



Comments Requested on the Blackfoot Travel Plan (Summer) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Proposed Forest Plan Amendment for Elk (Big Game) Security

by Bill Hallinan and MWA Staff

Please comment now on the Blackfoot Summer Travel plan. The Lincoln Forest District prepared a comprehensive inventory and analysis of their district. It is very professional work. Now it is time for us as chapter members to weigh in. In short the original proposed action, Alternative 2, is terrible for fish, wildlife, wildlands, quiet trails and clean waters. **Alternative 3, however, is best in 4 of 5 key resource measures including clean water, fisheries, wildlife habitat, wildlands, quiet recreation and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail.**

The 45 day public comment period on the travel plan Draft EIS is open from January 25 to March 11. Also, at the same time, there is a 90-day public comment period on the proposed Forest Plan Amendment for Big Game Habitat Security. The project site with all the details is here <http://www.fs.fed.us/nepa/fs-usda-pop.php/?project=30899>.

The next open house meeting is scheduled in Lincoln on February 28 (Thursday) from 2 p.m. until 8 p.m. at the Lincoln Ranger District office. The meeting is for members of the public to ask questions and provide comments on the DEIS and Programmatic Plan Amendment.

The Forest Service values our input. Comments received, including respondents' names and addresses, will become part of the public record for this proposed



Green Mountain, South of Lewis and Clark Pass.

action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the agency with the ability to provide you with project updates.

Please submit a comment via e-mail to comments-northern-helena-lincoln@fs.fed.us. Make sure to include "Blackfoot Travel Plan" in subject line. Write to:

**Helena National Forest
Blackfoot Travel Plan (non-winter) #30899
2880 Skyline Dr.
Helena, MT 59602**

Here is more of the nitty-gritty. The DRAFT EIS compares 3 alternatives:

COMMENTS continued on page 2



COMMENTS *continued from front page*

- Alternative 1: Existing Condition (no change)
- Alternative 2: Proposed Action (emphasis –motor trails & roads)
- **Alternative 3: Conservation Alternative (emphasis–water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, wildlands, quiet trails including CDT)**

Alternative 3 was developed in May and June 2011. Members of the Montana High Divide Trails—a coalition of 9 southwest Montana back country horsemen/women, hiking, bicycle, conservation groups—worked with hunters to propose site-specific goals for conservation of wild public lands along the Continental Divide. The hunters, horsemen, anglers, quiet recreationists, biologist, and conservation volunteers did a detailed review of the action, road by road, trail by trail. They

put their boots on the ground and visited the locations where they were not clear or had questions. They respectfully considered both motorized and non-motorized users in their respective needs for recreation and access.

When one begins to see the landscape through the lens of conservation, many of the decisions about travel planning become clear and inclusive, and provide better enjoyment, productivity, management, and access to the forest while decreasing infrastructure and long term costs; e.g. road maintenance and patrolling, weed eradication, illegal development of trails, etc. In times of deep budget cuts, Alternative 3 is wise stewardship.

After the alternatives were submitted, two questionable decisions were attached by the Helena National Forest to both action alternatives without the knowledge or

Resource/ Issue	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Open Roads	446 miles ¹	348 miles	307 miles
Stored Roads ²	0 miles	133 miles	75 miles
Decommission Road	21 miles ³	8 miles	197 miles
Quiet Trails	71 miles	122 miles	159 miles
Motor Trails	60 miles	92 miles	47 miles
Continental Divide NS Trail ⁴	32 miles motor free	32 miles motor free	48 miles motor free

CD Wildland Area	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Anaconda Hill Wild Area (Rogers-Flesher Passes)	NM core w (illegal) private OHV-ways	?	Reclaims illegal & old mine roads in wildlands
Specimen Creek Wild Area (Flesher – Stemple Passes)	CDT -foot, horse, dirt bikes	CDT in new OHV loop	CDT -foot, horse, bi-cycles
Crater Mountain Wild Area (near Stemple Pass)	Upper Hogum closed for elk	Upper Hogum open to OHVs	Upper Hogum closed Sept 1
Nevada Mountain Wilderness (proposed)	Trails 467, 487 severely eroded by OHVs; tracks and weeds spread	Trails 467, 487 severely eroded by OHVs; tracks and weeds spread	Trails 467,487 rehab, convert to quiet trails, protecting NMW

