskey Creek, intent on finding the ewes and their lambs-of-the-year. He will not be disappointed.

Up and around Twin Fir Draw, past the slope where the herd's oldest ram rests in the sun, Hogg drops into a high ravine and finds all 22 ewes, nine lambs, a yearling and a 2-year-old ram.

The nursery band.

The animals are bedded down in a field of lupine, rock and native grass that looks south to Ravalli and east to the Mission Mountains. These are, in fact, the foothills of the Missions. And if there were no farms or highways in between, these bighorns would likely migrate to and from the mountains.

Instead, they stay on the Bison Range, isolated from other bighorn herds, tolerant of the occasional scientist in their midst.

Hogg's first field season at the Bison Range was as a graduate student at the University of Montana. His doctoral work was a behavioral project on the mating system of bighorn sheep. He was the first to document the mating tactics used by subordinate rams.

The dominant rams in a herd tend the ewes as they come into estrus. The ewes are obliging, mating is cooperative.

The subordinate rams must resort to alternative, sometimes brutal, always spectacular, tactics. In "coursing," subordinate rams move in on a mating pair, butting the ram and chasing the ewe, attempting what Hogg calls a rape.

The ewe runs from the subordinate ram, the dominant ram in pursuit, in chases that typically cover hundreds of meters of cliff, scree and grassy slopes. Copulation takes only about two seconds.

In "blocking," a subordinate ram locates a ewe before she comes into estrus and tries to keep her away from the dominant rams. The ram will push, threaten and sometimes physically punish the ewe, desperate to keep her to himself.

It is, says Hogg, "kind of a kidnapping."

The mating research led Hogg to paternity studies that documented the reproductive success of subordinate rams versus the reproductive success of socially dominant rams.

And that led to his current work, as director of the Craighead Wildlife-Wildlands Institute in Missoula, on the population viability of bighorn sheep – both the Bison Range transplants and a herd of native bighorns at the Sheep River Sanctuary on the East Front of the Canadian Rockies in Alberta.

Hogg's is a combination of mud-and-boots field biology and space-age work in molecular genetics and remote sensing, a combination of basic science and conservation biology. The result, he says, will be a definition of the population size and habitat needed for bighorn sheep to persist.

This year's lambs look good, Hogg says from his cross-ravine vantage. There were 10 the last time he checked, only nine today. But losses are normal. There are cougars, bobcats and bald eagles on and above these slopes. One newborn earlier this year was taken before he even saw it.

Hogg weighs and takes a tissue sample of each lamb within a day or two of its birth. Because he knows when the adult sheep mate, he can also calculate – with some certainty – when the lambs will be born.

Gestation is 173 days; ewes almost always give birth between 170 and 175 days. Just before the lamb drops, the ewe separates from the band. Hogg must find each, knowing the ewes prefer steeper, tougher terrain for lambing, not knowing precisely where they will be, relying on instinct.

Newborn lambs are easily caught for inspection. The ewe maintains a tight circle around Hogg and the lamb, allowing the intrusion, but quickly returns to the lamb when Hogg departs.

"They do not accept me," he says. "They tolerate me."

UM geneticist Stephen Forbes analyzes each tissue sample taken from a lamb and helps Hogg trace the paternity. Hogg knows the fathers of all 142 lambs conceived during 10 rutting seasons on the Bison Range and at the Sheep River Sanctuary.

On both ranges, 42.5 percent of the lambs were fathered by subordinate rams skilled in the alternative mating tactics.

If the dominant ram in a herd monopolized reproduction, the animals would lose their genetic variation – and their vigor, requiring a larger herd size to maintain the population. The intrusion of the subordinate rams makes possible a smaller herd size.

Hogg says the Bison Range bighorns have also benefited from the introduction of new rams to the herd – the Rock Creek and Thompson Falls transplants of recent years.

The "hybrid" lambs born of newly introduced rams have larger birth weights, shorter gestations and higher pre-natal growth rates than do their cousins born of rams descended from the original 1922 transplant.

Between 1922 and 1985, the Bison Range herd lost half of the genetic variation present in the source herd, by Hogg's estimation. Rams hit a physiological wall at 8 to 9 years old and died soon thereafter.

The transplants appear to be living longer; Sam, a 1985 transplant, is robust at 13.

Hogg likens it to the difference between two competing brands of pile jackets, alike in every way when purchased. Same number of snaps. Same pockets. Same color and heft.

Some years later, though, one of the jackets is flat, its stitches pulled, its loft diminished. The other still looks new.

It is a metaphor for what happens when a population of bighorn sheep loses its genetic diversity. "They don't do everything quite as well," he says. "They don't wear as well."

Because it spans so much time and space, Hogg's research at the Bison Range can document – as shorter-term research could not – changes in a population when new animals fatten the gene pool.

Ultimately, he says, he will be able to combine all of the information on the mating system, reproductive success, ram and lamb fitness and demography – any of which could create fluctuations in herd size – and produce an estimate of how many bighorns are needed to keep the Bison Range herd intact into the future.

Across from Sheep Mountain. Up Twin Fir Draw. Above the Triskey Cliffs.

Host an international performer, make a lifelong friend... usually

By DONNA SYVERTSON
of the Missoulian

Four Missoula families will host their fourth group of International Choral Festival performers this year.

Some of the guests have become friends, exchanging visits when possible. Other guests leave without even a thank-you note.

But it doesn't affect the host families' enthusiasm for the guests and the festival itself.

"We've had nothing but positive experiences," said M.J. and Bill Beaman. The Beamans made good friends with members in two of their groups and, in another, spent time keeping track of a 17-year-old girl who "was feeling her oats," as Bill Beaman said.

The Beamans never heard from the 17-year-old and her 19-year-old friend after they left. "There was no thank you from them," M.J. Beaman said. "We decided we were a little old for teen-agers and it probably wasn't fair to them to put them with us."

Their experiences with some Scottish and Italian guests were more fun.

The Beamans enjoy showing visitors Glacier National Park and the National Bison Range in Moiese. They remember a Scottish couple's impression of Flathead Lake as they rounded the corner outside of Polson.

"They said it looks like Loch Lomond," M.J. Beaman said, noting that was a high compliment.

Since then they have exchanged visits. The Scottish guests stopped to see the Beamans in Arizona, the Beamans' summer home, and the Beamans have just returned from a visit to Scotland, the land of M.J. Beaman's ancestors.

But a visit to Italy stands out for hem.

The Beamans felt like "we were ng and queen for a day" when

they visited their Italian guests, M.J. Beaman said.

Beaman's guests liked the bison at Moiese's National Bison Range and tepees they spotted en route.

They did not like rodeos. "They thought we were being very cruel to animals," Bill Beaman said.

The guests like to shop, too, especially for America's less-expensive jeans.

"You have to have an afternoon set aside for them to buy jeans," M.J. Beaman advised.

The host families volunteer for reasons ranging from friends involved in the project to a general interest in other cultures.

Ray and Susie Risho were ready to become a host family for the international choral members.

One of their memories is a reception at their home with 100 people attending. Botswana choral members "ended up giving a mini-performance here in our house," Ray Risho said. "It was wonderful.

"We don't do this to get anything out of it," he added. "I guess of the things we do get, one is just having to establish a relationship for citizen diplomacy."

Joyce and Dudley Anderson's first guest was an Italian man, tired after the long plane ride.

"This tall Italian man singled us out and said 'I'm going with them.' He grabbed us because he wanted to get home and get to bed," Joyce Anderson said. Was that the guest they were supposed to host? "I have no clue," she said.

The Andersons also receive another benefit from hosting choral members.

"We are blown away by how beautiful the music is," Joyce Anderson said. "If we hadn't hosted, we wouldn't go to all these concerts."

Language has been a small, but not impossible, hurdle for Catherine and Cliff Goodman and their visitors. Their first guest was a man from Latvia who did not speak English. But after forming an emotional connection, Catherine Goodman said, they found it easy to communicate. Twice they took advantage of an interpreter "so we could talk at length" about religion, politics, the economy and cultural interests, she said.

It took awhile to understand their second guest, a man from Scotland, simply because his Scottish brogue was so thick. "We've kept in touch with him all these years," she added.

The Goodmans serve as host families to expose their two sons to people from other cultures.

"We've learned a great deal about the countries: how they're run, their political structure, their imports, exports, what's going on politically, how they view America, what they hear about us, what movies and books they've read. It's amazing how our culture affects others.

"It's just one of the best experiences," Catherine Goodman said.

:30am

July 12, 1996 The Missoulian

Barbecue, games held to honor Hellgate Treaty

By JOHN STROMNES
of the Missoulian

PABLO – As many as 1,000 people will gather this week at the National Bison Range by invitation of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes to commemorate the Hellgate Treaty between the tribes and the United States Government, and in celebration of tribal sovereignty.

"Everyone in attendance will be treated to a barbecue, traditional games, recreational activities, and drumming and singing," said Tribal Chairwoman Rhonda Swaney. "The purpose of the gathering is to reaffirm and remember the conditions of the treaty."

The treaty was signed on July 16, 1855, at Council Grove, west of Missoula. The celebration is not an annual event, but is held perhaps every two or three years, most recently at the University of Montana.

Holding it at the National Bison Range will allow more participation by people who are not enrolled tribal members, and Swaney urged Missoula-area residents to attend, as well as people from Lake and Sanders counties.

"It will be an opportunity for these folks to learn about the tribal perspective on one part of our history. And it will provide an opportunity to socialize with tribal members while we participate in some traditional activities. It's a day for all of us to celebrate being a community," Swaney said.

■ *For information on pick-up sites, or to arrange transportation for passengers with special needs, people may call Bonnie Rice at (406) 675-2700, Ext. 390.*

Col. Doug Allard and Tribal Vice Chairman Mickey Pablo will present a historical perspective on the bison herd that formed the nucleus of the existing Bison Range herd, and Daniel Decker, tribal attorney, will discuss the current significance of the Hellgate Treaty. The speeches will start at 10 a.m., and the barbecue will begin at 11.

The National Bison Range is about 40 miles northwest of Missoula, on rural Highway 212 between Dixon and Charlo. Due to limited parking at the Bison Range, the organizers have arranged for shuttle transportation to the event from a public parking area nearby. The area will be marked. Public transportation will also be available to and from the event for all communities on the Flathead Indian Reservation.

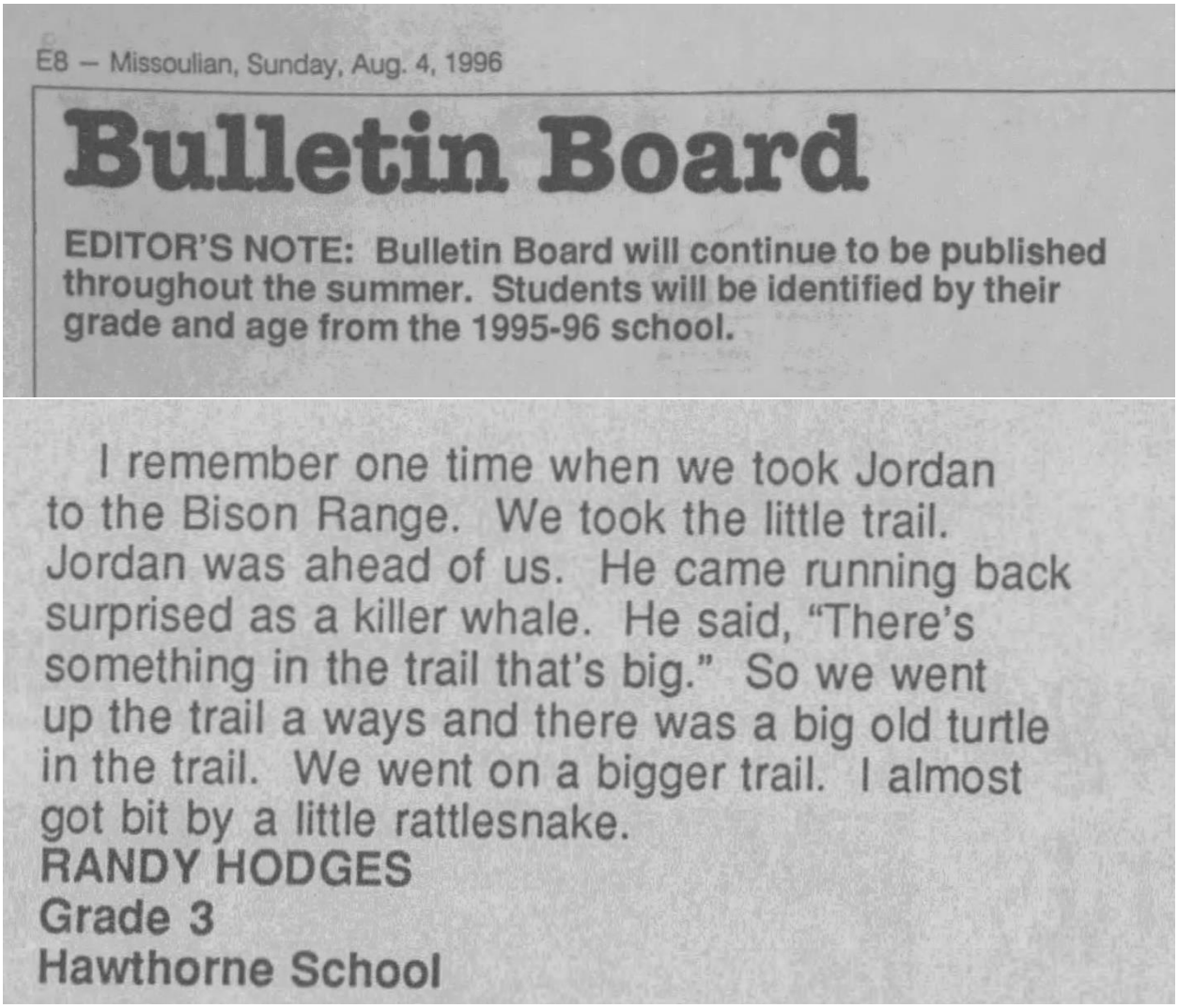
July 13, 1996 The Missoulian

"Entry fees change at National Bison Range

Moiese- News fees are in effect at the National Bison Range.

A season pass is $10 and is valid for a year from date of purchase and covers all passengers in a vehicle. The daily pass is $4 per vehicle.

The Bison Range will continue to accept and sell Golden Passes and federal Waterfowl Stamps. The Golden Eagle Pass is $25 and allows entry into most federal areas. The Golden Age Pass is $10 and is available to U. S. citizens over 62 years of age. It is a lifetime pass." August 1, 1996 The Missoulian



E8 — Missoulian, Sunday, Aug. 4, 1996

Bulletin Board

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bulletin Board will continue to be published throughout the summer. Students will be identified by their grade and age from the 1995-96 school.

I remember one time when we took Jordan to the Bison Range. We took the little trail. Jordan was ahead of us. He came running back surprised as a killer whale. He said, "There's something in the trail that's big." So we went up the trail a ways and there was a big old turtle in the trail. We went on a bigger trail. I almost got bit by a little rattlesnake.

RANDY HODGES
Grade 3
Hawthorne School

August 4, 1996 The Missoulian

"Coming Soon

Five Valleys Audubon Society, road trip through the National Bison Range with Joe Kipphut, Saturday, Aug. 10. Meet, 7:30 a.m., University of Montana Field House. Bring lunch." August 9, 1996 The Missoulian

Governments, tribes infringe on rights

I think it's about time the non-Indian people, and especially the sportsmen of our state, take note of our state and federal governments infringing upon our constitutional rights.

I speak of our state maintaining a cooperative agreement with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. This agreement requires a special hunting permit for anyone hunting on private land within the reservation boundaries. To this date, a jury has stated four times that this provision is not valid, but our state continues to exert pressure upon the sportsmen, including citations in court. Just how many acquittals does a jury have to make in order for our state to admit its mistake? Who can forget a crowd of sportsmen being illegally ordered to leave the Lone Pine State Building so the tribe and state could negotiate this secret agreement?

The tribes have long claimed they are a sovereign nation which can ignore federal and state laws that the rest of us must abide by. Just how many sovereign nations within our nation can we have? Many tribes have now obtained status as "treatment as states" under various federal environmental programs.

As citizens, which is their right, they are elected to our state Legislature in which they help make laws and taxes for all the other people in the state to obey and to pay while they, themselves and their people, are exempt. Nice, what?

The Flathead tribes are now negotiating for control of one of our national treasures – the National Bison Range at Moiese. Along with it will go the federal Ninepipe Reservoir and surrounding property.

I ask that you understand that I have no quarrel with the Indian people. It is their form of government I oppose along with our federal Indian policy from Washington, D.C.

John Cochrane
135 Garden Drive, Kalispell

October 9, 1996 The Missoulian

Teacher's workshops set

■ The National Bison Range offers a teacher's workshop on songbirds, watersheds and other nature subjects from the Montana Natural History Center education trunks on Saturday, Nov. 2.

Teachers will be eligible for seven OPI recertification units for the workshop. Preregistration is required. Call 406-644-2211. Registration fee is $10.

– Compiled by Daryl Gadbow, Missoulian

October 10, 1996 The Missoulian

MONTANA LIFE

Outdoors

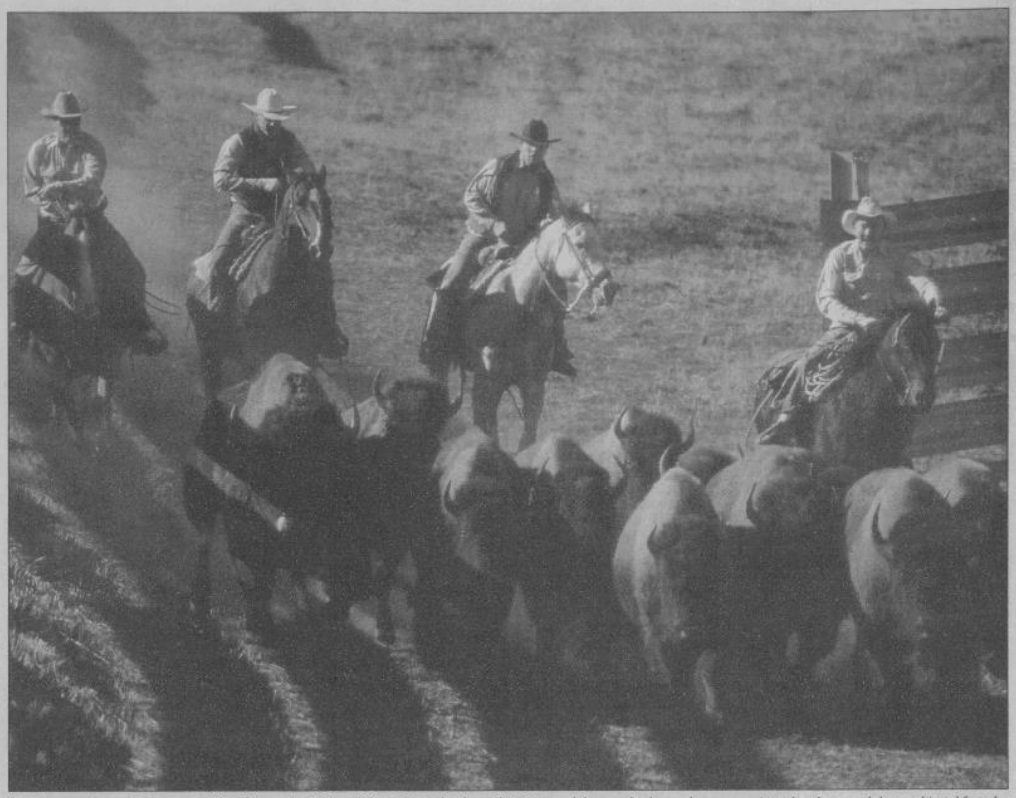
MISSOULIAN SECTION

C

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1996

INSIDE

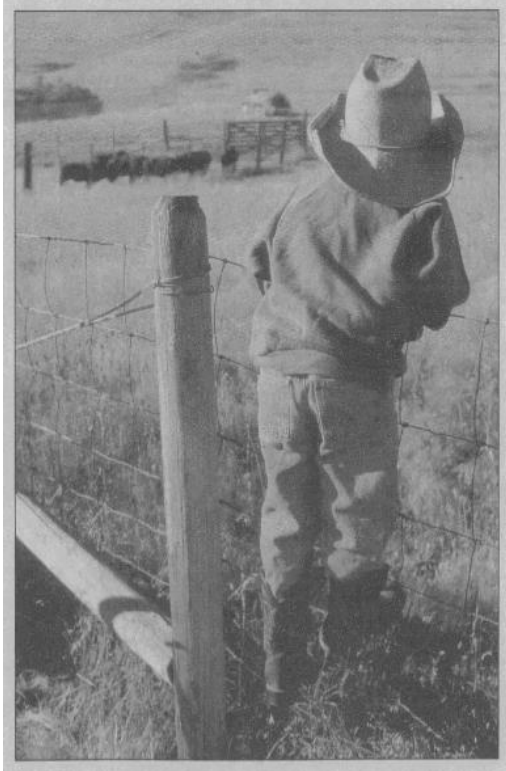
Roundup!



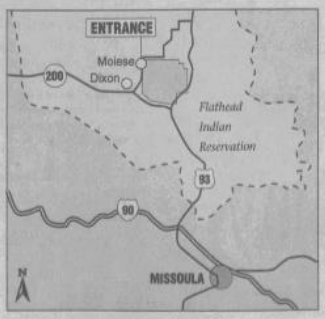
Cowboys cut *a small group out of the 450-member National Bison Range herd and drive it toward the corral, where calves are vaccinated and some adults are shipped for sale.*

Cowboys cull the bison herd

Written by SHERRY DEVLIN
Photographed by MICHAEL GALLACHER
of the Missoulian



Four-year-old *Brian Klatt, of Post Falls, Idaho, gets a front-row seat as cowboys push a group of bison toward the corral. Thousands of spectators watched the annual event.*



MOIESE – It's the Old West: a stampede of gnarly headed bison, stubble-faced cowboys in pursuit, the early day sun bouncing off the trail dust.

And it's the New West: teen-agers with earphones attached watching the spectacle from an aerial catwalk, a water truck on dust-control duty, the grade-school PTA selling coffee in the barn.

"You know what they say: 'You can herd a buffalo anywhere they want to go.'"

– Bison Range wrangler

The annual bison roundup at the National Bison Range is the once-each-October reminder of the history of the American buffalo, itself a story of the Old West and the New West. This week, the story was told once more.

"Bison are so majestic, so American, so everything," Carrie Hooge said from her vantage on the catwalk above the round corral, from which bison are sorted for vaccination, weighing and either sale or return to the range during the roundup.

Hooge and husband Brian always make the drive from Hamilton to Moiese to watch the roundup. They love the animals and the excitement of the rush from hillside to corral and the chance for a nearly eyeball-to-eyeball look at the largest land mammal on the continent.

Bison have such a massive presence, she said. The thunder of their stampede is that of a hundred drums.

Last year, the Hooges successfully bid on a 9-year-old bull being culled from the Bison Range herd. They had the animal butchered for meat and its head mounted for their home.

They're also building their own bison herd near Hamilton, so far three cows and a bull. The roundup, Hooge said, is a chance to compare the size and fitness of their bison to those on the refuge – "to see how we're doing."

This year's roundup took much of two days, Monday and Tuesday, and attracted thousands of spectators.

It is, however, work – part of what is needed to perpetuate the range's bison herd – not a made-for-spectator event, said park ranger Pat Jamieson. Without the roundup, she said, the herd would quickly overpopulate the available 18,541 acres.

It's all part of the story of the American buffalo:

There were, when European explorers first crossed the Great Plains, herds of buffalo so vast that they darkened the horizon and were days in passing. One of the first descriptions came in 1540 from Francisco Vasquez:

"I reached some plains so vast that I did not find their limit anywhere that I went, although I traveled over them for more than 300 leagues (about 900 miles). And I found such a quantity of cows . . . that it is impossible to number them, for while I was journeying through these plains, until I returned to where I first found them, there was not a day that I lost sight of them."

The slaughter began in 1871 and 1872, when hide hunters – encouraged by a government intent on subduing the plains Indians – spread out across the plains of eastern Colorado, western Kansas and southern Nebraska, then turned north into Wyoming and Montana.

By 1883, hunters scavenging the Montana plains found not one buffalo herd. By 1889, there were no more than 85 free-roaming bison in the United States and another 200 protected in Yellowstone National Park.

The National Bison Range was not officially created until 1908, but its herd dates to the 1870s and an Indian named Samuel Walking Coyote, who returned from a hunting trip to the eastern plains with a few orphaned bison calves.

By 1884, there was a herd of 13 in the Mission Valley, owned by ranchers Charles Allard and Michel Pablo. Pablo eventually offered to sell his herd of 700 to the U.S. government, then sold the animals to the Canadian government when President Roosevelt could not convince Congress to establish a buffalo refuge in Montana.

The refuge finally came, at the insistence of Montana Sen. Joseph Dixon, on May 23, 1908. The American Buffalo Society provided 37 bison descended from Samuel Walking Coyote's orphaned calves.

So abundant was the forage on the National Bison Range that the herd grew to 700 buffalo (and 650 elk) by the mid-1920s, far more than could be sustained by the native grasses. Winter began to take its toll on the increasingly forage-short herds, and range managers realized they would have to limit the herd.

Thus, the yearly roundup, which culls the herd to about 370 animals before the onset of winter, Jamieson said.

All the animals, except three or four cantankerous old bulls, are herded into the corral in a bowl overlooking the Mission Valley. At summer's end, with calves aplenty, the herd usually numbers about 450. Eighty-nine percent of the range's mature bison cows have calves each year.

One by one, the bison are selected either for sale or for return to the winter herd. There are protests: thick skulls butted onto chutes as the animals move through the corral, stomping, snorting, kicking and head waving.

But the intrusion is relatively quick.

See **ROUNDUP,** *Page C7*

In the *corral, individual animals are separated from the group, vaccinated, and chuted to various destinations, including breeding farms and butcher shops. The 450-member herd is culled annually to about 350 individuals.*

Roundup

Continued

Within a few minutes, the bison intended for release back to the range are thundering out a chute to freedom.

"Why are they running so fast?" asked one Kalispell grade-schooler at this week's roundup.

"Wouldn't you?" came the wrangler's reply.

Calves are innoculated and branded by their birth year.

"That veterinarian, the one with the little blue hairbows, she's pretty quick with those shots," observed one of a group of Kalispell senior citizens who took a bus to the Bison Range early Tuesday. "Do you think she'd consider giving me my flu shot?"

Jamieson said range managers tend to sell mostly young, mostly old, more males, fewer females from the herd. "We try to mimic how the herd would be distributed – age-wise – in the wild," she said. "We have very few old ones that die on the range."

This year's sale – all bison are sold live – included five yearling heifers, seven 2-year-old heifers, five 3-year cows, one 6-year cow, six 10-year-old-plus cows, eight yearling bulls, nine 2-year-old bulls and one 4-year-old bull.

The age classes are auctioned off by sealed bid in August, then individual animals are selected for sale during the roundup.

In recent years, Jamieson said, many of the bison have gone to ranchers interested in starting or adding to a private herd. This year, the Diamond Willow Ranch in Magrath, Alberta, paid $10,780 for five yearling heifers and another $12,936 for six 10-year-plus cows.

"They're hoping that some of those old cows are pregnant," Jamieson said.

Some animals are bought for butchering. White's Meats in Ronan bought two yearling bulls this year and one 2-year-old bull.

"People really want these animals," said Hamilton's Brian Hooge. There were 33 bidders for the 1996 roundup; just eight were successful.

Jamieson quickly concedes that the Bison Range herd is not truly wild. There are some, she said, who believe there are no wild bison remaining, as all national parks or refuges represent some form of management.

The Bison Range animals are moved between large, fenced-in pastures at different times of the year. They are rounded up once a year. And are innoculated and branded as calves.

But that doesn't make these bison domesticated, either, Jamieson said.

The roundup is proof: The four riders assigned to cut 20 bison at a time from the herd for processing in the corrals have dangerous duty. Bison are stubborn.

"If the riders don't run the herd at full speed, they could have animals turn on them at any minute," Jamieson said during one downhill stampede. "And bison can run circles around a horse."

The animals are no less subdued in the corrals. The calves grunt like pigs when trapped in the squeeze chute for shaving and branding. The big bulls – which can weigh more than 2,000 pounds – crash headlong into the chutes.

"These Bison Range animals are rambunctious," said Brian Hooge. "They may be managed, but they're still plenty wild."

"You're not a-kiddin'," said a wrangler, overhearing the conversation from his perch atop the scale. "You know what they say: 'You can herd a buffalo anywhere they want to go.'"

October 10, 1996 The Missoulian

Bison Range open in winter, too

MOIESE – The National Bison Range doesn't close at summer's end.

The 19-mile-long Red Sleep Mountain Drive is open through Oct. 25, taking travelers through the palouse prairie grassland, then up 2,000 feet to a ponderosa pine and Douglas fir forest.

Watch for white-tailed and mule deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep and bison along the way. Watch, too, for Hungarian partridge in the grass and Clark's nutcrackers in the trees.

The Red Sleep Mountain Drive takes about two hours and is a one-way gravel road. The visitor center is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Oct. 25.

The bison range remains open all winter. Starting Oct. 26, visitors can travel the 10-mile round-trip Winter Drive along the flats of Mission Creek and Alexander Basin.

Pronghorns frequent the flats, elk and deer are common along the forest edge. And there are chances to see bald eagles, geese and an otter along Mission Creek.

The Winter Drive takes about an hour and is open daily from 7 a.m. until dark. During winter, the visitor center is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays, but is closed weekends and holidays.

Questions? Call the National Bison Range at 644-2211.

October 10, 1996 The Missoulian

Visiting Japanese students experience culture shock at school

By DONNA SYVERTSON
of the Missoulian

They didn't wear school uniforms to Washington Middle School. And they didn't have to clean up the school after classes.

But Kaoru Huruhata and Aoi Ichihara, two of 10 visiting Japanese students, did attend seventh-grade classes at Washington Wednesday – and seemed dazed by the activity and the English language.

In Japan, students:

- wear school uniforms with colors and styles that identify the school.
- clean their own schools each day.
- stay in their own classroom while teachers rotate from room to room.
- eat the one lunch meal prepared for them.

The eight female and two male Japanese students from Date (Dah-tay) City earned the trip to Missoula based on essays they wrote and their English-speaking skills, Barbara Koostra of the Missoula Cultural Council explained.

Kaoru and Aoi weren't speaking too much English Wednesday. Their smiles and shy-but-eager behavior helped them let other students know of their interest.

Kaoru followed Mary Connole, her host family's daughter, through the classes while Aoi accompanied Elizabeth Williams, her host family's daughter.

Aoi, in halting English, said her quick impressions of Washington are that it is a small school. She also was interested in the lunch where the students could either bring their own food, eat a hot lunch or dine a la carte.

When Aoi was asked what she thought of the taco she ate, Mary said: "Taco means octopus ("taku") to them."

In tech design, a modern shop-type class, Kaoru helped Mary sand a form for a cradle. Aoi watched as her group sketched out a pattern. They both signed a poster on the wall.

Aoi's favorite classes included English and science. Kaoru was impressed with a microscope she had seen.

But when Elizabeth learned that Japanese students clean their schools, she was most impressed. "They must have a very clean school," she said.

The students and their four adult chaperones arrived Tuesday and will leave Monday. While here, they will visit the National Bison Range, the St. Ignatius Mission and other points of interest in the area. Elizabeth plans to go shopping with Aoi.

Representatives of the city of Date offered to pay all but transportation costs to and from Japan for students interested in visiting their city.

But the impetus behind the whole process, she emphasized, is "giving children and young people the tools to create a peaceful and beautiful 21st Century.

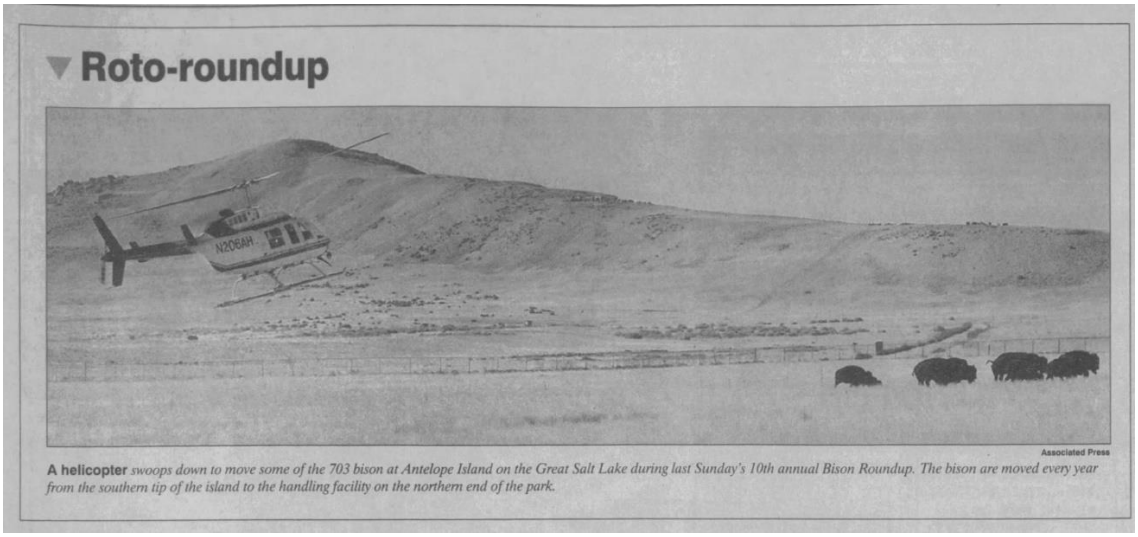
"It's all about global understanding. That's why they're visiting another culture and country," she said.

October 11, 1996 The Missoulian

KURT WILSON/Missoulian

Elk, like this one on the National Bison Range, have been transplanted from Canada to Kentucky with the aid of funding from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. The transplants are the foundation of a program to restore Kentucky's free-ranging elk herds.

October 17, 1996 The Missoulian



Roto-roundup

Associated Press

A helicopter *swoops down to move some of the 703 bison at Antelope Island on the Great Salt Lake during last Sunday's 10th annual Bison Roundup. The bison are moved every year from the southern tip of the island to the handling facility on the northern end of the park.*

October 31, 1996 The Missoulian

"Forest 'Frosty' Largent

Ronan – Forest 'Frosty' Largent, 92, passed away Thursday, Nov. 14, at St. Luke Extended Care Facility in Ronan of natural causes.

He was born July 26, 1904, in Pullman, Wash., to Louis and Mary Stricker Largent. He attended schools in Colfax, Wash., and Dixon.
On May 25, 1935, he married Jennie Crane in Polson.

He worked for the U.S. Forest Service at Ninemile Remount and Quartz Ranger Stations, and also at the National Bison Range. He also ranched in the Moiese Valley for several years until his retirement in 1966. After his retirement, he lived in Bigfork for a while, then moved to Ronan.

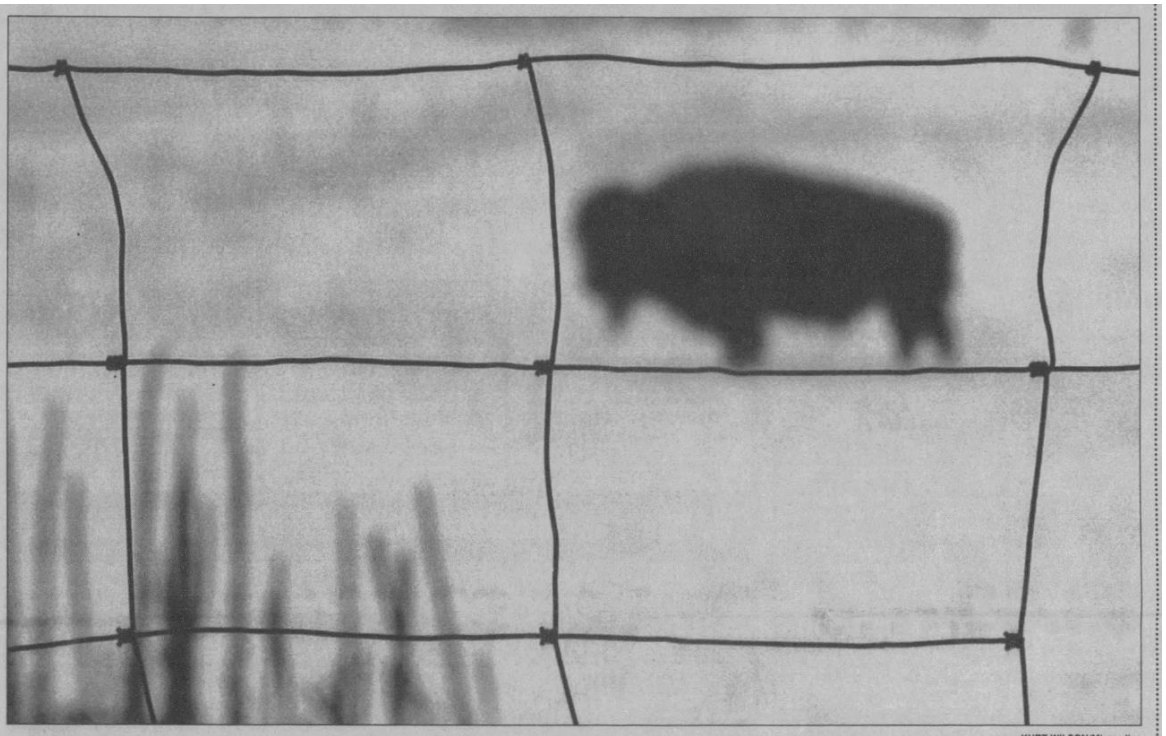
He was preceded in death by one brother, Roy Largent and three sisters Bertha Byrne, Dena Foy and Grace Smith.

Survivors include his wife, Jennie at the family home in Ronan; two sons, Walter Largent of Ronan, Jim Largent of Moiese; Richard Largent of Richland, Wash.; Gregory Largent of Greeley, Colo.; Kelsey Largent of Missoula; one great-granddaughter, Jessica Largent of Missoula; two sisters, Gladys Parrish of Vancouver, Wash., and Esther Zini of Deary, Idaho.

No public services will be held, by the request of the deceased. A private family gathering will be at a later date.

The family suggests visits to an elder or a loved one as memorials.

Arrangements and cremation are under the direction of Shrider's Mortuary of Ronan." November 16, 1996 The Missoulian



KURT WILSON/Missoulian

While U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes acknowledge that negotiations are under way regarding management of the National Bison Range, both parties say reports of an agreement are premature.

Burns blasts 'insulting' Bison Range talks

By DON SCHWENNESEN
of the Missoulian

A resumption in long-stalled talks over possible Flathead tribal management of the National Bison Range at Moiese has brought charges of secret back-room dealing from Sen. Conrad Burns.

A regional U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service official says reports of a deal are premature, but he acknowledges that the agency has been directed by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to seek an agreement in three areas.

A letter to the governor last week expressed the agency's intent to negotiate fire management and visitor center operation with the tribes under the Tribal Self-Governance Act.

It said that the agency hoped to have a deal ready for review when Congress reconvenes in January.

