

NINEMILE WILDLIFE WORKGROUP

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November 2014

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.

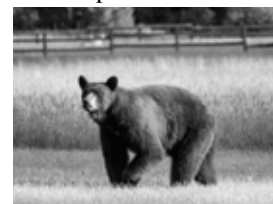
This treed mountain lion in the Ninemile is a good reminder why you should try not to attract deer or turkeys near your home...it brings in other visitors!

Please check out our website www.ninemilewildlife.org or join our email list (email us at ninemilewildlife@gmail.com) for event updates.



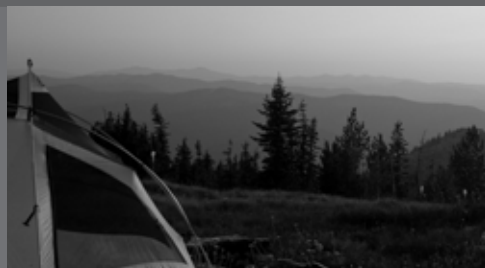
Wildlife Lecture Series Each winter/spring we hold a fascinating lecture series on wildlife issues. Be sure to join us at the Alberton Community Center in April and May for this year's lectures. Keep an eye out on our Events webpage and for emails once we determine the specific dates, speakers and their topics!

Newsletter - please send us your photos, news items, and other interesting bits for inclusion in the spring newsletter!



Black bear. Charlie, Ninemile visitor

WILDERNESS NEAR THE NINEMILE AREA



On September 3rd of this year, the **Wilderness Act** officially became 50 years old. In 1964, Congress enacted a law "to establish a National Wilderness Preservation System for the permanent good of the whole people." For the past 50 years, the Wilderness Act has legally protected "area[s] where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain."

Montana is home to 16 designated **wilderness areas**, comprising roughly 3.5 million acres (about 3.75 percent) of the state's lands. They offer great wildlife habitat to thousands of species of plants and animals, and they offer quiet, secluded recreational opportunities. The closest to the Ninemile region include the Selway-Bitterroot, Rattlesnake, and Welcome Creek Wildernesses.

Wilderness study areas (WSAs) have many of the same characteristics of a designated Wilderness area but have not yet been granted the same determination. WSAs are generally managed to protect their value as wilderness until Congress decides whether or not to designate them as wilderness. Some WSAs are managed exactly as wilderness areas, while rules for others allow activities that are generally excluded from wilderness (such as mountain biking). Montana has 39 WSAs. The majority (32) are managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) while the United States Forest Service (USFS) manages the rest.

The **Great Burn Recommended Wilderness** is near the Alberton/Ninemile region, between US-12 and I-90, along the Idaho-Montana border. It got its name following the famous 1910 forest fires that burned a shocking 3 million acres in 3 days in western Montana and northern Idaho. It's been recommended for wilderness designation for over 4 decades by the USFS in Idaho and Montana, but this legacy could soon be undone. Currently, the Clearwater-Nez Perce National Forest is in the process of updating its forest management plan, but it threatens to allow over-snow motorized vehicles. With this revision process, the USFS has the chance to strengthen protections for the area, guaranteeing traditional, quiet recreation opportunities, critical winter habitat for sensitive species like mountain goat and wolverine, and connectivity for grizzly bears and other species between the Great Burn and the Cabinet-Yaak and Crown of the Continent Ecosystems by prohibiting all forms of motorized recreation and maintaining a wild landscape across the Idaho-Montana border. For more information on the Great Burn, visit <http://www.greatburnstudygroup.org/> or call 406-240-9901 for more info on the forest plan campaign.



Bull elk. K.Paul



Robin nest. K.Paul



Long-toed salamander. K.Paul



by Jed Whiteley

ON THE UPSWING - HEALING AND HELP FOR NINEMILE CREEK



The Ninemile watershed is the largest watershed in the Middle Clark Fork, draining approximately 186 square miles of land. It's a critical spawning tributary for westslope cutthroat trout as well as historic habitat for the native threatened bull trout. This significant watershed has faced its share of challenges over the past century. In particular, a long history of mining has impaired water quality, caused severe streambank erosion, denuded fish habitat and ultimately left the Ninemile poorly equipped to filter out toxic sediments and other pollutants. Consequently, the Ninemile watershed is listed as water-quality impaired by the Montana Department of Environmental Quality.

Local landowners have shown great leadership and have partnered with state and federal agencies, local governments and nonprofit organizations to make restoration a priority on public and private lands in the valley. Mining wastes are being removed from many small feeder tributary drainages, streambanks are being reconstructed, and creeks are reconnected

to the mainstem Ninemile Creek.

One way to help the Ninemile watershed is to reduce the amount of water taken out of a creek and thus increase the amount of water within the creek (aka "instream flow"). In chronically dewatered tributaries of Ninemile Creek, this increase of instream flow is a current priority, since these creeks provide spawning and cold-water refugia habitat for native fish. The Clark Fork Coalition (CFC), a Missoula-based nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the Clark Fork River basin using scientific, technical, legal, and educational approaches, has been involved in the Ninemile watershed to help with this priority. CFC manages 3 water lease projects, 2 on the mainstem and one on a tributary of the Ninemile, and these provide a total of 14.25 cfs ('cubic feet per second' - a unit of measurement of water that is in motion) of water flow to Ninemile Creek during the critical low water months of August and September. Different types of transactions are used to help secure instream water for the creek including short and long term leases of water rights, split-season leases, and purchases. The CFC also works with area irrigators on water conservation projects that lead to more efficient irrigation practices and the ability to reduce diversion from the creek. The influx of clean, cold water into the watershed system supports and sustains the future of this critical watershed, and other ongoing, partner-led projects provide much-needed fixes to a legacy of pollution problems.

