

Ninemile Wildlife Workgroup Newsletter

www.ninemilewildlife.org
 ninemilewildlife@gmail.com
 Facebook: Ninemile Wildlife Workgroup

Fall Newsletter

September 2011

Edited by Kylie Paul

PROMOTING KNOWLEDGE AND STEWARDSHIP OF LOCAL WILDLIFE AND HABITATS WITHIN THE COMMUNITIES AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE NINEMILE, HUSON, AND ALBERTON REGION.

(Not Just) Cake Auction coming very soon. This annual fun event will be held on a Saturday this year to allow for more attendees - we hope you'll be in town! It will be at the Ninemile Ranger Station on *Saturday October 8th at 6pm* and conducted by the wonderful auctioneer JR Strand. This year we will still have cakes - but we will also include jams, canned goods, art, gift baskets, and gift certificates. The auction is our only fundraiser and your help is greatly appreciated. We need donations! If you bake, process foods, do any kind of art or craft, have a business (or a friend who has one) with gift baskets or gift certificates, and you are willing to donate to this fun event, please do not hesitate to contact: Genevieve Fix 626-4776, blackedelweiss@dishmail.net; Surry Latham 626-4304, surry@montana.com; or email ninemilewildlife@gmail.com. *Please donate and please attend this fun event!*

Pint Night for Ninemile Wildlife. Come to the Northside Kettlehouse Brewery in Missoula on *Wednesday, November 9th* to support the Ninemile Wildlife Workgroup! On that date, a portion of the proceeds from every pint sold between 5-8pm goes to

NWW. This is an opportunity put forth via Kettlehouse's "Community U-Nite" program. This is at the Northside Tap Room at 313 North 1st Street (not the one on 4th St!). NWW raffle prizes will also be given out at this event. Come on out and enjoy fresh Kettlehouse beer and support the NWW!

We want you! We are looking for board members for 2012. Please drop us a line (ninemilewildlife@gmail.com) if you're interested in participating on this fun and friendly volunteer board. In particular, we are in need of website and financially-savvy helpers as well as someone who might like to organize our annual lecture series in the spring. Don't be shy! We'd love to hear from you.

Please take advantage of our **Reduced Cost Bear Spray Program.** Because we believe that the more people in the woods carrying bear spray, the better off are both bears and humans, we've partnered with the Y2Y Conservation Initiative to provide residents of our area with effective bear spray for only \$25 a canister. Retail cost runs from about \$45, so this is quite the deal. For more information, visit our website at www.ninemilewildlife.org, email us at ninemilewildlife@gmail.com, or call Will Hamilton 626-0679 or Pat Sweeney 626-1610.



WILDLIFE UPDATES

FOOD STORAGE REQUIREMENTS ON THE LOLO NATIONAL FOREST A food storage order signed in 2011 requires food storage practice across the Forest to reduce the potential for human-wildlife encounters. Food, carcasses, and attractants must be stored in a bear-resistant container or stored in a bear-resistant manner if they are unattended. In the front country (most of the Forest) these same items must also be stored in camp at night, unless they are being consumed, prepared for transport or storage. In some limited backcountry areas on the Ninemile and Seeley Lake Ranger Districts during the night these items may be attended instead of stored. For specific information on the new order and to view specific locations of backcountry and frontcountry areas for each district, please see www.fs.usda.gov/goto/lolo/foodstorage.

MT FWP's CRUCIAL AREAS ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING SYSTEM PROGRAM (CAPS) Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) has a new program called CAPS. The CAPS website (<http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/conservationInAction/crucialAreas.html>) explains it "evaluated the fish, wildlife and recreational resources of Montana in order to identify crucial areas and fish and wildlife corridors." However, CAPS is more than an assessment, it is also a collection of GIS layers that illustrate key terrestrial and aquatic species along with their associated habitats. Upon launching the application, one can choose among several fields to bring up these layers. This tool will help people quickly identify places important for key species, the location of habitat types, and in some cases the threat level. Explore it - its fascinating and useful!



WOLF UPDATE FWP's Liz Bradley noted that the Ninemile wolf pack is still active in the valley and likely had pups. FWP currently does not have a radio-collar in the pack, so the number of adult wolves and pups is unknown. There still may be efforts this fall to try to put a radio-collar in the pack. Overall, FWP is not aware of any conflicts with the pack this summer. In 2009, the year of the first legal wolf hunt, no wolves were harvested from the Ninemile area.