The third area, which is outside the act, would be a cooperative federal-tribal effort to update the management plan for the bison range.

Still, negotiating an agreement is a long way from reaching one, Paul Gertler, FWS assistant regional director for Montana and Wyoming, said on Tuesday.

"We're nowhere near an agreement," he said.

Rhonda Swaney, who chairs the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribal Council, said fire management and visitor center operation were mentioned in a meeting with Babbitt last week in Washington, D.C., as was joint cooperation on the management plan.

But she said no formal proposal was offered by FWS, and she expressed surprise that the ideas were being viewed as one.

"That may be their intent, but it's not our understanding at all," she said.

"If that was a proposal to us, we were not clear about that and did not accept it as such," she added, although she was encouraged over the agency's renewed interest in implementing the Tribal Self-Governance Act.

The act requires the Department of the Interior to turn over agency management activities on reservations to tribes that can demonstrate the capability to run the programs to federal standards.

In a Monday statement, Burns expressed disappointment with Babbitt's "decision to award certain management responsibilities" to the tribes.

He said the secretary had ignored requests for public involvement and

See **BISON,** *Page B2*

Bison

Continued

instead instructed FWS to draft an agreement covering fire suppression, visitor center management and review of the management plan for the bison range.

"Major changes in federal management should not be conducted in secret meetings and without public input," Burns said. "It is an insult to the people of Montana to subvert the public process and dictate this change from Washington, D.C."

He termed it "the most recent example of the Clinton administration treating Westerners with a heavy hand and shoving policies down our throats without even the courtesy of allowing us to be heard."

Vowing that he "will not let this slide by," Burns said he will ask the Senate Indian Affairs Committee to hold a hearing in Montana on any agreement struck under the Native American Sovereignty Act.

Swaney expressed disappointment over the slant of Burns' press release, which "serves to perpetuate mistrust and encourage people to believe we're doing something illegal and undercover."

She said tribal leaders met with Babbitt and FWS officials on Oct. 18 and on Nov. 15 after seeking such a meeting for more than a year to find out what the secretary had in mind when an earlier tribal management proposal was answered with a counter-proposal from FWS.

She said the tribes made it clear that the meetings were for general discussion, not negotiations to reach a decision.

"Our relationship with the (Fish and Wildlife) Service has been rocky at best," Swaney said.

"We're trying to explore whether or not we can come to a workable solution."

Swaney said the tribes and FWS had planned joint press releases when negotiations began, and she added that the 90-day Congressional review period after a deal is reached "is intended to be the public comment period."

She also said that FWS officials had been unable to give the tribes a copy of the current management plan for the bison range and had indicated that it was incomplete.

Gertler said a 1967 management plan is out of date and is slated for revision. He said FWS had contemplated a joint planning process under which the tribes and FWS would work together to gather information and hold public meetings.

"I think the most important focus is the management scheme, not who the manager is," Swaney said. "That seems to be the real issue."

November 17, 1996 The Missoulian

MATCH OF THE MONTH

Friendship, memories will endure after match ends

Big Sister Sue Fisher and Little Sister Cassie have been matched since august 1995. Sue is a teller supervisor for First Bank while Cassie spends her days as an eighth grader at Washington School.

Sue appreciates Cassie's innocence and enthusiasm and has enjoyed seeing her mature throughout the course of the match.

Cassie believes that Sue is easy to talk with, someone she can trust and confide in, and especially values her sense of self-confidence. Sue said that she and Cassie have had a lot of fun doing things together and they have really grown close as their friendship has progressed.

Cassie's mom, Terry, says it has been a great match — Sue has helped Cassie experience new and different things and become more active.

Together, Cassie and Sue have enjoyed hiking, bowling, watching movies, and baking. Word has it that they both won second place for their delicious banana bread at this year's fair. Cassie and Sue both enjoy volleyball and have become big Lady Griz supporters this season. Cassie says her all-time favorite outing with Sue was when they went to the Bison Range; no bison … but what was that bear doing out there!

Their relationship now will be from a distance. To further her career, Sue must move to Ohio at the end of the year. Although this will formally end the match, Sue says they will definitely stay in contact. Good luck to Sue in her new life. Despite the miles, the friendship and special times will always be there.

December 16, 1996 The Missoulian

“Bison Range may expand

Moiese – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wants to buy 29 acres adjacent to the National Bison Range.

The land is along the north boundary of the Bison Range: in the SE1/4SW1/4 Section 26, Township 10N, Range 21W. The money would come from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and would be added as a boundary expansion.

The agency wants to buy the property to decrease trespass, preclude further housing development, limit predation by domestic animals and to improve management of the refuge boundary.

Comments on the expansion will be accepted through Feb. 1. Write Bill West, National Bison Range, 132 Bison Range Road, Moiese, Mont., 59824. Or call West at (406) 644-2211.” January 16, 1997 The Missoulian

“Bison Range plan under way

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is writing a comprehensive management plan for the National Bison Range Complex.

In the process, refuge managers will identify refuge goals, long range objectives, and strategies to carry out the goals and objectives. The resulting plan will the public a picture of the refuge’s future direction.

Issues to be addressed include grassland and wetland management, exotic weeds and public use.

To be placed on the mailing list to receive information about the planning process, write to Refuge Manager, U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Bison Range, 12 Bison Range Road, Moiese, Mont. 59824 or 406-644-2211.

The National Bison Range Complex includes the National Bison Range, Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge, Pablo National Wildlife Refuge, Swan River National Wildlife Refuge, 12 waterfowl production areas in Lake and Flathead counties, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife easement program in northwestern Montana.” Sherry Devlin, Missoulian January 17, 1997 The Missoulian

“Officials meet today on Bison Range plan by John Stromnes of the Missoulian

Moiese – The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service will meet with invited state, local and tribal officials Thursday morning at the National Bison Range to discuss what should be included in a new long-term management plan for the range and associated federally managed public land, including Ninepipe, Pablo and Swan River national wildlife refuges and the Northwest Montana Wetlands Management District, involving 12 waterfowl protection areas in Lake and Flathead counties.

Dave Wiseman, refuge manager, said the comprehensive management planning is distinct from the controversial proposal by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes to assume governance of the National Bison Range through a process called “compacting.”

Governance is who does the management. The plan involves what is to be done,” he said.

The meeting will start at 9:30 at the Bison Range. It is not a public meeting, in the sense that participation of the general public will not be sought. But interested citizens ho have not been specifically invited may attend if there is enough room in the conference center at the range. Public participation in the planning process will come later this spring at series of open houses. Dates are not yet set.

Wiseman said this will be the first comprehensive management plan to be developed since a master plan was approved in 1972. It will identify refuge goals and plan long-range objectives and strategies that will carry out the purposes for which the areas were established. The plan should provide the public with a clear picture of the future management direction of the complex, even though governance issues will not be addressed.

Some specific issues which will be discussed includes grassland and wetland management, exotic weeds, and public use.” January 30, 1997 The Missoulian

“Susan Inez McCollum

St. Ignatius – Susan Inez McCollum, 64, of St. Ignatius passed away peacefully Monday, Feb. 17, at her family home in the company of her three children.

She was born Oct. 7, 1932, in Laurel to Victor and Helen Williams. She and her family moved to several locations in Montana and spent some time in Washington and Oregon. Susan graduated from high school in 1950 in St. Ignatius.

In 1951, a daughter, Cherie, was born to Susan and her first husband, Richard Morigeau.

Later Susan worked for several years at the Montauk Café in St. Ignatius where she made many friends and first met Bruce McCollum. On Oct. 30, 1959, she was married to Bruce at the old McCollum ranch.

Shortly after her second daughter, Mary, was born in April of 1962, the family moved to Golden, Colo., and Bruce attended school in Denver. About a year later they returned to the Mission Valley where a son, Will, was born in 1965.

The family ranched in the Mission Valley for many years and during this time, Susan worked from 1970 to 1992 at the National Bison Range as a clerk/secretary.

Susan loved to garden. She always had beautiful flowers in the yard and plants all over her house. She was a loving, patient mother and wife and later had several grandchildren she loved to spend time with them.

On Oct. 13, 1991, Susan was baptized as a Jehovah's Witness. She gained much strength from her Christian brothers and sisters and the faith she found through them and the Bible.

Survivors include two daughters and their husbands, Cherie and Jim Landis of Toledo, Ore., and Mary and Joe Read of Ronan; a sonand his wife, Will and Paula McCollum of St. Ignatius; two brothers, and their wives, Don and Marina Williams of Arizona and Vic and Joyce of Texas; seven grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; several nephews and nieces.

Memorial services will be 11 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 20, at Kingdom Hall in St. Ignatius with Robert Martinez officiating. A reception will follow at the St. Ignatius Senior Citizens Center.

The family suggests memorials may be made in Susan's name to the Missoula County Cancer Association, 3005 Queen, Missoula, Mont., 59801, or to a charity of the donor's choice.

Arrangements are under the direction and care of the Sunset Memorial Funeral Home in Missoula." February 19, 1997 The Missoulian

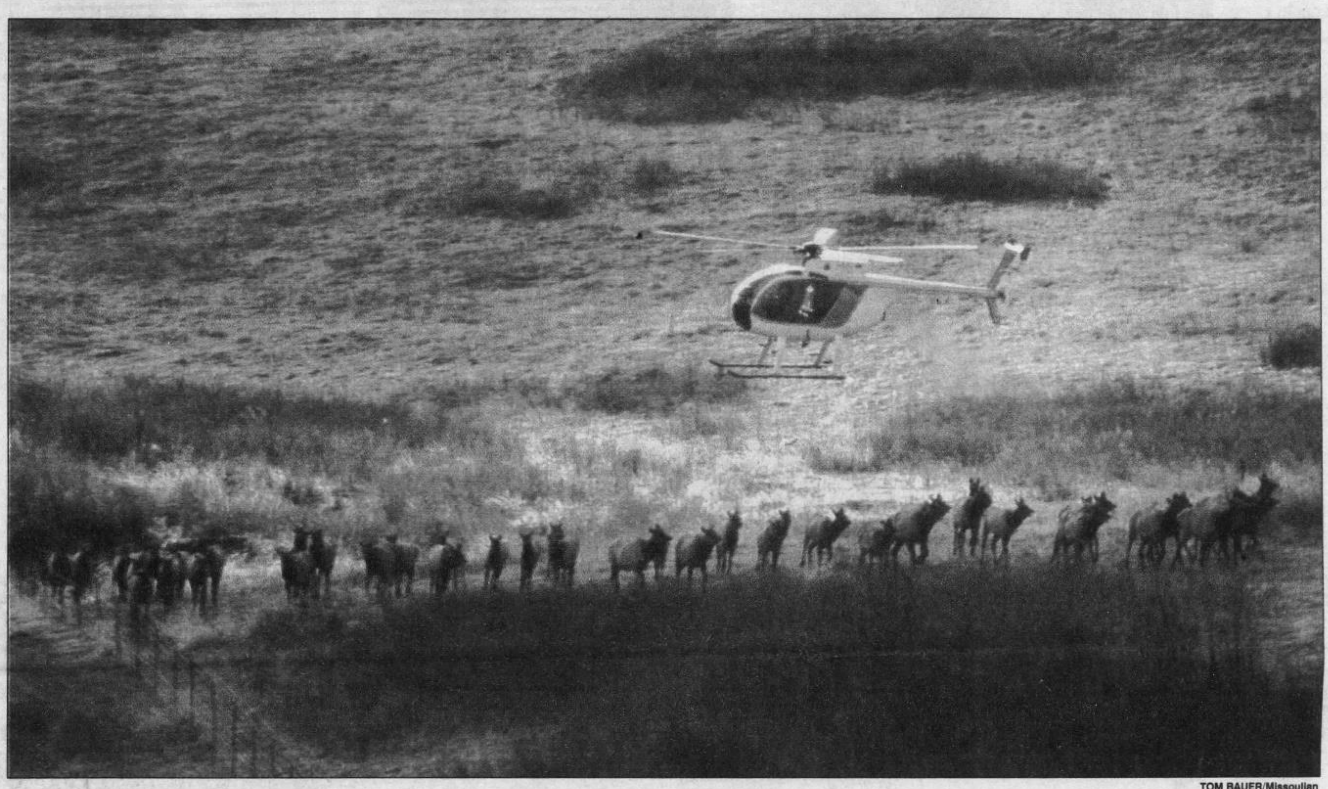
“Prescribed burning planned on Bison Range

Moiese – The National Bison Range will burn thick underbrush, duff and grass under old-growth pine forests on the refuge during April.

Range manager David Wiseman said he is worried about the build-up of fuels in the older forests.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribal fire management staff and the U.S. Forest Service will work together on the burns. About 480 spread over five states are planned for burning.

Visitors taking the 19-mile Red Sleep Mountain Drive this summer will have a chance to see the results of the spring fires, Wiseman said.” Sherry Devlin, Missoulian March 26, 1997 The Missoulian



TOM BAUER/Missoulian

A helicopter moves about 40 elk towards a pen on the National Bison Range Wednesday during a roundup that is part of a periodic reduction of the area's herd. In a few days, the elk will be transplanted to new ranges in western Montana.

Roundup on the range

Spring culling at National Bison Range sows seeds for new elk herds

By DARYL GADBOW
of the Missoulian

MOIESE – With a little coaxing from a low-flying helicopter, about 40 elk at the National Bison Range began a journey to new homes in western Montana Wednesday morning.

Half the elk will go to the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks and the rest to the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The FWP's elk will be transplanted in the Thompson River area southwest of Kalispell. The tribe's elk are destined for their new range near Niarada in the northwest corner of the Flathead Indian Reservation.

Wednesday's roundup was part of a periodic reduction of the Bison Range elk herd to keep their numbers within the capacity of the range to support them, according to Bison Range manager David Wiseman.

"It depends on range conditions for each species," he said. "We try to keep the elk population between 125 and 150. We have about 200 now."

Already this spring, the Bison Range sent 11 elk to Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge in Nebraska, Wiseman said.

The Bison Range has a long history of providing elk to start herds in other locations or to augment existing populations.

"Do you know where the Yellowstone Park elk came from?" asked Wiseman. "Right here."

Wiseman had hoped to ship out a mix of about 30 cows and calves and 10 bulls Wednesday.

"Our herd is skewed toward bulls," he said. "We keep more bulls than a regular land manager does. It keeps production down and gives people a chance to see more big bulls. But we don't want to keep taking cows and calves all the time so they're not all related."

But Wiseman's plans were foiled when a group of bulls, which were separated from the cows and calves, refused to cooperate with FWP helicopter pilot Lee Anderson of Helena.

"I could have run into them with the helicopter and I think those bulls would have still gone their own way," said Anderson. "They just scattered into the timber and it was all over."

But the cows and calves came along without a hitch, despite being herded about three miles over rough, mountainous terrain, with Anderson's copter hovering and dodging just 20 feet above them.

"You've got to understand a little about the herding instinct of animals," explained

See **ROUNDUP,** *Page A12*

Missoulian

Cont.

“Anderson. “It’s not like just moving animals from one side of a lot to the other. One big cow – the leader – kept wanting to run back up the hill. The rest wanted to follow her. So you try to use the leader to your advantage.

“You can watch’em learn as you go along. They’ll try one thing to get away, and it doesn’t work, so they try a new trick.”

FWP regional wildlife manager Harvey Nyberg, who will take charge of the state agency’s portion of the elk, said he wasn’t disappointed in the lack of bulls in the group rounded up at the Bison Range.

“We don’t like to get a lot of bulls,” said Nyberg. “We don’t like to get involved with a situation that looks like a put-and-take operation. We like to get a mixed herd, but more cows than bulls.

“We’d take a few more bulls, but I’m very satisfied with this group.”

Nyberg said members of a local chapter of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation had volunteered to transport the elk by horse trailer to the Thompson River area.

“They’ve got surplus elk here,” said Nyberg. “They’ve got to put’em someplace and we’ve got a place for ’em. We’ve got various places, in fact, but there’s so much snow this year our options are limited. You’ve got to be able to get a horse trailer into it.”

Before the elk can leave the Bison Range, Wiseman sad, they must be tested brucellosis and tuberculosis. The tuberculosis test takes three days, so the elk will be held in pens until they are moved Saturday.

Neither disease has been a problem with Bison range animals, including bison, Wiseman said.

We haven’t had a positive brucellosis test in over 20 years,” he said. “And we’ve been certified brucellosis-free since early ‘80s.”

No further reduction in the Bison Range elk herd are planned this spring, but Wiseman said a few more may be removed in the fall. In fact, the Bison Range might be willing to accept a few elk from outside the refuge to improve the genetic diversity of the herd.

“We haven’t seen any signs of inbreeding yet,” said Wiseman. “But it’s a lot easier to prevent than to cure.”

In the meantime, the band of 40 that was rounded up Wednesday will get a few days rest before heading off to their new homes.” March 27, 1997 The Missoulian

MOVE 'EM OUT

AP PHOTO

A HELICOPTER herds about 40 elk toward a holding pen on the National Bison Range at Moise during a recent roundup — part of a periodic reduction of the herd. After being tested for brucellosis and tuberculosis, the elk will be transported to other areas of western Montana.

March 31, 1997 The Missoulian

"Explore the world above at Bison Range workshop

Teachers an explore planets, meteors, stars and comets, as well as myths and stories about the heavens, at a discovery workshop at the National Bison Range on Saturday, April 26.

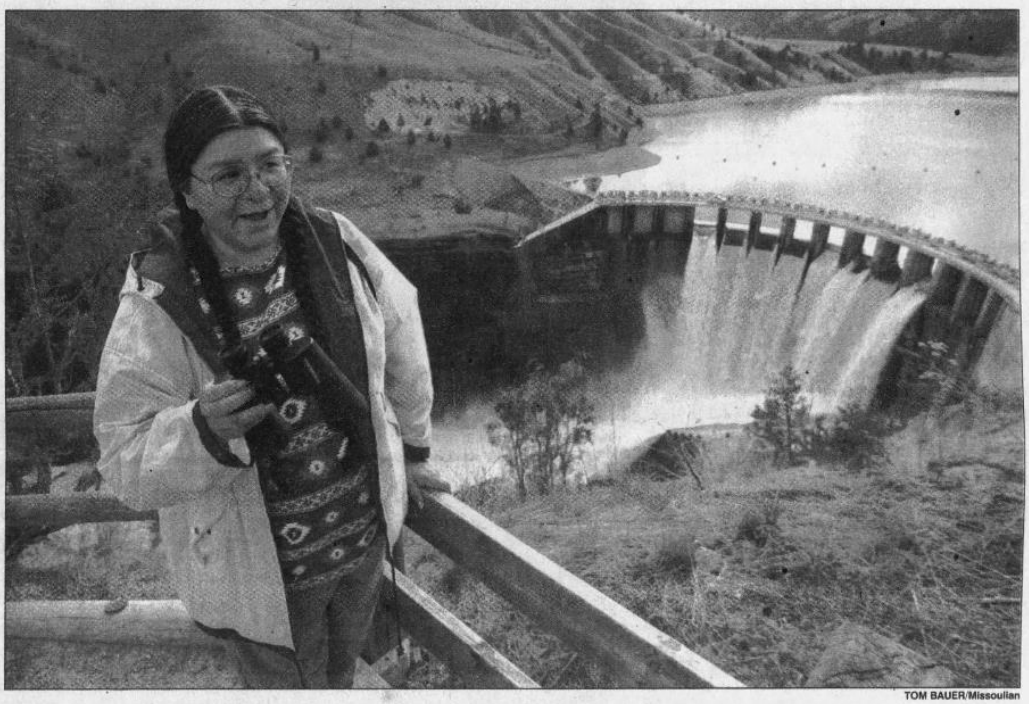
The workshop is sponsored by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Participating teachers re eligible to receive up to 10 recertification credits. The workshop also will cover cloud formations and weather phenomena. An afternoon field trip will focus on flight patterns and identification of birds. An optional evening field trip from 6 to 9 p. m., will cover night flying creatures such as bats and owls.

Activities and handouts for teachers to use in classrooms will be resented. Preregistration is required. For more information and registration forms, call Pat Jamieson or Terri Middlemist at the National Bison Range, at 406-644-2211. There is a $10 registration fee." April 10, 1997 The Missoulian

Tribal tours

Native Ed-Ventures offers a unique view of reservation sights

By DARYL GADBOW
of the Missoulian



TOM BAUER/Missoulian

Mary Jane Charlo guides Native Ed-Ventures tours of the Flathead Indian Reservation, visiting sites like Kerr Dam and giving a personal perspective when she can.

PABLO – When Mary Jane Charlo was a child, she was among the last students to attend the Ursuline boarding academy for Indians at the St. Ignatius Mission before the school was closed in the early 1960s.

One of her chores there was to clean the church's choir loft. One day she and a friend decided to sneak a puff of a cigarette while they were alone in the loft. Later, out of guilt and fear of reprisal from the all-seeing saints, Charlo confessed her transgression to one of the nuns.

One option of the powwow tours is staying with a host family on the reservation.

She thought she would be punished, she said, "but nothing ever happened. We were unsupervised a lot of the time there. I liked it a lot. I had more freedom there than I did at home. My parents were very strict."

Personal stories like that are the kind visitors are treated to if Charlo is their guide on a Native Ed-Ventures tour of the Flathead Indian Reservation.

Native Ed-Ventures is a tourism service of the Salish and Kootenai Tribes' People's Center in Pablo. The business offers guided tours that provide a native perspective on the history of the reservation and the culture of the people.

Several tour packages are available on a regular basis. The full-day "A Walk Through Time" tour includes visits to Kerr Dam, the National Bison Range, the People's Center museum, and the St. Ignatius Mission.

There's also a half-day "History, Heritage and Culture" tour of Kerr Dam and the People's Center museum. Powwow tours are available during the Arlee Powwow, July 2-7, and the Elmo Powwow, July 16-21. Three-day "Traditional Encampment" tours will be scheduled twice this summer, in July and August. Customized itineraries for families, groups or individuals can be arranged.

The St. Ignatius Mission is the favorite tour stop for Charlo, who was the first guide hired by Native Ed-Ventures when it started in 1994.

"I like to take people there because I can talk about my personal experience there with the Jesuit missionaries," Charlo said. "So it ends up being a real personal experience for them."

And the sharing of experience can work both ways, she said.

"I had a woman from Hollywood come stay with us to see the powwow," she said. "She obviously had a lot of money and she was all dressed up. I thought 'God, do I have to have that woman stay with me and camp with me at the powwow?'

"But this woman, she was the sweetest woman. We had a lot of fun and got to be good friends. I've really learned a lot from meeting interesting people."

FLATHEAD FOCUS

A group of visitors from England that she guided on a tour of the National Bison Range provided another interesting cultural exchange for Charlo.

"They were talking about apartheid," she said. "And they said that if England left South Africa its economy would fail. I got in an argument with them about it. I compared what the English did in South Africa with what the whites did to Indians in America, putting them on reservations.

"I guess they weren't angry because they recommended me as a guide to another couple visiting from England."

Charlo, who recently was named education director of the People's Center, manages to effortlessly weave history, personal anecdotes and current issues into her tour presentations, which seem more like a friendly conversation.

"I'm a tribal member and a descendent of all three tribes – Salish, Kootenai and Pend d'Oreille," said Charlo. "One of the reasons they hired me is that I know a lot of people and pretty much get along with them.

"I grew up in Evaro and went to the Ursuline boarding school. But I graduated from high school at Frenchtown and graduated from the University of Montana. So I'm pretty much well-rounded."

"She's our best guide," said Native Ed-Ventures manager Marianne "Wally" Gopher. "She brings a lot of humor into it."

All guides are hired on a contract basis for each individual

See **TOUR,** *Page A10*

TOUR PRICES

1. **A Walk Through Time –** A full-day tour, approximately 6 hours, $50 per person, two-person minimum.
2. **History, Heritage and Culture –** A half-day tour, approximately 3 hours, $30 per person, two-person minimum.
3. **Powwows –** Arlee, July 2-7; Elmo, July 16-21; $35 per person, two-person minimum.
4. **Traditional Encampment –** Three-day tours, call for dates and details.
5. **Customized itineraries –** Multiday itineraries are available for families, groups or individuals. Call for details.
6. **People's Center Museum –** No charge. Call ahead for personal guided tour, or visit on your own.

■ For more information about Native Ed-Ventures tours, call 1-800-883-5344.

Tour

Continued

tour, she said.

"I have a long resource list of guides," Gopher added. "When people call and request a tour, I get information on them so I can pick the right guide for them.

"If their interest is anthropology, I might get a professor from the (Salish-Kootenai) College. Or if they're interested in wildlife, I can get someone from the tribes' natural resource department, like a biologist or wildlife student. We have a lot of expertise in certain areas within our tribal departments."

The majority of people who have taken the tours are from out of state, she said, with a surprising number from other countries. Advertising in "Native Peoples" and "Rocky Mountain International" magazines has given the tours broad national and international exposure.

Few local residents have taken advantage of the tours so far, according to Gopher.

"They're probably just not aware of it," she said. "I would think it would be an excellent option for teachers in outlying towns around the reservation to familiarize themselves with the reservation and its history."

After a slow start in 1994 and 1995, Native Ed-Ventures picked up steam last summer, giving tours to 40 groups.

"Hopefully, this year we'll increase that," said Gopher. "It takes a while to establish a credible business."

While the "heritage and history" tours have been most in demand by visitors, Gopher said, there has been increasing interest in the powwow tours.

One option of the powwow tours is staying with a host family on the reservation.

"With a small group or a family, we try to set them up to stay with a local family as their hosts and guides, to show them around during the powwows," Gopher said.

"That's when we get the most requests for that service.

"A couple from Belgium stayed with a lady in Elmo for the powwow last year. She's going to come back for the Arlee Powwow this year. There's been more interest in that lately. It gives visitors more of a personal visit. They're not treated as tourists.

"And in most cases they establish a friendship. That's why I set them up with a family with similar interests. Then they leave with more than just a passing knowledge about the reservation. Once they get that oral interpretation, especially from a native person, I think it means more to them."

Tours of the People's Center museum, with its displays of historical artifacts, photos and native art works, are available at no charge.

Dalon Weaselhead, the museum's curator, or other members of the People's Center staff are available to conduct prearranged personal tours. Or visitors can make the tour on their own with a tape-recorded audio presentation.

Weaselhead said he often conducts tours for school children.

"I show them the buffalo-bladder containers," he said, "and say 'this is nature's original Tupperware.' I try to get them laughing. It's a hands-on kind of museum."

In the museum, youngsters can go inside a "tule tipi" made of cattails, and sit on a buffalo robe. They can also see toys, games, tools and clothing the Indians fashioned from natural materials and learn how they used them.

Most of Native Ed-Ventures' tours feature a "step-on" guide who accompanies visitors in their vehicle. But other arrangements can be made, Gopher said.

"We can provide buses for groups," she said, "or horses if they want to ride. Or they can take a hike. Like I said, we have a lot of resources. My motto here is anything's possible."

May 3, 1997 The Missoulian

“Head to where the birds fly, climb Red Sleep

Moiese – International Migratory Bird Day takes flight at the National Bison Range on Saturday, May 10.

As part of the celebration, the Bison Range will open Red Sleep Mountain Drive – a 19-mile, one-way gravel tour that climbs 2,000 feet to high point on the range, then descends along steep, 10 percent-grade hills.

The range will open at 7 a.m. Visitors should start the Red Sleep Mountain excursion by 7 p. m. to finish the trip before the range closes at dark. Fees will be charged for the drives.

A bird-watching expedition along Red Sleep Mountain Drive will begin at 8 a.m. on Bird Day. An advanced birding hike and beginning bird walk also are planned. All trips have limited space. Call the Bison Range at 406-644-2211 to register.

At 1 p. m. in the visitor’s center, Dale Becker will give a talk on the reintroduction of trumpeter wans in the Mission Valley. Nineteen birds were released las May at Pablo National Wildlife Refuge as part of a plan to establish a population in the valley. Becker will discuss the reintroduction and the probability of the birds’ return this year.

Other activities planned for Migratory Bird Day include an 11 a.m. talk on bluebird habitat and houses, talks at noon and 2 p.m. on attracting and feeding birds, and trivia and identification contests throughout the day – all at the visitor’s center.” May 8, 1997 The Missoulian

“Auduboners visit Stone, Freezeout

Five Valleys Audubon Society will sponsor two outings this weekend.

The first: A half-day trip to Stone Container Corp.’s settling ponds to look for migrating shore birds. Larry Weeks will lead the trip. Meet at Adams Field House at 8 a.m. or at the mill at 8:30 a.m.

The second: A weekend campout at Freezeout Lake and Pishkin Reservoir led by Joe Regan. Reserve a spot by calling 721-164.

Five Valley’s regular monthly meeting is at 7:30 p.m. Monday in Room 307 of the University of Montana Botany Building.

The program: A talk by Dave Wiseman, refuge manager at the National Bison Range, Wiseman will present a slide program on birding opportunities and activities at the Mission Valley’s wildlife refuges.

Wiseman has experience on the staff or as manager at Flint Hills, Marais des Cygne, Tishomingo and Sequoia refuges." May 8, 1997 The Missoulian

Five Valleys Audubon Society, monthly meeting, 7:30 p.m., Botany Building, Room 307, University of Montana campus. Program: Dave Wiseman, National Bison Range." May 12, 1997 The Missoulian

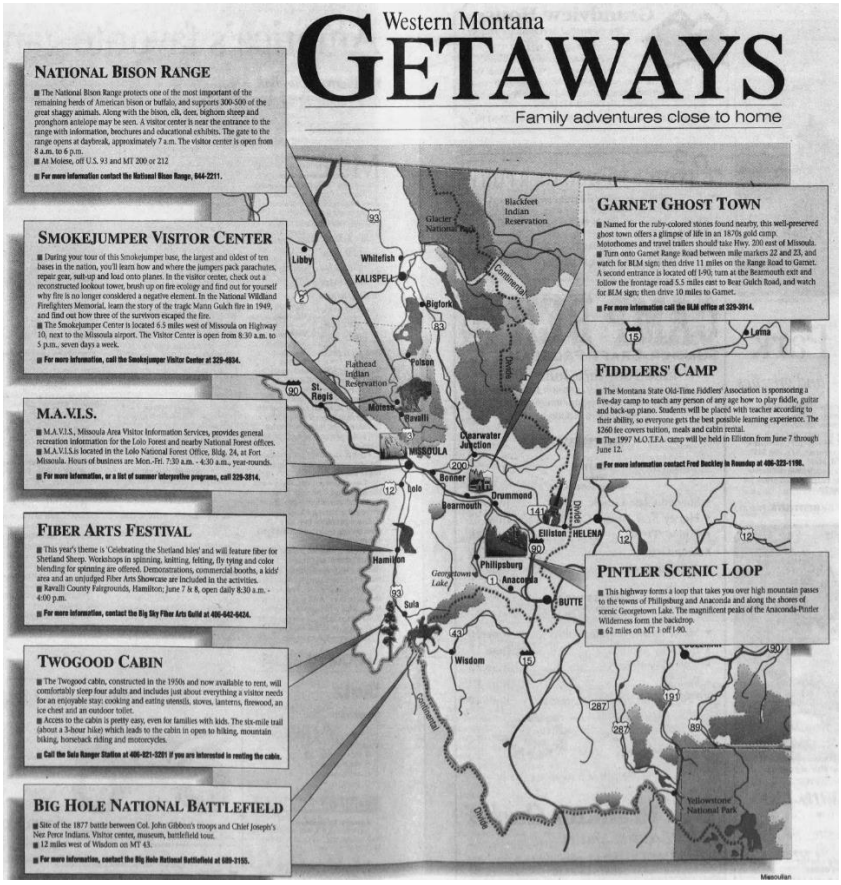
"Bison Range ride set for Sunday

Moiese – The Mission Rangers Saddle Clun will sponsor its annual National Bison Range Trail Ride Sunday. The ride begins at 9 a.m. and ends around 4 p.m.

Tickets are $20 each. Included is a steak lunch served by the St. Ignatius Chamber of Commerce.

There is also to be a fund-raising dinner hosted by the St. Ignatius Baseball Program and a dance with music by Hot Tamales tonight

Tickets for the Bison Range ride must be purchased by today. For information call (406) 745-3024." May 17, 1997 The Missoulian



May 18, 1997 The Missoulian

“Moiese Bison Range trip for seniors –

Transportation, guides and lunch provided. Plan on light hiking and photo opportunities. Meets June 24, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For ages 50 and older. Fee is $35. Register by June 13.” June 3, 1997 The Missoulian & June 10, 1997 The Missoulian

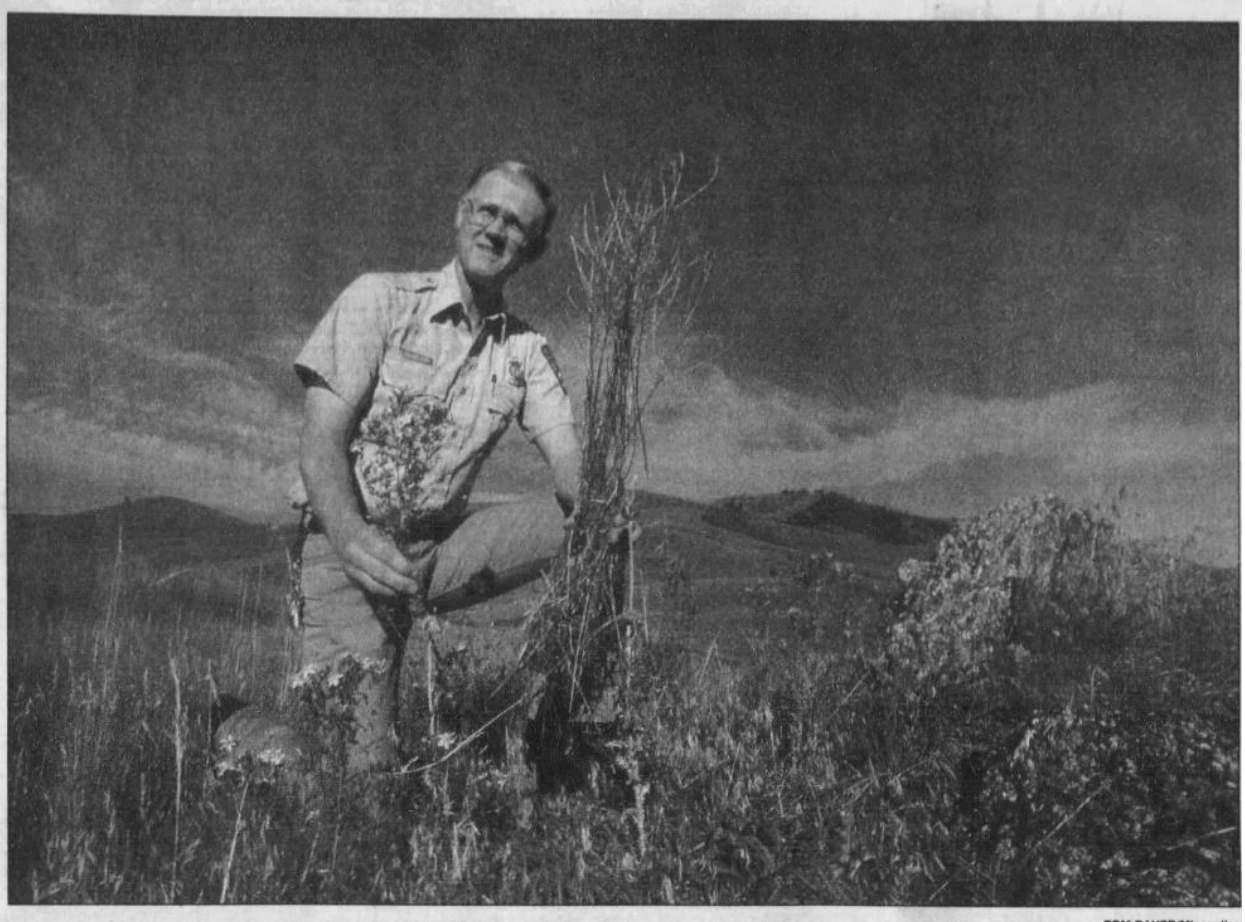
“Take a Llama trek

Join Tranquility Base Lalamas for a daylong trek to Squaw Peak on Friday, Aug. 1, in a program sponsored by the Missoula Parks and Recreation Department.

From the summit, enjoy views of the National Bison Range, Flathead Lake, Mission Mountains and Bitterroots. Lunch is provided. The registration fee is $37 per person. The deadline for registration is Friday.

Bring snacks, water and a jacket. Wear hiking boots. Llamas will carry your lunch and gear … but not you. The event is designed for ages 10 and up. Children ages 7 to 9 may register if accompanied by a parent or guardian. For more information call the Parks and Recreation office at 721-PARK.” July 24, 1997 The Missoulian

▼ Winning the war on weeds with ...



TOM BAUER/Missoulian

Bill West, assistant manager at the National Bison Range, shows proof of the success of the chrysolina beetle in controlling St. Johnswort: the dried remnants of the waist-high weed common on the bison range two years ago and the sickly, shortened weeds only seen in small patches this summer.

A little beetle juice

Shiny black bandits chew through choking weeds at the National Bison Range

By **SHERRY DEVLIN**
of the Missoulian

MOIESE – The Palouse prairie grasses grow strong and tall on Antelope Ridge this summer, their green and golden blanket touched only by the shadow of passing clouds.

Theirs is a prairie reborn, silent but stunning proof of a biological solution to a biological problem.

Bill West is not surprised, but he is thankful.

Two years ago, West stood across from this same ridge on the National Bison Range, in the foothills of the Mission Mountains, and lamented the loss of a grassland that helped to save the American bison from extinction.

The hillside was stained with a rusty waist-high weed called St. Johnswort, a Mediterranean plant that had overwhelmed 8,000 acres of the 18,500-acre bison range.

"Our native plants are sick," West said then. And no one seemed to care – not the public, not politicians, not policymakers. "I couldn't fill a phone booth in Washington, D.C., for a weed meeting," he said.

Then West, the bison range's assistant manager, witnessed an incredible demonstration of the chrysolina beetle's appetite for St. Johnswort.

Working at ground level and just below the surface, the shiny black-metallic beetle chews away each new shoot offered by the weed and eventually starves the roots – and kills the plant.

At the bison range, the beetle reduced the acreage of St. Johnswort to less than 400 acres by this summer, a 95 percent reduction. And the plants that remain are weak-stalked and no more than ankle-high.

See **BEETLE,** *Page A3*

Beetle

Continued

The native grasses – Idaho fescue, bluebunch wheatgrass and rough fescue – are back, reclaiming their place on hillsides and in gullies. And West is attracting at least a bit more attention to his war on weeds.

"The bugs did the job," West said one morning last week. "The St. Johnswort story tells me that we can have a positive effect by doing something. The idea of giving up or of letting weeds take their course is not something I could promote or accept. Not when I look out across this salad bowl of a prairie."

The National Bison Range and its related refuges and wetlands in the Mission and Flathead valleys harbor one of the largest intact remnants of the Palouse prairie, maybe the largest.

It also has the nation's largest, most comprehensive biological control program for weeds – insects intentionally let loose on unwanted exotic plants. Twenty-three species of insects are at work on the bison range's 12 species of noxious weeds.