¹ An additional 80 miles of closed private roads (Plum Creek Timber Co.) were acquired by USFS in recent years. These are not currently part of forest transportation system. ² Note, a stored road has a re-contour intersection (obliterate the road entrance) or additional rock/earth barrier as needed. A closed road is gated. In either case, one might anticipate illegal use of these roads by circumventing the entrance obstruction. Illegal use results in less big game security, weeds, and enforcement efforts. ³ The EIS chart shows 0 miles of decommissioned roads under Alt 1 (error?). However the DEIS states 21 miles of closed forest roads are currently considered “naturally decommissioned,” i.e., revegetated and impassable to vehicles. ⁴ Purpose of CDNST (1978) is to provide high-quality non-motorized recreation and to conserve natural, historic and cultural resources along the CDNST Corridor. Note: South of Highway 200, public lands along the Continental Divide narrow to a series of 4 wild islands, surrounded by roads, ruts, old mining spoils and rural subdivisions.



Looking south from Lewis & Clark Pass.

PHOTO BY BILL HALLINAN

support of conservationists and hunters:

- An amendment to weaken Helena N. Forest Plan standards for Elk Habitat Security
- An allowance to drive vehicles cross-country 300 feet on either side, a 600 foot-wide impact zone of designated roads and trails for car-camping.

The Montana Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers said putting the proposed changes for Elk Habitat

Security in the travel plan document lacks transparency and offers an inadequate definition of security habitat. A recent Helena Independent Record article describes the Elk Habitat Security standard in greater detail http://helenair.com/news/local/new-version-of-black-foot-travel-plan-is-released/article_f4de28ec-6686-11e2-a1a4-001a4bcf887a.html. A quick comparison of trails and road miles begins to show why Alt #3 ranks best for wildlife habitat and security, trout fisheries, clean water, quiet trails and the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail. Please consider commenting.

Meet MWA Staff: Kassia, Connor & Zach



Kassia Randzio



Connor John



Zack Porter

Kassia Randzio joined the Montana Wilderness Association staff in the spring of 2012 as the organization's Development Officer. She's excited to energize our growing community of MWA members. Since starting as a volunteer with MWA five years ago, she helped plan the 2009 Annual Gathering, was elected to the MWA State Council, helped kick-start the NexGen Wilderness Leaders program, and is now sharing her development skills with the organization. When not in the office, she's probably out on the trail skiing, backpacking, and exploring Montana's incredible wildlands.

Connor John is the NexGen Wilderness Leaders intern at Carroll College. Connor is a senior in business and active in the CAMP (Carroll Adventure and Mountaineering Program) as well as a the Outdoor Explorers Mentoring Program with Big Brothers and Sisters. He

helped make arrangements to host the 2013 Winter Walks Kickoff at Carroll College and for the guest speaker Steve Gehman from Wild Things Unlimited.

Zack Porter's career of protecting wild places began when he went to work in 2004 as a Wilderness Ranger for the US Forest Service in Washington's Cascades. In 2008, Zack started volunteering with the Montana Wilderness Association while a student at the University of Montana, and served as the first NexGen program intern the following year. Today, Zack is Program Director for the Montana Wilderness Association's NexGen Wilderness Leaders initiative, where he manages outreach to young people of all ages across Montana. He is an avid backpacker, skier, and canoeist, and spends every free moment exploring Montana's roadless country.

Volunteer Help Wanted

Party Planner(s). We need you to party! Literally, we need you to help plan a party in celebration of one or both bills that create more Wilderness pass! Party organizers will scope out short-notice venues, phone trees, e-mail blast, brief program with speaker, press release for the celebration, and public messaging. The first meeting is Tuesday, March 5, 2013, 6:00 PM at Lewis & Clark Library in the small meeting room. Call Bill Hallinan, 461-9876 for more information.