BEAR UPDATE This summer, a grizzly bear female and cubs were seen on the Reservation Divide. The greater region experienced widespread failure of huckleberry and low levels of hawthorn and chokecherry. As a result, multiple black bears are down in the valleys looking for ripening fruit. If you have a fruit tree on your property you can expect to have bear activity. To avoid this and to help bears stay wild, please pick all fruit as it ripens, rake up fallen fruit and store it in a secure location until you can discard it, or use electric fencing around trees. Hunters, carry bear spray and pay special attention to your surroundings especially in berry patches and river/creek bottom habitats.

Bull elk and cows. Photo by Paul Reed



3 toms and a hen. Photo by Jack and Sherry Sievers



Bull moose. Photo by Linda Curry



by Pat Sweeney

Each newsletter, we are now going to feature a local wildlife species that you might not know much about.

If you spend any time near water during the summer (who doesn't?), one of the birds you're likely to see is the spotted sandpiper. I do a lot of canoeing and often have several of these active birds accompany me on trips. A little over seven inches long, you may first hear their loud high whistled flight call before seeing them fly a short distance with distinctive, shallow, fluttering wing beats alternating with short glides. They flush in a broad arc over the water before returning to shore. Once they alight on shore, they walk briskly, usually punctuated with an exaggerated teetering or bobbing motion of their rear. The bobbing motion is also diagnostic in identifying this species and differs from another water lover, the American dipper, a small, plump gray bird whose bobbing looks more like deep knee bends.

The most widespread sandpiper in North America, you generally find the spotted sandpiper in Montana from mid-May through mid-September along the shoreline of most lakes, streams and rivers. They leave Montana and winter as far south as central South America.

If you get close enough, you will note their dark gray-brown backs with bright white underparts with dark spots. Their pale orange bill has a dark tip and is about the length of their head. Their legs are longer than most similarly sized birds. Males and

NINEMILE WILDLIFE: THE SPOTTED SANDPIPER

females look similar but the females are a bit larger.

The spotted sandpiper probes for a variety of insects and other small invertebrates on the ground or in the water. Prey includes fly larvae, grasshoppers, beetles, crickets, spiders, worms, crustaceans and mollusks. It may also catch insects in the air.



Spotted sandpiper. Photo by Pat Sweeney

Spotted sandpipers nest in June and have one of the most unusual breeding systems in birds—polyandry (one female mating with more than one male). Unlike most species of birds, the female spotted sandpiper reaches the breeding range before the male and selects and defends a territory. When the males arrive, she competes with other females to attract a mate and once successful, lays up to four eggs in a well hidden grass and moss-lined nest made in a depression in the ground. Each egg weighs approximately 20% of the female's weight!

The male incubates the eggs (sometimes with the female's help) and cares for the chicks while the female may look to repeat the nesting process with another male who hasn't assumed rearing duties. The chicks hatch in 20-24 days and leave the nest shortly after birth. They actively look for food soon after hatching and first fly when they are about 15 days old.

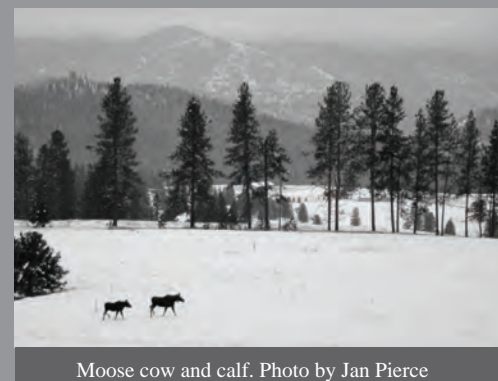
I look forward to summer when I share time along the water with these interesting migrants. They are only here for a short time, but they enrich our world, especially when you consider their travels and behaviors.

MOOSE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

by Kylie Paul

A fantastic photo of two moose moving through a field in the Ninemile area garnered third place in our first annual photo contest. Moose are seen with some frequency in our area. Unfortunately in Minnesota, research has found that moose have been drastically decreasing in numbers due to increasing average temperatures (Murray et al. 2006). In the last 25 years, the moose population in northwestern Minnesota has gone from around 4,000 to only 100! It was found that this reduction is not due to hunting or increasing deer populations. Moose become heat-stressed when temperatures reach over 23 degrees F in winter and 57 degrees in summer, requiring them to burn up energy to cool off. This extra energy spent cooling off then makes moose vulnerable to disease, parasites, and starvation. Sadly, some of the essential research to get to the bottom of this problem in MN has not received funding due to politics.