The most visible results are those produced by the chrysolina beetle on St. Johnswort, although West also is encouraged by the work of the weevil galerucella calmariensis on purple loosestrife – "it looks like a fire went through and the only thing that burned was purple loosestrife."

"If we had tried to use herbicides, it would have been a $400,000 operation – just for the St. Johnswort," West said. "And we would have killed the other broad-leafed plants and caused all the other related impacts on the environment."

"It would have been irresponsible," said bison range manager David Wiseman. "We would have destroyed the prairie."

Of course, Wiseman said, he would never have had $400,000 to spend on herbicides, as that's about half the budget he has per year to run the entire range.

Both Wiseman and West cautioned, though, that insects – biocontrols – are not the "the silver bullet" that will push back each successive invasion of exotic plants.

"There are a dozen exotics that we worry about, and each needs its own strategy," West said. For some weeds, insects are the answer or part of the answer. For others, herbicides are required. For some, there is no answer yet.

"No one thing is going to work on larger landscapes," Wiseman said. "Spraying herbicides should be your last alternative, but you need it if nothing else works."

It is called integrated pest management, Wiseman said.

The bison range is using five different biocontrols on knapweed, but none have proven as voracious as the chrysolina beetle or the aplocera plagiata moth (which chews leaves and stalks) on St. Johnswort.

West also hasn't found an effective biocontrol for dalmatian toadflax, the most worrisome weed on the bison range. Aerial spraying may be needed, he said.

And he is worried about the approach of leafy spurge, which is working its way down the Clark Fork River and up the Flathead – and which "takes in herbicides and spits them out."

Yellow star thistle is also nearing the bison range. The thistle, West said, is a relative of knapweed, "but one with big, ugly thorns. You can't even walk through it, and it's in the Snake River country already."

For new arrivals, West advocates a quick response with herbicides. "Nuke them," he said. "You shouldn't delay and let new ones take hold."

For large infestations, like St. Johnswort in 1995, biocontrols are the most economical, efficient and earth-friendly response, he said.

"We are trying to get a good balance here on the bison range," said Wiseman. "But nationally, we need more recognition of the extent of the weed problem in the West. The government simply hasn't recognized that weeds are as much a threat to the western United States as are wildfires."

Weed-control money still must come from the bison range's discretionary budget. Research into new biocontrols is limited, and focuses more on agricultural weeds than on exotics in grasslands.

"It's not like a fire, where someone drops out of the sky with expertise and money," said West. "The government is waking up. There is some talk of budgets and such. But biocontrol isn't talked about nearly enough. And neither is the integrated approach that we believe in."

But West's got the proof – on Antelope Ridge and dozens of other ridges like it this summer. There was no yellow bloom of St. Johnswort this spring; there'll be no rusty stain as the weed dries this summer and fall. There is only the wind and the silent waves of wheatgrass and fescue.

"The natives," West said.

See for yourself

■ The National Bison Range and Lake County Weed Control Office will sponsor an all-day tour Thursday to show off their success in fighting St. Johnswort and purple loosestrife.

The program starts at 10:45 a.m. at the Lake County Extension Office in Ronan and will end at about 5 p.m. at the National Bison Range. Bring a sack lunch; the tour won't stop at noon to eat. Drinks will be provided en route.

For more information, call the Lake County Weed Office at 406-883-7330 or the National Bison Range at 406-644-2211.

August 25, 1997 The Missoulian

"Hit the Bison Range

Moiese – Fall is a great time to visit the National Bison Range to observe deer, elk, pronghorn antelope and bison undisturbed by the usual summer crowds.

Starting Tuesday, Sept. 2, the Bison Range will begin its fall hours. The visitors center will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. and scenic tours will be open from 7 a.m. until dark. Visitors need to begin the Red Sleep Mountain Drive by 6 p.m. to complete it befo0re the main gate closes at dark. The 19-mile, one-way road takes about 90 minutes to two hours to drive. The shorter Buffalo Prairie Drive takes about 20 to 30 minutes. There is a $4 fee per vehicle. A Bison Range season pass is $10.

For more information, call 406-644-2211." August 28, 1997 The Missoulian

Much snow, many water holes ... expect a good waterfowl season

Nesting was late this year and predators plentiful, but a large number of young birds were banded in August

By DARYL GADBOW
of the Missoulian

Western Montana waterfowl hunters are looking forward to a banner season, what with a longer season, more liberal bag limits and record numbers of ducks and geese in the Pacific Flyway.

Of course, most of those ducks are still in Canada and hunters here won't see them until some wintry weather sends them south.

But when the season opens this Saturday, hunters can expect to see plenty of local birds in the Mission and Flathead valleys, according to state and federal wildlife managers.

Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge manager John Grant of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks said ducks and geese are plentiful in the Mission Valley.

"It seems the nesting season got a late start," said Grant. "It didn't look too good early. But the number of birds banded (by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the University of Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit) in the valley this year was the best ever."

Joe Ball of the UM research unit said he isn't sure how to account for the large number of young ducks banded in August.

In the nesting areas he and his students surveyed, ducks were hit hard by predators this spring, Ball said.

"They didn't do too well," he said.

Skunks, red foxes and coyotes did most of the damage to nesting ducks, Ball added.

But the annual banding project in August turned up large numbers of young birds. He said the birds may have migrated into the valley early, or they may have been raised locally in the area's many other wetlands.

Grant believes the latter situation is the case.

"The way conditions were," said Grant, "with a lot of cover and water, the local birds might have been spread out more during nesting."

The outlook for geese is excellent, according to Bill West of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the National Bison Range in Moiese.

"Once again, we have really good geese populations," said West. "I wouldn't be surprised if there are 7,000 to 8,000 Canada geese between Kalispell and the Mission Valley.

"At one time there was a 20-year period in the '70s and '80s when we thought we'd be lucky to see 3,000. They are pests in some places. But in most places people are taking advantage of the three-goose (daily) limit we have now."

Last winter's abundant snowpack has resulted in increased wetland areas, Grant said.

"There's a lot of water around," he said. "There are a lot of potholes east of the highway (U.S. 93) that have water that were dried up for the past couple of years. And there are ducks on quite a few different wetlands. So there will be more hunting opportunities opened up."

Hunting pits at Ninepipe will be issued by drawing this Saturday, Grant said. The drawing will be held at the FWP check-in area west of the reservoir on Ninepipe Road at 6 a.m. After opening day, pits will be assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.

Waterfowl numbers in the Bitterroot Valley are still relatively low, according to Pat Gonzalez, manager of the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge in Stevensville.

"We've got a lot of diversity in species with the birds that are here," said Gonzalez. "But we don't have high numbers of ducks yet. We haven't had a lot of cold weather to bring the birds down from the north. I think it's going to be a good year, though, with a lot of opportunities for hunting."

Pheasant numbers in the Mission Valley appear to be about average, according to Ball. Pheasant hunting season opens Saturday, Oct. 11.

"Six weeks ago, I'd have said it was pretty slim," Ball said. "But they seem to be coming out of the woodwork ever since. It looks like the pheasant population is at least average."

A late nesting season for pheasants will result in a lot of immature birds in the field when the hunting season opens, Grant said.

"A lot of the birds are really small right now," he said. "They're about the size of a partridge."

October 2, 1997 The Missoulian

MONTANA LIFE

Outdoors

MISSOULIAN SECTION

C

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1997

Just before the sun comes up, Darren Thomas prepares a couple of the horses to be used for the annual bison roundup at the National Bison Range at Moiese.

Bison are 'five times stronger and 10 times faster than a cow. If they look at you, you'd better just let them go.'

– Brent Woodger, National Bison Range

Wranglers cut a small bunch of bison from the main herd and head them toward the corrals. Below right, Brent Woodger and his horse watch the bison before beginning the chase.

OUT ON THE RANGE

Driving bison

The annual National Bison Range roundup pits the wranglers against the bulls

Written by SHERRY DEVLIN
Photographed by KURT WILSON
of the Missoulian

MOIESE – Tim Driscoll deposited a double-fistful of onions on his chili and considered the difference between the bison he chased all morning and the cows he used to chase.

"Horns," he offered between bites.

"And they turn on you. So you've got to watch what you're doing. And the old hurt bulls are cranky. So you've got to be ready to run."

Driscoll hefted an onion-mounded hamburger to his mouth. It was lunch hour on the first day of the bison roundup at the National Bison Range. The day fence builders and carpenters and biologists become wranglers.

The best workday of the year.

Driscoll was in shirt sleeves, defying the winter's-coming cold blowing off the Mission Mountains. He's done ranch work all his life, until 10 years ago on cattle ranches, since then at the Bison Range.

"It's all just work," he said.

Except early each October, when the fence-menders-turned-wranglers bring in the range's 400 bison plus calves. Then it's a week on horseback clearing the pastures of strays and pushing the assembled herd to a steep-sloped, high-fenced ravine just above the corral.

And two days of cutting a couple dozen animals at a time from the herd and running them hard – downhill – to the corral for culling, branding and vaccinating. One hundred animals are sold to private ranches or donated to Indian tribes, bison researchers or other wildlife refuges, the rest returned to relative freedom on the 16,000-acre refuge.

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Push a bull too hard, and he'll lift straight his tail, look you in the eye and charge, Driscoll told. The best response: "Run."

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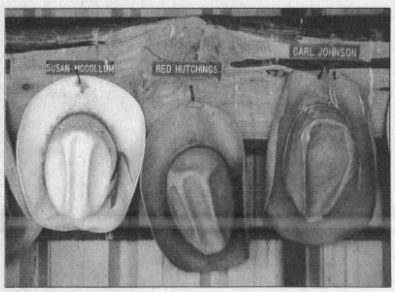

At the end of every year's roundup, one lucky wrangler is chosen to hang his or her hat on the wall, signifying their success in the calf-prediction pool.

Range manager Dave Wiseman keeps the herd to about 400 animals, what the grass can sustain over the long winter. He tries, too, to keep the ratio of cows to bulls at about what a herd would have in the wild: 40 percent bulls, 60 percent cows.

The longer bison are kept in fenced environs – at the Bison Range, they're rotated among eight fenced pastures – the more important the efforts to keep the herd as wild as possible. Otherwise, Wiseman says, they'll just be shaggy-headed cows.

Doubt not, though, that these bison are wild, said Darren Thomas, most days the fencing foreman at the National Bison Range, but for roundup a wrangler.

Doubt not, too, that Thomas was the wildest of the riders at this week's roundup – and the only one wearing tennis shoes. "Cowboy boots?" he hooted to a co-worker's inquiry. "I'm not a cowboy."

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"I'd just as soon chase buffaloes and break fences in the morning, then build fence all afternoon. That would be nice."

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Buffaloes, Thomas explained, smell

See **BISON** *Page C2*

And these horses love running after buffaloes.
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Bison

Continued

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Better to have a horse that – if not fears – at least respects the size and strength of a bison, West said. Both he and his horse weathered their encounter with the bull, but West wasn't looking for a repeat.

"My horse is a little too excited," he said after a morning of cutting bison from the main herd and bringing them into the corral. "That last run, he just about passed the herd. He's like a horse at the racetrack."

Still, West insists that horses – not riders – do most of the work at the roundup. "I'm just holding on," he said. "I wasn't hired for my horsemanship. I was hired for my biology. I was hired because I know weeds."

And, in fact, the only serious injury incurred this week came when a fence-mender-bricklayer-turned-cowboy took a four-wheeler rather than a horse up the hill to split the herd in half on Sunday – in preparation for the roundup's Monday-morning start.

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"I've been bucked off a horse a few times, but those motorcycles will kill you," Palmer said.

No one wants to miss the roundup, Palmer said, fingering his swollen hand, shaking the scrunched-felt cowboy hat on his head. Much of the rest of the year is spent alone, building fence (nine miles of new fence this season, plus many, many more miles of maintenance), carpeting offices, shoeing horses, repairing picnic tables. These are the days together, working hard, but playing too.

"There are seven of us in the maintenance crew," Palmer said. "We all have some specialty from our former lives: bricklayer, finish carpenter, construction. And we all build fence. And do odd jobs. And ride the roundup."

Brent Woodger has three words of advice for first-time riders at the bison roundup: "Don't get hooked."

Bison are "five times stronger and 10 times faster than a cow," Woodger said at midday Monday, saddling an appaloosa for the coming afternoon on the hill. "If they look at you, you'd better just let them go."

Woodger is a horseshoer at the Bison Range and one of the more adept riders. Bison will turn in mid-stampede and head back at you, he said. But it all happens so fast, there's no time to be scared. Only time to move out of the way.

Which is what Woodger did when a bull pivoted and retreated from the cut on Monday, making the crowd in the corral gasp. "Another near miss," came the exclamation. "Yikes," the reply.

At 1,800 and 1,900 pounds, the big old bulls always have the right-of-way, Woodger said later. But it is actually the old cows – wranglers call them "the big old heads" – who balk at making the final run to the corral.

"They remember being here before," he said. "They know what's coming, and they aren't interested."

The names – and cowboy hats – of roundups past line the wall of a booth above the corral where range workers record each buffalo and its weight and fate.

Ed Krantz, Darren Thomas, Bob King, Keith Krantz, Jim Largent, Susan McCollum, Red Hutchings, Carl Johnson, Bill Bishop, Tony Pinelli.

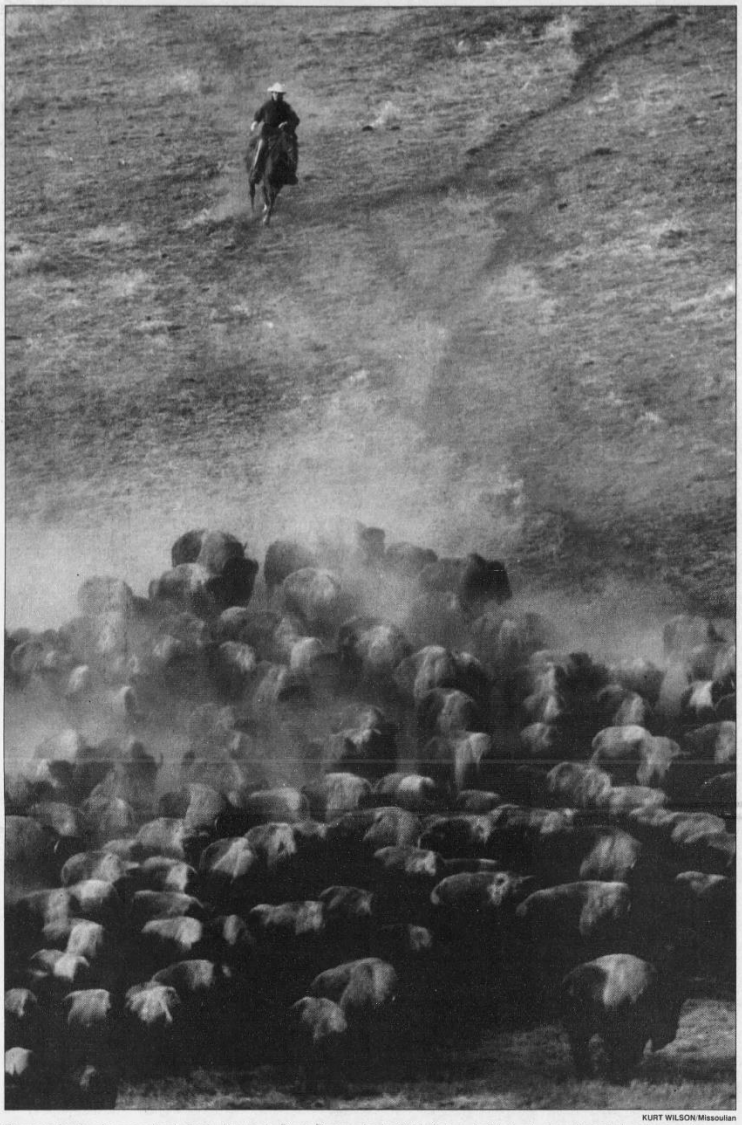
The names are those of the winners of the coffee-can-kept pool on the yearly calf count. Deposit $2 and extract one number from the coffee can – between 75 and 125. Whoever comes closest wins, sort of.

He or she who holds the correct calf count must use the collected money to buy beverages for the after-roundup party. And they must donate the hat they wore to roundup for the wall.

Thus the collection of black and beige, straw and felt cowboy hats, most notably the full-fold crunched felt hat hung on the nail by Pinelli after the last roundup. His winning calf count: 113.

There's much work to be done in the week before and the two days of the roundup, said Thomas, the fencing foreman-cum-cowboy-in-tennis-shoes. But there's more fun than work, by Thomas' estimation.

"Lots of fun," he said. "And fresh air. And chasing buffaloes."



KURT WILSON/Missoulian

The roundup begins soon after daybreak with wrangler Darren Thomas chasing 200 buffaloes – half the herd – down the high-sloped ravine where they grazed overnight to a holding area nearer the corral.

A newcomer's first impression of the wild buffalo

It seems like such an ungainly creature, the buffalo. The gigantic head. The high, heavy shoulders. The long curly hair. The skinny backside.

But buffaloes are quick-maneuvering, fast-running creatures, impressive to all who have made their acquaintance. Among the first white people to observe – and write of – buffalo on this continent was Pedro de Castaneda, who traveled to the plains with Francisco Coronado in 1541.

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Great Falls Tribune

AP photo

Wranglers on the National Bison Range at Moiese cut a small bunch of bison from the main herd and head them toward the corrals during the annual roundup on the range earlier this month.

Bison roundup pits wranglers against bulls

By SHERRY DEVLIN
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MOIESE (AP) — Tim Driscoll deposited a double-fistful of onions on his chili and considered the difference between the bison he chased all morning and the cows he used to chase.

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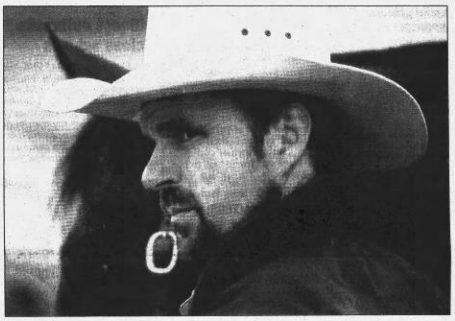
Wranglers ride the roundup on Moiese National Bison Range's ...

Thundering herd



NATIONAL BISON RANGE wrangler Brent Woodger and his horse watch the bison recently before beginning the chase during the annual roundup at the range near Moiese.

STORY BY SHERRY DEVLIN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KURT WILSON
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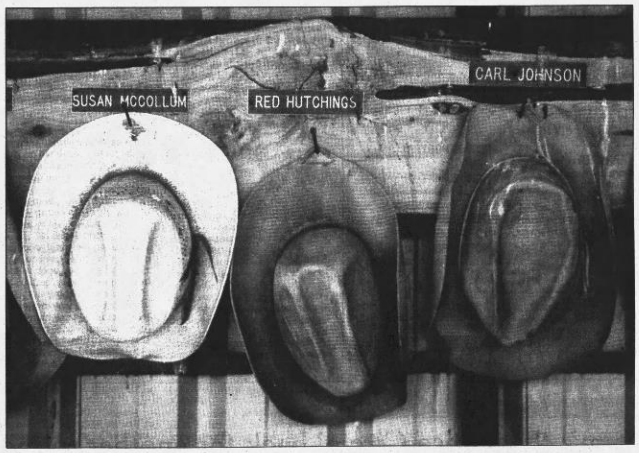
See THUNDERING, Page C5



HATS HANG on the wall in Moiese. At the end of every year's roundup at the National Bison Range, one lucky wrangler is chosen to permanently hang his or her hat on the wall, signifying their success in the calf number prediction pool.

Peculiar buffalo: Bearded like goats, woolly like sheep

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THE MONTANA STANDARD, BUTTE, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1997 ■ C5

Thundering ...

Continued from Page C1

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■ ■ ■

THE NAMES — and cowboy hats — of roundups past line the wall of a booth above the corral

October 19, 1997 The Montana Standard (Butte, Montana)

"Visitors can still roam at National Bison Range

Moiese – There's still room for visitors on the range the National Bison Range – although hours and drives are limited during the winter.

The Bison Range switched to winter hours this week,

The Winter Drive is open daily from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., covering 10 miles round trip along Mission Creek and in Alexander Basin.

Also open is the shorter West LoopFrive.

The Visitors Center is only open weekdays and only from 8 a.m. and to 4:30 p.m.

The range is open all winter, except during the most extreme weather. Call 406-644-2211 for road conditions." October 30, 1997 The Missoulian

Feds want Ninepipe circled by easements

By SHERRY DEVLIN
of the Missoulian

So that the Mission Valley will forever be habitat for farmers, ranchers, mallards and grizzly bears, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wants to conserve a 100-square-mile circle around Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge.

To comment:

■ To comment on the proposal or to receive several fact sheets explaining how easements benefit wildlife species and habitat, write the National Bison Range, 132 Bison Range Road, Moiese, Mont. 59824. Or call 1-406-644-2211.

For starters, the agency will use federal Land and Water Conservation Fund money to buy conservation easements on 16,000 acres of grassland, much of it east of Ninepipe and U.S. Highway 93.

About 16,000 acres of wetlands and wildlands already are protected as refuges, tribal ground or in conservation easements.

The remaining – for a total of 64,000 acres – are on Bill West's long-long-term wish list.

West, assistant manager at the National Bison Range in Moiese, is assembling a proposal to expand the protection of wildlife habitat in the Mission Valley – in his words, "to conserve the diversity and abundance of flora and fauna in an area that is extremely important and very threatened."

Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge is at the

See **NINEPIPE,** *Page A10*

Ninepipe

Continued

center of the 100-square-mile circle that West wants to protect from subdivision and two- to 20-acre ranchettes.

The number of houses within 20 miles of Ninepipe increased from 2,814 in 1970 to 5,892 in 1990, West said. "And everything has accelerated in the 1990s. Development has been rapid, and ranchettes are right on the edge of some protected areas."

And with ranchettes, said West, come poaching, trespass, vandalism and pets.

"Protected areas become disturbed and isolated as development surrounds them," he said. "Fragmentation creates artificial barriers to wildlife. In the case of grizzly bears, there may be genetic deterioration and increased susceptibility to environmental catastrophes."

His answer: purchase conservation easements on the remaining intact tracts of land in the valley, paying landowners to keep their ground whole and in production for agriculture.

"We would like to keep people on the land by offering them alternatives to subdivision," West said. "We'd like to protect the whole landscape without having the government buy the whole landscape."

And the Mission Valley's is habitat of national significance. The area, West said, is one of the only places on the continent that provides both nesting habitat in the spring and foraging habitat in the winter for migratory birds: mallards, Canada geese, short-eared owls, northern harriers.

Large concentrations of rough-legged hawks and significant numbers of wintering arctic species – gyrfalcons and snowy owls – attest to the high-quality prey available in the valley.

And grizzly bears are only found in four states, "so protection measures are of national interest," West said.

Prevent further habitat loss and fragmentation, he said, and the biological integrity of the Ninepipe ecosystem is maintained. Let the subdivision continue and the ecosystem – and its remarkable abundance of wild creatures – will be lost.

And once tracts are protected from development, West said, conservation work could turn to restoring or enhancing habitat – if landowners were willing. His longest-term goals: restoring wetlands, streams and native prairie plants.

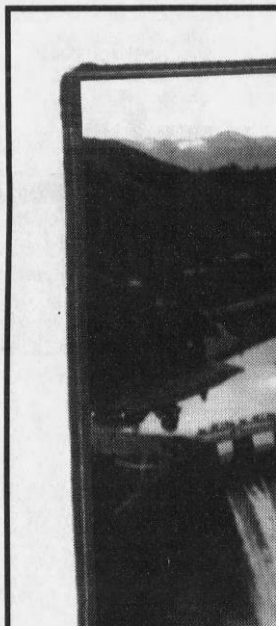
Most of the conservation easements purchased to date – since 1993 with federal Duck Stamp money – were west of Highway 93. Most protected wetlands.

The new effort – beginning with $1 million of Land and Water Conservation Fund money – would take the project into the grasslands east of Highway 93.

But West needs public comment on the notion of conserving the Mission Valley and on the use of Land and Water Conservation Fund money. Then he'll write an environmental assessment of the proposal. Then he'll start work on negotiating easements – and on finding other sources of money.

Easements, he explained, do not take land out of private ownership or out of agricultural production. They merely preclude future development and subdivision.

"So," said West, "we can stand in the Mission Valley and know it will remain that way for a hundred years. And a hundred more."



November 18, 1997 The Missoulian

Bison Range is open

Moiese – You can take a break from holiday shopping – or shop – this month at the National Bison Range.

Scenic drives at the range are open daily, except during extreme weather. The Winter Drive is a 10-mile round trip on a gravel road and offers views of deer, elk, pronghorn and bald eagles along Mission Creek and in Alexander Basin. The shorter West Loop Drive also may have deer, pronghorn or other wildlife.

Drives are open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

And the range will sell all its books, postcards and posters for 25 percent off during December. The visitors center is open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., but is closed on weekends and will be closed Christmas Day.

For currant road conditions at the range, call 406-644-2211." December 4, 1997 The Missoulian

"Saint Johnswort

Medicinal plant stirs up emotions by John Stromnes of the Missoulian

Plains – A meeting Wednesday might provoke a weed fight between those who say Saint Johnswort is a beneficial medicinal plant with immense healing powers and those who say it is one of Montana's most dangerous and nasty weeds.

The truth is, both supporters and detractors may be right. The question for the Sanders County Weed Board is whether it can be both weed and cash crop in the county. A local farmer, Delbert Herschbach of Herschbach Farms, has asked the couty weed board for permission to grow it, under strictly controlled conditions.

Brian Dreisbach, vice chairman of the weed board, said Thursday that public comment on Herschbach's proposal so divided Wednesday's meeting in Plains that the board has decided to continue taking additional written comment through Jan. 30.

"Then we'll meet Feb. 3 as a board to discuss it, and may make a decision" on Herschbach's request, he said.

He said the meeting was attended by about 50 people, "which is huge, for the weed board meeting. We usually have the weed board members show up and nobody else."

Governmental agencies, including surrounding counties of Flathead and Lake and Lincoln, plus several eastern Montana counties, sent letters opposing the proposal. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the National Bison Range at Moiese also oppose allowing Saint Johnswort to be cultivated legally in Sanders County, Dreisbach said.

But several local farmers are intrigued by the idea, because of the high yields the crop might bring, and a contingent of Missoulians who support the use of the herb as a natural medicinal plant also came to the meeting to voice support.

Saint Johnswort has been on the state's list of poisonous noxious weeds for many years. It is toxic when ingested by light-skinned animals, and spreads by runners and seeds, in some cases driving out native plants. The Bison Range has the worst infestation in the state, but is slowly bringing it under control, weed officials say.

Demand for Saint Johnswort has soared in recent months, after studies were reported by the national media that it is a medically effective nonprescription treatment for depression, replacing Prozac, Zoloft and numerous other antidepressant prescription drugs at less cost, and with fewer side effects.

Many county officials want the state to decided on a uniform approach to allow cultivation, or to direct counties not to allow cultivation under any circumstances.

But state officials insist it is a local decision, to be made y each county on a case-by-case basis. State law provided that local weed boards must exercise this authority, state officials say.

The Montana Weed Control Association's annual meeting is Jan. 13-15 in Butte, and it is certain to be a big topic of discussion there, Dreisbach said.

The time and meeting place of the Sanders County Weed Board's meeting on Feb. 3 has not yet been announced, bit it will likely be in the Plains High School at 7 p.m. – the same place and date of Wednesday's weed board meeting."

[Sidebar] "Written comments on the plan to cultivate Saint Johnswort may be addressed to County Extension Agent John Halpop, Sanders County Courthouse, P.O. Box 187, Thompson Falls, Mont. 59873." January 9, 1998 The Missoulian

"Roundup

Bison Range meeting today

An open house to collect public comments on the preparation of a comprehensive conservation plan for the National Bison Range Complex will be held today in Missoula from 3 to 8 p.m. at the Boone and Crockett headquarters, 250 Station Drive.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has scheduled the open house to provide an opportunity for people to ask questions and share information concerning how the National Bison Range Complex will be managed in the future.

The complex includes the National Bison Range at Moiese, Ninepipe, Pablo and Swan River national wildlife refuges, 12 Waterfowl Production Areas in Lake and Flathead counties, and the Conservation Easement Program in northwestern Montana.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has scheduled two more open houses in western Montana to discuss the conversation plan. The next meeting will be held Friday, Jan. 23, from 3 to 8 p.m. at the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks office in Kalispell, at 490 N. Meridian Road. The third meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Jan. 27, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Ronan Community Center, 300 3rd Ave. NW." January 21, 1998 The Missoulian

"Learn about Bison Range Plan

Moiese – Three open houses to gather public input on preparation of a comprehensive plan for the National Bison Range complex are scheduled by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The first open house was held Wednesday night in Missoula. The second meeting is Friday from 3 to 8 p.m. at the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks' Region 1 office in Kalispell, 490 N. Meridian Road. The third meeting is scheduled Tuesday, Jan. 27, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Community Center in Ronan, 300 Third Ave., NW.

The process of preparing the management plan for the National Bison Range is in the early stages. The open houses are intended to provide an opportunity for people living in the area and others to ask questions and share information about how the National Bison Range will be managed in the future.

Some areas that will be covered in the plan include noxious weed control, cattle grazing on Ninepipe and Pablo national wildlife refuges, the threshold for public use at the bison range, land acquisition and conservation easement program, photographer access, cultural representation at the bison range visitors' center, and interior fences on the range.

Comments on those and other issues can be offered at open houses or may be submitted in writing to the National Bison Range, 132 Bison Range Road, Moiese, Mont., 59824, or by calling 406-644-2211 to schedule an appointment for further discussion. Individuals also may comment or ask questions about the project at Lost Trail Ranch, west of Kalispell.

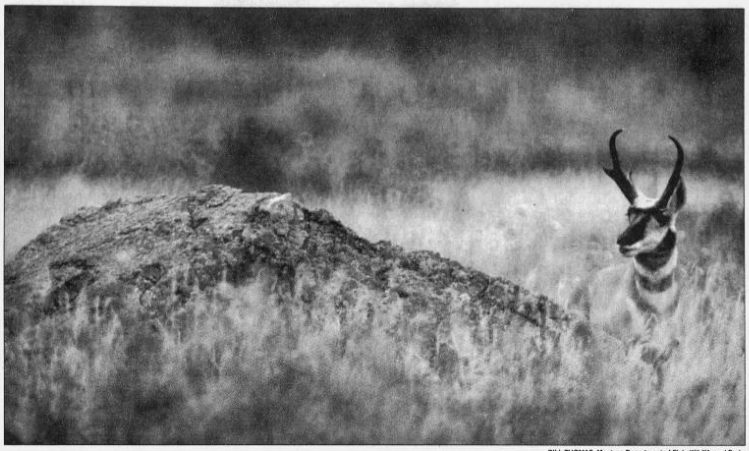
The complex includes the National Bison Range; Ninepipe, Pablo and Swan River national wildlife refuges; 12 waterfowl production areas in Lake and Flathead counties; and the Conservation Easement Program in northwestern Montana." January 22, 1998 The Missoulian

MONTANA LIFE

Outdoors

Missoulian Section C

Thursday, January 29, 1998



BILL THOMAS, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Pronghorns evolved eagle-like vision, unparalleled swiftness and a strong herd instinct in response to predators that died off 10,000 years ago, leaving the antelope "overengineered" for life in the 20th century.

Racing from the past

Pronghorn antelope still built to speed away from predators long extinct

By SHERRY DEVLIN
of the Missoulian

Pronghorn antelope are long-eyelashed, cud-chewing marvels – the most spectacularly overengineered mammals on the continent.

They can run 60 mph, faster than any other creature in North America, miles faster than any of their would-be prairie predators. A coyote in pursuit of an antelope is living in a "Roadrunner" cartoon.

"Why," is the obvious question. Why are pronghorns so overbuilt?

John Byers spent 14 summers – 6,000 hours – looking for the answer on the National Bison Range near Moiese, where about 100 pronghorns graze the last and largest remnant of the Palouse prairie.

His reply: Pronghorns are running from the ghosts of predators past.

They also bunch up for protection from long-extinct enemies: the lions, jaguars, saber-toothed cats, plundering dogs, giant short-faced bears, hyenas and cheetahs that patrolled the continent's mid-section until 10,000 years ago.

Female pronghorns mate with only the swiftest, most vigorous males, again to keep the species safe. And they reproduce at a tremendous rate. Females have twins – big twins – every year, the equivalent of two 12-pound babies in human terms.

"Pronghorns are obviously built for a former time," said Byers, a professor of zoology at the University of Idaho and author of the just-published "American Pronghorn: Social Adaptations and the Ghosts of Predators Past," an account – for the University of Chicago Press – of his research at the Bison Range.

> *"I don't believe there's a predator alive today as ferocious as the long-legged hyena. Its back was as high as a person's waist."*
>
> **– John Byers, author**

By his own admission, his explanation of antelope anatomy and behavior goes against the grain of most ecologists who begin with the assumption that the animals they study are perfectly adapted to their surroundings – and then identify the adaptations.

"I am trying to get people to realize that animals are not always perfectly adapted to the present because this is not a constant earth," Byers said.

In evolutionary time, the pronghorn is just an eyeblink away from the Pleistocene era, when a rich savanna grassland crossed the center of North America and supported a population of beasts more diverse than that now found in East Africa.

The predators were fearsome. "I don't believe there's a predator alive today as ferocious as the long-legged hyena," Byers said. "Its back was as high as a person's waist. It must've been truly formidable."

The giant short-faced bear was similarly scary, with its unusually long legs, slender build and impressive running ability. Byers has seen black bears try – without success – to ambush pronghorns on the Bison Range; their short-faced ancestors may have had the necessary speed.

It was in such a violent environment that the pronghorn developed its Olympian running ability, Byers said. Only the quickest and most wary survived; thus, the ease with which a pronghorn maintains a speed of 45 mph and sprints of 60 mph. Thus its perfectly proportioned legs and outsized lungs, trachea and heart.

In fact, Byers believes that many aspects of a pronghorn's life were shaped by its prehistoric enemies. Its behavior, he said, is "a historical document."

In 1981, during Byers' first field season in the Mission Valley, he realized the when-predators-were-fierce-and-abundant connection. Pronghorn fawns fought vigorously for dominance, and their success was absolutely predicted by their birth date.

"A late-born fawn was certain to become subordinate," Byers said. "A first-born fawn was certain to become dominant."

And while he had come to the Bison Range to study pronghorn development, Byers quickly shifted to a study of specific individuals and their place in the herd over time. Did the dominant fawns become dominant adults? And how important was that dominance for their lives?

Over the years, he realized that – for female pronghorns – dominance as fawns meant dominance as adults. So entrenched was the social order, in fact, that a dominant yearling always won contests against subordinate adult females.

"A fawn's status predicted her lifetime status," Byers said.

But what did a dominant female get out of her status? he wondered. They weren't more efficient foragers. Their fawns weren't bigger or healthier. They

See **ANTELOPE,** *Page C2*

The predators:

Here's a sampling of some of the predators that hunted pronghorns until 10,000 years ago.

Cheetahs: Two species are known from North America. Both were built to kill antelope-sized animals and probably were the driving force prompting the evolution of the antelope's astounding speed.

Hyena: A fast and formidable predator that hunted in packs.

North American lion: Bigger and probably faster than the modern lion, this was an extremely dangerous short-ambush predator.

Dire wolf: A large, heavily built wolf with powerful jaws and teeth – a threat to antelope fawns and weak adults.

Protocyon: A large, relatively short-legged dog and an effective pack-hunting predator.

– Source: "American Pronghorn: Social Adaptations and the Ghosts of Predators Past," by John A. Byers

Rattlesnake Mountains alive with birds in the dead of winter

By WILL KERLING
for the Missoulian

A petite bird frequently breaks the silence of my winter walks and ski trips in the Rattlesnake Mountains. It is the red-breasted nuthatch with its oft-heard nasal call. This species does well over all our winters.

In fact, the Rattlesnake Mountains have shown me 42 winter bird residents during the past 25 years. Eight other species are being monitored as potential candidates for winter residency.

Allow me to introduce you:

The Corvidaes – jays, crows and magpies – are well represented in the Rattlesnakes. Silent flying gray jays seem to appear out of nowhere, especially if you stop for a sandwich on an outing. They also can be found scavenging on carcasses of elk or deer. Common ravens and black-billed magpies frequently cruise the winter ranges.

Two other jays can be observed in the Rattlesnake. In recent years, you might hear the piercing "jay-jay-jay" call of eastern blue jays, as they are expanding westward and may even nest in our area now. A more common jay sighting would be Steller's jays. Their call is a harsh "shaack-shaack-shaack." These two species could hybridize.

Another harsh call in the conifer forests, a drawn-out "kra-a-a," emanates from the Clark's nutcracker. This was "Clark's Crow" in Lewis and Clark's journals. These birds spend a lot of time in ponderosa pines foraging for cone seeds with their specialized bills. I've watched them develop a cache of cones in the deep snow.

Dying conifers, here and there in the snow, are visited by the Picidaes (woodpeckers). Six species are found. Burned trees can attract three-toed woodpeckers and black-backed woodpeckers. They incessantly peck the trunks for dead or hibernating insects.

A very loud pounding in the distance could be our largest woodpecker. The pileated woodpecker is fairly common in the drainage. The flashing of their large white wing patches as they fly overhead has attracted me

See **BIRDS,** *Page C2*

WILL KERLING

The Steller's jay is one of 42 species of birds that winter in the Rattlesnake Mountains north of Missoula.

Five Valleys query has many answers

I heard the topic being discussed on a morning talk show before work awhile back, and I knew immediately there would be calls when I got to the office.

It's a question that keeps coming up.

If you have the good fortune to have anything to do with an organization or business that has the words "Five Valleys" in its name, you are supposed to be able to rattle off just exactly what the valleys you are so proud of happen to be.

GREG TOLLEFSON

Right now, there are 10 listings in our local telephone directory for "Five Valleys" something or another. I don't know if the folks at the bowling alley or the roofing company, or any of the others get those calls, but I assume they get some once in a while. If your business is a land trust, though, where you deal with the geography of this part of the world every day, it makes sense that you would be expected to know the names of those valleys.

Sure enough, when I got to work that day, there was a call from the radio station. Somebody was requesting an authoritative answer. I called back and gave them one.

However, because I don't happen to be answering the phone at that place of work anymore, I thought I would try to save my successor a little time and consternation by putting the "five valleys" question to rest once and for all.

And the answer is ...

It depends.

It depends, that is, on whom you ask. And I have asked a bunch of people over the years. All I can report after questioning local historians, old-timers and folks on the street is that nobody seems to agree.

Some say the five valleys obviously would be the Missoula Valley, Bitterroot Valley, Blackfoot Valley, Rattlesnake Valley and Frenchtown Valley. Some are just as sure that you should throw out the Rattlesnake and put in the Jocko Valley, or the Mission Valley, or even the Flathead Valley. Others insist that one must somehow include the Hellgate Valley, or lump the whole main artery into the Clark Fork Valley and add the Nine Mile, Bitterroot, Blackfoot and Rattlesnake to the mix.