Editor and Poster for WD Chapter Web Page. Reviews the WD web page. Provides information and pictures for posting.

Newsletter Editor/Writer. Twice a year newsletter to WD members (Spring/Fall). Can you help?

Annual Meeting Planning. Plans with others the WD Annual meeting/picnic.

Summer Walks Leaders and Co-leaders. Have you led a walk? We need your help. Are you interested in helping with the walks program as a volunteer leader or co-leader?

Becoming a Friend of the Sleeping Giant

The Sleeping Giant is Helena's scenic icon. The Sleeping Giant Wilderness Study Area is a roadless domain of about ten thousand acres just twenty miles from Helena that offers fantastic hiking, hunting and scenery. It has long been recommended for Wilderness by the B.L.M., now this special landscape needs supporters to achieve formal Wilderness designation. The Friends of the Sleeping Giant is an effective organization to help get that done; please consider joining via the Facebook page. There you can view photographs of hikers climbing the Giant, with magnificent vistas in all directions. For those who have hiked the Giant and have pictures to share please consider sharing your photos on the Facebook page. This inter-

Board Member Nomination

MWA is a grass roots organization. Volunteers at the local chapters are the heart of work. Now through March, The Wild Divide Chapter Board is taking nominations for new board members. The board meets once a month for 2 hours to keep up to date on Wilderness and Wildland issues. A board member may spend five to ten hours a month on board business which includes participating in organizing Summer and Winter Walks kickoffs, writing letters in support of Wilderness, hosting the Wild and Scenic Film Festival, leading walks, participating on the State Council, and being a presence at Forest Service travel planning. We also hold an annual picnic for our members. Please send your nominations for board members. You can nominate yourself. To learn more about the MWA board and how you can participate, please join us for an open house on Tuesday, March 12, 2013, 6:00 PM at Lewis & Clark Library in the large meeting room. We are taking nominations for President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Board elections will be held in April. Questions? Call Bill Hallinan, 461-9876.

by Wayne Chamberlain

net site is also a way to organize boating trips to access these lands using a route that offers physical challenge and more time to enjoy the area.

