



FIELD JOURNAL

Northwest Connections (NwC) is a non profit organization working to involve local people in the conservation of habitat linkages across rural lands.

Recommendations on Wildlife Linkage Zones

The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) hired Northwest Connections to develop a manual for agency personnel developing wildlife linkage zones. The manual offers guidelines for how agencies can successfully integrate rural communities into the process of linkage zone design, implementation and monitoring.

The first section of the manual paints a rationale for why rural residents need to be included in all stages of the process. Because wildlife require human tolerance to persist in rural areas and because private lands are often critical for wildlife, residents need to have as much trust in the process as possible. The manual also makes a strong case for local knowledge, citing the incomplete nature of most scientific analyses for where linkage zones are best located to maximize benefit to the critters and minimize conflicts with humans. Local site-specific knowledge, it argues, can help design linkage zones that are more

ecologically sound.

The main section of the text outlines a suggested process for collaboration between agencies and rural communities. The final section points out several of the challenges that agency personnel will face when trying to incorporate rural residents in planning and implementation. These challenges include: a) sensitivity around private property rights, discomfort with meetings, economic cost of participation for non-professionals, academic prejudice among some agency staff, and a lack of funding within agencies to invest in time consuming public processes.

The manual concludes by saying that top-down wildlife conservation efforts usually result in significant backlash from rural publics and so have a net loss to the animals. A collaborative approach has a much higher chance of success.

Copies of "Making Connections: A Guide to Involving Rural Communities in Wildlife Linkage Zone Development" can be obtained for \$5 from the Northwest Connections office.

STAFF PROFILE:

Northwest Connections is fortunate to have hired Raeann Henrekin as our new office manager. Raeann and her husband Rob own Mountain Creek Taxidermy in Kozy Korner. Raeann is a mother of three, 4-H leader, and part time cook at the Rich Ranch. She also helps her parents put on Montana Mule Days every summer. Raeann is organized, thorough, hard-working and fun! Let's hope she can put up with the rest of us.



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FACT AND FIGURES

- 8,500 — the number of trees and shrubs planted by the Wildlands Volunteer Corps in Dunham Creek this June.
- 4,500 — the dollar value of this volunteer stream restoration project.
- 151 — new residents contacted by Northwest Connections 'Living with Wildlife Welcome Wagon' effort
- 10 — the number of states from which Northwest Connections draws students for the Landscape and Livelihood Field Semester

Perspectives: Local knowledge in danger of being lost.

Melanie Parker

Last winter bear biologists visiting the Swan Valley shared a new theory. Young black bears are being harvested at a disproportionate rate because older bears 'claim' the more secure habitats and kick subordinate bears out onto the open roads where they are more vulnerable to hunters. A local bear hunter raised his hand and expressed, 'That's not new, my grandfather taught me that years ago.'

I had to smile and remember a quote from Barry Lopez in his book *Of Wolves and Men*. "It is one of the oddities of our age that much of what Eskimos know about wolves — and speak about clearly in English, in twentieth-century terms — wildlife biologists are still intent on discovering."

There is much that can be gained from the systematic observation of nature. You do not have to have a null hypothesis and test it with statistically valid methodology to learn something about nature. This is a fact that escapes most land managers. Schooled as they were in the halls of academia, they have been trained to think that environmental knowledge comes only from the application of experimental science. It's hard to imagine that a local bear hunter would really have anything new to add.

The unfortunate repercussion of this 'bias to science' is that several natural feedback mechanisms are not succeeding in moving human understanding about nature forward. People who live and work in rural landscapes with intention and care learn about what is sustainable, but their lack of academic credentials keeps them from being participants in the cultural learning that must take place if we are to persist on this planet.

Indigenous knowledge has most certainly been overlooked, but so

has the knowledge of rural people who have planted their roots in one place. Loggers working in the same valley for decades notice what forestry methods did not produce the intended results. And if they also hunt and fish there, they notice which practices sustained healthy wildlife populations and which did not. Ranchers who don't want to



Rob Henrekin, —trapper and taxidermist — uses his knowledge to help live trap lynx for a research project. His kids Cole and Jessie learn about the lynx too.

lose forage to noxious weeds learn what kinds of grazing practices maintain native and desired plant communities. The examples are too numerous to list: trappers learn about forest carnivore behavior, bird watchers learn about warbler habitat associations, fishermen observe the effects of dewatering on streams.

Increasingly we are seeing a willingness to include local knowledge in ecosystem management efforts. Community forestry and collaborative conservation initiatives in our valley and across the nation (and in fact the world) are forging a new alliance between conventional scientific research and what is being called 'traditional ecological knowledge.' Here in the Swan Valley, we've included maps representing local understanding of wildlife corridors in our watershed assessment, a document that is being used to help plan future land management.

But even as a movement grows

that calls for the inclusion of traditional ecological knowledge in environmental learning processes, the number of people that can contribute such knowledge is dwindling. Rural lifestyles are under attack from a number of different sources. A general trend towards urbanization, a global economy that favors exporting rural jobs to distant countries, and environmentalists who favor the end to all resource extraction on public lands are all forces working against rural livelihoods.

