



Annual Report

2009

Partners:

Northwest Connections (NwC)
Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC)
Swan Valley Bear Ranger (Ranger)

In cooperation with:

Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC)
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)
U.S. Forest Service (USFS)

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to summarize outreach and education events sponsored and implemented by the multi-party cooperative group, Swan Valley Bear Resources. Consolidating bear resources activities within one document will provide an important resource for several reasons. First, the summary will serve as a basis for comparison between years of operation for the working group. Second, this report may contain information that may be used for monitoring progress toward the group's mission to promote coexistence between people and bears within the Swan Valley. Finally, this report can act as a summary for interested parties unfamiliar with the Swan Valley, Swan Valley Bear Resources, and other local collaborative conservation efforts.

The report covers the broad framework of each accomplishment for 2009 and documents costs of the main projects for 2009 including the Bear-Resistant Garbage Container Loaner Program, property consultations, outreach and events, research and monitoring, and Swan Valley Bear Ranger.



The following is a map of the Swan Valley and surrounding wilderness areas, overlaid with the movement patterns of 10 radio-collared grizzly bears over the course of 5 years. This map highlights the overlap that exists between grizzly bear movements and the Swan Valley community.

Introduction

The mission of Swan Valley Bear Resources (SVBR) is to offer community resources to promote coexistence between people and bears. SVBR is a collaborative effort between local non-profit conservation organizations and community members who have partnered with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (FWP), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) and other natural resource entities, to pool resources, experience and expertise, to address bear conflicts on private property in the Swan Valley.

Research and management data from FWP and the FWS indicate that the Swan Valley provides important grizzly bear habitat and is an important grizzly bear linkage corridor between the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex and the Mission Mountains Wilderness. The Swan Valley has become known to have a high incidence of mortality for grizzly bears in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem. Trends also showed that an increasing number of these mortalities were human-caused, related to unsecured bear attractants on private property. As a result, SVBR recognizes the importance of reducing bear conflicts and bear mortality, which directly and indirectly result from bears becoming food conditioned and/or habituated in the Swan Valley.

The goal of SVBR is to honor our rural way of life while at the same time providing resources and site-specific recommendations for interested landowners to secure bear attractants and reduce human bear conflicts.

Resources

Bear-Resistant Garbage Container Loaner Program

One of the most dangerous temptations for bears in the Swan Valley is unsecured garbage. Once a wild bear learns to find food in garbage, its chances for survival are drastically reduced. Within the greater Condon community, SVBR administers a bear-resistant garbage container loaner program. The program encourages community members to check out a bear-resistant container for personal use. The containers were purchased with grants and donations. Money raised through voluntary donations or container purchases will be directed back into the program for purchase of additional containers.

In 2009, a total of 83 BearSaver (64 gallon) bear-resistant garbage containers were purchased and added to the existing inventory of the program. At year's end, 38 containers are on loan within the community, 14 containers have been sold (2005-2009), and 56 containers are available for loan.

With the landowner's permission, container locations throughout the valley are marked with a GPS for Swan Valley Bear Resources monitoring of effective distribution. Information including name, address, phone number, email (if available) and container number are registered for each container checked out within the community. When used properly, bear-resistant garbage containers are an important tool for teaching bears to stay away from garbage by denying them a food reward.

Property Consultations

Landowners and residents of the Swan Valley who are interested in reducing and/or eliminating bear attractants around their homes and property can contact SVBR for property consultations. We have a network of skilled individuals and organizations that have experience dealing with a variety of bear attractants, including bird feeders, garbage, gardens, livestock, orchards, pet food, etc. SVBR will continue to facilitate property consultations for interested landowners around agricultural and other attractants in the Swan Valley in the future.

Fencing Projects

As an extension of these property consultations, SVBR has assisted local landowners for technical specification, purchase of materials, and hands-on construction of two electric fences in the Swan Valley in 2009. Some labor and materials were also contributed by property owners as part of the cost-share project. SVBR is equipped to provide technical information on fencing specifications, as well as to offer resources on where to purchase appropriate materials. In addition, SVBR can help landowners search for potential cost-sharing opportunities and recruit volunteers to assist with fence construction.