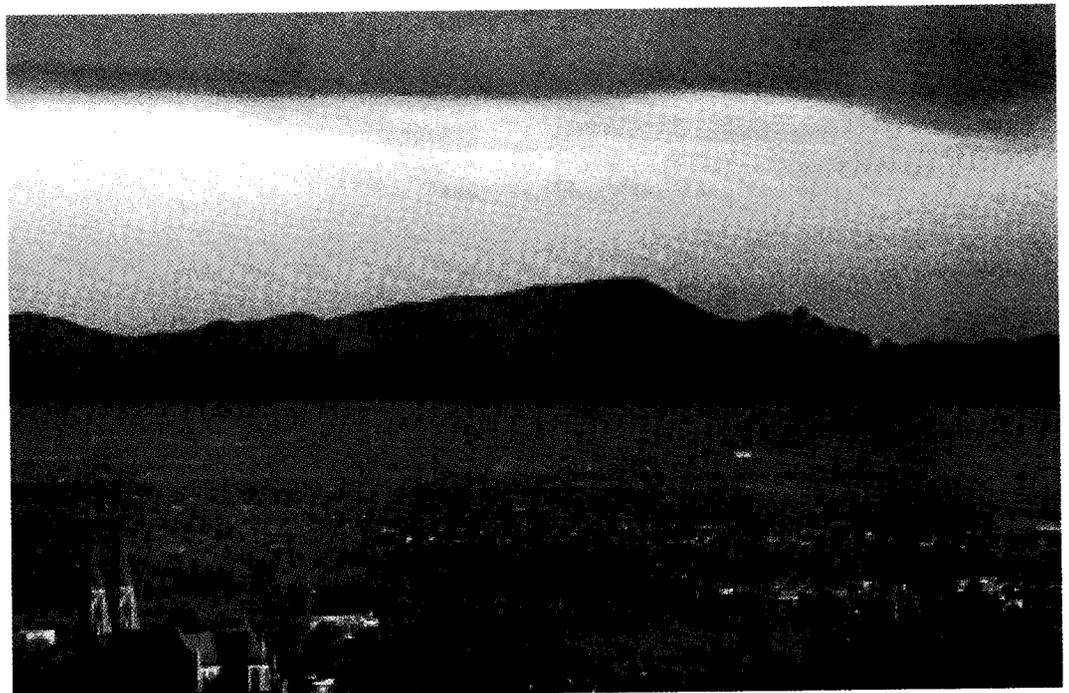


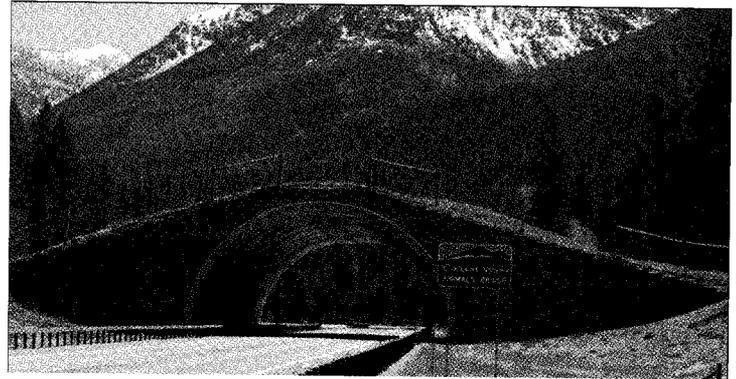
PHOTO BY JEFF VAN TINE

Animal Bridge Advocates

Animal bridges, which may also be known as ecoducts or wildlife crossings, are structures that allow animals to safely cross human-made barriers like highways. A wildlife crossing is the broadest term and can include: underpass tunnels, viaducts, overpasses and bridges, amphibian tunnels, fish ladders, culverts and green roofs.

Wildlife crossings are a practice in habitat conservation, allowing connections or reconnections between habitats and combating habitat fragmentation. They also assist in avoiding collisions between vehicles and animals, which in addition to killing or injuring wildlife may cause injury to humans and property damage. It has been reported that vehicle-animal collisions cost the United States a staggering \$8 billion a year.

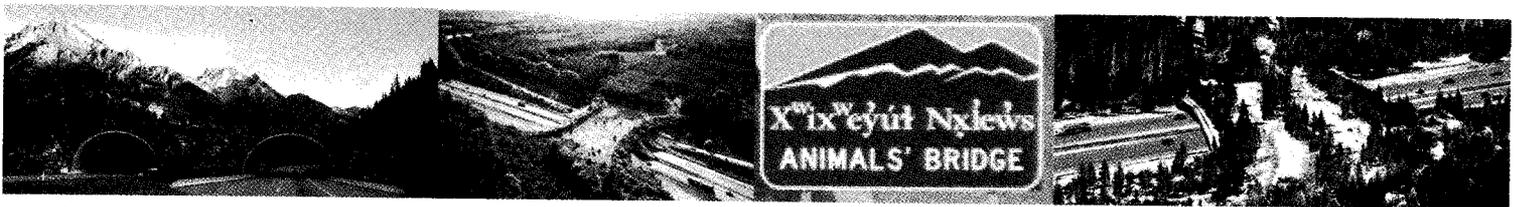
Imagine this: a Montana where many animal bridges make it possible to walk from Canada to Wyoming/Idaho and never touch a road. Consider one or more animal bridges at the major passes and known corridors of animal migration.



Highway 93 North near Evaro, Montana on the Salish-Kootenai Reservation

Interested? If you have knowledge of how transportation infrastructure gets funded and designed, or you have a reason, a skill and/or a passion to make wildlife bridges happen, then let's meet Wednesday, March 13, 2013, 6:00 PM at Lewis & Clark Library in the small meeting room.. Questions? Call Bill Hallinan, 461-9876.