Other states are finding similar declining moose populations. New Hampshire's Fish and Game Department says winter ticks account for 41% of all antlered game animal deaths in the state, equal to the percentage of animals killed by hunters and motor accidents combined. The department says shorter winters and other changes in the climate are partially to blame for increased winter tick numbers. By late fall a moose can carry about 30,000 ticks under average weather conditions. In years with a late first snow, that number could be as high as 160,000 ticks. And the situation will only worsen as the warmer temperatures allow the ticks to live longer and reproduce in greater numbers.



Moose cow and calf. Photo by Jan Pierce

According to FWP, Montana's moose range may change as warmer temperatures shift their southern boundaries northward. Moose need cool temperatures to thrive and have had difficulty adapting to warming temperatures in their historic ranges. Stressed by heat, moose feed less and are more vulnerable to parasites, factors that contribute to a decline in overall health.



FENCING PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

by Kylie Paul

It is not hard to assume the majority of us would not want to have an animal caught on our fences to die a slow, painful death. Yet depending on your fencing system, this may happen. Wildlife can become entangled in wire fences that have a top height that is too high for animals to jump over, have narrow spacing between wires, or that have bottom wires too low to crawl under. According to FWP's Private Lands Wildlife Specialist Joe Weigand, the most deadly types of fence to wildlife are woven wire topped with one or more strands of barbed wire. When a deer, elk, or sheep attempts to jump the fence, their back legs bend (see right) and may get snared in between the top two wires. They then hang, struggling and tangling themselves further.



Woven wire fence acts as a barrier to pronghorn antelope which prefer to crawl under fences. Woven wire or too narrow of strands also creates barriers for young animals attempting to follow their mothers (see left). Young animals that cannot jump as high as their mothers and that cannot crawl through may be abandoned and starve to death,

laying in wait for their mothers' return. Other problems with fencing include barbed wire that is loose or broken that can tangle an animal. Many birds (owls, swans, herons, cranes, raptors, and grouse) and even bats collide and can become ensnared in wire fencing. This is especially true in areas with high bird traffic, such as stream corridors. Animals additionally may be injured by



fences with wires that may not be visible to fast moving animals.

Fence problems encountered by wildlife can often be easily fixed by retrofitting existing fences or building new fences that allow free travel of wildlife under, over, or around the fence while still maintaining an effective barrier for livestock.

Fences should be constructed to the following recommended guidelines to reduce adverse impacts with wildlife:

- Constructed entirely of smooth wire or rail, or at least smooth wire or rail along the top and smooth wire along the bottom;
- Top wire or rail should be at 40 to 42 inches above the ground;
- Bottom wire or rail should be left 18 inches above ground;
- 12-inch spacing between the top 2 wires;
- Gates, drop downs, or openings in the fence should be used in wildlife corridors or flyways or during seasons when wildlife are moving throughout the valleys and when livestock is not present;
- The top of the fence should be highly visible—top rail, reflective tape, vinyl markers, or some type of flagging (NWW has a large box of free vinyl markers and Joe Weigand has many more, so please contact us if you would like some);
- Avoid vertical stays;
- Loose barbed wire should be tightened or removed (contact ninemilewildlife@gmail.com to enlist the help of volunteers!).

Not all of these fence design recommendations may be appropriate for all areas of your property. Other options abound. These can be found in fantastic resources such as FWP's Wildlife Friendly Fencing brochure (www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/docs/brochures/friendlyfences.pdf). Also, it is Joe's job to spend time and money to help you fix wildlife/fencing problems and come with specific ideas for unique circumstances on your private property. Let's keep Joe busy here in the Ninemile – read up on options and/or contact him for help at 444-3065, or email at joweigand@mt.gov. Creating open networks of habitat connectivity across areas with wildlife-friendly fencing reduces the number of injuries and deaths among wildlife, as well as reducing maintenance costs of fence repair due to wildlife damage of fences.