I am concerned about this loss. I am concerned not so much for some romantic aesthetic I have about rural living. I am concerned as a naturalist and as an educator who engages in environmental decision making and sees how limited our science is in describing the patterns and cycles of specific places. Traditional ecological knowledge, which is place-specific by definition, combined with the best available science will greatly enhance our ability to develop sustainable ways of living from the land.

I think that some environmentalists have misidentified the source of the problem. The failure of our culture to adopt more sustainable methods of natural resource utilization is not because people out on the land haven't learned any better. People have continued to do the wrong thing, in most cases, because the incentive systems are faulty and because the people who are living and learning from the land are not invited to participate in the process of decision making. If we are to have any hope of achieving sustainability we must develop local economies that reward ecological quality and we must fully engage those rural residents who have gained traditional ecological knowledge in meaningful collaborative decision making processes.

Bear Report

During the summer of 2001, Northwest Connections field teams were hired by the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to deploy DNA hair trap sites across the Swan Valley. The purpose of the study was two-fold: 1) to obtain a count of black bears in the drainage and 2) to monitor the harvest rate of black bears in order to determine if the hunter harvest is sustainable.



A remote camera catches this black bear leaving his DNA, as planned on a Fish, Wildlife and Parks station deployed by Northwest Connections field staff.

The preliminary results of the study are in. We 'marked' 212 different black bears last summer. Each of these bears is now known by the DNA of its pelt. Over the next several years, FWP will monitor what percentage of these marked black bears

are harvested by hunters. In the past game managers knew how many bears were harvested, but they did not know what percentage of the population that harvest represented. This new low impact technology will assist them in better protecting the resource and hunter opportunity. This effort is being duplicated in several other regions of Montana that support significant black bear populations. During the summer of 2002, Northwest Connections teams are again assisting FWP in setting DNA hair traps all across the Yaak region of northwest Montana.

Although it was not the intention of this study, we were also able to get a minimum count of grizzly bears in the Swan Valley. Last year's project turned up evidence of at least 9 grizzly bears. This was interesting to Northwest Connections because our annual track surveys consistently turn up between 8–10 grizzly bears that use the upper Swan Valley. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is pursuing an effort to survey the entire Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem (NCDE) for grizzlies. This would include Glacier National Park and the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. There has never before been an accurate count of grizzlies in the NCDE. People on all sides of the issue would like to see such a count undertaken to better assess whether or not the grizzly should be de-listed in this region any time soon.

Field Notes

Tom Parker

It's June 20th. Two Wildlands Volunteer Corps members — Steve Sorenson and Derek Wherley— and I spent a productive morning, joined by Henning Stabins the Plum Creek biologist, finding salamander larvae, spotted frogs, tadpoles, and snakes. Mid afternoon, Henning had to leave and the boys and I struck off for a more remote pond.

The pond was about 3 feet deep and dotted with many washtub sized islands covered with thick willow and other riparian shrubs. We threaded through the deep channels between the islands with the water licking the tops of our hip waders. I had just caught several jumbo sized frog tadpoles when my peripheral vision over the top of my dip net spotted a motionless, but out of place, form on a tiny island not 30" wide and 8' long. Making itself as flat as it could and not twitching a whisker this tiny fawn not two days old was under the full control of its instincts. I reached to my belt for the holster which held a digital zoom camera and photographed him even as I

backed away and over to Steven. I pointed out the fawn and the hideout his mother had so cleverly birthed him on.



This was no accident or mistake. Veteran whitetail does often select wetland areas in the Swan to hide their fawns for the first 4-6 weeks of life. I have found many hidden fawns in almost every imaginable setting, but this little island castle complete with its own deep moat was the best use of a natural fortress I had seen. The matted down vegetation near the fawn and the size of the area indicated its mother had likely birthed the fawn here. She made a significant and unknowing gamble the fawn would not lose balance or control and teeter into the deep water after birth and between the long waits for mom to arrive with a full bag of milk. For many reasons, I'll bet this doe knew exactly what she was doing!

Events Calendar

June 8—14 Wildlands Volunteer Corps stream restoration work on Dunham Creek

June 17 — 23 Wildlands Volunteer Corps amphibian monitoring in Swan Valley

June 29 Interpretive hike on Hemlock Peak. Free.

July 8—12, 22—25 NwC crews working on bear research in the Yaak Valley

July 29 NwC Board Meeting

July 31 Condon Bear Information Night 7pm @ Condon Community Hall

August 3 Interpretive hike on Plum Creek land options.

August 4 — 11 Alpine Field Studies, backpacking trip on the Swan Range, 2 credits, \$550.

August 17—24 Wilderness First Responder course taught by Aerie School for Backcountry Medicine, \$450.

September 3—October 27 Landscape and Livelihood, Field Semester for undergraduate students in natural resource degree programs.

STAFF and BOARD

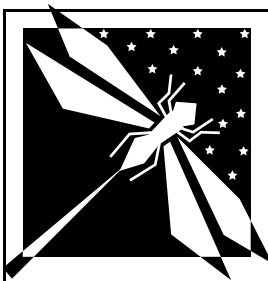
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