There are any number of combinations and permutations.

I have a copy of the book, "Following Old Trails," a compilation of newspaper columns by Arthur L. Stone, an early editor of the Missoulian and the first dean of the University of Montana Journalism School. The columns recount all kinds of fascinating tales of the early years in and around Missoula, and much of it involves answering questions about where various local landmarks got their names.

In those days, the river through town was still called the Missoula River, so we would have to eliminate the Clark Fork Valley right away if we could trace things back that far. According to Stone, the road over Evaro Hill to the Jocko Valley was first the "Coriacan Defile," then "O'Keefe's Canyon," neither of which is still in common use. There may have been more familiar places with different names then, too. However, nowhere in the book are five valleys of any kind mentioned as a group.

Back in 1986, the editorial board of this newspaper tried to have the final word on the subject. The question apparently had come up in the pages of the Missoulian, and the newspaper had been contacted by Alice Page, the wife of Winfield Page, a longtime local leader and political figure. She claimed to have the answer.

According to Mrs. Page, the term "Five Valleys" first was used in a radio talk given by Winfield Page on April 27, 1937. Mr. Page had apparently been expounding on the expanding business potential of the area, and listed the Frenchtown, Flathead, Bitterroot, Blackfoot and Hellgate Valleys as the "Five Valleys" he was talking about.

The Missoulian accepted the explanation hook, line and sinker.

With all due respect to Winfield Page, I'm not convinced.

Of course, I have nothing but raw skepticism to go on. The Flathead Valley is the part that doesn't ring quite right to me. It just isn't quite close enough to home.

One of these days, I may find time to do a little real research on the subject myself, just to satisfy my curiosity.

However, if somebody out there has the answer, and the proof, that would be a lot easier on all of us. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you happen to be the one who holds the key.

Meanwhile, if you don't know the answer but want one, don't bother to call anyone listed under "Five Valleys" in the phone book expecting any help. They don't know any more than you do.

And, as long as we're on the subject of place names, how many of you can point out Mount Dean Stone? Can you guess whom it was named after?

– Greg Tollefson is a Missoula free-lance writer. His column appears each week in Outdoors.

Antelope

Continued

didn't come into estrus earlier than subordinate females.

There was but one difference, Byers realized. In the herd, the dominant females always grazed near the middle of the group, while the subordinate females were on the periphery.

"And I realized that I was looking at behavior adapted to the past, not the present," he said. "The light bulb went on. The whole picture became very clear. I was looking at a species that, in its anatomy, physiology and behavior, is adapted to the Pleistocene world and its dangerous predators."

Those females that grazed in the middle of the herd were less likely to be ambushed and eaten. Those pushed to the outskirts were most vulnerable. Thus the value in being a dominant female.

From 4 million years ago to 10,000 years ago, pronghorns evolved to meet the challenge of a rogue's gallery of predators. Then, in a mystery still unsolved, there was a crash – a mass extinction of many of North America's fiercest predators.

"There was a profound reordering of the ecology of North America," Byers said. "The rich savanna vanished. The predators vanished. Some believe there was a climate change. Some blame the arrival of humans. But no one knows."

Among the survivors were pronghorns.

For 5,000 generations since, the remaining North American antelope have easily outpaced their quickest would-be competitors – wolves and coyotes. Only in a fawn's first 45 days is it at risk. After that, a pronghorn is virtually assured of survival for 10 years, possibly for as long as 15 years.

Only hunters alter the odds.

It is simply too soon after the demise of the pronghorn's predators for the species to have adjusted to the lack of predation, Byers said. "They haven't gotten slow and fat. That could take millions of years."

So-called "relict behaviors" have also been documented in other animals in recent years. California ground squirrels continue to recognize and fear rattlesnakes, 300,000 years after the venomous predator moved out of their neighborhood.

Put a ground squirrel in a room with a rattlesnake and the squirrel will throw dirt, fluff its tail and approach with the utmost caution, noted Richard Coss, one of a new field of evolutionary biologists.

By contrast, Coss found that Arctic gray squirrels in Alaska have lost their fear of rattlesnakes. Even after being bitten repeatedly, they seem unable to recognize the threat. The difference: the Arctic environment has been free of rattlesnakes for 3 million years.

Most controversial, Byers said, is the offshoot study of relict behaviors in humans. Yet another group of scientists, these called evolutionary psychologists, believe that some aspects of human psychology are adaptations to the past.

Nighttime fears, for example, seem to differ among young boys and girls, according to the researchers. Girls are more afraid that something scary is under their bed. Boys believe the threat is somewhere off to the side, in the dark.

The explanation from evolutionary psychologists: In prehistory, women slept in trees at night, hoping to stay away from predators below. Men slept on the ground; they rightly feared attack from all sides.

There is even, according to Byers, an explanation for male infanticide in relict behavior.

Men, he said, are more likely to kill infants when they move in with a woman who has a child – a child who is not the man's. "And that is exactly the situation we see with other species in nature," Byers said. "It is very prevalent in lions and in chimpanzees. When a male lion takes over a pride, he tries to kill all the infants he can, to eliminate the offspring of competitors."

Byers said his work with pronghorns is of considerable interest to the evolutionary psychologists. Behavioral ecology is not, Byers said, "a hypothesis of last resort. It is valid and real and useful."

Pronghorns, he said, are indeed running from the ghosts of predators past. At top speed.

January 29, 1998 The Missoulian

“Ninepipe-easement plan ready for public comment

Moiese- The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service is accepting public comments on its proposal to expand acquisition of conservation easements to protect wildlife habitat surrounding Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge.

The agency has purchased approximately 4,000 acres of these easements since 1993 using money from the sales of federal Duck Stamps. Those funds are limited and can only be spent on areas with significant wetands.

To expand the easement program, money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund would be used to purchase easements on lands that did not have enough wetlands to qualify for Duck Stamp funds, but which have high wildlife value. These easements would include important upland areas near wetlands, stream corridors, lands between or adjacent to current wildlife management lands, and lands that could help protect grizzly bears.

An environmental assessment of the easement of the easement program is available at the National Bison Range, 132 Bison Range Road, Moiese, Mont., 59824, or by calling 406-644-2211.” January 29, 1998 The Missoulian

“Waterfowl plan should be approved

We appreciate Sam Reynolds’ concern for what Montana Power Co., the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service have planned for mitigating past and future damage to public property, namely the Flathead Waterfowl Production Area. The settlement agreement which Reynolds referenced in his letter to the editor (Feb. 10 Missoulian) is the result of nearly 15 years of negotiations between the FWS, Montana Power and the tribes. The agreement addresses mitigation of habitat and wildlife losses on the Waterfowl Production Area on the north shore of Flathead Lake attributed to operations of Kerr Dam.

Original proposals for the erosion control project suggested “off-shore” revetments to prevent further erosion. However, the settlement agreement specifically calls for a “shore-aligned” erosion control structure. This revetment will consist of a low-profile dike built into and along the shoreline. I say along because in one area the revetment will be constructed to create a 37-acre wetland between the shore-aligned revetment and an existing inlet. Off-shore revetment structures are no longer a consideration.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission order directs the licensees (Montana Power Co. and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes) to construct “shore-aligned” revetments to prevent further erosion of the Waterfowl Production Area. These erosion-control revetments will be constructed on the lake’s existing north shoreline, extending approximately 4,300 feet east and west of the mouth of the Flathead River. The west-side revetment will traverse an existing inlet, which will create a 37-acre wetland area to provide waterfowl and other migratory bird habitat.

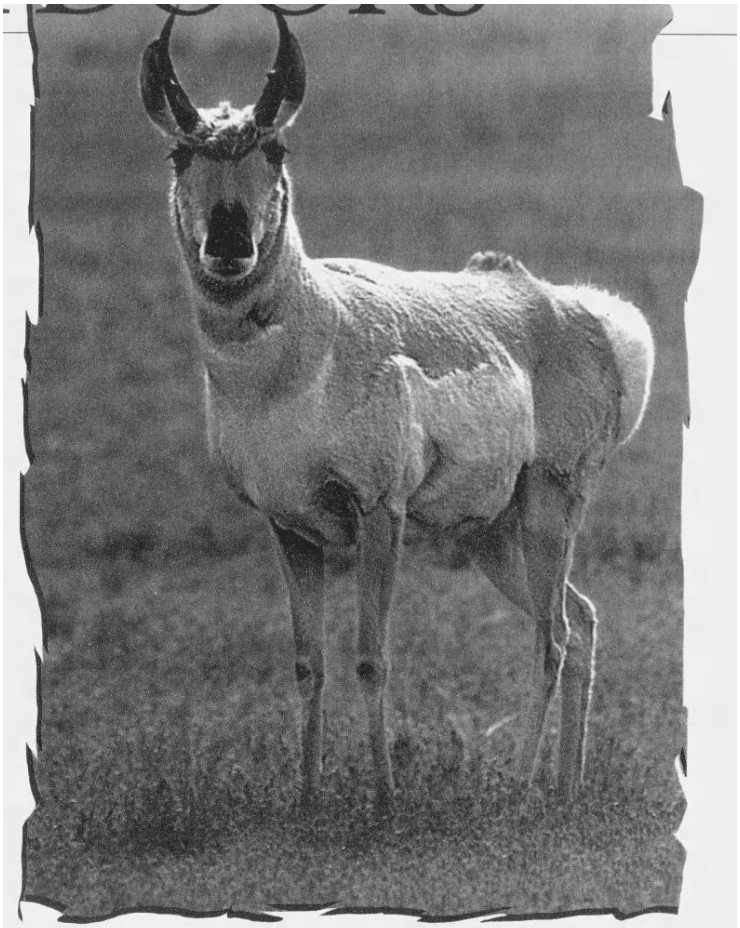
Reynolds' suggestion that 100 percent of the revetment be built on the existing shoreline would result in a more expensive structure than planned and provide less wildlife habitat. We hope the public will agree the plan is in the public's interest, will stop further degradation of public property and provide the most economical opportunity to enhance the lands that remain." David Wiseman, project leader, National Bison Range Complex, 132 Bison Range Road, Moiese
February 23, 1998 The Missoulian

"Bison Range celebration

Moiese – It's 90 days and counting until the National Bison Range's 90th birthday and the celebration is under way.

President Theodore Roosevelt established the refuge on May 23, 1908, as "a permanent national bison range" for the nation. The mission: "To provide a representative herd of bison, or buffalo, under reasonably natural conditions, to help ensure the preservation of the species for continued public benefit and enjoyment."

During its 90-day birthday fete, the Bison Range will recognize the vision of Michel Pablo, Charles Allard and William Hornaday, through whose effort's bison were saved from extinction. Talks, hikes, displays, demonstrations, contests and giveaways are planned." February 26, 1998 The Missoulian



an evolutionary THROWBACK

Pronghorns are built for speed and safety and one scientist says it's because they are still running from now-extinct predators

By **SHERRY DEVLIN**
Missoulian

MISSOULA — PRONGHORN antelope are long-eyelashed, cud-chewing marvels — the most spectacularly over-engineered mammals on the continent.

They can run 60 mph, faster than any other creature in North America, miles faster than any of their would-be prairie predators. A coyote in pursuit of an antelope is living in a "Roadrunner" cartoon.

"Why," is the obvious question. Why are pronghorn so overbuilt?

John Byers spent 14 summers — 6,000 hours — looking for the answer on the National Bison Range near Moiese, where about 100 pronghorns graze the last and largest remnant of the Palouse prairie.

His reply: Pronghorns are running from the ghosts of predators past.

They also bunch up for protection from long-extinct enemies: the lions, jaguars, saber-toothed cats, plundering dogs, giant short-faced bears, hyenas and cheetahs that patrolled the continent's mid-section until 10,000 years ago.

Female pronghorns mate with only the swiftest, most vigorous males, again to keep the species safe. And they reproduce at a tremendous rate. Females have twins — big twins — every year, the equivalent of two 12-pound babies in human terms.

"Pronghorns are obviously built for a former time," said Byers, a professor of zoology at the University of Idaho and author of the just-published "American Pronghorn: Social Adaptations and the Ghosts of Predators Past," an account — for the University of Chicago Press — of his research at the Bison Range.

Unusual opinions

By his own admission, his explanation of antelope anatomy and behavior goes against the grain of most ecologists who begin with the assumption that the animals they study are perfectly adapted to their surroundings — and then identify the adaptations.

"I am trying to get people to realize that animals are not always perfectly adapted to the present because this is not a constant earth," Byers said.

In evolutionary time, the pronghorn is just an eye-blink away from the Pleistocene era, when a rich savanna grassland crossed the center of North America and supported a population of beasts more diverse than that now found in East Africa.

The predators were fearsome. "I don't believe there's a predator alive today as ferocious as the long-legged hyena," Byers said. "Its back was as high as a person's waist. It must've been truly formidable."

The giant short-faced bear was similarly scary, with its unusually long legs, slender build and impressive running ability.

(More on Pronghorn, Page 4D)

Pronghorn

From Page 1D

Byers has seen black bears try — without success — to ambush pronghorns on the Bison Range; their short-faced ancestors may have had the necessary speed.

It was in such a violent environment that the pronghorn developed its Olympian running ability, Byers said. Only the quickest and most wary survived; thus, the ease with which a pronghorn maintains a speed of 45 mph and sprints of 60 mph. Thus its perfectly proportioned legs and outsized lungs, trachea and heart.

Prehistoric enemies

In fact, Byers believes that many aspects of a pronghorn's life were shaped by its prehistoric enemies. Its behavior, he said, is "a historical document."

In 1981, during Byers' first field season in the Mission Valley, he realized the when-predators-were-fierce-and-abundant connection. Pronghorn fawns fought vigorously for dominance, and their success was absolutely predicated at birth.

"A late-born fawn was certain to become subordinate," Byers said. "A first-born fawn was certain to become dominant."

And while he had come to the Bison Range to study pronghorn development, Byers quickly shifted to a study of specific individuals and their place in the herd over time. Did the dominant fawns become dominant adults? And how important was that dominance for their lives?

Over the years, he realized that for female pronghorns, dominance as fawns meant dominance as adults. So entrenched was the social order, in fact, that a dominant yearling always won contests against subordinate adult females.

But what did a dominant female get out of her status? he wondered. They weren't more efficient foragers. Their fawns weren't bigger or healthier. They didn't come into estrus earlier than subordinate females.

There was but one difference, Byers realized. In the herd, the dominant females always grazed near the middle of the group, while the subordinate females were on the periphery.

"And I realized that I was looking at behavior adapted to the past, not the present," he said. "The light bulb went on. The whole picture became very clear. I was looking at a species that, in its anatomy, physiology and behavior, is adapted to the Pleistocene world and its dangerous predators."

Those females that grazed in the middle of the herd were less likely to be ambushed and eaten. Those pushed to the outskirts were most vulnerable. Thus the value in being a dominant female.

From 4 million years ago to 10,000 years ago, pronghorns evolved to meet the challenge of a rogue's gallery of predators. Then, in a mystery still unsolved, there was a crash — a mass extinction of many of North America's fiercest predators.

Among the survivors were pronghorns.

For 5,000 generations since, the remaining North American antelope have easily outpaced their quickest would-be competitors — wolves and coyotes. Only in a fawn's first 45 days is it at risk. After that, a pronghorn is virtually assured of survival for 10 years, possibly for as long as 15 years.

Only hunters alter the odds.

It is simply too soon after the demise of the pronghorn's predators for the species to have adjusted to the lack of predation, Byers said. "They haven't gotten slow and fat. That could take millions of years."

Behavioral studies

So-called "relict behaviors" have also been documented in other animals in recent years. California ground squirrels continue to recognize and fear rattlesnakes, 300,000 years after the venomous predator moved out of their neighborhood.

Put a ground squirrel in a room with a rattlesnake and the squirrel will throw dirt, fluff its tail and approach with the utmost caution, noted Richard Coss, one of a new field of evolutionary biologists.

By contrast, Coss found that Arctic gray squirrels in Alaska have lost their fear of rattlesnakes. Even after being bitten repeatedly, they seem unable to recognize the threat. The difference: the Arctic environment has been free of rattlesnakes for 3 million years.

Most controversial, Byers said, is the offshoot study of relict behaviors in humans. Yet another group of scientists, these called evolutionary psychologists, believe that some aspects of human psychology are adaptations to the past.

The explanation from evolutionary psychologists: In prehistory, women slept in trees at night, hoping to stay away from predators below. Men slept on the ground; they rightly feared attack from all sides.

There is even, according to Byers, an explanation for male infanticide in relict behavior. Men, he said, are more likely to kill infants when they move in with a woman who has a child — a child who is not the man's. "And that is exactly the situation we see with other species in nature," Byers said. "It is very prevalent in lions and in chimpanzees. When a male lion takes over a pride, he tries to kill all the infants he can, to eliminate the offspring of competitors."

Byers said his work with pronghorns is of considerable interest to the evolutionary psychologists. Behavioral ecology is not, Byers said, "a hypothesis of last resort. It is valid and real and useful."

Pronghorns, he said, are indeed running from the ghosts of predators past — at top speed.

March 5, 1998 The Billings Gazette

Free programs offered at National Bison Range

MOIESE – As part of its 90th anniversary celebration, the National Bison Range is offering a series of free evening nature programs to the public this spring.

Four researchers will share their experiences and results of their studies on the Bison Range. All talks will be held at the refuge visitors' center, starting at 7 p.m.

Here's a schedule of programs:

■ **Wednesday, April 15.** Jack Hogg of the Craighead Wildlife/Wildlands Institute in Missoula will discuss Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep. He has been studying the Bison Range sheep for many years, looking at behavior, reproduction, lamb success and family relationships.

■ **Monday, April 27.** Erick Greene of the University of Montana Division of Biological Sciences will discuss lazuli buntings and brown-headed cowbirds. Greene studies lazuli buntings, colorful neo-tropical migratory birds found in brushy areas of the Bison Range. Nesting success is declining in some areas and there is concern it may be related to brown-headed cowbirds, native birds that lay eggs in other birds' nests.

■ **Tuesday, May 5.** Gary Belovsky of the Utah State University Department of Fisheries and Wildlife will discuss a grasshopper population study. Bison are the most visible and definitely the largest plant eaters on the Bison Range. But they may not be the creatures that eat the most. Belovsky will talk about grasshoppers, their impact on vegetation, population trends and how predators impact grasshoppers.

■ **Tuesday, May 19.** John Byers of the University of Idaho Deapartment of Biological Science will discuss pronghorn antelope. Byers will describe a year in the life of North America's fastest mammal. He has studied the Bison Range herd for many years, examining behavior, forage requirements and fawn survival.

March 26, 1998 The Missoulian

What to do about medicinal weed?

BIGFORK – Goatweed, one of Montana's most noxious weeds, is also a useful medicinal herb, St. Johnswort, and commercial cultivation can pay growers big dividends.

That puts a problem squarely on local officials on county weed boards. Should it be eradicated or cultivated? Should it be harvested where it already infests?

A panel of speakers pondered the alternatives at the annual plant management gathering hosted recently by Glacier National Park.

The consensus seems to be that harvesting the weed on sites already infested could help control it, while creating some jobs and income for herbalists.

But it cannot be cultivated, under current Montana weed laws.

With its use growing as a nonprescription antidepressant, St. Johnswort is in big demand by pharmaceutical companies.

Dorreen Stokes of Eagle Valley Herbs in Plains helped harvest 10,000 pounds last year from infestations on the National Bison Range at Moiese. Montana's wild plants have a higher concentration of the active ingredient in the plant, she said.

Dick Hyunson of Montana Naturals said the Arlee company purchased some 3,000 pounds of the extract last year, paying brokers around $80 a pound.

"The market demand is going to continue to outpace the supply," he said.

Gary Gingery, weed program administrator for the state Department of Agriculture, said his agency will monitor what is happening with legal cultivation in Spokane and northern Idaho.

Bigfork Eagle, 4/6/98

Weeklies Reader, a collection of items from western Montana weekly newspapers, is compiled by Missoulian reporter John Stromnes.

April 12, 1998 The Missoulian

Migratory Bird Day fun

MOIESE – The National Bison Range at Moiese and Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge near Stevensville plan activities on Saturday, May 9, to celebrate International Migratory Bird Day.

The event is designed to increase awareness of all migratory birds, including song birds, waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors.

The Bison Range is planning to open the Red Sleep Mountain Drive in honor of the event on May 9. The 19-mile, one-way gravel road, which is popular for wildlife viewing opportunities, will be open at 7 a.m.

Several bird activities also are planned May 9 at the Bison Range. An advanced birding hike and a beginning bird walk are scheduled. The trips have limited space, so please call the Bison Range at 406-644-2211 to register. There also will be a talk about bluebird habitat and houses, a discussion of backyard bird feeding, giveaways, contests and a book sale.

A May 9 visit also would be a good time to participate in the Bison Range birthday celebration. Established in 1908, the Bison Range turns 90 years old on May 23.

At the Metcalf refuge, folks can join local birders in an attempt to count all the birds in Ravalli County. Data are used to detect trends in population size and distribution of breeding birds across the country. For more information, call Clif Barry at 406-363-7293, or John Ormiston at 406-363-7162 or 406-363-5464.

April 30, 1998 The Missoulian

“Bison Range drive open for the season

Moiese – The National Bison Range’s Red Sleep Mountain Drive is open for the summer season.

The Red Sleep Mountain Drive is a 19-mile, one-way gravel road that climbs 2,000 feet, and takes about two hours to complete. Visitors need to start this drive no later than 6 p.m. to finish the loop before the main gate closes at dark. Trailers and other towed units are not allowed on the drive. They can be left at the visitor’s center parking lot.

The shorter, graveled West Loop and Prairie drives are open for trailers and large buses and motor homes. These drives offer views of bison, elk, deer and pronghorn and take about 30 minutes. The graveled roads are not open to motorcycle or bicycles.

The main gate opens daily at 7 a.m. and closes at dark. The visitors’ center is open daily. Hours vary until after Memorial Day. A $4 per car fee is charged for the drives. A Bison Range season pass is available for $10. For more information, call 406-644-2211.” May 14, 1998 The Missoulian

May 15, 1998 The Missoulian

Outdoors

INSIDE

Buffalo Roam

Photos courtesy of the National Bison Range

ABOVE: Not much has changed at the National Bison Range over the past 90 years. The mission remains as always: "To provide a representative herd of bison, or buffalo, under reasonably natural conditions, to help ensure the preservation of the species for continued public benefit and enjoyment."
TOP: Most famous of the bison born on the National Bison Range over the past nine decades was Big Medicine, a white-coated bull born in 1933.

Bison Range helps preserve a western icon

By SHERRY DEVLIN
of the Missoulian

MOIESE – This is the story of the National Bison Range.

And, also, of the West.

There were once 60 million to 80 million bison on the great, uninterrupted plains of America, moving in herds immense enough to cover the prairie for one day's travel, and then another.

For the Plains Indians, the shaggy headed beasts were the central figure in a centuries-old pattern of life. Tribes moved with the buffalo. Survived on the buffalo. Worshipped the buffalo.

For the white settlers who moved onto and across the plains in the 1800s, the bison were a commodity – and a means of subduing the Indians.

In 40 years, ending around 1880, all of the great bison herds were extinguished. Millions of the animals were shot for meat, sometimes only for their tongues. Millions more were shot for their hides, more for sport, more on orders from the military.

By 1900, there were less than 100 wild bison left.

There was only, at the end of one century and the start of another, a handful of ranchers and a Pend d'Oreille Indian named Walking Coyote to intentionally, or unwittingly, save the species.

In the fall of 1872, Walking Coyote left the Flathead Indian Reservation to hunt buffalo in Blackfeet country to the north and east, on the other side of the Rocky Mountains.

He joined a band of Piegan hunters, and wintered with them along the Milk River, where it crossed from Canada into Montana.

In the spring, after a successful hunt, a dozen stray motherless bison calves wandered into Walking Coyote's camp. The rust-colored babies were docile and, in fact, grazed alongside the horses and followed the hunters from place to place.

When, later, Walking Coyote decided to return to the reservation, he also decided to take some of the calves with him – alive – to start his own herd.

Six calves, two bulls and four cows survived the long journey back. From Sun River to the head of the Dearborn. Across the Continental Divide at Cadotte's Pass. Down the Big Blackfoot River and through Hellgate Canyon. Then northwest into the Flathead country.

Over the next 11 years, Walking Coyote's herd increased

See **BISON,** *Page C2*

Greyhound buses brought visitors to the National Bison Range in 1960. Nowadays, most visitors arrive by private car. Visitation has increased by 5 percent to 10 percent each year for the past 15 years.

On May 23, 1958, the National Bison Range celebrated its 50th birthday with a picnic and a well-attended program that included public speakers near the front entrance.

Bison Range throws 90th birthday bash

There's a birthday party on Saturday in Moiese. Everyone's invited.

The National Bison Range will celebrate its 90th birthday with a day of free admission, extra-long hours, cake and lemonade, and poster giveaways.

It'll be a good day to visit the refuge for the first time, said public affairs officer Pat Jamieson. "Or if you are a longtime visitor, to check out some of the new exhibits and trails."

So that visitors can enjoy the sunrise, the Bison Range will open its main gate at 5:30 a.m. Saturday. The gate will remain open until 10 p.m.

As an incentive to visitors, no fees will be charged for the scenic drives. Visitors will need to start the longer Red Sleep Drive by 7 p.m. to complete the loop before dark.

At the visitors' center, cake and lemonade will be served, beginning at 11 a.m. Free posters will be provided, along with coloring pages for children.

New at the center this season is a touch-screen interactive computer program that teaches about the refuge and challenges visitors to try their hands at managing bison.

The nature trail near the picnic area has new signs to interpret the sights. And there's a new accessible grassland trail just behind the center, leading visitors on a leisurely stroll through the Palouse prairie.

To commemorate the 90th birthday, the range is selling a new enameled pin of Big Medicine, its most famous buffalo. Also new is a National Bison Range poster by Donna Toelke. Throughout the day Saturday, Toelke will sign posters at the Wagon Wheel Gift Shop.

The National Bison Range is located in Moiese, off state Highway 212, about 50 miles north of Missoula.

Questions? Call 1-406-644-2211.

– Sherry Devlin, Missoulian

FROM PAGE C1

Bison

Continued

to 13 animals.

At the same time, ranchers in Texas, Kansas and Canada established small, private herds of buffalo – theirs an intentional attempt to preserve a few of the nearly depleted species.

Not, though, until Walking Coyote sold his 13 bison to Michel Pablo and Charles Allard, his neighbors on the Flathead reservation, was a large and healthy private herd established. Under Pablo's management (Allard died in 1896), the Flathead herd grew to 600 animals.

Allard's heirs sold their bison to several ranchers, including Charles Conrad of Kalispell. Pablo continued to raise bison until his herd outgrew the pasture and government officials refused his request for a long-term lease on public rangeland nearby.

Eventually, after Congress refused to buy Pablo's herd, he sold the bison to Canada. Ironically, as the last of his animals left the Flathead, the first 34 bison – purchased from the Conrad family – arrived at the National Bison Range.

President Teddy Roosevelt established the National Bison Range on May 23, 1908, as "a permanent national bison range." It was the first land ever purchased by the federal government for wildlife.

Its mission, said Roosevelt, was "to provide a representative herd of bison, or buffalo, under reasonably natural conditions, to help ensure the preservation of the species for continued public benefit and enjoyment."

On June 15, 1909, the federal government purchased 18,541 acres in the foothills of the Mission Mountains, across the Divide from the historic range of the buffalo, but on land equally able to sustain a shaggy headed herd.

From Congress came $47,000, most to be paid to the Confederated Tribes of the Flathead, Kootenai and Pend d'Oreille in compensation for the land, the rest "to enclose said lands with a good and substantial fence."

The first bison were released inside that fence on Oct. 17, 1909.

"And at first, the management was as simple as that," said David Wiseman, who – on the Bison Range's 90th birthday – is manager of a refuge that encloses a healthy herd of 350 to 500 bison.

"They built a fence and turned the animals loose," Wiseman said earlier this week.

There wasn't much "management," Wiseman said, until the herd grew so large that it started to damage the prairie. Then the Bison Range began its yearly roundup and sale, which limits the herd to a size that fits the amount of available grass.

In 1921, an executive order expanded the Bison Range's purpose to include bird management. And all wildlife refuges have since been instructed to manage for endangered species.

Wiseman's approach is even broader: "To manage for birds and bison and endangered species translates into managing for a healthy environment. If we take care of the birds and bison, then other species will prosper as well."

So, too, must he tend the Palouse prairie that covers the hills and draws of the refuge. It is, researchers believe, the largest intact remnant of the tall Northwest prairie.

"The challenges to the prairie are never-ending," Wiseman said. "We've had grass invaders from other continents and – of course – lots of weed invaders. There's always something new, it seems."

Predominant on the Palouse prairie are rough fescue, Idaho fescue and bluebunch wheatgrass, native grasses favored not only by bison, but by the range's elk, deer, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep and mountain goat.

Grazers share the prairie, if reluctantly, with coyote, mountain lion, bobcat, bear and badger. And with the birds which the refuge must protect. And with the humans which the reserve must manage.

"Originally, wildlife refuges were locked up," Wiseman said. "The only people who got to enjoy them were the people who worked there."

Gradually, over many decades, visitors were added to the refuge environment, slowly, in buses, then in cars, in larger and larger numbers. Visitation at the National Bison Range has increased by 5 percent to 10 percent a year for the past 15 years.

"It's become a challenge," he said. "When you have 20,000 acres and about 200,000 visitors a year, you have to find a way to preserve the animals and the prairie – and to manage the people."

Wiseman believes the Bison Range is quickly reaching "the threshold of incompatibility."

"The quality of the experience is diminishing," he said. "Some days, we're getting a thousand people in the visitor center and on the tour road, and you don't feel like you're out in the wild anymore. There's somebody behind you and somebody in front of you."

The Bison Range provides scenic drives, short walking trails and a visitor center for the humans in its environment. But visitors are not allowed away from their cars or off the trails.

The refuge remains, Wiseman said, primarily for the animals and plants.

"This kind of environment and this kind of diversity, you don't see very often," he said. "People appreciate that we are here, even if they are never able to visit. They still appreciate that there is a National Bison Range."

They still appreciate, said refuge recreation planner Pat Jamieson, the bison.

And knowing that, were they to visit, they could hear the chomp of bison teeth on prairie grasses. And see the romp of rust-colored calves in the spring. And feel the thunder of bulls wallowing in mid-summer's drought, or stampeding down-draw on an autumn morning.

And knowing that the American bison was not lost. Nor, with it, the American West.

May 21, 1998 The Missoulian

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JOHN STROMNES/Missoulian

Art student Nathan Boot adjusts metal work on sculpture of bison that the art class made this winter and spring in collaboration with the metal shop class at St. Ignatius High School.

Art of the wild

St. Ignatius art, shop classes team up to create metal bison sculpture

By JOHN STROMNES
of the Missoulian

ST. IGNATIUS – Art class and shop class collaborated at St. Ignatius High School this winter to produce a metal sculpture of a bison, celebrating the rich heritage in the Mission Valley.

"We wanted the kids here to identify with where they are from," said art teacher Jeri Malatare, who conceived the fine arts-practical arts collaboration. The project involved 15 artists, some in Malatare's advanced art class, and some in metal shop.

The art students worked from Malatare's original sketch, enlarging it, laying it out on newsprint, then modeling and casting the sculpted aluminum horns.

A completely different set of students in Gene Posivio's applied materials processing class – metal shop – did the fabricating and metal cutting. They also helped mount the artwork on an exterior wall of the art and shop building near the main high-school campus.

Appropriately, the bison face west toward the National Bison Range just a few miles away. In the early-morning light, the sculpture is quite awe-inspiring, Malatare said.

■ An acidic solution left the metal with a rich bronze patina that has a remarkable resemblance to the bison's natural brown and black coloring.

Metal sculpting was a new medium for the art students, and several have tried more metalwork pieces since the bison project was completed earlier this month.

"The kids have been really inspired. They did three other metal sculptures, and got the three top awards at a recent show at Sandpiper Gallery in Polson," Malatare said.

The shop students also benefited by being introduced to the latest metal-cutting technology – a "plasma" cutting torch that was loaned to the school for the project by Norco Welding Products of Missoula.

The plasma torch made quick work of the 14-gauge steel on which the design was traced using soapstone. (Soapstone doesn't mar the finished work, and doesn't burn off during the cutting process.) The plasma cutter enabled students to trace the intricate detail of the design with laser-like accuracy, Posivio said.

Fabricating the bison horns involved yet another technical and artistic collaboration. Nathan Boot sculpted the horns from clay and made a plaster of Paris cast. Posivio's students melted aluminum in the shop's heat-treating foundry, and poured the aluminum into the molds. These students also fabricated and welded the mounting brackets.

Final finishing was done with salt and vinegar by Malatare. The acidic solution left the metal with a rich bronze patina that has a remarkable resemblance to the bison's natural brown and black coloring.

Posivio and Malatare declared the project a scholastic and artistic success, not the least because it involved close collaboration between two groups of students that seldom share experiences.

"A lot of the kinds that never take art were involved in the art program, and a lot of the art students went next door and learned they could make some really big stuff out of metal," Malatare said.

May 26, 1998 The Missoulian

“Resource organization meeting Saturday

Charlo – This year’s Flathead Resource Organization membership meeting will be Saturday from 2 to 5 p.m. at the National Bison Range at Moiese.

It is a potluck event.

FRO is a conservation-oriented group on the Flathead Reservation with 20-year track record of environmental advocacy.

“Please bring a dish of your choosing, and bring a lawn chair! Families are welcome Bring Frisbees and games for kids,” said Tom Smith, FRO executive director.

Several prominent speakers have been invited to make presentations, inckuding Joe McDonald, president of Salish Kootenai College and president of FRO’s Board of Directors; Tony Incashola of the Salish Cultural Committee in St. Ignatius; Jerry Roselip and Kathy Schmidt of the Mission Valley Preservation Alliance; Joann Bigcrane, preservation officer of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes: Virgil Dupuis, SKC Extension Service agent, and Michael Kennedy, Missoula County commissioner from Missoula.

No reservations are required, but for mor information, call FRO at 644-2511.” John Stromnes, Missoulian May 29, 1998 The Missoulian

“Bison Range visitors’ center hours expanded

Moiese – The visitors’ center at the National Bison Range is now open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily for the summer.

The center is the best place to start a visit to the range. Personnel are available to answer questions and give wildlife viewing tips. A free map and field guide are available. Displays cover the natural history of bison as well as the history of the slaughter and recovery of bison populations. A 12-minute video is shown on request. There’s also a bookstore, with a variety of books, maps and posters for sale.

A $4 fee is charged for the scenic drives. Visitors arriving before 8 a.m. may go on the scenic drives and pay the fee on the way out. The main gate opens at 7 a.m. and is locked at dark. Visitors must start the Red Sleep Mountain Drive by 7 p.m. to have enough time to finish before the main gate closes.

For more information, call the National Bison Range at 406-644-2211.” June 25, 1998 The Missoulian

Forest Service eyeing potential wildlife refuge

By MICHAEL JAMISON
of the Missoulian

KALISPELL – Winged shadows trace a watery path through the marshy grassland, a metallic "kik-kik-kik" shrilling from above the massive black tern nesting colony. Flowing away to the west, a long lazy valley meanders green with the water, folding finally into rolls of forest and native prairie.

From across the shallow lowland a solitary sandhill crane cries out against the still heat; a call heard, on most days, only by moose, elk, wolves, bears, bald eagles.

This first day of July, however, the sandhill has as an audience. A small handful of people have

See **REFUGE,** *Page A4*

Refuge

Continued

gathered to discuss the future of the crane, her home and her native neighbors.

"This ranch," says Bruce Bugbee, "is one of the finest wildlife conservation opportunities in northwestern Montana. It would be a tragedy to let such an opportunity slip by."

The opportunity Bugbee refers to is the Lost Trail Ranch, hidden in the low mountains west of Kalispell. Bugbee, a conservation real estate consultant for Montana Power Co., is working on a deal to sell much of the ranch to the federal government – creating, in the process, an 8,000-acre National Wildlife Refuge.

MPC bought the ranch two years ago, he said, investing $5 million in the land and buildings. The purchase was part of a deal to compensate the public for wildlife habitat lost when Kerr Dam plugged the end of Flathead Lake.

Since the dam's construction, Flathead Lake has remained unnaturally high, and the rich delta that once spread across the head of the lake is now greatly eroded.

To mitigate for habitat lost on the lake's north shore, as required by federal law, MPC purchased the wetland ranch in Pleasant Valley. About 3,100 acres of the ranch will be handed over for dam mitigation, as will an additional 800 acres at nearby McGregor Lake.

Of the remaining 4,900 acres at Lost Trail Ranch, 1,700 will go into the wetlands preservation program under a conservation easement.

The debate taking place under the watchful eyes of the sandhill crane concerns the last 3,000 acres of ranch land. MPC would like to sell the land to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, creating a single 8,000-acre National Wildlife Refuge.

The USFWS favors the idea, and is currently looking for public input on the proposed purchase, which would be paid for with duck stamp dollars.

If all goes as many hope, it will be the first substantial addition to Montana's refuge lands in more than a decade.

"We haven't seen all the public comment," said David Wiseman, "and this is a long way from a done deal. But I predict our preferred alternative is going to be to acquire the ranch."

Wiseman is the USFWS project leader for the National Bison Range Complex, which covers all National Wildlife Refuge lands in northwestern Montana.

His prediction for the 3,000 acres comes despite a small but loud group of naysayers, including several area ranchers and a Republican legislator.

Rep. Bob Spoklie, R-Kalispell, is a local elk farmer appointed last January to take the legislative seat of Rep. Bill Boharski, who left to become mayor of Kalispell.

Spoklie and other property-rights minded locals have raised concerns over what they perceive to be yet another encroachment by the federal government. More public lands should be transferred to private ownership, they say, not the other way around.

Those speaking against the purchase, however, have been largely overwhelmed by the state's extensive hunting and fishing sportsmen's lobby, which strongly supports the new refuge.

Currently, the land is posted against hunting, and is being operated as a working cattle ranch. If it is included in the refuge system, Wiseman said, hunting and fishing may very well be restored in the area, offering the public more access than currently enjoyed.

"The refuge system places wildlife first," Wiseman said. "It's not a multiple-use system. But if fishing and hunting do not interfere with the mission, then they are allowed in the refuge."

The same goes for grazing and logging, he said.

"The land won't be grazed or logged commercially," he said, "unless, of course, a grazing or logging program can be used in some way to enhance wildlife habitat."

Looking down on the ranch from the forested northern rim, Wiseman can imagine a landscape rich in wildlife and open to visitors. But for now, he sees potential, hemmed in between cattle guards and the bellow of beef on the hoof.

The road slicing through the ranch is bordered by knee-high knapweed, which obscures the fresh cow pies underfoot. The once-meandering stream draining from 165-acre Dahl Lake marches out in geometric precision, straightened for irrigation.

The ranch, in other words, is somewhat less than pristine. Yet the potential Wiseman imagines is not hard to picture, as a bald eagle perches in a snag just beyond the southern-most cattle fence.