From: <http://twistedstifter.com/2012/07/animal-bridges-around-the-world/> and <http://arc-solutions.org/>

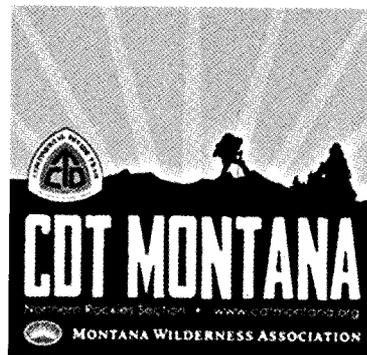


Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada; Highway A50, Netherlands, Evaro, MT; ARC International Wildlife Crossing Infrastructure Design Competition

Higher Ground: the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST or CDT)

Besides being the longest non-motorized trail in America, the CDT literally and figuratively is the high ground where our best aspirations for Wilderness and critical wildlife habitat follow the trail. About one-third of the Continental Divide Trail in Montana runs through the Wild Divide Chapter. Parts of the CDT remain unfinished, and MWA is very proud to be carrying on the work of completing the Continental Divide Trail in Montana.

As the official caretakers of the CDT, our local communities, volunteers and donors deserve a huge thank you for stewarding this national treasure. The Montana



CDT project schedule is coming out in early March. Check here for latest details <http://www.cdtmontana.org>. Please consider volunteering with a friend for a CDT project this year. Also, any donations to the MWA for the CDT go on the ground coordinating work, buying supplies, and promoting CDT stewardship.

2013 promises to be a BIG year along the Wild Divide with THREE pivotal travel plans coming out and MWA's new lead role as non-profit steward/ partner for almost 1,000 miles of America's greatest quiet mountain trail.

By the Numbers *by Bill Hallinan*

Thank you! In the Wild Divide Chapter we have 774 individuals and organizations as members, some 550 family and organizational groups. Your support makes it possible to keep our attention on identifying and protecting wild places in Montana.

Observation and numbers matter, and it is often that a shared vision brings the numbers to life. For example, in the film "Chasing Ice," one photographer's vision to document global warming by filming glaciers creates a moving urgency that is anything but "glacial."

How do we imagine Montana? We live in Big Sky country, and some contend that Montana is so big that it has more than enough wild lands. Is Montana really that big? Montana is less than one quarter of one percent of the earth's surface. The untrammed land in Montana, the land that is Wilderness or eligible for Wilderness designation, is less than three one hundredths of one percent of the planet's surface. In a universe of

lifeless planets, that untrammed land is simultaneously infinitesimal and vast -- as vast as it will ever be. Since 1805, the year Lewis and Clark began their westward journey, the predominant culture has used 89.5% of Montana's landscape for human centered activity. Today, only 3.7% of Montana is Wilderness and 6.8% untrammed. The 6.8% includes National Park land.

How to imagine the size of untrammed landscapes? The total area of Wilderness is 5,000 square miles, a 71 by 71 mile square. The remaining eligible for Wilderness is roughly 10,000 square miles, a 100 by 100 mile square. One can play all sorts of number games and math puzzles for interest. How many Montanans per square mile of Wilderness? 221 Montanans per square mile. How many US citizens per all untrammed land in Montana? 21,000 US citizens per square mile of untrammed Montana. Yet numbers rarely affect a change in behavior. Stories, images, and narrative do create change. A shared vision persuades, current observations inform, and a willingness to let it be keeps it wild.

Land Type	In Square Miles	% Of Earth	% Of Lower 48 US States	% Of Montana	% Of Untrammed
Earth's Land Mass	57,505,693.77				
Lower 48 United States	3,119,884.69	5.43%			
Montana	145,556.00	0.25%	4.67%		
Untrammed (Wilderness or eligible for Wilderness designation)	15,373.59	0.03%	0.49%	10.56%	
Untrammed - Unprotected	9,995.31	0.02%	0.32%	6.87%	65.02%
Untrammed - Wilderness Protected	5,379.75	0.01%	0.17%	3.70%	34.99%