Yates Property

The project was located just off the east side of Highway 83 between mile marker 56 and 57, near Simmons Meadow and Swan Peak Scenic Viewpoint. Other than a few neighbors, this property is surrounded by public land that offers good quality habitat that supports a variety of wildlife including high densities of both grizzly bears and wolves.

Need: Pam and Ray raise sheep and chickens. Sheep (2) were killed by a grizzly bear which was then trapped and relocated to Glacier Park.

Design: We built a 7-strand, high tensile electric fence with 4 hot wires and 3 ground wires in alternating arrangement around sheep and chicken pen (857 linear feet). We also installed a 16 foot gate with a hot wire across the top.

Result: The same grizzly bear, which was fitted with a GPS radio collar, was located about a quarter mile from this property later in the summer after the electric fence had been built. No conflicts occurred with the bear in such close proximity to the property after the fence had been built.

Partners: Swan Valley Bear Resources and community volunteers (Tom Parker, Adam Lieberg, Mark Ruby, Len White, Rod Boothby), Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (Tim Manley), The Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative (Seth Wilson), Cenex Harvest States (Scott Mackey), CLB Custom Landworks (Chris Barnes), property owners (Pam and Ray Yates).



Tom Parker secures an H brace on the Yates fence.

Volunteers work to put in new posts for a 7-strand high tensile electric fence.

Contributions by SVBR:

<u>Volunteer</u>	<u>Commitment</u>	
Tom Parker (NwC)	52 hours	
Len White (Volunteer)	24 hours	
Rod Boothby (Volunteer)	8 hours	
Mark Ruby (USFS)	10 hours	
Adam Lieberg (NwC)	10 hours	
Total Hours =104		Total Value = \$2,080 (104 x \$20/hr)

Contributions by landowners:

Manual labor: 70 hours
 Materials: 16 4x4 boards for cross-bracing.
 **All left over materials were donated for SVBR future electric fence projects.

Total Contributions = \$3,768 including donated materials

Contractor Fees: CLB Custom Landworks: post pounding
Total Cost = \$480 Paid by Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative
Fencing Materials:
Total Cost = \$1,100 Paid by Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative
TOTAL COST = \$5,348/ 857 linear feet = \$6.24/ft.



Volunteers learn how to wrap an "H" brace for fencing corners.

LaPlante/Brand Property

This property is located on Charles Road about a quarter mile off Highway 83 at mile marker 44. This property is about a quarter mile east of the Swan River, adjacent to the river bottom, which is a major corridor for most wildlife, in particular, grizzly bears.

Need: Jan LaPlante, the tenant, raises goats and chickens. She also has a good-sized garden. The Condon Farmers' Market was held on this property and most likely will be held here again. There was an old barbed-wire fence on three sides of the perimeter of the property. Goat pens are enclosed in a mesh wire fence and the chicken pen is enclosed with chicken wire. Major wildlife conflicts have not occurred. Considering the inadequate fencing in place, the amount of unsecured attractants, and proximity to important wildlife habitat and corridors, this project ranked very high on the priority list.

Photo Right:

Jan LaPlante shows off her goats at the property in Condon.



Photo Below:

New electrified gate and fence on LaPlante/Brand property.



Design: A 5-strand high tensile electric fence with 3 hot wires and 2 ground wires alternating on the outside of the fence posts was constructed. On the inside of the posts, a 5 ft. non-climb woven wire fence was installed. We fenced the entire perimeter of the property (approximately 1 square acre or 845 linear feet) and installed a double gate at the entrance with a hot wire across the top.

Result: There have been no wildlife conflicts. Residents have observed grizzly bears move around the fenced area and through the neighborhood without finding available attractants. Black bears have also been observed reacting to the fence and leaving the area.