"The old photos of the ranch show it like it was," he said. "Marshes, beaver ponds, willow bottoms. Eastern hunters holding strings of ducks as long as their cars. Actually, it looked a lot like it does now."

■ The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has extended the public comment period on the Lost Trail Ranch purchase into July. Comments will be accepted through the month, and a draft plan for the area will be released in early to mid August. Write U.S.FWS, ARW/RE Land Acquisition and Planning, P.O. Box 25486, Denver, CO, 80225-0486. Or, for more information about the Lost Trail project, contact the National Bison Range Complex Planning Project, 132 Bison Range Road, Moiese, Mont., 59824.

MONTANA

USFWS seeks public input on MPC sale of refuge

BY MICHAEL JAMISON
of the Missoulian

KALISPELL — Winged shadows trace a watery path through the marshy grassland, a metallic "kik-kik-kik" shrilling from above the massive black tern nesting colony. Flowing away to the west, a long lazy valley meanders green with the water, folding finally into rolls of forest and native prairie.

From across the shallow lowland a solitary sandhill crane cries out against the still heat; a call heard, on most days, only by moose, elk, wolves, bears, bald eagles.

This first day of July, however, the sandhill has an audience. A small handful of people have gathered to discuss the future of the crane, her home and her native neighbors.

"This ranch," says Bruce Bugbee, "is one of the finest wildlife conservation opportunities in northwestern Montana. It would be a tragedy to let such an opportunity slip by."

The opportunity Bugbee refers to is the Lost Trail Ranch, hidden in the low mountains west of Kalispell. Bugbee, a conservation real estate consultant for Montana Power Co., is working on a deal to sell much of the ranch to the federal government — creating, in the process, an 8,000-acre National Wildlife Refuge.

MPC bought the ranch two years ago, he said, investing $5 million in the land and buildings. The purchase was part of a deal to compensate the public for wildlife habitat lost when Kerr Dam plugged the end of Flathead Lake.

Since the dam's construction, Flathead Lake has remained unnaturally high, and the rich delta that once spread across the head of the lake is now greatly eroded.

To mitigate for habitat lost on the lake's north shore, as required by federal law, MPC purchased the wetland ranch in Pleasant Valley. About 3,100 acres of the ranch will be handed over for dam mitigation, as will an additional 800 acres at nearby McGregor Lake.

Of the remaining 4,900 acres at Lost Trail Ranch, 1,700 will go into the wetlands preservation program under a conservation easement.

The debate taking place under the watchful eyes of the sandhill crane concerns the last 3,000 acres of ranch land. MPC would like to sell the land to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, creating a single 8,000-acre National Wildlife Refuge.

The USFWS favors the idea, and is looking for public input on the proposed purchase, which would be paid for with duck stamp dollars.

If all goes as many hope, it will be the first substantial addition to Montana's refuge lands in more than a decade.

"We haven't seen all the public comment," said David Wiseman, "and this is a long way from a done deal. But I predict our preferred alternative is going to be to acquire the ranch."

Wiseman is the USFWS project leader for the National Bison Range Complex, which covers all National Wildlife Refuge lands in northwestern Montana.

His prediction for the 3,000 acres comes despite a small but loud group of naysayers, including several area ranchers and a Republican legislator.

Rep. Bob Spoklie, R-Kalispell, is a local elk farmer appointed last January to take the legislative seat of Rep. Bill Boharski, who left to become mayor of Kalispell.

Spoklie and other property-rights minded locals have raised concerns over what they perceive to be yet another encroachment by the federal government. More public lands should be transferred to private ownership, they say, not the other way around.

Those speaking against the purchase, however, have been largely overwhelmed by the state's extensive hunting and fishing sportsmen's lobby, which strongly supports the new refuge.

Currently, the land is posted against hunting, and is being operated as a working cattle ranch. If it is included in the refuge system, Wiseman said, hunting and fishing may very well be restored in the area, offering the public more access than currently enjoyed.

"The refuge system places wildlife first," Wiseman said. "It's not a multiple-use system. But if fishing and hunting do not interfere with the mission, then they are allowed in the refuge."

The same goes for grazing and logging, he said.

"The land won't be grazed or logged commercially," he said, "unless, of course, a grazing or logging program can be used in some way to enhance wildlife habitat."

Looking down on the ranch from the forested northern rim, Wiseman can imagine a landscape rich in wildlife and open to visitors. But for now, he sees potential, hemmed in between cattle guards and the bellow of beef on the hoof.

The road slicing through the ranch is bordered by knee-high knapweed, which obscures the fresh cow pies underfoot. The once-meandering stream draining from 165-acre Dahl Lake marches out in geometric precision, straightened for irrigation. The ranch, in other words, is somewhat less than pristine. Yet the potential Wiseman imagines is not hard to picture, as a bald eagle perches in a snag just beyond the southern-most cattle fence.

"The old photos of the ranch show it like it was," he said. "Marshes, beaver ponds, willow bottoms. Eastern hunters holding strings of ducks as long as their cars. Actually, it looked a lot like it does now."

To comment

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has extended the public comment period on the Lost Trail Ranch purchase, northwest of Missoula, into July. Comments will be accepted through the month, and a draft plan for the area will be released in early to mid August. Write U.S.FWS, ARW/RE Land Acquisition and Planning, Box 25486, Denver, CO, 80225-0486. Or, for more information about the Lost Trail project, contact the National Bison Range Complex Planning Project, 132 Bison Range Road, Moiese, MT, 59824.

July 4, 1998 The Montana Standard

BRIEFS

Jim Fowler at Bison Range

MOIESE – Jim Fowler, host of "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom," will visit the National Bison Range on Monday.

Fowler, who is also director of Mutual of Omaha's Wildlife Heritage Center, will talk about bison and wildlife, birds of prey and conservation from 5-5:30 p.m. at the Visitor Center. His appearance is free and open to the public.

Fowler's visit is part of the Bison Range's 90th birthday celebration. The range was established on May 23, 1908, the first land ever purchased for wildlife by the federal government. Its mission: "To provide a representative herd of bison, or buffalo, under reasonably natural conditions, to help ensure the preservation of the species for continued public benefit and enjoyment."

July 23, 1998 The Missoulian

Fowler of 'Wild Kingdom' fame coming to area

Jim Fowler, one-time sidekick of Marlin Perkins, now the longtime host of "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom" in his own right, will bring his wildlife-conservation message to Kalispell and Moiese next week.

Here's his schedule:

From 2-2:45 p.m. Monday, Fowler will talk to children from the Salvation Army recreation program in Kalispell, with help from a white-tailed fawn, golden eagle, peregrine falcon, great gray owl and barred owl.

From 5-5:45 p.m., he'll be at the National Bison Range in Moiese with a lesson on preserving the natural world. His audience: a group of Boy Scouts and 4-Hers.

Fowler

His assistants: a golden eagle, great horned owl and a barred owl. Fowler also will release a great horned owl into the wild during his stop at the Bison Range.

On Tuesday, Fowler will begin his day at the Bibler Gardens in Kalispell, with an appearance from 9:30 to 10:15 a.m. He'll meet with local 4-Hers, look at the flowers and show off a miniature Sicilian donkey, a miniature Nigerian goat and a Zebu.

From 10:45 to 11:30 p.m., Fowler will visit Spring Brook Ranch, a 250-acre ranch that has been protected as undeveloped open space. He'll meet, too, with children from Glacier Institute's Young Naturalist Program and from Children for Wildlife.

Finally, from noon to 12:45 p.m. Tuesday, Fowler will give children a tour of the Conrad Mansion in Kalispell, again bringing along some animal friends.

Fowler's visit is sponsored by Mutual of Omaha's Wildlife Heritage Center. The center was established in 1992 as part of the "Wild Kingdom" program.

– Sherry Devlin, Missoulian

July 25, 1998 The Missoulian

Crown prince of the

Wild Kingdom

MICHAEL GALLACHER/Missoulian

He's been chased by elephants, stalked by polar bears and nearly had his boat upset by hippos, so being battered by a peregrine falcon Monday afternoon at the National Bison Range was just another day at the office for Jim Fowler.

Jim Fowler lends a hand on the TV series, and lends his voice to conservation

By JOHN A. REED
for the Missoulian

MOIESE – Although his version of a "hoot" owl call didn't seem to much impress the barred owl perched on his sleeve, Jim Fowler got the message across to his human audience just fine.

Fowler, host of "Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom" TV series, visited the National Bison Range on Monday afternoon, packing a little humor and a serious environmental message for the more than 100 people gathered at the visitors' center.

And he tapped a natural resource along the way – the animal kingdom – to help him send home the point.

Surrounded by the likes of a peregrine falcon, a white-tailed fawn, golden eagle, great gray owl and – much to its disinterest – the barred owl, Fowler told a collection of young and old that mankind can learn a lot from its animal neighbors.

"We've got to learn the laws of nature, as to how they affect life on Earth," Fowler said, his brow dripping from sweat in the 90-plus degree heat.

"The trick is to reach people. And you can certainly do that with animals," he added.

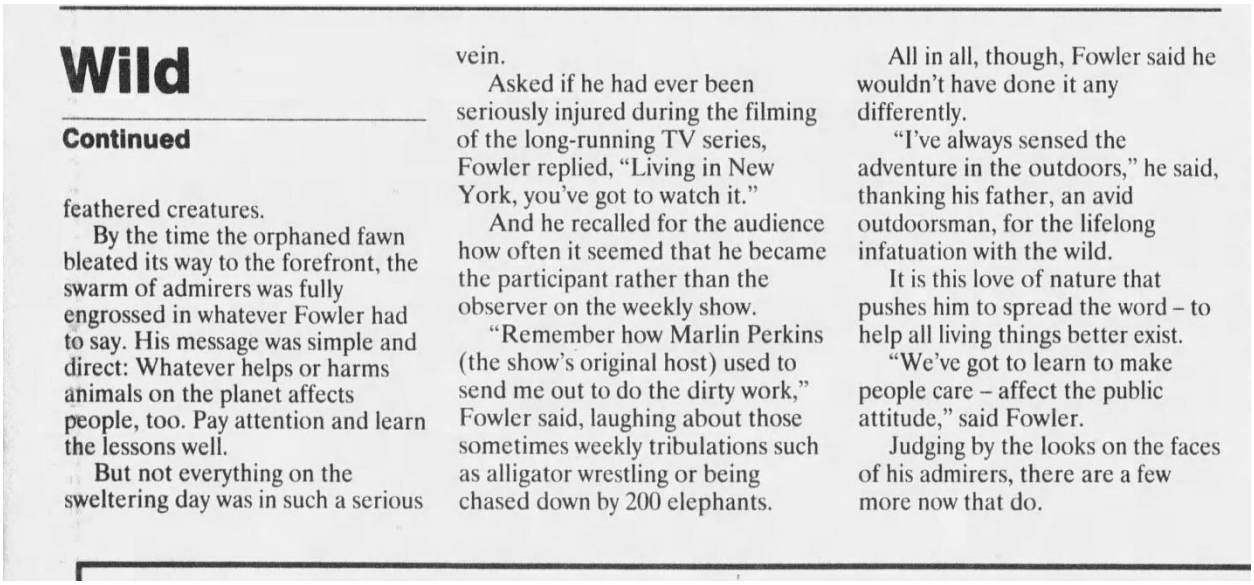
Reaching people was not the problem Monday.

Every set of eyes was glued to Fowler and his contingent of animal guests that were brought to the presentation by Beth Sorensen of Wildlife Return, a western Montana wild animal-care shelter.

With each critter Fowler brought out, the gaggle of youngsters hugging the ground in front of him edged closer and closer, yearning to reach out and touch their furred and

See **WILD,** *Page A12*

There was no shortage of animals to keep the youngsters occupied, but this white-tailed fawn stole the show.



Wild

Continued

feathered creatures.

By the time the orphaned fawn bleated its way to the forefront, the swarm of admirers was fully engrossed in whatever Fowler had to say. His message was simple and direct: Whatever helps or harms animals on the planet affects people, too. Pay attention and learn the lessons well.

But not everything on the sweltering day was in such a serious vein.

Asked if he had ever been seriously injured during the filming of the long-running TV series, Fowler replied, "Living in New York, you've got to watch it."

And he recalled for the audience how often it seemed that he became the participant rather than the observer on the weekly show.

"Remember how Marlin Perkins (the show's original host) used to send me out to do the dirty work," Fowler said, laughing about those sometimes weekly tribulations such as alligator wrestling or being chased down by 200 elephants.

All in all, though, Fowler said he wouldn't have done it any differently.

"I've always sensed the adventure in the outdoors," he said, thanking his father, an avid outdoorsman, for the lifelong infatuation with the wild.

It is this love of nature that pushes him to spread the word – to help all living things better exist.

"We've got to learn to make people care – affect the public attitude," said Fowler.

Judging by the looks on the faces of his admirers, there are a few more now that do.

July 28, 1998 The Missoulian

"National Bison Range switches to fall hours

Moiese – Fall's coming to the National Bison Range, and with it a change in park hours.

Beginning Saturday, Sept. 5, the visitors' center will be open weekdays from 8 a.m. o 5 p.m. and on weekends from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The cenic drives will be open from 7 a.m. until dark.

Visitors should begin the Red Sleep Mountain Drive by p. m. to finish before the main gate closes. The 19-mile, one-way gravel road takes 90 minutes to two hours to drive. The Buffalo Prairie Drive takes 20 to 30 minutes.

There is a $4 per vehicle charge for use of the scenic drives, payable at the visitors' center. A season pass to the Bison Range is $10.

Remember that Red Sleep Mountain Drive will close for about a week near the end of September or beginning of October while the bison herd is moved. Visitors' center hours also may be different at that time. The scenic drive closes for the winter on Oct. 13.

Questions? Call 406-644-2211." August 27, 1998 The Missoulian

"Bison Range hours changing

Moiese – Hours are changing at the National Bison Range, but the gates will remain open throughout the winter.

Beginning Tuesday, drives on the range will be open from 7 a.m. until dark. The Winter Drive takes about an hour to complete. The shorter West Loop Drive lies behind the Visitor Center and takes about 15 minutes.

The Visitor Center is open weekdays only, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. It is closed weekends and holidays through the fall and winter months. No fees are charged during the winter.

The 10-mile round-trip Winter Drive offers views of deer, elk, pronghorn and bald eagle along Mission Creek and in Alexander Basin. There are always bison in the exhibition pasture just past the picnic areas, and other bison should be visible along Highways 3 and 200.

Visitors planning trips to the Bison Range during colder weather may want to call first for current road conditions. The number is 406-644-2211." Missoulian October 8, 1998 The Missoulian

“Briefs

Take a holiday drive on the National Bison Range

Moiese – Need a place to take all that company coming for Thanksgiving and Christmas? The National Bison Range says, “Come on up.”

The Bison Range’s scenic drives are open daily, except during extremely harsh weather. The Winter Drive is a 10-mile round trip on gravel road. Likely seen are deer, elk, pronghorn and bald eagle along Mission Creek and n Alexander Basin.

A small group of bison is always on display in the exhibition pasture just past the picnic area. In winter, most of the bison herd can be seen on the south side of the range along Highway 93 north of Ravalli.

The shorter West Loop Drive also offers views of deer, pronghorn and other wildlife. Range managers suggest that visitors allow about an hour for he drives, so they can go slow enough to spot and enjoy wildlife and scenery.

Drives are open daily from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Visitors may want to call Bison Range for current road conditions. The number is 406-644-2211.

In nicer weather, visitors often walk along the nature trail in the picnic area. The one-mile accessible trail is a good place to see winter birds, including black-capped chickadees, northern flickers and Townsend’s solitaires.

Birders also should spend a little extra time and drive north on Highway 212 to Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge. There are geese and other waterfowl on open water in the reservoir, ring-necked pheasants and bald eagles on and above the ground.

Remember that walking away from vehicles is prohibited on national wildlife refuges, except in designated areas.

The visitors center and bookstore at the Bison Range are open weekdays only from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Beginning Dec. 1, all books, postcards and poster will be 25 percent off. The visitors center is closed weekends and holidays, and also will be closed the day after Thanksgiving.”

November 19, 1998 The Missoulian

SUNDAY

Montana Life

MISSOULIAN

SUNDAY, NOVEM

BIRD SEASON

Donaldson's sign advertises the birds outside her home on Highway 93 near St. Ignatius.

Judy Donaldson set out to buy baby chickens last spring, but ended up with 20 turkeys instead. She hopes to sell most of the 17 birds that survived for Thanksgiving.

Donaldson raised the turkeys without using chemicals or medicines.

Judy Donaldson's turkeys are homegrown from the heart

Written by SHERRY DEVLIN
Photographed by TOM BAUER
of the Missoulian

ST. IGNATIUS – When the breeze starts to bite and autumn turns the corner into winter, Judy Donaldson buttons her patchwork overshirt taut against the cold of her morning chores.

This is, she confesses, her favorite time of year.

The asters offer a farewell bloom. An acre of crisscrossed corn stalks gives testimony to summer's bounty. The apples that no one could reach wrinkle on a dozen branches.

In the barn, a mama bunny warms a half dozen babies in a nest of straw and fur. In the chicken coop, 17 ever-so-plump turkeys peck the last of yesterday's grain from the feeding trough.

'You've got to love an animal or it's not going to respond. But you can't name them. Once you give them names, they become pets and you can't eat them.'

– Judy Donaldson

Donaldson kicks the leaves coloring her lawn and nods to the snow squall on the Mission Mountains to her east. Just look at that, she says. The sun finds a break, narrow but navigable, in the clouds and lights the foothills to her west. If we had the field glasses, she says, we could probably see buffalo.

This time of day, Donaldson says, her life seems like a dream: the move to Montana, the long search for work, the good fortune of finding the little farmhouse for rent, the generosity of her landlord and of his land.

"It's like a miracle," she whispers.

The first time Judy Donaldson raised turkeys was back home in northeast Indiana, three hens and a tom, a gift from her sister when they were a day old.

They'd sit with her on the front porch swing at daybreak, pecking cereal out of

See **TURKEYS,** *Page E3*

Donaldson's turkeys start calling an hour before she feeds them. The birds think she's their mama, and Donaldson's husband, Otis, says they recognize her voice.

Turkeys

Continued

her breakfast bowl.

"They thought I was their mother," Donaldson says.

This time, she set out for the Cenex in Ronan intent on buying baby chickens to raise and sell as fryers. She came home with 20 turkey chicks that her husband bargained for.

"I told Otis, 'I want two little hens and a rooster,' " Donaldson said. "But you can't sex turkeys when they are babies, so he bought them all. I wish he'd do me that way with money."

She couldn't let these turkeys run free, like she did back home. The owls would get them, or the hawks or coyotes. Either that or they'd run out on Highway 93.

Still, Donaldson babies her birds – which are gobbledy plump after seven months of eating lettuce and zucchini from the garden. Corn, too, cobs and all. And squash.

They start calling an hour before she fills two plastic pails with tap water and a coffee can with corn, and leaves the warmth of her kitchen. "Can you hear them?" she asks. "They're looking for mama."

By the time she peeks through a knothole in the chicken house, the birds are in full gobble.

There's no profit in raising turkeys, Donaldson says. "I'm losing my shirt." But she loves it just the same. "I just love animals. It doesn't matter to me what they are."

Judy and Otis Donaldson are, she figures, a perfect match. Her people were farmers in Indiana, and she grew up butchering pigs – "on New Year's Day at Uncle Noble's" – and tending chickens – "I'd fall headfirst into the 55-gallon barrel of feed."

Otis is a Texan and a rancher, quick with a smile, accustomed to hard work.

They share a love of animals, all sorts, she says. She can't count the number of dogs and cats they've "rescued" over the years.

They've spent their 21 years together moving around the country, working on ranches and following construction. When they married, Judy had six children. Otis helped her raise them, and did a wonderful job of it. But the kids are grown and gone now, and Judy and Otis are ready to stay in one place.

"Last year, Otis said, 'Honey, I am so tired. Where are we going to go?' And I said, to Montana."

They were living in Wyoming on land so alkaline you couldn't drink the water or grow a garden. But they had friends in St. Ignatius and Otis had a job offer.

By the time they arrived, though, the job belonged to someone else. Their friends offered the Donaldsons a room, and Otis started commuting to and from the Job Service office in Polson. One day, he invited Judy along for the drive.

The little tiny ears of corn that didn't grow also found their way into the turkey feed. 'I shucked them and broke 'em in half,' Judy Donaldson says. 'They'd swallow the cobs whole. I couldn't believe it.'

feet. "You're my little pampered one, aren't you? I'm not going to eat you."

"Hey," she scolds a big white-feathered hen. "No fingernail pecking."

One of the toms pecks her patchwork shirt, and gets a pat on the head. "Sorry. You already ate all the buttons."

Donaldson squats now and is surrounded by her brood. The chicken house grows silent as she sweet-talks the birds, rubbing their knobby topped heads.

"I sat outside with these guys all summer, watching the buffalo up on the Bison Range and talking to the pheasants that poked their heads out of the grass. One day, a bunch of wild turkeys came up to investigate these guys, but they ran off when they saw me."

"You've got to love an animal or it's not going to respond," she instructs. "But you can't name them. Once you give them names, they become pets and you can't eat them."

And these turkeys are, indeed, intended for butchering. Donaldson flattened a cardboard box into a sign a few weeks back and stapled it to the back of the plywood sign her husband set out on Highway 93 last summer.

Otis Donaldson's sign announced: "I'm Looking for Work." It brought him odd jobs all summer. In September, he found work driving a dump truck at a construction site in Missoula.

Judy Donaldson's sign announces: "Order Now 'Fresh' Turkeys." It has brought four orders so far. She's hoping for another nine. That way, she could butcher one turkey for herself and keep a tom and a pair of hens to produce next year's babies. ("About spring, they breed and lay a bunch of big eggs – ouch eggs," she says.)

Of the 20 baby turkeys she brought home from the Cenex, 17 thrived and grew. The other three died the first day.

She lifts one of the toms circling her in the chicken house, and figures he's nearly 20 pounds. She'll sell him for $1.29 a pound, cleaned and dressed.

"All summer, they ate out of the garden," she says. "They loved the greens. I even gave them the weeds and the green bean plants once the beans were done. And I had tons and tons of zucchini. I let them grow and they'd be nine pounds."

The little tiny ears of corn that didn't grow also found their way into the turkey feed. "I shucked them and broke 'em in half," she said. "They'd swallow the cobs whole. I couldn't believe it."

Every meal comes with a helping of grit, crushed rock that helps the turkeys grind up and digest their food. Now that the garden's hunkered down for the winter, meals are mostly grain and corn, with an occasional helping of potato peelings and egg shells.

These turkeys, Donaldson says, haven't had any medicine, and she doesn't use chemicals on her garden. They've been raised natural. They'll be good eating.

Judy and Otis Donaldson are, she concedes, "way behind" in their rent, but they pay some every month and some day they'll catch up. Their landlord likes that they take such care with the place, and has promised not to put them out in cold weather.

"I would love to have these 80 acres for my own," Judy said. "The barns all have good, solid, cement floors. Otis and I could rescue so many animals. I'd love to have some pigs and goats, and he'd love having cows again."

Next spring, Otis and a neighbor are going to bring in some sawdust and soil to rejuvenate the garden. Judy's saving flower seeds to scatter in the marsh that buffers their front yard from the highway. She's also saving some cleanup in the flower and vegetable beds for spring, knowing the urge that will come over her with the first warm breath of spring.

A local couple lived here nearly 60 years before they sold out and moved to a new house in town. Judy and Otis met them over the summer, and thanked them for the bounty they left behind.

"All the magnificent flowers were their doing," she said. "I just got to enjoy it: the columbines and lupines and lilies – you should have seen the lilies – and the lilac bushes and the marigolds. And we had apples and plums and more vegetables than I've ever had before.

"I canned 401 quarts of fruits and vegetables and jams. I didn't even put up that much when the kids were all at home."

The kids aren't coming for Thanksgiving or Christmas this year. It's too far, and too cold for them. Otis was worried, she said, that she wouldn't put up the tree for just the two of them.

So Judy surprised him a week or so ago, lifting it into the corner of the living room while he was at work, looping the blue tinsel from branch to branch, plugging in the lights when she saw his turn signal on the highway that night.

"You should have seen his face when he came in the door."

It sure felt like home, she said. It still does.

"I'd like to stay right here forever," she said. "Until our time is up."

About a mile north of St. Ignatius, she saw the little white farmhouse with the green roof. "I said, 'Oh Otis, there's my place. It's got the chicken house and the barn. It's my dream.' "

The place was, they could tell, empty. So Otis started asking around. One call led to another and another, then to a real-estate agent who knew the owner – a retired doctor in Nevada. Yes, he said, he'd call and ask if they could rent it.

Two weeks later, the doctor called the Donaldsons. They provided the asked-for references, "and he let us move in," Judy said. "Otis didn't even have a job."

They moved in at the end of March, before the buds began to show on the linden tree that shades the porch. Each week that followed brought a new and wonderful surprise: snowdrops blooming alongside the driveway, neighbors Judy felt like she'd known forever, old-fashioned irises and lilacs, a humongous corn patch, a wonderfully old bed of asparagus, a house that immediately reminded Judy of her grandma's.

At the end of April, she and Otis went to Ronan to buy baby chickens, and came home with turkeys.

With a stomp, a wiggle and a whistle, Judy Donaldson can coax her toms to strut.

"Gobble, gobble, gobble," she mimics, her arms reaching for the birds. She shakes her imaginary tail feathers and flaps her wings. Her brood answers back.

"Look at you, tom. You're beautiful," she coos to the biggest of the mottled brown males. He's in full strut now, feathers fanned, wings and chest fluffed.

"Gobble, gobble, gobble. Oooh, look at you. You're the cock of the roost."

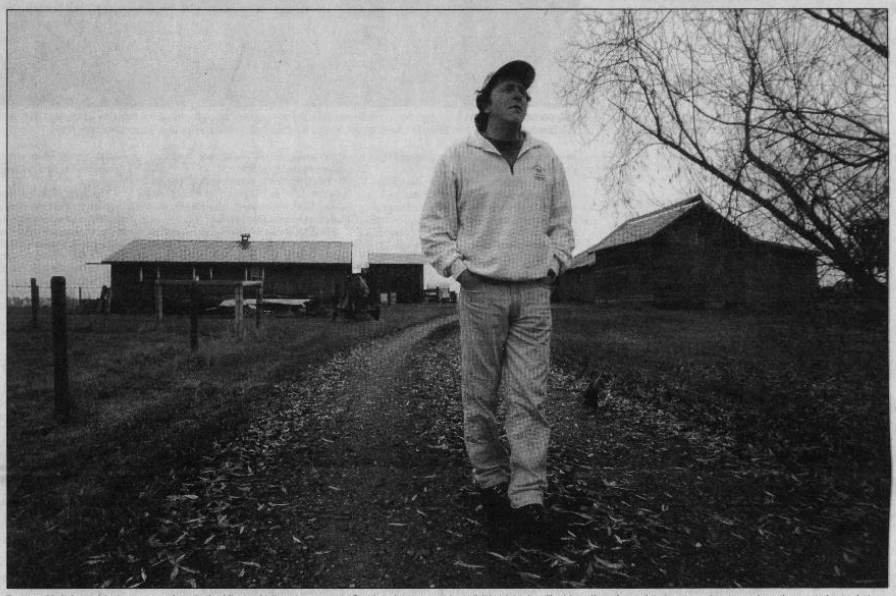
"Come here baby," she says to a hen with gnarly knuckles on its

November 22, 1998 The Missoulian

MONTANA LIFE
Outdoors
Missoulian Section
C
Thursday, November 26, 1998

A stand of willows provided a hiding place – and a perch – for a great-horned owl one morning last week.

Learning *off the* Land



Denver Holt bought a seven-acre farm in the Mission Valley a year ago in October, intent on giving wildlife biologists like himself a refuge of their own and a place where they can share what they learn in the field with the public. "This is everything that I believe in," Holt says, "doing research and connecting research people to the public and letting the public participate."

Biologist's dream of getting folks back to nature is taking flight at Ninepipes

Written by SHERRY DEVLIN
Photographed by KURT WILSON
of the Missoulian

CHARLO – Denver Holt sees the old farmhouse and imagines wildlife biologists sitting around the kitchen table at day's end, philosophizing and swapping stories.

He sees the big red barn out back and imagines college students learning how to handle raptors at a weekend workshop. They're staying overnight in the hog pen; it's become a bunkhouse. The hawks and owls have accommodations in the old granary.

Holt surveys the farm he bought a year ago on the edge of Ninepipes National Wildlife Refuge and knows it is his chance to make a dream come true. This is a place, he says, where biologists can commit themselves to field research and share what they learn with other researchers and with the public.

This is a place where people can see and touch and hear wild places – ice and rocks, coniferous forests, prairie potholes and grasslands, shelterbelts and tilled fields, cottonwood creek bottoms – and all their accompanying wildlife.

They will come here to learn, he says, and the learning will make them care.

For years, Holt searched the back roads of the Mission Valley for a farm – "or even a little shed" – that he could rent and use as a field station for his owl research.

One afternoon, nearly two years ago now, he stopped along Ninepipes Lane to quiz an older gentleman at work outside a pair of ratty cabins.

"Do you own these?"

"No."

"Are they for rent?"

"No."

"For sale?"

"No. Who are you anyway?"

Holt introduced himself and told about his Missoula-based Owl Research Institute and his study of long-eared owls at Ninepipes and Pablo national wildlife refuges.

"I know about you," the man said, and invited him inside for coffee.

By hour's end, the spark of a friendship flickered. The older man was Dwight Stockstad – "Stocky" to all who know him – and he was the first state Fish and Game biologist in the Mission Valley.

In 1954, he helped establish the state's wildlife management area at Ninepipes.

Twenty years later, he and his wife Hope bought 120 acres adjoining the state and federal refuges, intent on conserving the land as wildlife habitat and as their retirement home.

Stockstad showed Holt the house he was building nearby, atop a mound of glacial till. On the flatland below, he pointed out a little farmhouse and a half-dozen outbuildings and said he owned those, too.

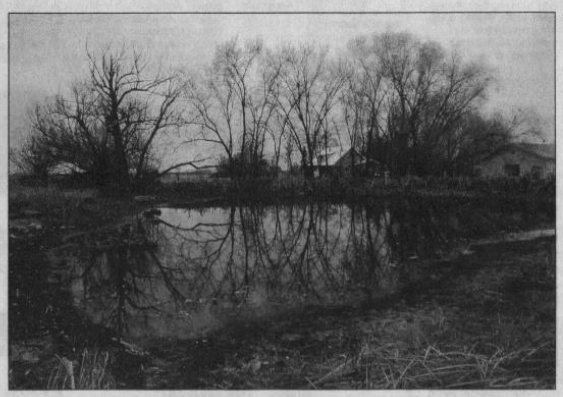
"If you ever want to sell that farm, let me know," Holt said. I have this idea, this dream really, of a center for wildlife research and education.

And Holt said his good-byes, figuring he'd likely never hear from Stockstad again.

Three months later, the telephone rang. "Let's talk," Stockstad said. By the end of the afternoon, they had come to an agreement, although Holt admits he had

See **CENTER,** *Page C2*

A nook off the mud room offers shelves of field guides and a writing table. Holt has furnished the house with donated items and curios from his own collection.



The farmhouse was Holt's first refurbishing project. Its kitchen, sitting room and private corners give wildlife biologists a place to relax, swap stories and rework their notes after a day in the field.

Center

Continued from Page C1

"no idea" how he was going to pay for the farm he had just bought.

"The more we thought about selling the farm, the more we thought about selling it to Denver," Stockstad said one day last week, sitting at a two-chair table in the kitchen of the home he has now – almost – finished. "We realized that what Denver was proposing was the best possible use of those buildings."

"All we ever wanted was to see this place remain in conservation," Stockstad said. "Denver is our guarantee."

Holt's Owl Research Institute bought seven acres, including the farmhouse and outbuildings, a year ago October, and the Ninepipes Wildlife Research and Education Center was born.

Holt stepped out of the farmhouse kitchen and literally sprinted into the yard. "I really just lucked into a wonderful place," he said. "Just look."

At the fenceline, a state wildlife management area begins. Beyond that, is the Ninepipes refuge, then the Mission Mountains, mostly hidden by snow clouds this day. To the west is 31 acres of farm land that Holt hopes to buy, then the town of Charlo, then the Salish Range. To the north, he has an option on another 110 acres. "Then," he said, "we would be insulated."

He spied a great-horned owl roosting in a stand of willows. Hawks – Cooper's, rough-legged, red-tailed, sharp-shinned, kestrals, merlins, prairie falcons – use the weeping birch for hunting perches, he said. Long-eared owls nap in the junipers out front. That's where I'm building an old-fashioned New England rock wall, he said, underneath the huge-leafed Norway maple and the black cottonwood.

"I can't believe everything that is already here," he said, spinning now, arms reaching wide. This summer, there was fruit on the pear, plum and apple trees, and on the mountain ash. The rose bushes bloomed long and often. With fall came the show of the mountain maple and black locust. Now the witchy branched willow dominates alongside the pond.

Holt sees his Ninepipes Center as a refuge for wildlife researchers, a place where they can relax at the end of a day in the field. Thus the farmhouse and its well-appointed nooks: a cubicle just off the mud room furnished with a writing table and a growing collection of field guides, and a wide – and open – kitchen where biologists can fix their meals and attend to their day's field notes.

In the sitting room and an adjoining reading room, Holt has provided an eclectic collection of wildlife journals, art books, artwork and curiosities he's collected in the field and on the road: items lost and found on the Alaskan tundra where he studies snowy owls each summer, a mounted great-horned owl, a White Owl cigar box, carved and hand-painted and temperature-gauging owls, tiny vases of bird feathers, balene from a bow whale, a blues harp.

The centerpiece of the Ninepipes Wildlife Research and Education Center will be the two-story, red-sided barn, says Denver Holt. Once renovated, at a likely cost of $250,000, the barn will provide a lecture hall, exhibit space, labs, work rooms and offers.

Maybe, if he can provide the end-of-the-day refuge, wildlife biologists will get back into the field, Holt said. "Wildlife biology is becoming so much office work. We don't get out anymore. We're administrators and department chairmen. We're always in meetings."

> *'If we want to study animals that live outside, then we need to get outside among them.'*
>
> **– Denver Holt, wildlife biologist**

When money dries up, field research is the first victim, he said. So, too, when time gets short. Biologists with ties to universities often find themselves pulled away by teaching and advising duties. Everyone laments the time spent in meetings and on the computer answering e-mail.

"If we want to study animals that live outside, then we need to get outside among them," said Holt.

That is why, in 1989, Holt established his Owl Research Institute, a non-profit institute funded by grants and private donations, dedicated to long-term research studies and public education. The institute, he said, has allowed him to stay in the field. Now the Ninepipes Center will help others do the same.

As a tour guide, Holt tends toward the manic. "This is just a shed," he said. "But I like it."

"This may look like an old hog pen, but we will make this the bunkhouse. It will probably take about $50,000."

"I love this barn. I don't want to lose its appearance or its integrity. But it needs to be skinned and modernized. It's probably a quarter-million-dollar project."

The Owl Research Institute has been so successful in attracting foundation grants and individual donations that Holt is confident – even if apprehensive – that he can raise the $500,000 it will take to refurbish the outbuildings that will provide lecture halls, meeting rooms, work space and sleeping quarters for the Ninepipes Center.

"But I can't do this alone," he said.

Already, he's wrangled donations of used snowmobiles for his visiting researchers, windows and a stove for a cabin, artwork and scholarly journals for the farmhouse, electrical work and carpentry.

"I tell people, here is this mushroom. It is growing. It will be good. It needs your help," he said. "I feel so strongly that this center is important for conservation. This is everything that I believe in: doing research and connecting research people to the public and letting the public participate."

The Stockstads were the first to contribute, substantially lowering the price they could have asked for the place. Hope helped arrange a recent meeting and tour of the grounds by the Charlo Garden Club. Stocky is around the farm almost every day, working in the shop, dreaming and scheming with Holt.

The old granary would make a great holding pen for injured – or otherwise visiting – birds of prey, he said. Its floor boards are sound, as are its walls. It just needs shoring up a bit, and cleaning and painting.

The barn, at 60 feet long, 30 feet high, 30 feet deep, offers the most potential for meeting and work space. Holt imagines a series of museum exhibits upstairs and a lecture hall. Downstairs, there is space for classrooms, offices, labs and work areas. The barn will be the education center, he said.

Eventually, Holt said, he'll hire a full-time education director and offer courses and workshops and lectures for university students, school teachers, school children, writers, photographers and the general public.

Already under way is reconstruction of a one-room cabin that will house visiting instructors and researchers. Already inhabiting it are wildlife biologists from the Craighead Wildlife-Wildlands Institute. They're studying bighorn sheep on the National Bison Range.

The cabin is a memorial to Nancy Claflin, a woman from Holt's native Massachusetts who "took me under her wing when I was 16 years old and gave me this world of birds."

Claflin gave Holt his first pair of binoculars and a bird book, and encouraged him over the decades of schooling and research that followed. When he bought the farm a year ago, she was among the first visitors. She died in June.

"Nancy gave me this," Holt said, his spin taking in the farmhouse and outbuildings and the marshes and mountain ranges that surround.

"So I could give it to others."

FLASHBACK

40 years ago

On Dec. 8, Dr. Earl C. Lory, chairman of the Chemistry Department at the University of Montana, was appointed dean of the faculty by President Gordon Castle. Lory relinquished his position as head of the chemistry department, but continued his teaching duties within the department. He had been head of the chemistry department for three years. The new dean succeeded Dr. Harold Chatland, who stepped down in October to take over as head administrator of institutional research at UM. Lory, on the UM staff for 12 years at the time, assumed his new duties at the start of winter quarter in January of 1959.

(Lory was on the University of Montana staff for more than 25 years as a professor and administrator, but when he left the school he began a second career of public service. Lory was a Missoula area legislator from 1975-89. He was a longtime member of the Community Medical Center board, the Salvation Army advisory board and the Council On Aging, along with being a long-term member of the Kiwanis. The one-time chemist also has gained notoriety for his cookies, and often brought samples to various meetings and to share with friends.)

The modern champion of buffalo slayers was at it again on Dec. 9 at the National Bison Range at Moiese. Henry J. Helgeson, Missoula area butcher, went to the bison range and slaughtered 60 bison to help the range management thin out the herd. Helgeson had been hunting bison at the range both on his own and at the behest of the range staff for over 35 years. On his return from Moiese, the champion marksman said, "By my own tally I have now killed some 3,543 bison since 1923. There aren't as many to kill, nor do they want as many killed as we used to, but it is still a great sport."

CHRIS WALTERSKIRCHEN

(Helgeson continued thinning the herd into the 1960s but that type approach to leveling the herd's numbers was discontinued soon after. Now the management of the bison range takes bids each year from parties interested in removing bison from the range. Interested bidders are sent a list of types of available animals and then submit their bids, a minimum of $500. Successful bidders then remove the bison, alive, from the range. In recent years, from 80 to 100 bison are removed each year. About one-third to one-fourth of the bison removed are donated to projects such as the Intertribal Bison Cooperative, which involves numerous tribes attempting to establish bison herds of their own. Also more recently, many bison bought from the range are used for breeding rather than for meat.)