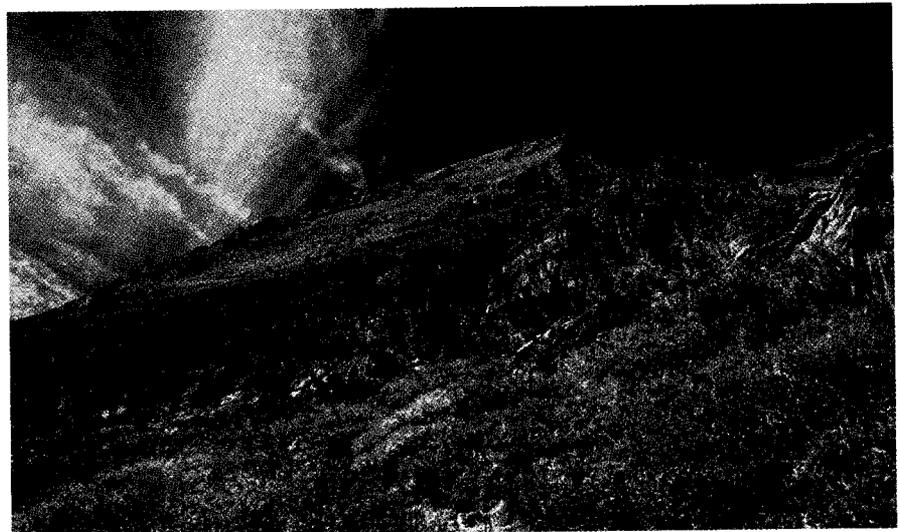
National Park Wilderness

by John Gatchell

Did you know Glacier National Park's (GNP) back country is Montana's largest recommended Wilderness? Passage of the 1964 Wilderness Act set in motion evaluations by each American public land

NPW continued on page 7

"Grinnell Colors" by Eric Regensburger, Helena, MT. Taken in Glacier NP. To see this photo To see the full colors of this glorious first-place winning photo check the PDF newsletter and photo contest on the MWA web site: www.wildmontana.org.



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managing agency to determine which lands were qualified and which managers recommend be designated as Wilderness.

Glacier's back country--considered a true western wilderness park-- was recommended by the National Park Service for wilderness designation in 1974. Recommended Wilderness is 93% of GNP area) The 1999 general management plan for Glacier slightly expanded the Glacier recommended Wilderness.

Winter Walks

by Bill Hallinan

On January 18, 2013 at Trinity Hall on the Carroll College Campus we had a great Winter Walks kick off with over 70 people attending a Wildlife Tracking Workshop and, the next day, 40 people split in three groups tracking in the field. Conner John, the Carroll MWA NexGen intern and member of Carroll Adventure and Mountaineering Program, did a great job organizing the predator tracking workshop on the campus. Steve Gehman from Wild Things Unlimited conducted a wildlife ecology and snow-tracking workshop which highlighted the importance of identifying the location and range of intrepid winter wildlife.

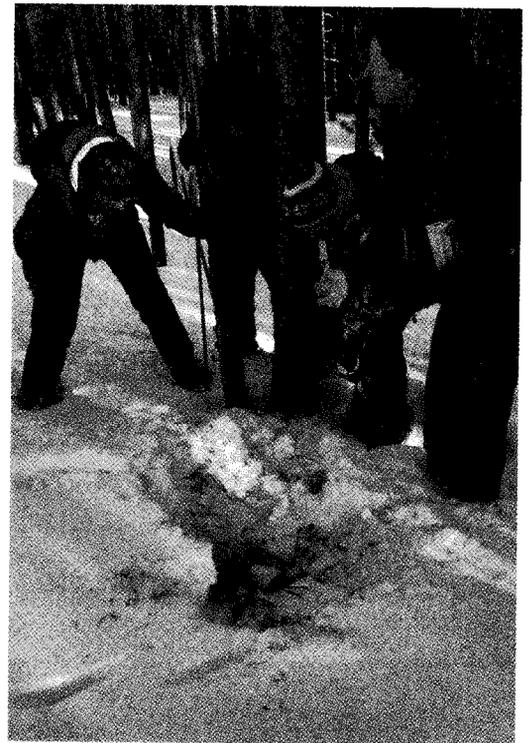
Over the years Wild Things Unlimited has collected an impressive range of tracking data. A tracker and photographer, Kalon Baughan, set up remote camera traps to capture elusive species such lynx, grizzlies and wolverine. He is currently tracking and documenting the presence of at least seven wolverines in the Lincoln District of the Helena National Forest. Despite the poor tracking conditions in the field, the attendees at the Saturdays workshop identified ermine, bobcat, coyote, rabbit, fox, and moose at one or more sites in the upper Little Blackfoot valley. Rabbit, deer, and moose kill sites were found.