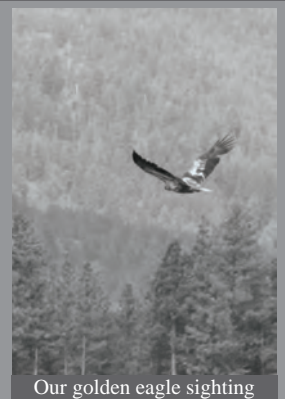
BIRDING EVENT UPDATE

by Kylie Paul



Birding fun

Large mammals are not the only animals that need connectivity to move throughout the region for their daily or seasonal activities. Birds also live year-round or migrate through western Montana and need high-quality, safe habitat to eat, breed, and nest. On May 21, residents and members of NWW explored the Ninemile area to look for birds on a lovely summer morning. We ranged from the Grand Menard park area to the pond on Sixmile Road. Over 20 species were observed. We would likely have seen more if we weren't having so much fun chatting and laughing! Despite our raucous activity, we did see a golden eagle and Clark's nutcrackers, two of 23 birds listed as Species of Concern in Missoula County by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (<http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/concern/>). Species of Concern are defined as native taxa that are at-risk due to declining population trends, threats to their habitats, restricted distribution, and/or other factors. Perhaps we'll see more Species of Concern and other birds next year — we had such a good time this year, we plan to have another birding event next spring.



Our golden eagle sighting

Second place photo. Photo by Pat Sweeney

Third place tie. Photo by Charles Janson

Third place tie. Photo by Charles Janson



by Rickie Van Berkum

LECTURE SERIES UPDATE

NWW again organized and sponsored a great series of lectures in 2011 on topics related to wildlife in the area.

Laura Ward, Forest Fire Management Officer for the Lolo National Forest, presented information on ‘Fire on the Ninemile,’ including maps displaying fire history, current efforts by the National Forest Service to reduce fire danger, and ways residents can protect their property in the event of fire. Laura is a long-time Ninemile resident, and her information was timely and helpful, sparking many questions with some of the audience keeping her busy well after her presentation. **Amy Cilimburg**, Director of Bird Conservation and Climate Policy for Montana Audubon, spoke on ‘Montana’s Birds and Wildlife in a Warming World.’ We learned that with climate change, many birds are shifting their range and abundance, and even the presence of some Montana’s birds may be eliminated. Phenology or timing of events such as insect abundance are not synchronizing as well with historical bird migration times that provide food for hungry nestlings. Birds that rely on caching food are finding their stores do not preserve as well over the winter. **Denver Holt**, founder and president of the Owl Research Institute in Ninepipes, MT, shared his insights on ‘Owls in Montana.’ His imitation of the short-eared owl mating dance, complete with fantastic sound effects, was not to be missed!! **Rob Roberts**, who leads mine reclamation and habitat restoration efforts for Trout Unlimited in the Clark Fork watershed, presented on ‘Settled, Mined and Left Behind: TU’s efforts to improve fisheries and water quality in Ninemile Creek.’ It was fascinating to see the impact of past mining activities in our area, and the kinds of restoration activities currently undertaken. We encourage all residents to attend as many of these lectures next year as they can. Everyone will find them interesting!

CELEBRATE WILDLIFE! COMMUNITY APPRECIATION PARTY

It was a hot, lazy summer Sunday in August when over 40 neighbors met up to share food, laughter, and some knowledge at our third annual Community Appreciation Party. After eating a delicious potluck meal, we heard from Joe Weigand who spoke to us about wildlife and private lands, especially focusing on fencing issues. Jamie Jonkel (FWP), Patti Sowka (Living with Wildlife Foundation), and Erin Edge (Defenders of Wildlife) set up an outdoor electric fencing demonstration. Girl Scouts showed their skills in identifying and casting animal tracks as well as sharing information to an audience.

More fun at the event included a raffle drawing for prizes such as native seeds from Native Ideals Seed Company (www.nativeideals.com), bear spray, bird identification books, and zucchini. And what would any event be without a visit from Smokey the Bear? Remember, only you can prevent forest fires (editor’s note: but don’t forget, naturally-caused forest fires are essential for forest and grassland ecosystems)!