16 years ago

On the night of Dec. 12, the Missoula City Council selected three finalists and then chose Ward 4 City Councilman John Toole as Missoula's next mayor, to replace the late Bill Cregg. The council's final choices came down to Toole; Montana Speaker of the House Daniel Kemmis; and city finance director Larry Heggen. The final three were whittled from an original list of 21 applicants, five of which withdrew or were disqualified for various reasons. The council last Wednesday interviewed eight candidates before deciding on the final three. On the first three ballots, Heggen and Kemmis were deadlocked just short of the majority needed for election. On the fourth ballot, Toole gained support as a deadlock among the other two had developed, and finally, on the fifth ballot, Toole got more than the needed seven votes and was eventually made a unanimous choice.

(Toole served as mayor for two years until the election of fellow Republican Bob Lovegrove. Kemmis was eventually elected mayor in his own right in 1989.)

December 6, 1998 The Missoulian

“Frank B. Groom

Missoula – Frank B. Groom one of the last of the old cowboys, died Dec. 28, 1998, in Missoula of natural causes.

Frank was born in [December 2] 1902 in Grant City, [Worth Co.] Mo., the first son of Virginia Lee and William “Bud” Groom. Jenny Lee and Bud, both widowed single parents when they married, brought a large blended family to the marriage and Frank, his brother Emmett and his sister Edrie were the children of the new marriage.

The Groom family moved from Missouri to Oklahoma by wagon when Frank was 2 years old. Frank and Emmett left Oklahoma for Montana during the Great Depression. Frank worked at the National Bison Range, supervising CCC crews in the building of some of the original fence line around the Bison Range. Frank married Verda King in 1945, and they worked at several cattle ranches before settling in the Polson Area.

Frank began working for the Teel Hereford Ranch on the south shore of Flathead Lake in 1950, and he worked there until his retirement in the ‘60’s. He spent a year or two with the Pablo Irrigation District in the ‘50’s. Following his retirement, Frank found he didn’t enjoy life much without being around stock, so he worked into the 1970s on a part-time basis for the Dupuis brothers’ Mud Creek Ranch near Pablo.

Frank and Verda retired in Pablo. Verda preceded him in death in 1977 as did his parents and all 20 of his siblings.

Frank is survived by his son Robert and wife, Sharon, of Pine Bluffs, Wyo., his daughter Mary Groom Hall and husband, Lionel, of Missoula; grandchildren Robert, Paul, James, Emmett and Vicki Groom of Pine Bluffs, and Daryk and Jeremy Hall of Missoula; three stepdaughters, Shelia Peterson and Zelda Poulson of Missoula, and Colleen Harrison of Boerne, Texas; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Frank could break a horse, stack hay, still ‘shine, call a square dance and spin a yarn with the best of them. He lived a long, full life and left a legacy of stories of the progress of the 20th the West.” January 5, 1999 The Missoulian; https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LVLT-Z6T/frank-b-groom-02-1998 [this says 29 Dec.] [In 1931 he married Minnie Belle Pauls.]

“Stanley Driscoll

Charlo – Stanley Driscoll, 84, of Charlo died Feb. 17, 1999, as the result of an auto accident.

Stan was born Dec. 17, 1914, the fourth child of Jeremiah Driscoll and Katherine Sullivan.

He was preceded by his parents and a brother, Lawrence. His wife, Anne, also died in the accident.

He is survived by his children, Joann (John) of Cordova, Alaska, Daniel (Carole) of Spokane, Michael (Mary) of Kenai, Alaska, Thomas (Jo) of Kent, Wash., Elaine (Steve) of Hong Kong, Tim and Leo, both of Charlo, and Laura of Missoula; 10 grandchildren, Lori, Reland, Gwynn, Chris, Erin, Blythe, Mike, Cindy, Rachel and Emmerett; five great-grandchildren; brothers John of Shawnee Mission, Kan., and Jim (Inez) of Billings; sisters Mary of Portland, Ore., Katherine of San Francisco, Irene of San Francisco, Alice of San Francisco and Geraldine of Issaquah, Wash.; a sister-in-law, Anne of Bozeman; numerous nieces and nephews, and a special nephew, Joe Tejeda of Visalia, Calif.

Stanley worked for the National Bison Range, then as a pipefitter in the Kaiser Shipyards inn Vancouver, Wash., during World War II. Upon returning to Charlo, he farmed in the Charlo community for over 50 years.

He enjoyed horseback riding, playing pinochle and visiting with his many friends.

The rosary will be held at the Mission Valley Funeral Chapel in St. Ignatius on Sunday, Feb. 21, at 7 p.m. Graveside services will take place at 10 a.m. Monday, Feb. 22, at the St. Ignatius Catholic Cemetery with Mass following at 11 a.m. at the St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Charlo.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests that memorials may be sent to the D'Aste Women's Club or the Charlo Senior Citizen's Center." February 20, 1999 The Missoulian

"Teachers can discover Bison Range habitats

Moiese – a two-day "Discover Workshop" for teachers to explore the Palouse prairie and wetland at the National Bison Range will be held Friday and Saturday, April 23 and 24.

Teachers who participate will be eligible for 9 to 12 Office of Public Instruction recertification units. The highlight of the workshop will be on Saturday, April 24, when the group will explore two trails near the Bison Range visitor center to learn about the special habitats, plants and animals of the Palouse prairie and wetlands.

There will be an optional three-hour evening session on Friday, April 23, for teachers who wish to participate in the Leopold Education Project, an interdisciplinary educational curriculum based on the classic writings of the renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold. The curriculum was developed to teach the public about humanity's ties to the natural world, and to provide leadership in the effort to conserve and protect the earth's natural resources.

Participants can sign up for either or both sessions, but preregistration is required. For information and registration forms, contact Pat Jamieson at the National Bison Range, at 406-644-2211. There is a $10 registration fee. Anyone is welcome to attend the workshop, but priority will be given to educators." March 18, 1999 The Missoulian

“Dean E. Stipe

Moiese – Dean E. Stipe, 69, of Moiese, passed away Saturday, March 27, 1999, at St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula of natural causes.

Dean was born Feb. 17, 1930, in Stanley, N.D., to Stanley E. and Hazel Grace Curry Stipe.

On Sept. 9, 1950, he married Darlene Maul in Ronan. Their son Earl was born April 22, 1952, in Anaconda. Darlene died on Jan. 29, 1968, in Ronan.

Dean Gaylia May Siggard were married Oct. 10, 1970, in Ronan.

Dean worked at the Hungry Horse Dam, Anaconda smelter and National Bison Range, and farmed in the Moiese Valley. He served on many Lake County boards and was a member of the Pablo Nazarene Church.

He is survived by his wife May; son Earl; May’s children, Marjorie James, Rick Smith and Linda Woolsey; grandchildren Shawn Stipe, Tiffany Stipe, Clint and Allen Stipe, Nathan, Tyler and Luke Smithy, Phillip Crawford and Bradley and Maria James; great-grandchildren Amber James, Kristian and Ryan Stipe; brother Dick Stipe; and sister Vivian Coleman.

He was preceded in death by his sister Fern Munson and brother Harold Stipe.

Friends may pay their respects 3-8 p.m. Monday, March 29, at Shrider’s Mortuary in Ronan.

Funeral services will be 1 p.m. Tuesday, March 30, at the Ronan Christian Missionary Alliance Church with the Rev. James Perry officiating. Burial will follow at Calvary Cemetery.

The family suggests memorials to the Gideons or a charity of the donor’s choice.” March 29, 1999 The Missoulian

“Mission Rangers ride the National Bison Range May 16

St. Ignatius – The Mission Rangers Saddle Club will hold its 1999 National Bison Range Trail Ride on Sunday, May 16.

This historic and scenic ride is the only trail ride allowed on the National Bison Range near Moiese.

The ride begins at 9 a.m. sharp and ends around 3 to 4 p.m., with lunch served at High Point by the St. Ignatius Chamber of Commerce. This year, the lunch will be barbecued beef, baked potato, salad, dessert band a beverage. Tickets cost $20 each, and are limited to 300 experienced riders, on a first-come, first-served basis. The ticket sale begins today. Call 406-745-3024 for tickets.

Other highlights of the ride include a fund-raising dinner and a dance Saturday night, May 15, at the camp area south of Moiese. The St. Ignatius Baseball Program will offer spaghetti with buffalo burger meatballs, salads, beverage and dessert for $5 per person. The Missoula band,

Cash for Junkers, will perform for the outdoor dance." Complied by Daryl Gadbow, Missoulian April 8, 1999 The Missoulian

"Field Trips

The Montana Natural History Center is sponsoring several field trips in conjunction with this year's International Wildlife Film Festival.

Here is this week's schedule:

Monday – Charles Jonkel, bear biologist and founder of the film festival, will guise a trip to the Seeley Lake area in search of grizzly, elk and other species while learning about the greater Bob Marshall Wilderness Area.

Thursday- Wildlife biologist Milo Burcham will lead a tour through the National Bison Range at Moiese, one of the last remaining uncultivated short grass prairies and home to bison, pronghorn antelope and other animals.

Saturday – Burcham will guide a visit to Glacier National Park.

For more information about these programs and costs, call the Montana Natural History Center at 327-0405." John Stucke, Missoulian April 18, 1999 The Missoulian

"National Bison Range route opens May 8

Moiese – In celebration of Migratory Bird Day, the National Bison Range will open its Red Sleep Mountain Drive on Saturday, May 8.

Established by the Partners in Flight Program, International Bird Day, is designed to increase awareness of all migratory birds (including songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds, and raptors) and publicizes conservation efforts on their behalf.

The Bison Range's Red Sleep Mountain Drive is a 19-mile, one-way gravel road that climbs 2,000 feet to the high point of the Bison Range and then descends along steep foothills. The Bison Range will be open at 7 a.m. May 8. Visitors will need to start the drive by 6 p.m. to complete the trip before the Bison Range closes at dark. Fees are changed for the drive.

A variety of bird-related activities are planned for May 8 at the Bison Range. An advanced birding hike, a beginning bird walk and a bird-watching caravan over Red Sleep Mountain Drive are planned. The trips have limited space, so preregistration is required. Call the Bison Range at 406-644-2211 to register. There will also be a talk about bluebird habitat and houses, a discussion of backyard bird feeding, giveaways, contests, coloring pages, a book sale and a variety of other events. Complied by Daryl Gadbow, Missoulian." April 29, 1999 The Missoulian

“Bison Range scenic drive opens

Moiese – The National Bison Range will open the 19-mile Red Sleep Mountain Drive for the summer season Thursday, May 8.

The shorter, graveled West Loop and Prairie drives are now open, and offer views of bison, elk, deer and pronghorns, and take about 30 minutes. The Red Sleep Mountain Drive, which is closed to trailers, takes about two hours. Visitors need to start this drive no later than 6 p.m. to complete the loop before the main gate closes at dark. The gate opens daily at 7 a.m. Morning and evening hours offer the best wildlife viewing. The visitors center is open daily.

A $4 per car fee is charged for the use of the drives. There is no charge or the picnic and day-use areas or for educational groups. There is a Bison Range season pass available for $10. The Golden Passes and the Federal Waterfowl Stamp are accepted for admission and are available at the visitors center.

All Golden Passes admit the bearer and all occupants of the vehicle to most federal areas that charge entrance fees. The Golden Pass is $50 and is good for one year from the date of purchase. The Golden Age Pass for U.S. citizens 62 years of age or older has a one-time $10 fee, and is a lifetime pass.

For more information about Bison Range hours or activities, call 406-644-2211.” May 6, 1999 The Missoulian

“Mission Rangers Saddle Club,
1999 National Bison Range Trail Ride,
Sunday, May 16. For details, call 745-3024. Ticket sales begin today.” May 6, 1999 The Missoulian

“Bison Range celebrates with birthday bash

Moiese – Help celebrate the 91st birthday of the National Bison Range this Sunday.

To celebrate, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans a variety of activities at the Bison Range, including inviting the public to visit for free. Cookies and lemonade will be available at the visitors center after 11 a.m. Posters and coloring pages for children will be given away. Three larger-than-life inflatable bison sculptures, made by area artists Sheryl Haler and Tim Rumage of Bigfork, will be on display from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the visitors center.

President Theodore Roosevelt established on May 23, 1908, as a permanent national bison range for all to enjoy.

The main gate will be open by 7 a.m. and remains open until 9:30 p.m.” May 20, 1999 The Missoulian

Air bison

TIM THOMPSON/Missoulian

Three inflatable bison, on display at the National Bison Range at Moiese, dwarf Pat Jamieson as she walks toward them. The inflatable art was created by artist Sheryl Haler and was set up to help celebrate the 91st birthday of the range.

Surprising guests appear at bison range fete

By BETSY COHEN
of the Missoulian

MOIESE – Expect to be startled anywhere, anytime in any public place in western Montana this summer by a roving herd of jumbo ripstop nylon bison.

They're sure to make you gawk, and hopefully they'll make you think about issues facing the West and the environment, said their creator Bigfork artist Sheryl Haler.

The trio made their first appearance Sunday at the National Bison Range to celebrate the refuge's 91st birthday.

On a bluff above the information center parking lot, visitors were visibly taken with the unusual 11-foot high, 12-foot long, 6-foot wide brightly colored beasts, which appeared to come to life as they shifted and moved in the wind.

"I think they're great," said Aaron Powers of Missoula. "The graph on the side of the one buffalo gives you a reminder of how many there were and how few there were at the end of the century. I think they make you think how important they are here."

Called inflatable art, Haler said her nylon bison are blown up to a larger-than-life scale with the help of an air blower.

"Air art is about making an impact with one of the forces of nature," Haler said. "It's about interacting with the environment."

With every gust of wind, the bison's nylon hair blew and their bodies gently rocked with the air currents.

Haler said she hopes to soon make the bison solar-powered for a true "guerrilla installation."

"I'd really like to have them in places where people see them, to pop them up unexpectedly for people to think about and get them talking; to use them as a backdrop or focal point." she said. "As a sculptor it's hard to make art that is transportable. With these I just put them in a duffel bag and I can go anywhere."

Pat Jamieson, the park's outdoor recreation planner, invited Haler to display her nylon bison on Sunday, the park's official birthday.

"We thought it would be something fun and different," Jamieson said.

By the early 19th century, less than 100 wild bison roamed the West, where once more than 6 million lived.

To celebrate president Theodore Roosevelt's signing of legislation that created the national bison range in 1908, admission was free all day, and visitors were handed a complimentary lemonade and cookie for the loop around the park to see the real thing, the 400-plus bison that range the 18,541 acres.

"The range is something that brings back the old West," said Lincoln May, a Bigfork resident who was touring the range with his wife and 1-year-old son. "It's great to have and we need to keep it for the next generations. It is important to the culture of the area and to Montana."

The refuge is open every day from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., Jamieson said.

For more information call 644-2211.

May 24, 1999 The Missoulian

Jumbo ripstop nylon bison to tour Montana

By BETSY COHEN
Lee News Network

MOIESE – Expect to be startled anywhere, anytime in any public place in western Montana this summer by a roving herd of jumbo ripstop nylon bison.

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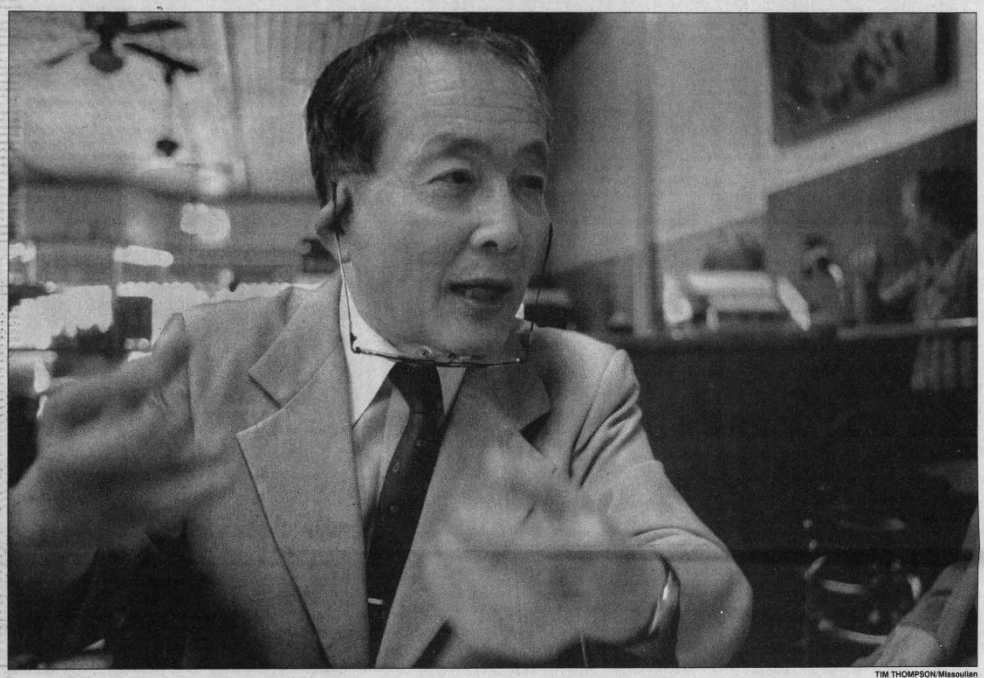
The refuge is open every day from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., Jamieson said.

For more information call 644-2211.

Betsy Cohen is a reporter for The Missoulian.

May 24, 1999 The Independent Record (Helena, Montana)



TIM THOMPSON/Missoulian

Masao Kunihiro talks about the speech he will deliver tonight at the Mansfield Center while visiting the Oxford Cafe on Sunday evening. Kunihiro, a Japanese politician, arrived in Missoula after speaking at the United Nations and visiting with old friend Mike Mansfield in Washington, D.C.

Back to the old haunts

Japanese dignitary and friend of Sen. Mansfield visits Missoula, a town he loves

By BETSY COHEN
of the Missoulian

At age 96, Montana's "treasure," former Sen. Mike Mansfield, is doing quite well and is in fine spirits, said the ambassador's longtime friend, Masao Kunihiro, while having a cup of tea at the Oxford Cafe on Sunday.

"I found him in very good shape," said Kunihiro, who visited Mansfield in Washington, D.C., last week. "We talked about our common friends, including my mother."

The Japanese politician, scholar and former television talk show host, referred to as Japan's Dan Rather, is in Missoula to pay respects to the homeland of his friend, and to talk about relations between Japan and the United States at the University of Montana's Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center.

He will also revisit spots he enjoyed in a 1991 visit, including the Ox, area steak houses, and if there's time, a trip to the National Bison Range.

Kunihiro will give a talked titled "What is it that Japan says no to?" at 4 p.m. Tuesday at the Mansfield Center. The title of his talk is a play on the title of the book "The Japan That Says No," written by Tokyo's newly chosen, conservative governor, Shintaro Ishihara.

"He is sort of a maverick," Kunihiro said of the new governor. "He's a bit of an enigma as far as I'm concerned, but he is very well known with a big following. He is known as anti-American and he's already known as anti-Chinese."

Kunihiro said he is here to "relive the good old times," of the years he spent working closely with Mansfield in Japan, and in 1991, when the two met in Missoula for a few days at the annual Mansfield Lecture.

"I try to improve the relationship between our two countries, two countries I am very much in love with," he said.

Kunihiro said he is particularly concerned by the lagging economy in his own country, and concerned too that it will deeply affect the rest of the world.

"The past seven consecutive years Japan's economy has been in very bad shape. It may very well be zero growth," he said. "Unless Japan's economy picks up its momentum, the rest of Asia may be hard hit, particularly southeast

See **HAUNTS,** *Page B2*

Haunts

Continued

Asia. Something must be done, not just for Japan. It is equally important for the rest of Asia."

The current tensions between the United States and China also concern Kunihiro, who believes we live in crucial, tentative times.

"China is very important to Japan," he said. "And China and the U.S. are at loggerheads. The question is for Japan, what could we do to ameliorate the progress to help relations between U.S. and China?"

He said he will watch Tokyo's new governor carefully because the man's alleged prejudices appear to be working towards thickening the tensions rather than soothing them.

As a writer and as a political watchdog, Kunihiro said he frequently thinks about the mediation style of Mike Mansfield.

"My assessment of Mike Mansfield is he is a national treasure, not only for the United States, but for Japan," he said. "He served the public with his distinct understanding, fairness, humanity and compassion."

Kunihiro and Mansfield first met in the 1970s when Mansfield was ambassador to Japan and Kunihiro was an adviser to Japan's prime minister. Renowned for his bilingual abilities, Kunihiro translated into Japanese Mansfield's speech "Our Future Lies in the Pacific." The translation was sold in book format throughout Asia, which also included Kunihiro's essay titled: "Mansfield as I See Him."

Even though Kunihiro corresponds with Mansfield frequently, fate is responsible for their recent meeting and his visit to Missoula, he said.

"My mother died and I received a condolence card from him before my departure to the United States," said Kunihiro, who carried the letter among his personal items. "He had written in long hand, as usual; when he writes a personal letter he always uses his own hand, and the sentiment was so moving and touching, I knew I had to see Mike Mansfield or else I'd miss the opportunity because I so seldom come to the United States."

Between his scheduled talks at the United Nations in New York and at a conference on American-Japanese relations in Utah, Kunihiro detoured to Washington, D.C. After his visit with Mansfield, he decided to visit Missoula.

"There's a tranquility here," he said. "Tranquility is the only term I can think of to describe my affinity with Montana ... It is a great honor to be friends with Mike Mansfield."

June 8, 1999 The Missoulian

"Briefs
Stockgrowers hold annual meeting in Kalispell

Kalispell – The annual rancher round-up will bring more than 300 Montana cowboys to Kalispell this week, where they parley a bit on issues from cattle country.

The Montana's Stockgrowers Association's mid-year meeting saddles up Thursday and rides into the weekend

the weekend with talks on cattle industry programs, new policies and who's who in the bovine business.

The annual meeting begins with a tour of Flathead Valley agricultural lands, including stops at the National Bison Range in Moiese, the Spoklie elk ranch in Kalispell and two area cattle ranches. Cowboy golfers can also replace the branding iron with the nine iron in the annual "Cow Pasture Scramble" at the Buffalo Hill Golf Club.

The June 11 general session will focus on the state of the cattle business, with industry representatives highlighting issues from both state and national levels.

"This is the chance for ranchers to get involved and have input in issues affecting their industry," said Keith Bales, MSGA president. "The grassroots participation at mid-year is what drives the Montana Stockgrowers throughout the year."

The association represents more than 3,500 cattle producers.

Michael Jamison, Missoulian

June 9, 1999 The Missoulian

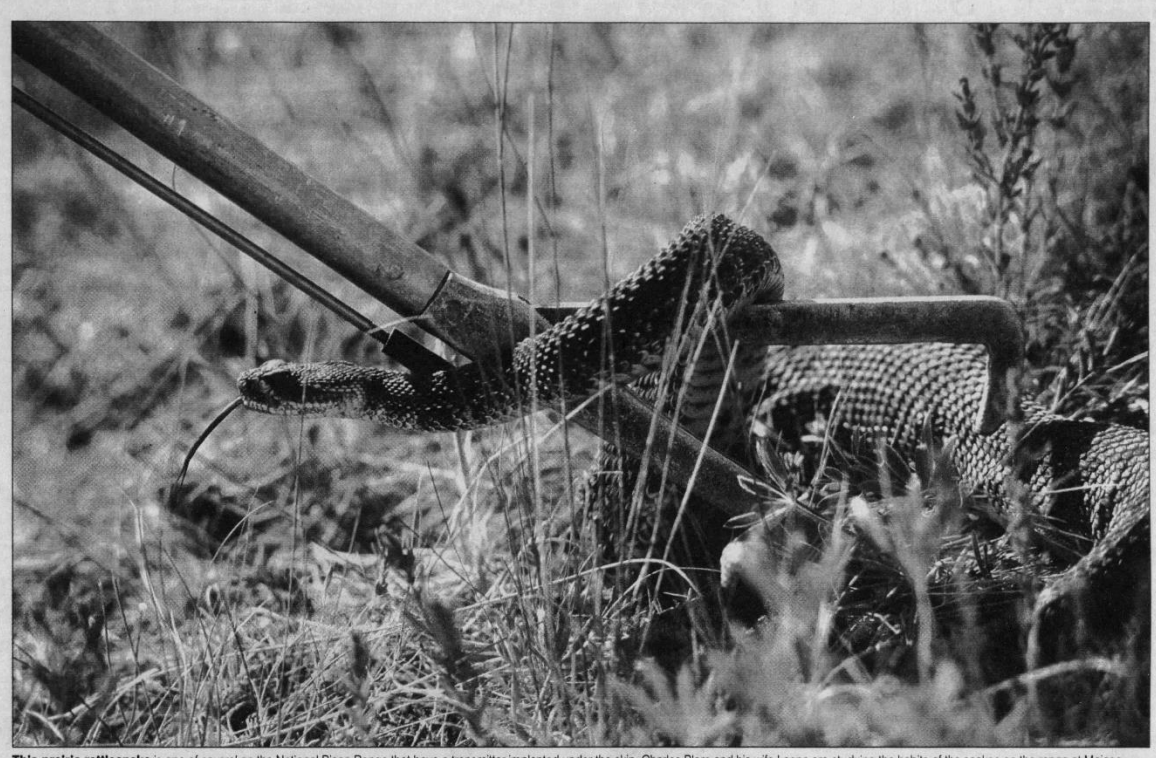
Bird expert leads tour of National Bison Range

Terry Toppins, the man responsible for the Montana Bird Hot Line, will lead an all-day trip to the National Bison Range on Sunday, July 11.

The Refuge features a variety of high mountain, riparian and prairie birds. There will also be good viewing of buffalo, elk, antelope and possibly mountain goat.

The trip is sponsored by the Five Valleys Audubon Society. Interested people should meet at the University of Montana field house parking lot at 8 a.m. For more information call Elizabeth Johnston at 327-1525.

June 10, 1999 The Missoulian



This prairie rattlesnake is one of several on the National Bison Range that have a transmitter implanted under the skin. Charles Blem and his wife Leann are studying the habits of the snakes on the range at Moiese.

ABOVE: **The transmitter remains** in the snake for one year, after which it is removed and the snake returned to the same area it was found. Once the information from the transmitter is saved, the transmitter is rebuilt and ready for use again. Each costs about $300.

RIGHT: **After the snake** has been drugged, Charlie Blem slides it into a tube so the transmitter can be implanted. The tube protects Blem in case the snake comes to sooner than expected. Once the transmitter is implanted, the snake is kept for 24 hours to make sure it has fully recovered and is ready to be released back on the Bison Range.

Rattlesnakes

Couple track Bison Range vipers to see how they survive

Written by NICK GEVOCK
Photographed by TIM THOMPSON
of the Missoulian

MOIESE – People visit the National Bison Range for the beauty of the grassland environment and the Mission Mountains, and most of all to see the abundant wildlife – bison, elk, bighorn sheep, pronghorns and rattlesnakes.

Rattlesnakes?

Many visitors don't realize there are rattlesnakes on the range. And they certainly don't come to see them.

A Virginia couple, however, not only knows rattlesnakes are here, they have spent the last four years finding, capturing and studying them. They capture venomous prairie rattlers (*Crotalus viridis viridis*), implant transmitters in their sides, then track their movement and behavior as part of an ongoing research project.

"It's like fishing, sometimes you go out and catch a bunch and sometimes you get nothing," said Charles Blem, who teaches zoology at Virginia Commonwealth University. "Sometimes we go out and see six or seven snakes in a day."

"It kind of gives you the yips when you're walking around," said Leann Blem, who teaches anatomy and natural history at VCU. "One time I was tracking one and Charles said you're about to step on another one. We saw five in one small area around some rocks. It was like the scene in Indiana Jones."

The Blems teach ecology courses at the University of Montana's Flathead Biological Station in the summer. Charles, whose specialty is birds, has done research on almost all types of vertebrates, including mammals, birds and reptiles, and teaches a wide range of subjects at the station.

His snake research began 10 years ago when he was asked to teach herpetology at VCU. He did so because he believes you can't teach about a species if you are not researching it.

On the Bison Range, the Blems are investigating why rattlesnakes live where they do and how much they move around. Some areas of the range have numerous rattlesnakes, usually north-facing hillsides with lots of large rocks. But often similar hillsides that face south do not have rattlesnakes – a surprise.

Because rattlesnakes need to sun themselves, the Blems expected to find them inhabiting primarily south-facing hillsides. The Blems are researching what physiological differences allow the snakes to adapt to areas that are not prime habitat.

The Bison Range and similar habitat in the northern Rockies is the coldest climate they can withstand.

"They have a very interesting, patchy distribution," Charles Blem said.

Rattlesnakes cannot survive extreme temperatures, hot or cold. Temperatures above 100 degrees can kill a rattlesnake, he said, so in deserts they have to get out of the sun during the hottest part of the day to cool down. Rattlesnakes are constantly working to maintain proper body temperature by sunning themselves to warm up or going into holes and shady spots to cool down.

And opposite of humans, a rattlesnake's metabolism slows down the colder it gets. Humans burn more energy as temperatures lower to keep warm, but in lower temperatures a rattlesnake slows down drastically and can't catch or digest food.

At around 50 degrees, Charles said, rattlesnakes are very slow and can't catch mice. They become active at around 65 degrees. Rattlesnakes come out in the morning to sun themselves and warm up, which helps in digestion.

June through early September is the only time of

See **SNAKES,** *Page C10*

Snakes

Continued from Page C1

the year when rattlesnakes feed on the Bison Range. They can survive on as few as two mice for the entire year, but cannot reproduce with such small amounts of food.

Years with lots of mice are good for rattlesnakes. They go into mouse holes to prey on the rodents. The Blems have recorded snakes that have eaten as many as five mice in a week. Charles believes the rattlesnake is an important part of the ecosystem on the range.

"They do a real service by keeping the rodent population down," he said.

The main staple of their diet is field mice, but they also feed on deer mice and baby ground squirrels.

In winter, rattlesnakes hardly move. They go underground about six feet, below the frost line, and huddle in groups to stay warm.

The goal of the Blems' research is to develop a model of where the rattlesnakes live. The Blems hope they can develop a model that shows the microclimate where rattlesnakes use less energy than they take in, the key to their survival and reproduction.

The rattlesnake project is a big change from the Blems' usual interests, which primarily are birds. They met while they were undergraduates at Ohio University. A biology class they had together was seated alphabetically, and they were next to each other.

"He came back to class after a week from a snake research project," Leann said, "and I thought he was pretty cool."

Both went on to do graduate work in biology at the University of Illinois, Charles earning a doctorate and Leann a master's degree.

They first came to the biological station in 1990 when asked to teach bird ecology. The Blems were familiar with western birds from bird-watching trips to the region. At the end of summer in 1990, they didn't know if they would have the opportunity to come back.

"We cried when we left," Leann said. "There was no bird course offered the next year, but the summer after that we were asked back and we have been back every year since."

The Blems talked to range staff members about birds four years ago while looking for a research project. They were told about the large population of rattlesnakes. Charles had done research on several snake species in Virginia – most of which were venomous snakes – and their research project was born.

TIM THOMPSON/Missoulian

Leann Blem scans the area while Charlie works the receiver trying to zero in on the location of snakes.

Transmitters have helped a great deal in their research, Leann said. The first year of the study, four years ago, the Blems would find snakes and record their location, attempting to get an idea of their movement.

But that was difficult, and the next year they came with transmitters. The technology has helped them track individual snakes over several years and keep track of their location and growth.

"The first year, we had no way to really track the snakes," Leann said. "It works out better with a transmitter in them."

Unlike transmitters used for large mammals, which are radio collars to aid in tracking, the transmitter for a rattlesnake is internal. The Blems capture rattlesnakes and transport them to the biological station for the procedure.

The snakes are tranquilized and placed inside a long PVC tube to protect the handlers.

Neither Charles nor Leann has been bitten by a snake. At least not yet.

"If you do this long enough, eventually you'll be bitten," Charles said. "Almost everybody I know has been bitten, usually by a caged snake."

An incision about an inch long is made in the rear portion of the snake's body. The Blems insert a transmitter in the slit, which is under the skin.

Next a drinking straw is inserted in the slit and pushed towards the snake's head. This helps maneuver the antenna and keep it internal so it doesn't break off.

Another small incision is made at the end of the straw, so it can be removed. A couple of stitches and some antibiotic ointment and the procedure is complete. The snakes stay in the lab for 24 hours to be sure they have recovered.

"We wouldn't put them out here until we know they will be OK," he said. "They could be stepped on by a bison or die from overheating in the sun if they weren't ready to be back out."

Snakes are implanted with transmitters throughout the early summer. The Blems get two summers of tracking out of each transmitter, then remove the transmitter.

Another primary goal of the research is to learn about the movement patterns of the snakes. Charles said movement varies a great deal among individual snakes, but he has recorded a general pattern of migration up and down hillsides.

One snake traveled eight miles, the farthest they have recorded. Other snakes barely move from the area where they were found, frequently close to a large rock the snake uses for sunning and shade.

The Blems would like to visit the range during the winter to determine where the snakes hibernate. They suspect the snakes are gathering in talus slopes because rocky areas make good den sites.

In the spring, range employees have observed dozens of male snakes fighting for breeding rights on hillsides. They curl together in pairs to show off for female snakes in an impressive display.

The Blems plan to continue the study for several more years. Charles said they are at the midpoint of the project and plan to write several papers when the research is done.

In the meantime, the couple's fascination with rattlesnakes is not limited to the Bison Range.

"We were passing through Idaho and saw a sign in the pet walking area that said 'Caution Rattlesnakes,' " Leann said. "We started looking around."

July 8, 1999 The Missoulian

“Coming Soon

Audubon trip to Bison Range, led by Terry Toppings, Sunday, July 11. Meet at University of Montana Field House parking lot, 8 a.m.” July 10, 1999 The Missoulian

“Bison Range hit by thieves, poachers

The headquarters of the National Bison Range was burglarized Tuesday, July 6, sometime between 3:30 and 4 a.m. The burglars stole display items rom the theater and a cash register with an undisclosed amount of money from the Visitor Center.

The display items included an elk antler and a white-tail deer buck skull with a distinctive antler disfigurement from underneath the right eye.

In addition, the National Bison Range requests any information on two white-tailed deer bucks that were illegally shot, decapitated, and the carcasses left to spoil on the north side of the refuge. The suspects are believed to have used Curlew Road for access to the refuge.

If you have any information regarding these incidents, contact Lake County Crimestoppers, 883-7309 or 1-888-883-7309. Missoulian” July 17, 1999 The Missoulian

Couple tracks Bison Range vipers

Virginians implant transmitters into snakes to learn reptile's behavior

By NICK GEVOCK
Lee Outdoors Network

MOIESE — People visit the National Bison Range for the beauty of the grassland environment and the Mission Mountains, and most of all to see the abundant wildlife — bison, elk, bighorn sheep, pronghorns and rattlesnakes.

Rattlesnakes? Many visitors don't realize there are rattlesnakes on the range. And they certainly don't come to see them.

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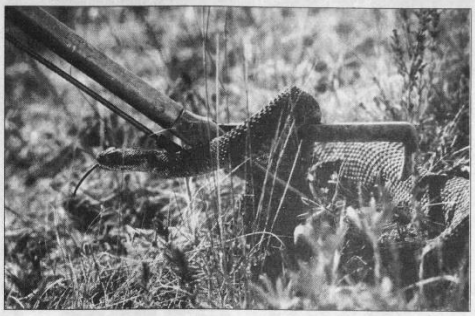
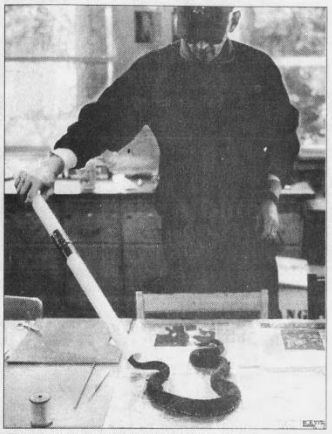


Missoulian photos by Tim Thompson

Charles and Leann Blem, who teach at Virginia Commonwealth University, have studied prairie rattlers on the National Bison Range for four years.

In winter, rattlesnakes hardly move. They go underground about 6 feet, below the frost line, and huddle in groups to stay warm. The goal of the Blems' research is to develop a model of where the rattlesnakes live. The Blems hope they can develop a model that is hows the microclimate where rattlesnakes use less energy than they take in, the key to their survival and reproduction. The rattlesnake project is a big change from the Blems' usual interests, which primarily are birds. They met while they were undergraduates at Ohio University. A biology class they had together was seated alphabetically, and they were next to each other. " He came back to class after a week from a snake research project," Leann said, "and I thought he was pretty cool." Both went on todo graduate work in biology at the University of Illinois, Charles earning a doctorate and Leann a master's degree. They first came to the biological station in 1990 when asked to teach bird ecology. The Blems were familiar with western birds from bird-watching trips to the region. At the end of summer in 1990, they didn't know if they would have the opportunity to come back. " We cried when we left," Leann said. "There was no bird course offered the next year, but the summer after that we were asked back and we have been back every year since." The Blems talked to range staff members about birds four years ago while looking for a research project. They were told about the large population of rattlesnakes. Charles had done research on several snake species in Virginia — most of which were venomous snakes — and their research project was born. Transmitters have helped a great deal in their research, Leann said. The first year of the study, four years ago, the Blems would find snakes and record their location, attempting to get an idea of their movement. But that was difficult, and the next year they came with transmitters. The technology has helped them track individual snakes over several years and keep track of their location and growth. " The first year, we had no way to really track the snakes," Leann said. " It works out better with a transmitter in them." Unlike transmitters used for large mammals, which are radio collars to aid in tracking, the transmitter for a rattlesnake is internal. The Blems capture rattlesnakes and transport them to the biological station for the procedure. The snakes are tranquilized and placed inside a long PVC tube to protect the handlers. Neither Charles nor Leann has been bitten by a snake. At least not yet.



Charles Blem tries to slide a tube over a snake.