Partners: Swan Valley Bear Resources and community volunteers (Tom Parker, Adam Lieberg, Mark Ruby, Len White, Pate Barnes, Peter Brown), Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (Tim Manley), The Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative (Seth Wilson), Cenex (Scott Mackey), CLB Custom Landworks (Chris Barnes), property owner (Jay Brand).

Contributions by SVBR:

<u>Volunteer</u>	<u>Commitment</u>
Adam Lieberg (NwC)	97 hours
Tom Parker (NwC)	28 hours
Mark Ruby (USFS)	26 hours
Pate Barnes (NwC Student Volunteer)	12 hours
Pam Yates (Volunteer)	8 hours
Ray Yates (Volunteer)	8 hours
Peter Brown (Volunteer)	8 hours
Len White (Volunteer)	8 hours
Gordon Somerville (Volunteer)	8 hours
Total Hours = 203	Total Value= \$4,060 (203 x \$20/hr)

Contributions by Landowner:

Manual Labor: 70 hours

Fence posts and cross bracing

Installation of corners and cross-bracing (along with Swan Valley Bear Resources)

Installation of front gate (along with Swan Valley Bear Resources)

Total Contribution = \$4,900 including donated materials

Contractor Fees: CLB Custom Landworks: post pounding
(challenges of rocky soil and terrain increased cost)

Total Cost = \$ 1,005

Fencing Materials:

Total Cost = \$2,587 Paid by Northern Rockies Conservation Cooperative

TOTAL COST = \$8,492/ 845 linear feet = \$10.05/ft.

Outreach and Events

SVBR sponsors a number of outreach efforts and events to bring awareness of our mission of reducing human/bear conflicts in the Swan Valley. SVBR sponsors the Bear News, a bi-annual community newsletter that highlights current events relating to bears. SVBR is proud to host two community events each year, the Spring Bear Wake Up Social and the Bear Fair. These events provide a forum for experts in the bear research, management, and conservation fields to share their most up-to-date findings with our community.

Swan Valley Bear News

The Swan Valley Bear News is a bi-annual publication produced by SVBR each spring and fall that contains articles written by biologists, local community members, students, and Swan Valley Bear Resources staff. The publication furnishes local, state, and regional bear information and is mailed to community members throughout the Condon area, other regional agencies and seasonal home owners. A total 1200 copies of the newsletter were produced for both spring and fall issues for 2009. The publication was paid for by FWS. Bear News has been published since 2005. Archived copies of all issues of Swan VBear News can be found on SEC's Web site:

<http://www.swanecosystemcenter.org/documents/news&events/newsletters/bearnewsltrs/>

Articles in 2009 included:

Spring:

Spring at the Montana Rehabilitation Center by *Patti Sowka*

Grizzly Monitoring Via Hair Snaring by *Jeff Stetz*

Montana's Grizzly Bears: FWP's Statewide Recap by *Dianne Tipton (press release)*

Profile of a Grizzly Den in the Swan Valley by *Mark Ruby*

Bear Aware Neighborhood Approach in the Seeley-Swan by *Erin Edge*

A Food Storage Alternative for Campers by *Dianne Tipton (press release)*

Fall:

Roaring grizzlies viewed from tree stand; were they mating? by *Sally Thomason*

Cool Head Luke deters bluff-charging grizzly bear by *Luke Lamar*

Bear Fair Dispels Myths by *Ali Vissichelli*

We've Never had a Problem by *Mark Ruby*

Hunting in Bear and Lion Country by *Patti Sowka*

Albino Basin Male Euthanized by *Mark Ruby*

Spring Bear Wake Up Social

The 2nd Annual Swan Valley Spring Bear Wake Up Social was held at the Community Hall from 5:45 pm to 8:00 pm on April 30th 2009. Invited speakers included FWS Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, Chris Servheen and FWP Grizzly Management Specialist, Tim Manley. Tim Manley was unable to attend due to illness. Chris Servheen gave both PowerPoint presentations. An estimate of 80 people attended the event. Appetizers and drinks were provided by the Swan Valley Café.