OTHER UPDATES



Neighbors and NWW supporters enjoying potluck

NWW WILDLIFE AND NATURE PHOTO CONTEST



First place photo: Red squirrel. Photo by Kylie Paul

Attendees of the Community Appreciation also cast their votes for our first annual photo contest, after which the results were announced and prizes were awarded. We had nearly 50 amazing photo entries, in less than 2 months of advertising! A judging panel of 3 people (who did not submit photos themselves) narrowed the submissions to 20 excellent photos. Thirty-eight votes were cast at the Community Appreciation to determine the lucky finalists. All judging and voting occurred without any knowledge of who had taken the photos. Here are the results: 1st place: Kylie Paul (\$50); 2nd place: Pat Sweeney (\$20); 3rd place (3-way split; \$10): Charles Janson (2 pictures) and Jan Pierce.

Thank you to everyone that participated in our first photo contest. If you want to see the fabulous winning photos, please consider attending our next event, our annual “Not Just Cake” Auction on *Saturday, October 8th*. We intend to run the contest next year so start snapping photos of your favorite wildlife and nature spots in our beautiful region. We’ll let you know when we begin to accept submissions for the 2012 NWW Photo Contest.

In case you ever need to call someone relating to wildlife

Bears and wildlife conflict 542-5508 (Jamie Jonkel)
Mountain lions 542-5550 (Bob Wiesner)
Wolves 542-5523 (Liz Bradley)
Nongame wildlife 542-5551 (Kristi Dubois)
Fisheries 542-5506 (Ladd Knotek)
Injured wildlife 542-5500 (general line)
Private lands wildlife issues 444-3065 (Joe Weigand)

Hunting and fishing questions 542-5500
Missoula County Rural Initiatives 258-3432
Missoula County Weed District 258-4200
Sheriff’s Search and Rescue 258-4810
Lolo National Forest Ninemile District 626-5201
To report poaching or other wildlife and fishing violations:
 800.TIP.MONT (800.847.6668)



Wolves and horses in the Ninemile. Photo by Krist Hager

BEAR-CHICKEN CONFLICTS ON THE RISE

Adapted from article by Tristan Scott, Courtesy of the Missoulian — Sep 4, 2011

More grizzly bears are keying in on unprotected chicken coops in western Montana, with increasingly deadly consequences - both for the bears and the pilfered poultry. The rise in bear-related chicken raids is ruffling the feathers of state and federal wildlife managers who are forced to move or kill bears that receive a food reward, be it from a trash can, a fruit orchard or a bird pen. The conflicts are entirely avoidable, managers say, but it's the responsibility of landowners to buck the disturbing trend. "Chickens have become a real pain," said Chris Servheen, Montana's grizzly bear recovery coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "We're seeing a lot of people who are just being irresponsible." Servheen and other managers are encouraging landowners to build electric fences around chicken coops and other attractants, like sweet corn, vegetable gardens, fruit orchards and beehives. The fences are cheap and when constructed properly will deter even the craftiest bears. "We have found that when people put up a good fence around orchards, gardens, beehives, chicken coops, it is a very good deterrent," said Tim Manley, bear management specialist with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). "Bears respect the electric fence, and if you get a good hot fence bears will stay away."

Late last month, Manley trapped and relocated two grizzly bears that killed about 100 chickens at a residence near Lake Five, several miles from West Glacier. An adult female grizzly and yearling male killed the chickens - mostly chicks - over a period of two nights, Manley said. With help from FWP, the landowners installed an electric fence around their chicken pen and a nearby rabbit pen, a step Manley said will dramatically reduce the chance of another encounter. "The bears just don't come near the fences," he said.

In Missoula, chickens and hobby farms have grown in popularity since a December 2007 city ordinance made it OK to keep chickens. With passage of the ordinance came added potential for bear-human conflicts. "I sometimes get calls daily on chickens, whereas I used to never hear about it," said Jamie Jonkel, FWP's bear management specialist in Missoula. "There are so many chickens on the landscape that it's like having garbage cans with wings just tempting the bears." Jonkel is confident that bears and humans can coexist in Montana, and he doesn't see any reason why chickens can't be in the mix, too. But it requires added vigilance and responsibility on the part of the landowner. "Usually what I see is someone buys a box of chicks, they don't have any setup, and the next thing you know they've got a shabby coop and 40 chickens running around," Jonkel said. "They're throwing the slop in the backyard and gathering eggs, and pretty soon they've got game trails coming off the ridge and leading into their backyard."