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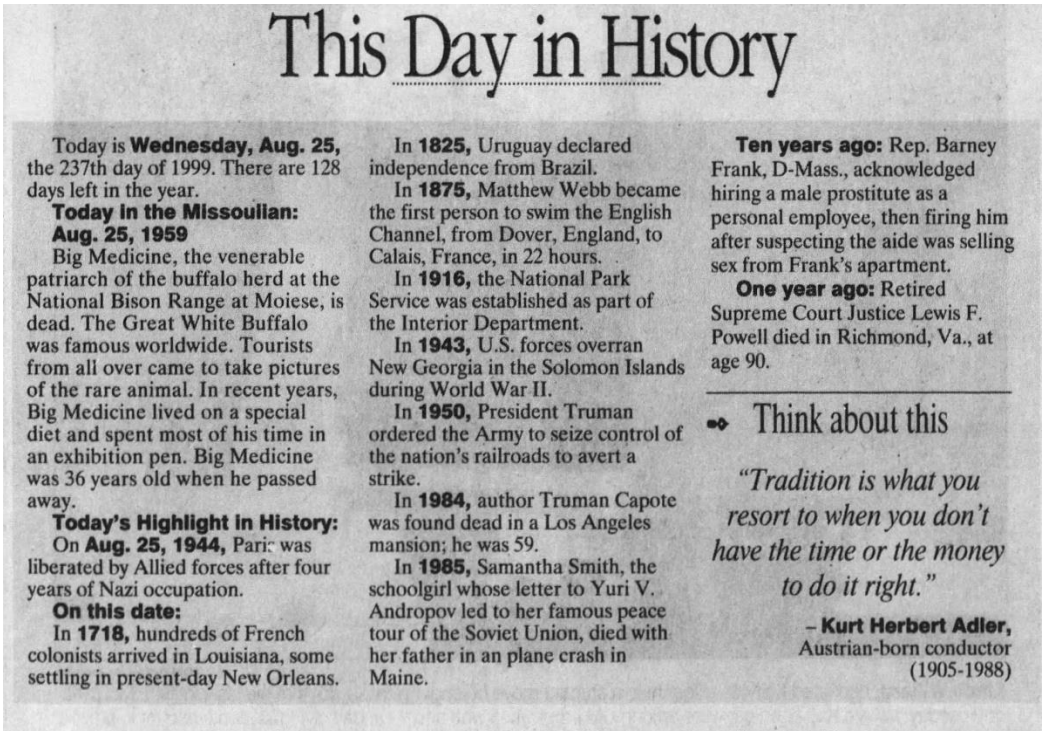
Nick Gevock is a Missoulian reporter.

July 29, 1999 The Independent Record (Helena)



This Day in History

Today is **Wednesday, Aug. 25,** the 237th day of 1999. There are 128 days left in the year.

Today in the Missoulian: Aug. 25, 1959

Big Medicine, the venerable patriarch of the buffalo herd at the National Bison Range at Moiese, is dead. The Great White Buffalo was famous worldwide. Tourists from all over came to take pictures of the rare animal. In recent years, Big Medicine lived on a special diet and spent most of his time in an exhibition pen. Big Medicine was 36 years old when he passed away.

Today's Highlight in History:

On **Aug. 25, 1944,** Paris was liberated by Allied forces after four years of Nazi occupation.

On this date:

In **1718,** hundreds of French colonists arrived in Louisiana, some settling in present-day New Orleans.

In **1825,** Uruguay declared independence from Brazil.

In **1875,** Matthew Webb became the first person to swim the English Channel, from Dover, England, to Calais, France, in 22 hours.

In **1916,** the National Park Service was established as part of the Interior Department.

In **1943,** U.S. forces overran New Georgia in the Solomon Islands during World War II.

In **1950,** President Truman ordered the Army to seize control of the nation's railroads to avert a strike.

In **1984,** author Truman Capote was found dead in a Los Angeles mansion; he was 59.

In **1985,** Samantha Smith, the schoolgirl whose letter to Yuri V. Andropov led to her famous peace tour of the Soviet Union, died with her father in an plane crash in Maine.

Ten years ago: Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., acknowledged hiring a male prostitute as a personal employee, then firing him after suspecting the aide was selling sex from Frank's apartment.

One year ago: Retired Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell died in Richmond, Va., at age 90.

Think about this

"Tradition is what you resort to when you don't have the time or the money to do it right."

– Kurt Herbert Adler, Austrian-born conductor (1905-1988)

August 25, 1999 The Missoulian

"Thelma Lenore Henry

Ronan – Thelma Lenore Henry, 91, of Ronan passed away at her home in Ronan on Tuesday, Sept. 14 of natural causes.

Thelma was born Sept. 12, 1908, in Battle Creek, Mich., the daughter of Ben C. and Rose (Luedders) Payne. She attended public schools and college and graduated school in Michigan. On Sept. 12, 1932, she married Cordia J. Henry in Battle Creek. They moved to Montana in 1958 when her husband became director of the National Bison Range.

Thelma was a homemaker and served as a hostess to the many dignitaries from foreign countries and the U. s. who visited the Bison Range. She was a member of United Methodist Church in Ronan and was a pianist and choir director at Charlo United Methodist Church for many years.

She was preceded in death by her husband and bother. Survivors include a niece, Lois Burdi of Longview, Wash.; a nephew Larry Payne of Sturgis, Mich.

Memorial services will be 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 1, at Charo United Methodist Church. Memorials may be made to Charlo United Methodist or to Ronan United Methodist Church.

Funeral arrangements and cremation are under the direction of Shrider's Mortuary, Ronan."

September 1, 1999 The Missoulian

"Christian Singles, potluck picnic at Moiese Bison Range. Meet, 2 p.m. Kmart parking lot to carpool. Bring a dish and beverages to share. Call Ruth, 728-3637." September 5, 1999 The Missoulian

Migratory birds

Some local flocks a bust amid record waterfowl population boom

By NICK GEVOCK
for the Missoulian

There is good news and bad news for western Montana waterfowl hunters this year.

Nationwide, populations of many species of migratory ducks and geese have reached record levels, and hunters should expect an excellent year when waterfowl from Canada move south during their fall flights. But for locally produced birds in the Flathead and Mission valleys, the picture is not as bright.

A dry early spring combined with a healthy vole population reduced ground cover for nesting birds, making them vulnerable to predators, according to Bill West of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the National Bison Range in Moiese.

"We have a tremendous population of voles this year, and they chew up the vegetation," West said. "There was not enough grass early this year to hide nests from predators, especially aerial predators, and I suspect there was a lot of preying on nests."

Joe Ball of the University of Montana research unit agrees. But he said that while Mission Valley production of waterfowl this year is mediocre because of the dry conditions, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is predicting record numbers of waterfowl continent-wide.

"We had very good water conditions in the prairie pothole region – the Dakotas and southern Canada – and the Conservation Reserve Program has been very successful in protecting nesting areas," Ball said.

'There was not enough grass early this year to hide nests from predators, especially aerial predators, and I suspect there was a lot of preying on nests.'

– Bill West, USFWS spokesman at National Bison Range, Moiese

That should translate into excellent wing-shooting when birds from Canada move through western Montana.

Goose populations are doing better than ducks, Ball said, and some populations are so large that geese are destroying their breeding habitat. That should mean liberal bag limits and longer seasons in many states.

Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge manager John Grant also said that spring water conditions adversely affected locally produced birds.

"Most of the small wetlands either didn't have water in them or dried up very quickly," Grant said. "That's where pairs look to nest."

Local conditions for nesting improved later in the spring and summer, and Grant said some birds were still on nests in late summer. Many ducklings he observed were very small.

Fish and Wildlife employees band ducks every year as part of their population surveys, West said, and usually find that around 90 percent of the ducks they band are young ducks hatched that year.

But this year only 25 percent of the ducks banded were young ducks, which suggests the hatch was not very good. West agreed that hunters should not expect to see as many birds in the early part of the season, when most birds in the Mission Valley are locally produced birds.

"It's usually not until late October when the migrating birds come through," he said.

This is the first year in the past three that numbers of resident Canada geese are down, West said. The same factors that influenced the local duck hatch also affected goose production.

In the Bitterroot Valley, the waterfowl hatch went well, according to Pat Gonzalez, manager of the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge near Stevensville.

"It looks like mallards did really well this year," he said. "Wood ducks are the best indicator, and they did really well, too."

The Bitterroot Valley has a resident waterfowl population of about 4,000 ducks and geese, Gonzalez said, that is mostly comprised of mallards, wood ducks and widgeons. The valley also has about 350 Canada geese that, like ducks, had a good hatch.

Gonzalez said the best waterfowl hunting in the Bitterroot Valley should come, like the Mission and Flathead valleys, when large flocks of birds from Canada come through.

September 16, 1999 The Missoulian

Upland birds

Grouse and pheasant populations appear stronger east of the Divide

By NICK GEVOCK
for the Missoulian

Upland bird hunters should expect at least an average number of birds this year when they take to the field in Montana.

Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge Manager John Grant said he saw more pheasants in the Mission Valley this spring than any spring in the past 10 years.

"Last winter was mild, so I think survival was good," Grant said. "I haven't seen as many young birds, but sometimes we see them later."

Several late freezes that could have killed a lot of birds may account for the lack of young birds, according to Grant. He said when a hatch is unsuccessful, hen pheasants often gather together, and he has not seen that this year.

Conditions this year caused a later than normal hatch for waterfowl, and those conditions may have had the same effect on upland birds, according to Bill West of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the National Bison Range in Moiese.

"A lot of the young ducks we have banded this year are very young, which suggests there was a late hatch," West said. "And that probably carries over to upland birds."

Early spring conditions are to blame for the poor ground cover. The lack of moisture combined with a healthy vole population resulted in poor ground cover that left birds vulnerable to predators. West said conditions improved later in the spring, which may have helped birds nest.

Asian-style recipes for pheasant
– Page H10

Grant said current conditions for birds are good, although he hasn't observed many birds.

"A lot of times we see birds on wet mornings on the roads because they come out of cover to dry off," Grant said. "We haven't seen that, but we haven't had a lot of wet mornings either."

Upland bird numbers in central Montana should be at least as good as last year, said Kristi DuBois of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Great Falls, said.

"I would say it will be an average or above average year," DuBois said. "From what I've seen it looks good."

DuBois has seen a lot of ruffed and blue grouse in mountain foothill areas around Great Falls. And pheasant and Hungarian partridge numbers also look promising.

"I think it looks better than last year," DuBois said.

Spring did not produce a lot of violent storms in many parts of central and eastern Montana, which helped bird survival rates, according to Graham Taylor of Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Great Falls. That followed an extremely mild winter, he said.

"We had no accumulation of snow and no prolonged cold temperatures," Taylor said. "We had pretty generous nesting conditions."

Pheasant numbers vary a great deal throughout central Montana, but Taylor said the best hunting is generally in areas farther north and east.

Sharptail grouse are doing very well. Taylor called sharptails the "brightest spot for the region."

"Spring surveys suggest a good carryover for sharptails," Taylor said. "Especially in the mountain foothills."

Sage grouse also had a good hatch, but are still not abundant. Taylor said sage grouse are still recovering from a prolonged decline in their habitat.

KURT WILSON/Missoulian

Wildlife managers in the region say pheasants should at least be as numerous this season as they were last season.

September 1, 1999 The Missoulian

"Baucus aide to hear concerns

Polson – A representative of Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mon., will be in Ronan and St. Ignatius on Monday to respond to constituents concerns.

Rebecca Manna, field director from the senator's Kalispell office, will be available in the St. Ignatius Public Library o First Avenue from 2 to 3 p.m. and from 3:30 to 5 p.m. in the Lake County Community Development Corp. office, 319 Main St., in Ronan.

"If you are having any problems with any government agency, I encourage you to stop by and discuss it with Rebecca," Baucus said in a press release.

Manna also will attend the annual bison roundup at the National Bison Range near Moiese on Monday as a guest of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Manna's Kalispell number is 756-1150." October 1, 1999 The Missoulian

"Winter hours to start at National Bison Range

Moiese – The National Bison Range will have new visiting hours for the winter season starting this Saturday. The Bison Range closes only during extreme weather during the winter.

The Red Sleep Mountain Drive will close until next May. B There will still be wildlife viewing available along the Winter Drive. There are always bison in the Exhibition Pasture, just past the picnic area. The shorter West Loop Drive may also have deer, pronghorn or other wildlife.

Drives will be open daily from 7 a.m. to dark. The Winter Drive takes about an hour to complete. The shorter West Loop lies behind the visitor center and takes about 15 minutes. The visitor center is open weekdays only from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. No fees are charged during the winter season. Visitors can call for road conditions at 406-644-2211." October 21, 1999 The Missoulian

Joseph M. Dixon

Ambitious newspaperman relished skewering Amalgamated Copper and all things establishment

By STEVE WOODRUFF
of the Missoulian

An ill-humored Rick Hill bustled into the Missoulian a few years ago. Then the head of the state Republican Party and later a two-term congressman, he flung himself into a chair and declared, "The Missoulian is the most anti-Republican newspaper in Montana!"

If he meant that it opposes everything Republican, he misspoke. The newspaper has aligned itself editorially with scores of Republican issues and candidates over the years. But if Hill meant the Missoulian is annoyingly adversarial to a Republican Party establishment joined at the hip with monied interests and candidates who pledge loyalty to voters but serve corporate backers – well, he had a point.

Hill should blame Joseph M. Dixon, though. He started it.

Dixon, born in 1867, was a Republican turned reformer who helped lead the Progressive movement, managed Teddy Roosevelt's quixotic comeback campaign for president in 1912 and challenged Montana's "invisible government" – the political machine run by the Amalgamated Copper Co., predecessor of the Anaconda Copper Mining Co. Onetime owner of the Missoulian, Dixon wielded the newspaper like a sharpened stick against "The Company" and copper-collared politicians.

"The issue in Montana is clearly defined," he declared on the front page of the March 25, 1912, Missoulian. "Shall the special interests which know no party allegiance, acting in our own state through the Amalgamated Copper company and its allies, control the Republican as well as the Democratic Party, or shall the Republican Party be controlled by the people themselves?"

Dixon

He prodded for political reforms such as open primary elections, the initiative process and direct election of senators – measures that allowed citizens to begin wresting government from corporate clutches.

Dixon was a South Carolinian who came to Missoula in 1891 to study law under an uncle. He used money from his law practice and real-estate investments to buy the Missoulian in 1900. In keeping with the fashion of the day, he unabashedly used the paper to promote the Republican Party and especially his own ambitious political career.

After a term in the Legislature, Dixon served two terms as a congressman, from 1902 to 1906, followed by a term in the U.S. Senate. Along the way, he soured on the GOP establishment and its slavish devotion to big business. A staunch protectionist, he fought his party's free-trade policies, pushed for regulation of corporations and advocated passage of income and inheritance taxes. He threw in with the Progressive Party, made up largely of reform-minded Roosevelt Republicans. He gained national prominence by managing Theodore Roosevelt's "Bull Moose" campaign against Republican incumbent President William Taft and Democrat Woodrow Wilson. Dixon lost his Senate seat in 1912 to Democrat Thomas Walsh.

Dixon returned to Montana and devoted his energies to his Missoulian, using its pages to continue beating the Progressive drum – much to the annoyance of The Company and its interests.

Amalgamated launched the Missoula Sentinel newspaper during Dixon's Senate years in an attempt to crush the Missoulian and weaken support for him in his hometown. After his Senate career ended, the Missoulian and Sentinel fought a ferocious newspaper war that Dixon appeared to win. Amalgamated withdrew, bruised, and sold the Sentinel to Dixon. However, it was a short-lived victory for Dixon and the independent press. In 1917, he sold the Missoulian and Sentinel to investors who turned out to be front men for The Company. ACM controlled the Missoula newspapers, along with most other daily papers in the state, for the next 40

See **DIXON,** *Page M16*

Dixon

Continued from Page M15

years.

As did most Bull Moosers, Dixon rejoined the Republican Party, and in 1920 he experienced a political resurrection. Montanans elected him governor in a landslide over Burton K. Wheeler. Gov. Dixon pushed hard for sweeping tax reform aimed largely at forcing mines to shoulder a fair share of the tax burden. The Company assailed him. Dixon failed to get higher mine taxes past his fellow Republicans in the Legislature. Under constant attack from ACM and its allies, he turned to the voters with an initiative for a gross proceeds tax on mines. Voters approved the measure in 1924 – in the same election they voted a battered Dixon out of office. He lost another bid for the Senate before serving as assistant secretary of interior in Herbert Hoover's administration.

Dixon died in 1934, "disillusioned about government and politics," says Jules Karlin, author of the authoritative two-volume 1974 biography "Joseph M. Dixon of Montana." Karlin quotes Dixon in his waning years writing to a friend, "I have lost much of my former faith in the intelligent action of the 'dear people.' "

Even near the close of the 20th century, it's not hard to find evidence of Dixon's handiwork. Social strife, legal conflicts and the jurisdictional quagmire involving non-Indian property owners on the Flathead and Crow reservations are included in his legacy. Over the objections of tribal leaders and in the name of "progress," Rep. Dixon rammed legislation through Congress opening those reservations to white settlers, cleverly twisting the 1855 Hell Gate Treaty to his purpose and, as he put it, "trading my hope of heaven" in the bargain.

In Congress, Dixon promoted development and expansion of Fort Missoula, helped create Glacier National Park, played a part in giving Missoula a regional headquarters for the Forest Service and passed legislation for the National Bison Range. He also helped secure federal funding for irrigation projects throughout the state. State government retains some of the reforms he pushed as governor. The tax-reform debate he launched rages unchecked.

The initiative process he and other Progressives promoted also continues to shape Montana politics. Only last year, Montana voters passed an initiative banning the use of cyanide in mining. The 1999 Legislature's Republican majority toyed briefly with the notion of repealing the initiative, but finally yielded to the will of the people.

Call it one more small victory for Joe Dixon.

– Steve Woodruff is the Missoulian's Opinion Page editor.

October 24, 1999 The Missoulian

BRIEFS

National Bison Range is a wildlife wonderland in winter

The 10-mile Winter Drive through the National Bison Range affords holiday guests a chance to glimpse deer, elk, bald eagles and, of course, the buffalo. Park officials recommend spending about an hour in the range to enjoy the wildlife and the view of the Mission Mountains. The graveled route is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m., except during severe weather. To check road conditions, call (406) 644-2211, ext. 205.

If the weather remains lovely, guests can hike the one-mile Nature Trail, with opportunities to spot black-capped chickadees, northern flickers, and Townsend's solitaires. Bird-lovers should consider driving farther north on Highway 212 to the Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge, home to an open-water reservoir where geese and other waterfowl linger. Ring-necked pheasants also grace the area.

For friends that can't make it, the visitors center and bookstore is knocking 25 percent of all books, postcards and posters from Nov. 29 until New Year's Eve. The gift selection includes a large-format picture book about bison, and a variety of children's coloring and picture books. Hours are 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., including the day after Thanksgiving, but officials recommend calling for updated hours nearer the holidays.

Kick-out-the-Kinks benefit is Dec. 4 at Izaak Walton Inn

The annual Kick-out-the-Kinks ski benefit kicks off on Saturday, Dec. 4, in Essex at the Izaak Walton Inn. Free cross-country ski lessons are available at 10:30 a.m. At 1 p.m. is the Huckleberry Hustle, in which participants play games on skis and snowshoes. All players win

November 20, 1999 The Missoulian

MONTANA LIFE

Birder in paradise

Easterner's trip to bison range, Lee Metcalf, Ninepipe yield memorable sights

By MICHAEL GIVANT
for the Missoulian

The plane was slowly taxiing out to the runway for takeoff. It was the end of our two-week birding vacation in Montana. Gazing out the window, my thoughts began to drift back over what we'd seen.

■■■

It had started outside the Visitors Center of the National Bison Range. The landscape was a prairie ringed by mountains and a sky partially filled with large cumulus clouds. The panorama conveyed a sense of solitude and awe.

As our van got closer and closer to a herd of resting bison I became increasingly excited about seeing these creatures that were once nearly hunted to extinction. Watching them from behind a wire fence, their horns – shiny, gray, short and twisted – are their most interesting feature. A nursing mother makes movements indicating that she wants to stop feeding a youngster. The response is an emphatic no. The little bison gives a high, hard push with its head. These animals, languid in the afternoon sun, don't have Buffalo Bill to worry about anymore. Tourists, however, are mild annoyances. Slowly and imperceptibly they move away from us.

Later, Fred, our guide and driver, saw something. He pulls the van over to the side of the road. Quietly we get out. Tan with a black-streaked long face, a pronghorn antelope slowly walks down the mountainside, pausing to stop and occasionally look back. Its ears are modified ovals. The horns are black and curve inward; its nose and neck look as if they have been dipped in chocolate pudding. I admire the symmetry of the animal's form as it walks.

This is one of the fastest mammals on Earth, often reaching speeds of more than 40 mph. Its endurance is storied. Extraordinary eyesight allows the animal to ascertain movement up to 4 miles away, giving a mere human pause to wonder. Looking at it through my spotting scope, the animal bends over a thin sapling, grasps the base with the inside of its pronged horn and rakes the tree, bending it in the process.

Minutes later we came upon a group of 15 pronghorns scattered on both sides of the road. On our side are three grazing youngsters. Slowly they start to walk toward us. I'm filled with a silent awe. One is particularly colorful with a rich tan coat filled with black lines and yellow plastic tags on its ears. They change direction slightly and slowly cross the road. I exhale. My wife has captured the moment on video.

Fred has good eyes ... far down the road on a fence post there is a bird that looks and acts like a kingbird.

"Western kingbird," I offer.

Eastern, he corrects me.

How is that possible? This is the western end of Montana. He's right. There's the telltale thin white horizontal bar above the gray trail that I've seen so many times at Cape Cod, Mass.

■■■

About a week later, near a fish hatchery outside of Whitefish, we again see an eastern kingbird. This time there's no doubt about its identity. It's near a telephone pole. High on the pole, black insulated wire sticks out like the arteries of a heart. Wedged between the wire and the pole are a few sticks of wood forming a saucerlike nest. In it are three fuzzy kingbird chicks. Their open yellow mouths eagerly await food from the adult. I'd never before seen the nest of a kingbird, much less chicks being fed. It is clear from the adult's behavior that we are intruding. I pack up my scope and we leave.

■■■

At the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, high in a large nest, a mother osprey shields her three fledglings from the hot sun. Their young tongues are sticking out, a sure sign of their hunger.

Minutes later we came upon a group of 15 pronghorns scattered on both sides of the road. On our side are three grazing youngsters. Slowly they start to walk toward us. I'm filled with a silent awe.

Nearby the male hunts over a lake with mountains in the background. High in the sky is another bird of prey, the kestrel. It is a small falcon, no more than 12 inches, with multiple shades of rust and spots of black on its body.

Slowly flapping its blue-gray wings, the kestrel hovers above the waving grasses. I expect it to dive at any moment for unseen prey below. What I can't see is that it already has a meal in its beak.

Soon it lands on the wooden crossbar of a pole. Through my scope I see the bird plucking at a lifeless form, perhaps a vole, on the crossbar that serves as the kestrel's lunch table.

■■■

The early birder catches the worm – or, in my case, an unexpected view of three mule deer. At 6:40 a.m. near the base of the big "M" mountain that borders the University of Montana campus in Missoula, I stop to tie a sneaker lace. Looking up, I see a fawn and two young deer looking down at me. The fawn and one youngster go into some trees but don't completely disappear. The whitish rump of the adult sticks out, momentarily revealing a black spot at the base of the tail. They are mule deer. I've never before seen them and am amazed by the unexpected encounter. By Washington-Grizzly Stadium, clouds hang halfway down the mountain. They seemingly await the sun's heat to rise. From the large, pebbly sky some light filters down, revealing the mountain's green beneath the white covering. I stand there watching the early morning evolve, filled with an inner sense of tranquillity.

■■■

On a dusty road at the Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge are three species of blackbirds within a few feet of each other: male red-winged, brewers and yellow-headed blackbirds. Up close, the latter, with bright yellow heads and necks atop black bodies, are striking. One sits on a strand of barbed wire, its thin claws indistinguishable from the wire's twists. It disappears over a fence and into the weeds leaving the wire shaking slightly.

At the road's end is a lake and a small island. On the island is a bone-gray spindly tree; next to it is a green one. Both are rife with cormorant nests. They are upside down, tear-drop-shaped nests that are about 33 inches, or the size of one of these birds. In back are huge bare mountains with the tops laced with snow. My wife's cousin, a novice birder, calls it the Cormorant Condo.

On the way out we see an owl sitting on a fence. Its round face and brown body striated with white is a woodcarver's creation come to life. Slowly and quietly we get out. It looks directly at us. A yellow eye is ringed with black. No ears are visible. All this takes place in what seems to be less than a second. It flies off the fence and over a hilly mound. As it flies, its downward wing beat is powerful. The wing tips are black. It lands some 40 yards from us and we sit in our van for about 10 minutes, hoping that what we think is a short-eared owl will return. It doesn't, and we leave.

■■■

On our last afternoon we go again to Ninepipe. We watch coot chicks with candy-corn beaks swim in one of the ponds that serves as a nursery for these young birds. Two immature coots sit on a small mud island in a pond; a pair of large bird eggs are nearby. An adult coot moving quickly on yellow legs soon chases off the two younger birds. The eggs, dabbed with mud, are left exposed and alone on the island in the pond. For a while I ponder what bird left the eggs. All too soon it's time to go.

■■■

The plane starts down the runway. There are vibrations and the sound of rushing wind and soon, silence. In my mind's eye we are riding along an empty stretch of Highway 93 before Kalispell. A lone house sits on the hill above the road beneath a sky covered with billowy clouds and barely a hint of blue. Home and heart in the American West. Magnificent isolation beneath an overwhelming sky. It's a picture waiting to be taken. I can feel the plane lifting off the runway and into the evening. I click the imaginary camera shutter. This picture is going home with me.

– Avid birder and occasional Montana visitor Michael Givant is an associate professor of sociology and the faculty athletics representative at Adelphi University in Garden City, N.Y.

Another elk farm pioneer

Durand started farm in 1920s

By JOE KOLMAN
Lee Montana Newspapers

CORWIN SPRINGS – In the 1930s, on Courtland Durand's dude ranch and game farm near present-day Checkerboard, elk pulled wagons and bison dove off 40-foot-high platforms.

While Welch Brogan of Corwin Springs is considered to be the man who brought game farming into vogue, more than a decade earlier Durand opened what he claimed was the first game farm in the country. Durand's exploits were chronicled recently in Montana magazine by Dave Walter, a research historian at the Montana Historical Society.

When Durand was 15, his parents staked a claim in the foothills of the Little Belt Mountains. They had lived previously in Minneapolis and South Dakota. Durand graduated from Princeton University with a degree in civil engineering in 1906. Over the next few years, he worked on the family ranch, managed a family mining company and traveled the world extensively, including a trip to Paris where he met an animal trainer.

Walter writes that in the mid-1920s, Durand decided to raise exotic stock for breeding and commercial meat. In 1927, Durand bought 74 cow and calf elk at a minimal fee from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Biological Survey. In addition to the cows and calves, which were at the federal bison range in Moiese, the federal government later agreed to ship 12 bull elk and 14 bison.

He later added other stock to his collection and billed it as the largest private game preserve in the nation.

Durand trained elk and black-tailed deer to carry pack saddles. Elk pulled wagons. In the summers, Durand impressed guests at the dude ranch with a "Wild Game Water Rodeo."

Bison dove off 40-foot platforms into 15 feet of water. Elk were released into the lake and lassoed so they could pull a rowboat.

By 1935, Walter writes, Durand had also succeeded in marketing wild meat. A newspaper account reports that one day Martinsdale residents Alberta and Marguerite Bair were enlisted to do the slaughtering. The Bair sisters, later famous for their philanthropy, shot eight elk, dropping "each animal with a single shot at the base of the ear from a .22 long rifle."

The Depression was hitting Durand's business hard, however. He released about 60 elk into the wild, where during the tough winter the animals sought forage in the fields of Durand's neighbors, much to their disdain.

His animal circus continued to be successful. In 1939, the menagerie became a feature at the New York World's Fair and later became a regular show in Atlantic City where bison dove from 50-foot platforms.

The central lodge of the dude ranch was destroyed by fire in 1943. In 1951, at the age of 73, Durand was gored in the stomach by a bull elk that he had trained from birth. According to Walter, Durand never fully recovered from the injury.

The rest of Durand's animals were auctioned later that year in Lewistown. In 1955, he died of a stroke.

Joe Kolman is a reporter for the Billings Gazette Bozeman Bureau.

December 13, 1999 The Missoulian

"Recreation

National Bison Range. Located at Moiese in the Flathead Valley. Established in 1908, the 19,000-acre big-game range features about 400 bison, many species of birds and herds of white-tailed and mule deer, pronghorns, elk and more in a 19-mile self-guiding tour. Fee is $4 per car; all Golden passes, as well as Federal Migratory Bird Stamps are accepted. Call 644-2211 for information." March 26, 2000 The Missoulian

“Public invited to learn about species act

Moiese – A workshop on endangered species, sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will be held Saturday, May 6, at the National Bison Range.

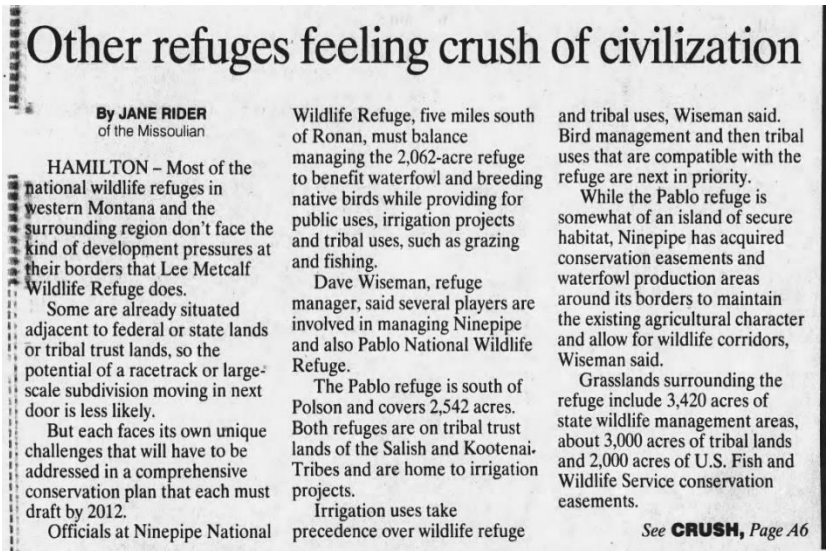
Teachers will be eligible for 9 to 12 Office of Public Instruction re-certification units.

The class will cover the Endangered Species Act, how species are protected and why. It will explore why species become listed under the act, and how the listing process works. Success stories, along with some problems and failures, will be discussed.

Pat Tucker and Bruce Weide will present information on wolf reintroduction and experimental populations. Kate Davis of Raptors of the Rockies will display some of her birds of prey to help illustrate the recovery success of peregrine falcons and bald eagles. All participants will receive educational materials providing background for teachers and student activities.

An optional, three-hour evening field trip over the Bison Range’s Red Sleep Mountain Drive will be offered. The history of bison will be presented during the drive. Those who participate in the evening program can earn an additional three OPI credits.

Preregistration is required. For more information and registration forms, call Pat Jamieson at the Bison Range, at 406-644-2211, ext. 207; or send email to her (Patjamieson@fws.gov). There is a $10 registration fee. The course is open to all, but priority will be given to educators.” April 16, 2000 The Missoulian



Other refuges feeling crush of civilization

By JANE RIDER
of the Missoulian

HAMILTON – Most of the national wildlife refuges in western Montana and the surrounding region don't face the kind of development pressures at their borders that Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge does.

Some are already situated adjacent to federal or state lands or tribal trust lands, so the potential of a racetrack or large-scale subdivision moving in next door is less likely.

But each faces its own unique challenges that will have to be addressed in a comprehensive conservation plan that each must draft by 2012.

Officials at Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge, five miles south of Ronan, must balance managing the 2,062-acre refuge to benefit waterfowl and breeding native birds while providing for public uses, irrigation projects and tribal uses, such as grazing and fishing.

Dave Wiseman, refuge manager, said several players are involved in managing Ninepipe and also Pablo National Wildlife Refuge.

The Pablo refuge is south of Polson and covers 2,542 acres. Both refuges are on tribal trust lands of the Salish and Kootenai Tribes and are home to irrigation projects.

Irrigation uses take precedence over wildlife refuge and tribal uses, Wiseman said. Bird management and then tribal uses that are compatible with the refuge are next in priority.

While the Pablo refuge is somewhat of an island of secure habitat, Ninepipe has acquired conservation easements and waterfowl production areas around its borders to maintain the existing agricultural character and allow for wildlife corridors, Wiseman said.

Grasslands surrounding the refuge include 3,420 acres of state wildlife management areas, about 3,000 acres of tribal lands and 2,000 acres of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conservation easements.

See **CRUSH,** *Page A6*

Crush

Continued

The National Bison Range, spanning 18,529 acres in the Mission Valley near Moiese, attracts more than 200,000 tourists to its visitor center every year.

Providing for public use while making wildlife a top priority is a difficult balancing act refuge managers must perform.

"We're also getting quite a bit of suburbia right outside our boundary," said Wiseman, who also manages the bison range, Swan River and Lost Trail national wildlife refuges and the Northwest Montana Wetland Management District.

"When you get a lot of houses in close proximity to the (bison) range itself, you also get the trappings of suburbia ... occasional pets coming onto the range," he said.

'I think there will be a lot of land kept in open space because of the tribal trust.'

– Dave Wiseman, Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge

But none of the refuges that Wiseman oversees is facing the degree of development pressure that Lee Metcalf Wildlife Refuge is.

"We're not nearly as congested as the Bitterroot," he said. "We're maybe 10 to 15 years from seeing that here. Even then, I think there will be a lot of land kept in open space because of the tribal trust."

Here are some other national wildlife refuges within the region, their issues and timetables for comprehensive conservation planning. Wiseman said the public will play an important role in the planning process by offering ideas and alternatives:

■ **Swan River National Wildlife Refuge,** about 20 miles southeast of Bigfork in the Swan Valley, covers about 1,568 acres within the floodplain of the Swan River above Swan Lake. It is home to 171 bird species, elk, moose, bobcat and black bear. Grizzly bears sometimes move onto the refuge in early spring to forage.

The challenge is keeping it in its natural state.

"Reed canary grass, not a native species, is encroaching on wetland habitat where there is an endangered plant that we would like to recover," Wiseman said.

'It can be a positive opportunity. The challenge will be managing the recreational impacts.'

– Mike Hedrick, Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge

Portions of the refuge are open to waterfowl hunting. Big game and upland bird hunting is prohibited. Bird watching and wildlife viewing are common activities. A comprehensive conservation plan won't be drafted until after Lost Trail and National Bison Range plans are completed.

■ **Lost Trail National Wildlife Refuge,** about 25 miles west of Kalispell, encompasses about 7,840 acres of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service land and another 1,700 acres in state-purchased conservation easements. It supports a variety of bird species, deer, elk, moose, mountain lion and black bear. Grizzly bear, bald eagle and gray wolf may be found around the area.

Challenges are to control exotic and invasive plant species, develop a public use plan that includes hunting opportunities and restore Doll Lake.

Cattle once heavily grazed parts of the refuge. Plans are to allow those areas to recover. Wiseman said limited grazing may be allowed in future to benefit habitat.

Lost Trail is bordered by Plum Creek Timber Co. lands and two large ranches. Refuge officials have already begun gathering public input to draft Lost Trail's goals and objectives for its comprehensive conservation plan. Wiseman hopes to complete the plan by early next year.

■ **Northwest Montana Wetland Management District** is located in parts of Lake and Flathead counties. It consists of more than a dozen waterfowl production areas.

"We do have quite a bit of housing development around those," Wiseman said.

Habitat fragmentation, humans and household pets are impacting those areas.

In Lake County, the sites add up to 3,130 acres and are three to nine miles north of the National Bison Range. In Flathead County, they cover 4,390 acres and are south and west of the Kalispell area and include about seven miles of lake shoreline and upland along Flathead Lake's northern end.

The areas are open to limited bird hunting, fishing and trapping. Farming, haying and grazing are allowed with special-use permits in some areas.

Comprehensive planning will be tackled after the National Bison Range and Lost Trail plans are completed.

■ **Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge** is the second-largest wildlife refuge in the lower 48 states and covers 1.1 million acres. It is known for its big game hunting and 240,000-acre Fort Peck Lake.

"Growth is an issue," said Mike Hedrick, refuge manager. "Even though it is a large lake and relatively pristine, I think in the future it will be one of the primary growth areas over here. It can be a positive opportunity. The challenge will be managing the recreational impacts. Just water itself draws people."

Livestock grazing is also a controversial issue.

"Economically, from a livestock owner's perspective, the way we would graze to benefit habitat isn't the most economical way to graze livestock," he said. "You may graze one year and not graze again in that area for four to five years. That's what is required to achieve our wildlife objective."

The refuge is still changing its grazing practices from historical methods to ways that aim to improve wildlife habitat.

Refuge officials haven't started a comprehensive plan because the refuge completed an extensive plan in the late 1980s that included an environmental impact statement, Hedrick said.

"We are due to start ours in 2004," he said.

■ **Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge** spans about 44,963 acres in Beaverhead County. Lakes and ponds cover 9,000 acres of the refuge. A diversified habitat supports a variety of birds and mammals.

Just over the mountains in Madison County, however, residential developments are transforming the landscape.

Don Gomez, refuge manager, acknowledged the potential for such subdivision development in Beaverhead County and the impacts it might have on the remote refuge.

"But there is a pretty good effort under way between local government, Nature Conservancy, the Fish and Wildlife Service and landowners to develop partnerships or conservation easements here," Gomez said.

"This has been a relatively wild place (the Beaverhead Valley) and people would like to keep it that way," he said.

Gomez expects refuge managers will begin work on a comprehensive plan next summer, after a vacant staff position is filled. It will entail looking at recreation uses, whether they are occurring at a manageable level and how they should evolve.

Wildlife watching is probably the most popular use now, he said. He hopes to maintain the refuge as a wilderness-type area, where people can experience solitude, he said.

April 16, 2000 The Missoulian

"Learn about migratory birds at Bison Range

Moiese – Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day by participating in a variety of bird activities planned at the National Bison Range on Saturday, May 13.

Established by the Partners in Flight Program, International Migratory Bird Day increases awareness of all migratory birds (including songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds and raptors) and publicizes conservation efforts on their behalf.

At the Bison Range, an advanced birding hike, a beginning bird walk and a birdwatching caravan over Red Sleep Mountain Drive are scheduled. The trips have limited space, so preregistration is required. Call the Bison Range at 406-644-2211 to register. A talk n bluebird habitat and house, a discussion of backyard bird feeding, giveaways, contests, coloring pages, a book sale and a variety of other activities are also scheduled.

Also in honor of Migratory Bird Day, the Bison Range plans to open the Red Sleep Mountain Drive for the season on Saturday, May 13. The 19-mile, one-way gravel road climbs 2,000 feet to the high point of the Range, then descends along steep, 10-percent-grade hills. Because it travels through a variety of habitat, it is a good place to see a number of different birds, as well as wildlife.

The Bison Range will be open at 7 a.m. on May 13. Visitors will need to start the longer drive by 6 p.m. to complete the trip before the Range closes at dark." May 4, 2000 The Missoulian

"Bison Range drive now open to public

Moiese – Cure that cabin fever with a visit to the National Bison Range this Saturday when the range will its 19-mile Red Sleep Mountain Drive for the season.

The drive is a 19-mile one-way gravel road that climbs 2,000 feet and takes about two hours to complete. Because it travels from the valley grasslands to the timberline and along Mission Creek, visitors have opportunities to see a variety of animals and birds, including deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, meadowlarks, eagles and of course bison with this year's calves.

Visitors need to start this drive no later than 6 p.m. to finish before the main gate closes at dark. There also is a shorter, loop drive that takes about 30 minutes.

A $4 per car fee is charged for use of the drives. There is no charge for the picnic and day-use areas. A Bison Range season pass is available for $10. Visitors are asked to stop at the visitors center to pay fees and receive current information and a complimentary copy of the Field Guide to the Bison Range.