MWA members wholeheartedly support the Glacier National Park Wilderness.

Two years ago, Superintendent Cartwright made a series of talks expressing hope that the Glacier Recommended Wilderness, would, at long last, be designated for the Glacier National Park Centennial (2011). At that time, his speaking of wilderness was reprimanded by Montana's lone congressman. Today is a new day, a new Congress, another chance to be clear on Wilderness qualities of Glacier that make it what it is.



ABOVE: *Kalon Baughan points out recent coyote and bobcat tracks near a moose kill site to Stephanie Pung (l) and Jessica Savage (r).* RIGHT: *Examining track around rabbit kill site.* PHOTOS BY BILL HALLINAN



If you want to participate as a citizen volunteer in snow-tracking and reporting of wildlife observations, make your wildlife observations here: <http://www.wildthingsultd.org/>. Document your location, date, time, weather and snow conditions, and take photographs of your find from different angles.

One of the most enjoyable aspects to the Winter Walks program is being out side with others who, also, really want to enjoy winter at its fullest. If you have not already signed up for a walks, there are a couple months left. MWA can supply snowshoes. The walks are free and open to the public. You can read more at the newly revamped MWA web site: www.wildmontana.org.

Montana High Divide Trails (MHDT)

At the December MHDT meeting, attendees discussed the idea of a trail project/ camp out --perhaps on the CDT between MacDonal and Priest Pass as the 2013 Montana High Divide Trails Jamboree. The exact location for the Jamboree is under discussion, so keep your eye out for the date in the Summer Walks book.

Some of the trail sections under discussion are Josephine (mine) to the saddle above Minehaha, Josephine to Jericho Mountain, and the new CDT between Josephine and Bison. Each year the MHDT members and land managers walk the sections of interest. They consider what is needed, logistics, and the budget before picking their yearly projects. A mile or more of trail building or maintenance will take place during the Jamboree. The Montana High Divide Trails partnership



PHOTO BY MARTIN KIDSTON

includes: Great Divide Cycling Team, Helena Bicycle Club-Wild Divide Chapter, Helena Outdoor Club, Helena Trail Riders, Highlands Cycling Club, Last Chance Back Country Horsemen, Mile-High Back Country Horsemen, Montana Wilderness Association and the Prickly Pear Land Trust. Call MWA if you are interested in participating.

Contact Congress

Now is as great time to share your passion for Wilderness with our congressional leaders. Please call and/or write them and let them know your why you support Wilderness and your desire to protect our remaining wildlands.

Both John Tester and Max Baucus have bills before Congress which include Wilderness. They appreciate your calls and notes of support. And although new to Congress, Steve Daines may be its most experienced back-packer. Let them know you want to keep it wild!

The Honorable Max Baucus

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<http://daines.house.gov/>

SEVEN! Yes! Seven More Pages of Great News at wildmontana.org!

In an effort to conserve resources, we have limited our print version of this newsletter to only 8 pages. Please visit wildmontana.org to see the full PDF version where you can read articles about MWA's Strategic Plan Update, Helena's String of Pearls, Prairie Wildlands, Eastern Montana Wilderness Lands and BLM Management Plan, and more! If we have your e-mail, we have sent the link to the newsletter in a recent MWA e-mail.