Electric fencing is such a proven and effective solution that Defenders of Wildlife, a nonprofit wildlife preservation organization, has launched an electric fence incentive program. Erin Edge, the Bear Aware coordinator for Defenders of Wildlife in Missoula, said the group will contribute \$100 to the cost of installing an electric fence around livestock, chicken coops or beehives. "The chicken thing has really increased in the last five years and hobby farms are starting to pop up all over the place," Edge said. "There's a push for local food and sustainable agriculture, which is great, but bears are learning about these new attractants. When you live in this wildlife-urban interface you have to be responsible."

Manley said an electric fence for an average-size chicken coop will cost about \$200, including the energizer, posts and wires. To be effective, the fence must be at least four feet high and have seven strands of electric wires, and an energizer with a joule rating of at least .5. He said to test a fence's effectiveness one wildlife manager put an electrified perimeter around a horse carcass in bear habitat, and installed remote-sensor cameras to monitor the area. Although bears were present, they stayed away from the carcass. "A horse carcass is pretty tempting," Manley said. Brochures on installing electric fencing are available at FWP headquarters and on the agency's website at fwp.mt.gov.



Bear managers hold out little hope for a bear that's received a food reward from a human setting, and the problem is only compounded when cubs are involved. "We can't fix bears that have gotten a food reward. We can move them, but they're going to come back," Servheen said. "And if it's a family group, the cubs are learning future behaviors. If the mother teaches them how to key in on a chicken coop, they will continue to do that. And if they are orphaned, then that becomes the only food source they know. That really creates a long-term problem." In the Mission Valley, east of St. Ignatius, an adult female and her two yearlings have been targeting the same unprotected chicken coops for the last two seasons. Recently, the mother mysteriously disappeared. "I don't have a lot of hope for those bears, and I'm suspicious of what happened to the mother," said Stacy Courville, a bear biologist with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. "Now we've got two yearlings running around getting into trouble at the same residence, all because people won't secure their attractants."

Courville said too many grizzly bears are meeting their fate because of residents' ignorance about chickens and other attractants, like sweet corn, which has become another problem. This spring, tribal officials trapped and relocated a chicken-eating grizzly on the Flathead Indian Reservation and released it in the North Fork of the Flathead. The bear continued to get in trouble, however, coming out of the mountains to feed on chickens and goats in the Trego area. FWP labeled it a nuisance bear and killed it. In May, a Ronan-area landowner shot and killed a 2-year-old grizzly after the bear killed his chickens. Last summer, a sow and two cubs on the reservation who found chicken dinners both tasty and easily accessible were trapped and sent to the Louisville Zoo. In total, about a half-dozen grizzlies were lost from the Flathead Reservation in less than a year to poultry-related incidents, Courville said. "We are talking at least five grizzly bears dead because of poultry in the last two seasons on the reservation alone," he said. "And I couldn't even begin to tell you how many black bears we've had to destroy. "This problem should be nonexistent," he continued. "We shouldn't be destroying grizzly bears because people are refusing to protect their chickens, especially when there's a cheap solution. An energizer is a hundred bucks and the wires are even less. We are destroying grizzly bears because people won't protect their attractants." It's starting to work, but we are playing catch-up and there are still a lot of unfenced coops," he said. "We're getting through to some people, but not all of them. If people are going to have chickens in bear country, they're going to have to take extra precautions."

Ninemile Wildlife Workgroup



Name _____

Address _____

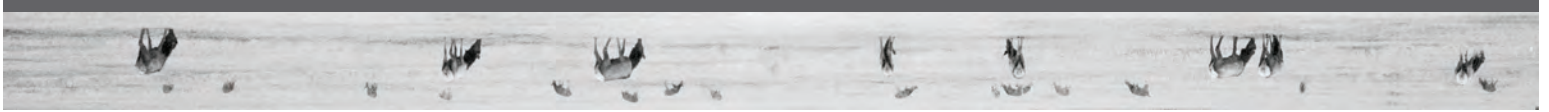
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone # _____ Email _____

Renew Your Membership!	\$10.00	_____
Individual Membership	\$10.00	_____
Family Membership	\$20.00	_____
Business Membership	\$25.00	_____

Place a checkmark beside type of yearly membership

Please become a member or renew your membership with the Ninemile Wildlife Workgroup! Fill out this coupon and mail it along with your membership payment to: Ninemile Wildlife Workgroup, PO Box 435, Huson, MT 59846



Non Profit U.S. Postage PAID Missoula, MT Permit NO. 569
--

P.O. Box 435
 Huson, MT 59846
 ninemilewildlife@gmail.com