For more information about hours and activities, call the Bison Range at 406-644-2211." May 11, 2000 The Missoulian

“Montana

‘Birds, Birds, Birds’ on tap for festival by John Stromnes of the Missoulian

Polson – Birders from all over are uniting this weekend to hold the first official Audubon Bird Festival to take place in Montana.

Jim Rogers of Polson is the organizer. It took two years of planning, in coordination with the Flathead Audubon chapter of Kalispell and the Montana Audubon Society headquartered in Helena. Sponsors include the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the National Bison Range and the Owl Research Institute near Charlo.

Rogers, a bird enthusiast since elementary school, said his motive was simply this: “It was an excuse to get a lot of birding friends together and look at birds for three days.”

According to the brochure, the festival involves “three days of celebrating birds, birds and birds.”

Actually, there’s a lot more to do than just look at birds, although the Flathead Bird Festival offers 10 birding field trips, all within convenient driving distance of Polson, including Swan River and Pablo National Wildlife refuges, the National Bison Range, Mission Mountains and Glacier National Park.

Numerous workshops and seminars are also scheduled.

The goal is to give participants a good time while heightening awareness and deeper appreciation of birds and their habitats.

Preregistration is required for the banquet, and the deadline has passed. But you can register right up to Saturday morning for Saturday’s workshops, events and field trips, Rogers said.

Speakers include nationally known owl researcher Denver Holt, Dick Hutto of the University of Montana and Sue Reel of the Lolo National Forest.

For further information contact Montana Audubon, 443-3949, or visit www.mtaudubon.org for a list of activities.” June 1, 2000 The Missoulian

June 1, 2000 The Missoulian

"Biologists Converge on UM by Sherry Devlin of the Missoulian

More than 1,300 conservation biologists – scientists who study rare plants and animals and their surroundings – will meet at the University of Montana this weekend to share research findings of the year past.

The scientific program for the 14th meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology includes about 400 spoken papers, 60 symposiums on conservation-related research from around the world.

Conference co-chairman Dan Pletscher, who heads UM's wildlife biology program, said the meeting has attracted "a remarkable group of people" from 25 countries and throughout the United States.

Saturday morning's opening session will include presentations by Daniel Simberloff, a professor at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and a seminal

author in the field of conservation biology; Michael Soule, a founder of the Society for Conservation Biology, now with The Wildlands Project; Jamie Rappaport Clark, director of the U. S. Fish and wildlife Service; and Jack Ward Thomas, retired chief of the U.S. Forest service and UM's Boone and Crockett.

Pletscher said conservation biology is a relatively new scientific field focusing primarily on rare species – and on the biodiversity needed to restore those species to health.

Conservation solutions to be discussed at the Missoula meeting range from the "very local" to the global, Pletscher said. "From the back yard to the continental."

Invited papers in the eight symposia include presentations on "Conservative Medicine: The Ecological Context of Health," "Evolutionary Ecology of Pacific Salmon" and "The Role of Top Predators in Ecological Communities."

The meeting will open its doors from noon to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday for free, public viewing of 180 poster presentations - 90 each day – in the University Center Ballroom. All other sessions are open only to registered participants. Registration will continue through Monday at UM's Continuing Education Building.

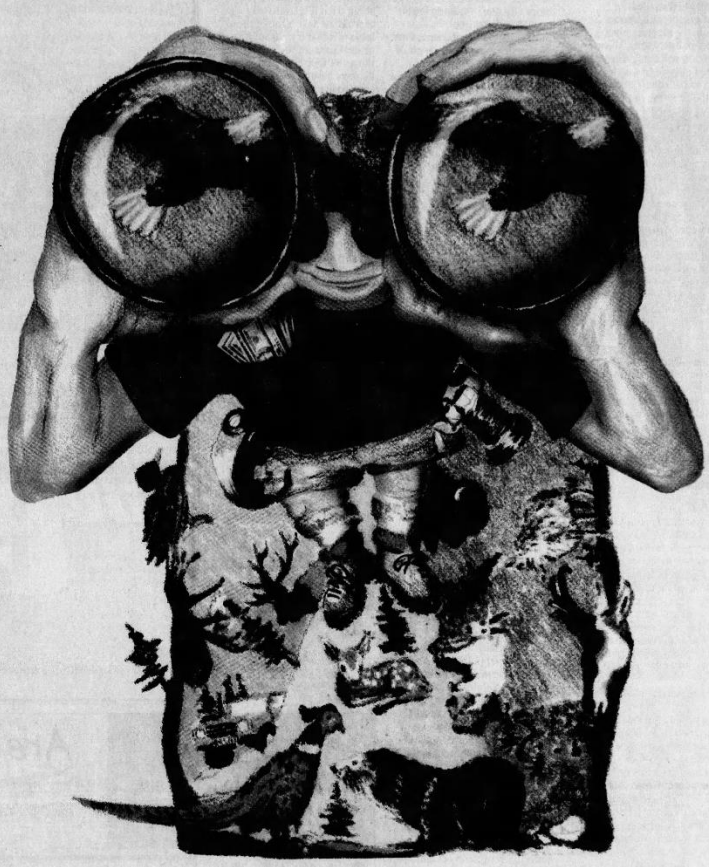
UM scientists volunteered to host the society's year 2000 meeting about two years ago, Pletscher said. "And they jumped on our offer."

"Montana is a place that people think about when they think about conservation." He said. "We have a fairly sparse human density, a beautiful landscape and the large carnivores that ae no longer in the rest of the United States. So a lot of people want to come to Montana."

Field trips on Friday and next week are "full to the brim," Pletscher said, and will take scientists to Glacier National Park, Yellowstone, the National Bison Range, rafting on the Lochsa River, the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, the Swan Valley and "in the footsteps of Lewis and Clark."

Scientific reports will continue through Monday, when the meeting will end with a banquet and awards ceremony.

For more information about the Society for Conservation Biology meeting or to register, visit the Web site at www.umt.edu/scb2000." June 9, 2000 The Missoulian



ECO-TOURISM

More visitors are coming to immerse themselves in western Montana's natural beauty, leaving little impact on our land and a lot of money in our economy

SEEING GREEN

Written by JOHN STROMNES
Illustrated by KEN BARNEDT
of the Missoulian

MOIESE – One morning not long ago, a rental van pulled to a stop along a dirt road high on a ridge above the Mission Valley.

Out piled a clutch of casually dressed middle-aged folks, sturdy shoes on their feet, binoculars and spotting scopes in hand or slung around their necks, wildlife watching guidebooks in their knapsacks and jacket pockets.

Bunched together like prairie hens, they sat amidst the bunchgrass and opened sack lunches, chattering all the while about wildflowers in bloom, bird lists and the weather, which for a June morning in Montana was spectacular – sunshine, warm breeze and a sky so clear you could see almost to Bigfork.

"This is how we take our vacation – learning more about nature," chirped Mickey Nail, an eco-tourist from Wilmington, Del., as she began pecking at her sandwich.

'(Eco-tourists) are a gentle lot. They drop a lot of money and then they leave – the kind of people you want visiting Montana.'

– Denver Holt, Montana nature guide

She's not alone.

Eco-tourists, a formerly rare but now common migratory species of vacationer, is making quite an impact on the travel industry and on local economies in western Montana – and around the world.

This particular clutch of eco-tourists had entrusted their care and feeding to Denver Holt, a wildlife researcher and nature guide for 20 years. Holt's "day" job is director of the Owl Research Institute near Charlo, which he founded. But he enjoys spending several weeks each year as a tour guide for Victor Emanual Nature Tours, perhaps the most prestigious and certainly one of the oldest eco-tourism businesses in North America.

Holt himself leads three or more nature tours a year in Montana. Folks come from across the nation seeking owls in early spring, birds of prey in winter, and wildlife and natural history of all kinds during this June-in-Montana tour. He has led tours elsewhere in the United States and in Africa and Central America.

"We're seeing more and more people come to Montana to view wildlife and wild lands," he said. "Montana is just starting to open up to this. But in other states, it's already a huge business. Natural history tourism is becoming a big part of every state's economy."

Deborah Richie Oberbillig, a Missoula consultant on wildlife viewing and a board member of Watchable Wildlife Inc., a nonprofit group, is brimming with examples of the significant – but often unrecognized – economic impact this new kind of tourism can have on rural communities.

"Wildlife viewing and birding are the fastest-growing segments of outdoor recreation," Oberbillig said.

For example, the one known nesting pair of yellow-green vireos in the United States resided for several years in South Texas, at the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. They were closely studied, not only by naturalists interested in the success of their breeding efforts, but also by economists interested in the economic impact of their residency.

"These chickadee-sized songbirds generated an estimated $150,000 per year for local businesses near the refuge," reported Howard Youth in a recent issue of World Watch magazine.

See **GREEN,** *Page C2*

Green

Continued

There's more:

■ The 28,000 people who visited Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park in the fall of 1997 to see the annual display of bulging bull elk contributed more than $2.3 million to Estes Park and surrounding communities.

■ The 100,000-plus birders who visit Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia each year spend more than $10 million locally.

■ Thousands of avid birders flock to Starr County, Texas, one of the poorest regions in the United States, seeking a glimpse of some 485 bird species and 30 butterfly species each year. They don't take any birds or butterflies home, but they leave behind some $103.5 million that helps the local economy. That includes fees paid to ranchers who charge tourists for the privilege of visiting the wildlife habitat on their private property.

"That illustrates one of the big pluses of eco-tourism," according to Oberbillig, who acknowledges she is a journalist by profession, but a wildlife conservationist at heart. "When communities, local businesses, government agencies and private landowners start seeing the economic value of wildlife, it's an incentive for them to protect habitat."

It also helps educate travelers, as they discover they have a big stake in the wildlife conservation movement. They are much more willing to accept regulation of public and private property to protect wildlife, and to fund watchable wildlife programs, she said.

A close-to-home example Oberbillig uses in her lectures, workshops and discussions is Missoula's own $5 million open-space bond issue. She said the political support to buy private land for public ownership came initially from local folks who wanted to protect the winter range of an easily viewable elk herd – on Mount Jumbo – that was threatened by real estate development and competing recreational uses.

Thus watchable wildlife "became the linchpin for Missoula's green-space bond issue," said Oberbillig, who is chairman of Missoula's Open Space Advisory Committee.

Although there seems to be no question that interest in "watchable wildlife" or "green" tourism is growing, reliable data singling out the monetary impact of eco-tourism as distinguished from vacation and recreational travel are notoriously hard to come by. Definitions vary, agencies collect numbers in different ways, and worse, the same agency will ask different questions in a survey from year to year, making comparisons between years and regions difficult and somewhat unreliable.

Nationally, the most oft-quoted survey on the economic impact of eco-tourism is the National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, published in 1997.

According to that report, 77 million adults, or about 40 percent of the U.S. population, enjoyed some form of wildlife-related recreation in 1997, generating $100 billion from sales of equipment, transportation, permits, lodging, food and other related expenses.

Of course, a lot of that was spent on guns and fishing poles – and there is general agreement that whatever eco-tourism is, it is not hunting and fishing. (The simplest definition is that eco-tourism is tourism based on nonconsumptive viewing of natural, rather than synthetic attractions such as theme parks or sports events.)

We do know that tourists of all kinds spend almost $2 billion a year in Montana, making it the state's second largest industry after agriculture. And we know the behavior of these tourists is changing, fitting more into the "green" or nonconsumptive mode, tourism experts say.

In 1999, for example, nonresident travel showed a switch from the typical visitation centered on national parks to increases in other areas of the state, many of them off the beaten path.

"Traffic patterns show that more nonresidents are getting off the interstate highways and taking to the scenic secondary roadways," said Norma Nickerson, director of the Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research at the University of Montana.

In years to come, a big boost will undoubtedly be interest in the Lewis and Clark Trail, which arguably could be classified as an eco-tourist activity. "Attractions near the Lewis and Clark Trail in Montana generally experienced visitation increases, while attractions near interstate highways tended to report no increase or even declines in 1999," Nickerson said.

Local businesses in western Montana are benefiting. For example, the state's first Audubon Bird Festival, held recently in Polson, attracted 300 birders to the locally owned KwaTaqNuk Resort. These visits occurred in May, before the regular tourist season started filling rooms in the area.

Holt, the birding tour leader, said it is common for him to write checks totaling $400 or more to a local restaurant when his clients drop by for a meal. He notes that eco-tourists as a group are wealthier, better educated and older than the general population, so they don't mind spending money for creature comforts. And they don't account for many "negatives."

Eco-tourists, he said, are "mostly retired, well-educated travelers, generally very nice people. They are a gentle lot. They drop a lot of money and then they leave – the kind of people you want visiting Montana. The worst damage they do is we might stand on a trail too long, or step on and damage some grass," he said, as his clients munched their sack lunches.

That day, though, high on the hillside above Moiese, the impact was on the travelers – not the resource.

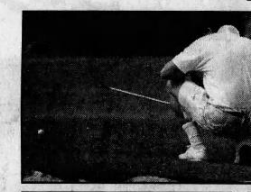
Their lunch finished, folks took turns looking through a spotting scope at the St. Ignatius Mission far below. It had been a good morning. In four hours, under Holt's tutelage, the group had seen deer, elk, pronghorn and American bison, courtesy of the National Bison Range.

Mickey Nail was extremely happy. She already had a "tick" or check-off on her lifetime list of bird sightings. She spotted an American dipper along the Clark Fork River.

"Birding in a group is wonderful – all these experienced eyes," she said. "We picked this tour because of the enchantment of coming to Montana."

And Montana delivered, she said, aplenty.

Reporter John Stromnes can be reached at 1-800-366-7186 or at jstromnes@missoulian.com



Bringing back native plants

KURT WILSON/Missoulian

Elderhostel volunteer Henry Geist of Scottsdale, Ariz., collects seeds Monday morning from wildflowers at the Clark Fork Native Prairie in Missoula's John H. Toole Riverfront Park. The seeds, collected by 17 volunteers Monday, will be used to revegetate areas of Mount Sentinel and Mount Jumbo after weed eradication.

Seeds of restoration

Elderhostel, AmeriCorps volunteers help replant two hillsides in Missoula

By **DARYL GADBOW**
of the Missoulian

It isn't every visitor from out of state who leaves Missoula a more beautiful place.

Thanks to two visiting service groups, however, the natural beauty of the town's most prominent landmarks – Mount Sentinel and Mount Jumbo – will be enhanced, with more abundant native grasses and wildflowers and fewer noxious weeds.

The two groups are from Elderhostel – a national nonprofit organization that provides educational adventures for folks age 55 and over – and AmeriCorps, a federal program that gives young adults ages 18 to 24 an opportunity to earn money for college by providing community service.

Seven volunteers from Elderhostel and 10 from AmeriCorps are in Missoula this week to participate in "From Weeds to Wildflowers: Restoring Montana's Natural Lands," a program sponsored by the Montana Natural History Center.

On Monday morning, the two groups worked under the direction of Marilyn Marler, noxious weed coordinator for the University of Montana, to collect native grass and wildflower seeds at the Clark Fork Native Prairie in Missoula's John H. Toole Riverfront Park.

Seeds will be used to revegetate areas on Mount Sentinel and Mount Jumbo where weed eradication efforts have taken place, Marler said.

"Revegetation is an important part of any weed management project," she said. "It's not adequate just to eliminate weeds. You need to occupy their niche with something else. And native plants are best."

On Monday, Marler said, the volunteers collected seeds of blue-bunch wheat grass, June grass, needle-and-thread grass, and several species of native wildflowers, including penstemon, yarrow, blanketflower, sticky cinquefoil and showy fleabane.

Some seeds collected by the groups also will be used for a native "seed orchard" that is being developed at Fort Missoula, she said.

Marler praised the efforts of the two service groups.

"These are really good folks," she said. "These seeds are not commercially available. This is the only way to get them, and we're getting lots of seeds. It's so neat to have these service groups here, because it is a time-consuming project. And my program at UM doesn't have funds to pay for it. It's nice for them, because they learn about the plants and our weed problems. But they're providing a real valuable service."

See **SEEDS,** *Page B2*

Seeds

Continued

The seven Elderhostel volunteers came from all around the nation, said Marian Gordin of Atlanta, who was participating in her first Elderhostel activity.

"We all paid $500 to do this," said Gordin. "Elderhostel has a big catalog of projects that you can pick from. You can build homes in Alaska for Habitat for Humanity, or you can work in an Indian museum in Arizona. You can pick from different categories. The largest category is education, which doesn't involve service work. I've never been to Montana or this part of the country. And it fit my schedule. That's why I picked this one."

Volunteer Mary McPherson of Arizona said she pulled weeds in the Midway Island Atoll on one Elerhostel project.

"We drove up here and hiked in all the national parks on the way up, and went camping in Glacier," McPherson said. "We wanted to do something outdoors."

Besides the wild seed-gathering project, Gordin said, the Elderhostel group also will help construct and plant a "butterfly garden" at the Montana Natural History Center's Nature Center at Fort Missoula.

"That will be our gift to Missoula," said McPherson.

The group will see a little more of western Montana this week on field trips to the National Bison Range and Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge.

"We'll also sight-see," Gordin said. "You learn to open your eyes and see things."

The AmeriCorps volunteers already have spent several weeks in Missoula as part of a six-week stay doing service work in the community. The group is part of the National Civilian Community Corps, based in Denver, which is one of more than 200 AmeriCorps programs nationwide.

"We're the only ones that move all around the country," said AmeriCorps volunteer Chantry Baker of Cherry Hill, N.J.

The stay here is one of five projects around the country for the group, each lasting six to eight weeks, as part of the volunteers' 10-month tour of service. For their participation, they each receive about $70 a week living expenses. They also can earn an award of $4,725 for college or vocational education.

Before coming to Missoula, the group spent several weeks tutoring students at public schools in Detroit, Baker said.

Since they've been in town, she said, the young volunteers have worked on several community service projects, including the Missoula Food Bank, Garden City Harvest's community gardens, and in the Montana Natural History Center's "From Weeds to Wildflowers" effort.

Besides Monday's seed-gathering, Baker said, the group has worked with Marler shepherding weed-eating sheep and pulling weeds on Mount Sentinel and Mount Jumbo.

"The best thing about our project is we're constantly traveling," she said. "And it's really neat to see a community from the inside. It's neat to see how this community takes care of itself."

Reporter Daryl Gadbow can be reached at 523-5264 or at dgadbow@missoulian.com

July 11, 2000 The Missoulian

'Some very difficult times ahead' in August, warn fire managers

By SHERRY DEVLIN
of the Missoulian

In minutes, a late-night thunderstorm Wednesday added four dozen new forest fires to the Lolo and Bitterroot national forests' collection.

Western Montana fire update

Firefighters spent Thursday attacking the new starts from the ground and air along a 10-mile-wide path from Darby northeast through the Rock Creek and Blackfoot drainages and into the Jocko Lakes, Seeley Lake and Ovando areas.

By late afternoon, crews reported fires ranging in size from a spot to five acres. And fire managers were warning of 100-degree temperatures for the weekend and fire-danger ratings like none they've ever seen.

"We have 81 weather stations in the northern Rockies, and they are all at unprecedented levels," said Dan Bailey, fire management officer for the Lolo National Forest. "They're setting the stage for some very difficult times ahead. August is going to put everybody to a pretty good test."

That's why the response was prompt and aggressive after the latest lightning storm. Fires that escape initial attack will be increasingly difficult to staff with large, project-size crews, Bailey said. There are simply too many fires burning throughout the West.

"By this time of year, Arizona and Nevada normally have these big monsoon rains," said incident commander Randy Doman. "But they're still having big project fires. They're not getting the moisture."

So the competition for firefighting crews continues to grow, he said. Colorado remains at the top of the priority list, followed by Utah. Third on the list are Montana and north Idaho – and within that region, the Canyon Ferry fire is No. 1.

"What's worrisome is that this is all happening so early in the year," said Bailey. "Everything is happening very, very early."

On the Lolo and Bitterroot forests, firefighters continued Thursday to work on these fires:

■ About 200 firefighters were close to containing the 105-acre Saloon fire west of Darby and along Lost Horse Road. There were no immediate threats to homes, although a contingency plan was in place for evacuations – if the fire made an unexpected run.

■ Sixty firefighters almost had control of a 44-acre fire west of Alberton, along the Clark Fork River, called the Freezeout fire. The fire was remapped – and its acreage adjusted – on Thursday.

■ North of Bearmouth, 70 firefighters remained on duty, mopping up the 40-acre East Pearl fire and the 80-acre Anderson Hill fire. Others were dispatched to the new lightning starts.

■ Two crews were finishing work on a 10-acre fire in the headwaters of Wyman Creek.

■ West of Stevensville, 100 firefighters reported containment of the 25-acre Kootenai Creek fire and the 25-acre Smoke Creek fire seven miles west of Sula. The Kootenai Creek trail will reopen Friday, and the area closure for Lookout Pass will be lifted Saturday. The 10-acre Quartzite fire also is contained.

■ A few firefighters remained at the Little Blue fire, mopping up the 5,800 acres burned southwest of Darby. But the fire management team returned home Thursday.

Elsewhere, despite extreme heat and unseasonably dry conditions, wildfire activity remains relatively calm throughout northwest Montana.

In Glacier National Park, only the Parke Peak Fire continues to burn out of control, having scorched about 70 acres so far. The fire, located in the northwest corner of Glacier, is being attacked by two fire crews and two helicopters.

The crews are stationed at Kintla Lake Campground, forcing a closure of that area to overnight use. Day use, however, is permitted, and the lake remains open to recreationists.

The campground likely will remain off-limits to overnight guests through the weekend.

On the adjacent Flathead National Forest, crews are working on a handful of small fires, including: the half-acre Crane II Fire, currently controlled; the 1.1-acre Miller Creek Fire, controlled; the seven-acre Canyon Creek Fire, not controlled; and four fires of less than half-acre size in the Bob Marshall Wilderness that were being suppressed Thursday afternoon.

The largest fire on the Flathead is the Lewis Creek II Fire, located 25 miles south of Hungry Horse Reservoir in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. That 50-acre fire is being allowed to burn, with officials managing the blaze to benefit forest health.

Because of the very high fire danger, the following restrictions remain in effect in much of western Montana:

■ Campfires are only allowed in designated campgrounds.

■ Smoking is limited to an enclosed vehicle, designated campground or a 3-foot circle of cleared debris.

■ People working in the woods are asked to voluntarily follow "hoot-owl" restrictions, including no burning, no wood cutting and blasting after 1 p.m., and patrolling areas for two hours after work ends.

The restrictions apply to the Lolo and Bitterroot national forests, Flathead Indian Reservation, Bob Marshall Wilderness, Montana state lands in Ravalli, Missoula, Mineral, Powell, Sanders, Silverbow, Deer Lodge and Granite counties, the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge, National Bison Range, Ninepipe and Pablo national wildlife refuges, and to Bureau of Land Management lands in Missoula, Granite and Powell counties.

Bailey said even tighter restrictions are likely by early next week.

Reporter Michael Jamison contributed to this story.

July 28, 2000 The Missoulian

"The National Bison Range announced that because of fire danger it is restricting travel on its Red Sleep Mountain Drive to "hoot-owl house" starting Wednesday. The entrance to the scenic 19-mile drive at the range will close at 11 a.m. daily. Visitors may start the drive any time before 11 a.m. That will give them time to complete the drive by 1 p.m." August 2, 2000 The Missoulian

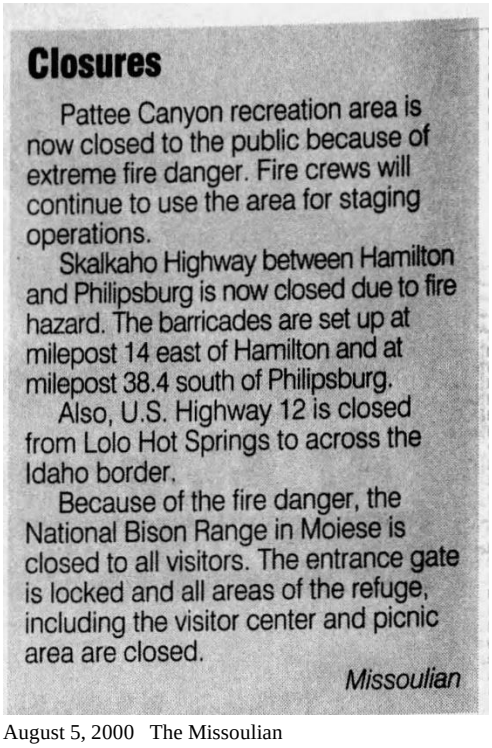
"Bird watching and activism

Kalispell – Enjoy a day of bird watching and help combat the wetland weed invasion of loosestrife at the 11th annual celebration of the Ninepipe pothole wetland complex this Saturday.

Join members of the Flathead Audubon Society, the Mission Mountain Audubon Society and the Flathead Chapter of the Native Plant Society for this annual event. The birding exploration will begin at 8 a.m. The loosestrife pull is scheduled at 10 a.m. Meet at Ninepipe Lodge six miles south of Ronan on Highway 93.

The event also will feature a discussion of the current efforts to control purple loosestrife and dalmation toadflax by Allison Rowland of the National Bison Range. Participants should bring binoculars and or spotting scope, gloves, shoes to get wet, water and lunch. Gourmet desserts will be provided

For more information, call leaders Neal and Pattie Brown at 406-837-5018." August 3, 2000 The Missoulian



Closures

Pattee Canyon recreation area is now closed to the public because of extreme fire danger. Fire crews will continue to use the area for staging operations.

Skalkaho Highway between Hamilton and Philipsburg is now closed due to fire hazard. The barricades are set up at milepost 14 east of Hamilton and at milepost 38.4 south of Philipsburg.

Also, U.S. Highway 12 is closed from Lolo Hot Springs to across the Idaho border.

Because of the fire danger, the National Bison Range in Moiese is closed to all visitors. The entrance gate is locked and all areas of the refuge, including the visitor center and picnic area are closed.

Missoulian

August 5, 2000 The Missoulian

Antelope at play in the Bitterroot?

Rumors mounting about American pronghorn taking residence between Lolo and Florence

By DARYL GADBOW
of the Missoulian

These are longtime Bitterroot Valley folks, old ranch-family stock, so presumably their judgment, veracity and eyesight can be trusted.

Still, what they say they saw makes you wonder.

Rumors have been drifting out of the smoke in the Bitterroot Valley for a week or so about reported sightings of an antelope – technically an American pronghorn – in the ranchland foothills east of the river, between Lolo and Florence.

"Yeah, my dad said he saw one a couple of weeks ago," said Colter Schroeder, whose father, Jim, ranches south of Lolo. "He was up on his motor bike and saw it a couple of hundred yards from the house. My cousin, Will, saw it the next day. It's the first antelope my dad's ever seen around here."

Some neighbors of the Schroeders also have reported seeing the solitary doe antelope in the vicinity.

Where it came from nobody knows.

"No one in the department has confirmed a sighting in the Bitterroot. We don't doubt it. It just confirms what we've always said: 'Never say never. And never say always. Wildlife will surprise at any time.' "

– Bill Thomas, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

But the door's wide open for speculation.

Most antelope in Montana live in the eastern prairies, hundreds of miles away.

Antelope haven't roamed the Bitterroot Valley in recent memory, according to Bill Thomas, information officer for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Missoula.

The antelope population nearest to the Bitterroot Valley is at the National Bison Range in Moiese, where the animals are confined within a sturdy fence, Thomas said. In the past, however, antelope from the Bison Range have been transplanted into the wild on the Flathead Indian Reservation, he said.

"I think some of those tried to return to the Bison Range," Thomas said.

The most likely place the animal would have come from in the wild, he said, is the Deer Lodge Valley, where a small, isolated herd resides.

"They have been reported, for instance, in the Drummond area over the years, and even in the Georgetown Lake area," Thomas said. "We're talking about an individual animal or two. No one in the department has confirmed a sighting in the Bitterroot. We don't doubt it. It just confirms what we've always said: 'Never say never. And never say always. Wildlife will surprise at any time.' "

Another possible location the wayward antelope could have come from is the upper Big Hole Valley. Antelope range in the Mussigbrod area of the upper Big Hole, where a large wildfire has been

See **ANTELOPE,** *Page B8*

Antelope

Continued

raging for several weeks.

Could the fires have disoriented the antelope, and caused it to flee across, or around the Anaconda Mountain Range into the Bitterroot?

Thomas doubts that explanation.

"If an antelope is there," he said, "and if it did come from a natural source, why it moved is pure speculation. To me, it's doubtful that fire would be the cause. But who knows? There hasn't been any fires close to where the nearest antelope hang out around Deer Lodge. But who knows?"

Maybe it's just one more oddity of nature in a strange year that's seen a number of exotic birds show up in Montana, far from their normal home ranges, buffeted here by freak winds, or confused by El Nino or La Nina weather patterns.

Maybe the critter was bewildered and sent astray by these extraterrestrial sunsets we've had of late.

In any case, Thomas said, FWP has little time in these hectic days of fire and forest recreation closures, and hunting season postponements, to worry about a lost antelope.

"This sighting is interesting," he said. "But it is a very low priority for us right now."

Reporter Daryl Gadbow can be reached at 523-5264 or at dgadbow@missoulian.com.

August 25, 2000 The Missoulian

Forest Service retirees gather for national reunion

By DARYL GADBOW
of the Missoulian

Retired U.S. Forest Service employees from throughout the nation will gather in Missoula this week for an activity-filled reunion.

More than 800 retired employees of the Forest Service are registered for their third national reunion Sept. 4-8 in Missoula. Even more retirees of the federal agency are expected to show up, as well as nearly as many spouses and guests, according to reunion organizers.

Planning for the event started four years ago, after the group's last national reunion in Park City, Utah, according to Jim Freeman of Victor, who retired after a 29-year career in the Forest Service.

"In our group," said Freeman, "we have a few folks who started their forestry careers in the Forest Service clear back in the '30s, with the CCCs. And we've got some recent retirees in the '90s. So within our group, we've got 60-some years of forestry experience with the Forest Service.

"Like most retiree groups, we value that old esprit de corps and family feeling we had in the Forest Service. We battled fire and floods and hurricanes together, and had a lot of fun. There will be lots of tales about when John fell in the creek – that sort of thing. This is not a political rally, by the way. It's a reunion to celebrate the old traditions of family and esprit de corps we shared. And it's a chance for us to plug in with the organization again, and make note of the accomplishments of the Forest Service over the last 60 years."

Two of the reunion's central events come Wednesday. During the day, the building site for the National Museum of Forest Service History will be dedicated. That night, there will be a benefit dinner for the museum, according to Bill Gabriel, secretary of the nonprofit corporation working to open the museum.

Forest Service Chief Mike Dombeck will be the reunion's keynote speaker Tuesday morning at the event's headquarters, the Holiday Inn Parkside. Dombeck also will present the museum dedication speech Wednesday. He will be joined during the week's activities by three former Forest Service chiefs – Jack Ward Thomas of Missoula, F. Dale Robertson and R. Max Peterson.

'Like most retiree groups, we value that old esprit de corps and family feeling we had in the Forest Service. We battled fire and floods and hurricanes together, and had a lot of fun.'

– Jim Freeman

In addition to those dignitaries, the wife and daughter of another former Forest Service chief, the late Ed Cliff, will attend the reunion, Gabriel said. John McGuire, the oldest of the retired chiefs, can't attend. But he sent a letter with his regards to the group of retirees.

Gabriel, a retired wildlife biologist for the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, said a handful of volunteers has been working feverishly to prepare for the reunion.

"I'm harried," he said. "About 200 retired Forest Service employees in the region have been called back to fire duty. There's just a few of us left to do everything to get ready for this reunion."

The hectic fire season in western Montana isn't deterring attendance at the reunion, according to Gabriel and Freeman.

"Fires aren't a problem, except for those who've been called back," he said. "We'll have as many as we expected. But the fires might affect the field trips we have planned."

Planned field trip destinations on Thursday included the Big Hole and Lost Trail Pass, the National Bison Range, the historic Ninemile Ranger Station, a tour of the Bitterroot National Forest, the Rattlesnake Recreation Area and Gates of the Mountains.

The fires, many of which are burning on national forest land, no doubt will fuel plenty of spirited conversations among the former Forest Service employees at the reunion, Gabriel said.

"I'm sure folks from out of the region will want to come and see what's going on," he said. "I'm sure they'll all want to kibitz about the fires."

Another highlight of the reunion will be a talk by author and historian Steven Ambrose on Tuesday night.

"The only problem is we don't have a place big enough to hold everybody to see him," Gabriel said.

Half of the group will attend Ambrose's speech in the Holiday Inn Parkside's Ballroom, he said. The other half will listen to the talk piped to speakers at the Doubletree Hotel several blocks away.

Ongoing activities during the reunion will include history talks, slide shows, a Lewis and Clark trunk show, tours of the Forest Service's Aerial Fire Depot and Smokejumper Visitor Center, the Northern Forest Fire Lab, the Historic Museum at Fort Missoula and the Society of American Foresters steam sawmill and logging display there, and general visiting and reminiscing.

Gabriel said he and other members of the National Museum of Forest Service History board of directors will be lobbying hard during the reunion to drum up interest and financial support for the museum.

The volunteers in the museum corporation have been working for a dozen years to collect and protect the artifacts of nearly a century of Forest Service history, and the interpretation of that history for the public, Gabriel said. The corporation has secured a site for the museum, just west of the Fire Sciences Laboratory and the Missoula Aerial Fire Depot.

Former Forest Service employees, and some active agency units, have contributed large numbers of artifacts and archives to the museum group, Gabriel said. But so far, museum organizers have been forced to store the material in a warehouse, while trying to raise funds for a facility where it can be exhibited.

Some progress is being made in development of a museum, however, said Gabriel.

"We have sort of a Lincoln Log kit of a historic ranger station that we got from the Clearwater National Forest this spring," he said. "That building is going up at the museum site. We're now putting a roof on it. We hope to have it enclosed by next week so we can have an exhibit in it."

The exhibit will be similar to one the group displayed recently at the Historical Center at Fort Missoula, Gabriel said.

Missoula is a natural location for a national Forest Service reunion and a national museum, he added.

"This is where the Forest Service has its roots," said Gabriel. "The first of the forest reserves were here before there was a Forest Service. And they became the first national forests. The first regional office of the Forest Service was here. So we've got a lot of history here."

Reporter Daryl Gadbow can be reached at 523-5264 or at dgadbow@missoulian.com.

September 4, 2000 The Missoulian

ON CAMPUS

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Outdoor program – Tour through the National Bison Range, $19 includes transportation, driver and entrance fee. Call 243-5172 for more information.

September 10, 2000 The Missoulian

Woman killed, daughter injured in highway crash

MOIESE (AP) – A driver attempting to make a U-turn in her car on a state highway near Moiese collided with a pickup truck, killing the car's driver and injuring her daughter, authorities said.

Mary Funk, 41, of Charlo, died at the scene. Her 13-year-old daughter, Jolynn Funk, was listed in guarded condition Wednesday at St. Patrick's Hospital in Missoula.

The Highway Patrol said Tuesday's collision occurred when Funk apparently tried to make a U-turn on state Highway 212 near the National Bison Range.

Her car was struck by a passing pickup, which then crashed into two cars parked along the shoulder. No other injuries were reported.

October 5, 2000 The Missoulian

PUBLIC EVENTS

FLATHEAD RESERVATION FISH & WILDLIFE BOARD, 9:30 a.m., National Bison Range, Moiese. Call Ralph Goode, (406) 883-7905 or Nancy Schall (406) 675-2700, ext. 1027.

MISSOULA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, board of trustees' special session to hear grievance, 1:30 p.m., Business Building boardroom, 915 South Ave. W.

PINOCHLE PARTY, 7 p.m., Welcoma Club, 3100 Clark St.

October 6, 2000 The Missoulian

“Briefs

‘Winter Drive’ opens bison range season

Moiese – The National Bison Range starts its winter season this Saturday, with the opening of the range’s “Winter Drive,” and new visiting hours.

Friday will be the last day for the public to take the Red Sleep Mountain Drive at the Bison Range. However, the range will be open daily through the winter, except during extreme weather.

The Winter Drive, a 10-mile round trip, offers good wildlife watching for elk, deer, pronghorn and bald eagles along Mission Creek and Alexander Basin. There are always bison in the Exhibition Pasture just past the picnic area. Other bison should be visible from time to time, as well as bighorn sheep and mountain goats, from highways 93 and 200. The shorter West Loop Drive also is an opportunity to see wildlife.

Drives will be open daily from 7 a.m. to dark. The Winter Drive takes about an hour to complete. The shorter West Loop takes about 15 minutes. The visitor center will be open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p. m. weekends, but will be closed weekends and holidays for the remainder of the fall and winter months. No fees are charged during the winter season. Visitors planning trips during the winter may want to call the Bison Range at 406-644-2211 for current road conditions.

School groups visiting the Bison Range during fall and winter will find that the Winter Drive provides excellent viewing and allows better access for school buses to wildlife area that are not available during the summer. Good viewing areas long Mission Creek can now be reached without having to travel over the steep grades of Red Sleep Mountain. School groups visiting the Bison Range should pre-register by calling 406-644-2211, extension 207.

For ore information, visit the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service web site at www.fws.gov.” October 19, 2000 The Missoulian

“Briefs

“Bison, wildlife await out-of-state relatives

Along with the migration of the snow geese, the holidays also bring gaggles of relatives to western Montana in search of kinship, but also the splendors of the last best place.

Don't worry about trying to find time to fit that trip to Glacier between stuffing the turkey and setting the table. Instead, visit couple of Missoula's most overlooked scenic and wildlife opportunities, either the nearby National Bison Range or Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge.

Both preserves are roughly an hour north of Missoula and promise to offer fun that is distinctly Montana. The Bison Range has two scenic drives, open daily, except during extreme weather. The winter Drive is a 10-mile round trip gravel road where visitors can view deer, elk, pronghorn, bald eagle and some bison. Most of the bison herd, however, can be viewed from Highway 93, just north of Ravalli. The second scenic drive in the refuge, the shorter West Loop Drive, also provides opportunities to view various wildlife.

If it is the winged variety of wildlife that visitors seek, then drive north a little further to the Ninepipe Refuge. Black-capped chickadees, northern flickers and Townsend's solitaires are some of the winter bird species to be encountered.

Drives in the Bison Range are open daily from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Visitors may want to call the Bison Range for current road conditions at 644-2211." November 16, 2000 The Missoulian

A short trip to Flathead Lake offers more than the lake to your out-of-state guests.

Day trip

Flathead Lake

So, you're looking for a day-long trip that'll give those out-of-staters – oh, let's say they're from Iowa, just for the sake of argument – something to see? Our panel of judges suggests a trip to Flathead Lake is in order. The added benefit of this, of course, is that you get to see their expressions when they make that turn on 93 North and come face to face with the Missions: "Those are called mountains. There's no reason to be scared just because you haven't seen anything like them before." The Flathead trip earned 45 votes, and – as it turns out – if you head up that way you can schedule a side trip to the No. 2 attraction, the National Bison Range (42 votes). Of course, mountains and bison in one day – check it out with their doctors first. If you decide you'd rather not drive on Highway 93 North, and we understand, the No. 3 choice here is A Carousel for Missoula, with 28 votes.

December 15, 2000 The Missoulian