Schedule of Event:

- 5:45 – 6:00 pm Doors open and welcome
- 6:00 – 6:20 pm Swan Valley Bear Resources PowerPoint (Mark Ruby)
- 6:30 – 8:00 pm Presentation by Chris Servheen (Q&A follow-up)

Costs:

Bear Social 2008	
Hall Rental	20.00
Publicity	33.25
Swan Valley Cafe	769.65
Total	822.90

Bear Social 2009	
Hall Rental	30.00
Publicity	119.75
Swan Valley Cafe	1150.00
Total	1299.75

Bear Fair

The 2nd Annual Swan Valley Bear Fair was held on August 1st 2009. A summary of table vendors, activities, event schedule, costs and logistics is below. An estimated 275-300 people attended this event.



Dave Parker from Counter Assault looks on as a bear fair attendee practices using an inert can of bear pepper spray.



Kids and parents meet the Karelian bear dogs from the Wind River Institute at the 2009 Bear Fair.

Food and Drink: Coupons were handed out at the welcome table for two free “beers” and bratwursts.

Event Schedule:

- 5:00 pm - Tents Setup (evening before)
- 8:30 am - Begin Setup
- 11:00 am - Event Kick-off
- 11:30 am - Wind River Institute Demonstration
- 12:00 am - Beer and Brats served
- 1:15 pm - Chuck Jonkel presentation
- 1:45 pm - Gallagher Electric Fence presentation (Scott Mackey, Cenex Harvest States)
- 2:00 pm - Counter Assault Bear Pepper Spray Demonstration
- 2:15 pm - Interpretive Bear Trail (Adam Lieberg)
- 2:30 pm - Announcements, Raffle Drawing, Tim Manley Presentation
- 3:00 pm - Cleanup

Other Activities: Bean Bag Toss, Water Balloon Toss, Bake Sale, Slushi Machine

Raffle Prizes: Day in the Field with Tim Manley, Flight with Bear Ranger, Four Tickets to UM Grizzlies Football Game, Bear-Resistant (65 gallon) Garbage Container, Tracking Day with Northwest Connections, Picnic Basket, Wildlife Quilt.

Table Presenters:

Wind River Institute
Montana Legacy Project
Missoula County Rural Initiatives
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks - Jamie Jonkel and Tim Manley
Great Bear Foundation
Northwest Connections
Kids Table
USGS Northern Grizzly Bear Project
Gallagher Electric Fencing (Scott Mackey - Cenex Harvest States)
Counter Assault
Living with Wildlife – Patti Sowka

Costs:

Bear Fair 2008	
Hungry Bear Steak House	2000.00
Portable Toilets	110.00
Postage	17.86
Publicity	511.62
Supplies	919.43
Telephone	12.80
Total	3571.71

Bear Fair 2009	
Hungry Bear Steak House	2184.60
Portable Toilets	110.00
Publicity	225.04
Supplies	285.87
Telephone	128.35
Program Expenses – Wind River Institute	285.87
Total	3219.43

Research and Monitoring

The Swan Valley has been a hot-spot for bear research and monitoring. SVBR hopes to add value to existing studies by tracking the effectiveness of effort to reduce attractants on private property.

Bear Ranger

The Swan Valley Bear Ranger offers bear education outreach at area schools, local campgrounds, for agency field crews and private groups by special request. The position is a cooperatively funded position through FWS, USFS, SEC, Plum Creek Timber Company and DNRC. The Ranger acts as a liaison among community members and agency personnel on issues promoting the coexistence between people and bears in the Swan Valley.

The ranger assists with local research and monitoring efforts, serves as a member of Swan Valley Bear Resources, and is the public contact for human/bear related issues. The Swan Valley Bear Ranger visited campgrounds and dispersed sites throughout the summer checking for compliance for food storage and carrying out informal education with campers as well as scheduled education presentations. Camper numbers, hunter numbers and a list of education presentations are presented in the tables below.

Ranger Outreach

	# People	Age Range (yrs.)	Length (hrs.)
Bear Education			
Information on food storage, bear behavior, bear pepper spray, safety during bear encounters, bear biology, habitat, and practices to best co-exist with bears			
Great Northern Fire Crew	25	25-35	.5
Stillwater Christian Wildlife Biology Club	12	12-14	1.5
Creston Elementary School K-6	90	6-12	1
Swan Ecosystem Center After School Club	10	8-14	1
Holland Lake Campfire Talk – Bears	15	8-70	2.5
Swan Youth Camp Bear Aware Olympiad	12	10-14	2
Living with Bears in Swan Valley – Swan Bear Social	80	12-70	.5
Swan Valley Bear Fair – MC and event spokesperson	275	8-70	4
Common Loon Education			
Information regarding Common Loon behavior, biology, and measures and practices to best coexist with nesting loons			
Holland Campfire Talk – Loons	30	12-70	2
Stillwater Christian Wildlife Biology Club	12	12-14	1.5
Family Forestry Expo – Loon Table	35	10-65	3
Wildlife Education			
Information involving education for Swan Valley wildlife species identification, detection, and Conservation			
Stillwater Christian Wildlife Biology Club – Fisher Monitoring	12	12-14	1.5
Big Brothers and Sisters Nature Walk - Guide	12	12-25	4
Landscape and Livelihood Student Bird Count - Guide	4	22-24	4
Estimated Total:	624	--	30

Ranger Monitoring

Total Days for Bear Ranger Monitoring ** (including hunting days):	32
Days for Bear Ranger Hunting Contacts:	13
Total Hunter Contacts:	174
Total Hunter Camps:	37

** Bear Ranger monitoring = days used to visit campers and campgrounds

	# People	Campsites
Campers/hunters/other approached about food storage (May 25 th – Oct. 1 st)	575	263
Hunters/other approached about food storage (Oct. 1 st - Oct. 25 th)	17	14

Future Goals

SVBR continues to evolve in its ability to work within the community to create feasible solutions that promote human/bear co-existence. Several goals for 2010, include a bear conflict/observation database, neighborhood networking, future fencing projects, and continuation of existing programs.

Through local reporting networks where community member comments on bear occurrences on private property and other observations throughout the community are documented and archived in a central location. A database created of bear sightings, problems, and other related reports is hoped to create a baseline of information to better track the effectiveness of human/bear co-existence efforts by Swan Valley Bear Resources. Coordination with the FWP Grizzly Bear Management Specialist may also aide in the ability to track long-term human/bear conflict rates within the community over time as a gauge to measure the effect of outreach and education within the community for living with bears.

To improve community involvement and strengthen lines communication, SVBR hopes to develop network neighborhood groups within the Swan Valley modeled after efforts within the Blackfoot and Clearwater drainages. A network neighborhood involves phone trees in geographically grouped neighborhoods where information about bears in the area can be rapidly disseminated among neighbors by local area coordinators without a high degree of effort by agency managers.

SVBR has set a goal of loaning out all bear-resistant garbage containers for 2010 and facilitating two additional fencing projects for the Condon area for the summer of 2010 depending on available funding. Specific sites or interested landowners are being researched.

Future work in education, monitoring, and implementation of existing programs will continue and include a revised Powerpoint presentation and color brochure. SVBR continues to examine areas for improvement of existing programs and will continue to provide solutions throughout the upcoming year.

Partners:

Northwest Connections (NwC)
Swan Ecosystem Center (SEC)
Swan Valley Bear Ranger (Ranger)

Supported by:

American Wildlands
Defenders of Wildlife
Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee
Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation (DNRC)
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP)
Plum Creek Timber Company
Private Donations
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)
U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Wildlife Land Trust

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