There is more work to be done in flow restoration on the Ninemile watershed as well as other tributaries of the Middle Clark Fork including Sixmile Creek. If you're interested in working with the CFC regarding instream water rights, please visit www.clarkfork.org or contact the Clark Fork Coalition's Project Manager Jed Whiteley at 406-542-0539 ext 209, jed@clarkfork.org.



SUPPORT YOUR FAVORITE LOCAL WILDLIFE WORKGROUP...THE NWW!



Wolf. Betty Oleson.

We need your support! The mission of the NWW is to promote knowledge and stewardship of local wildlife and habitats. We do so through meetings, lectures, workshops, newsletters, Facebook and a website. We manage a community bear aware program, sell bear spray at below cost, sponsor construction of electric fences, promote and place bear resistant garbage containers. Our annual lecture series brings experts from a broad spectrum of interests to share their knowledge with local citizens.

Our organization is led by a small group of dedicated volunteers and runs on donations only. If you agree with our mission and appreciate our work and programs, please consider making a donation. Thank you for your generosity! And if you would like to be more involved and join our board, we would love to welcome new faces and new ideas!



BEAVERS AND THEIR WATERY ROLE

By Kylie Paul

Beavers have long been building dams and storing water across the landscape. Now days, some landowners and agencies consider them pests and remove them from their lands. Beavers can certainly wreak havoc with flooding of human-created structures like roads, fields, and buildings, and with cutting of desirable trees. Yet, experience and research is showing that simply trapping out beavers or blowing up their dams is both expensive and short-term. There are developing technologies that can be used to rectify the problems that beavers create while also maintaining the countless benefits that beavers provide to the ecosystem, to our water quality, and potentially, to your bottom line.



So what to do if a beaver is cutting your trees or flooding your land in a way you're not okay with? There are many steps you can take. When beavers dam an area, they are triggered by the sound of running water. So you can work with that behavioral knowledge to trick the beavers and reduce your problems and costs. This very generally describes these flow control devices – search online for some useful guidelines on how to create these tools.



If problems occur at a culvert, the “Beaver Deceiver” blocks beavers from getting close to the culvert with big branches. The “Double Filter System” is a second similar option for preventing beavers from plugging or blocking a culvert, while keeping beavers at the site for the various benefits they provide to aquatic and riparian habitats and wildlife.

If a beaver pond is flooding property, the “Castor Master” allows water to move through a dam without triggering the beaver to fix the issue using a pipe with a covered outlet downstream. This allows you to maintain your preferred water level, prevent flooding, and keep the beaver and dam in place.

If you have problems with beavers killing valued trees and shrubs, solutions include fencing to exclude beavers from those sites or wrapping trees with metal wire.

So why in the world bother with trying to keep beavers in place? Your sanity, for one thing. If you have good beaver habitat, the problem won't end by killing them, as that will only lead to more individuals coming in to fill in that space. Then there are the reams of benefits that are so often overlooked. Beavers are a major boon when talking about times of water shortage - important considerations with increasing droughts and warm temperatures. Beaver dams and ponds are natural water reservoirs - they store surface water and re-charge ground water, increasing water supply and releasing it more steadily throughout the year. They also help cool water temperatures. Ponds trap and store sediment, improving water quality downstream. They slow the velocity of streams, thus reducing erosion and increasing wet floodplain vegetation. They also provide habitat for a huge array of plants, insects, amphibians, fish, songbirds, waterfowl and mammals.

In the past there were vastly more beavers than there are today. When they were mostly eliminated due to excessive trapping by the early 1900s, the landscape suffered. Water tables dropped, streams cut downward with some even drying up, woody vegetation (like willows, which actually increase with beaver use) disappeared, and habitats were thus damaged. This has improved in some areas with careful management, but beaver populations still are at only 10-20% of their original numbers. Once we recognize the benefits beaver provide our lands and understand the technologies that can help us maintain them on our lands, we can better accommodate beavers on the landscape and reap the benefits.



Warbling vireo K.Paul



Grizzly bear. Krist Hager



White-tailed deer. K.Paul

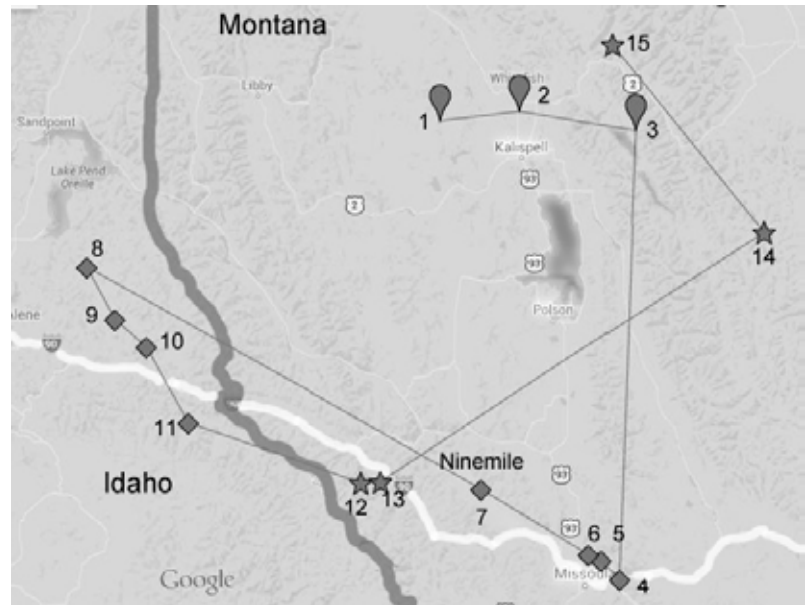


ETHYL THE WANDERING GRIZZLY BEAR - WHAT THE HECK IS SHE DOING?

by Rickie Van Berkum

Ethyl is a grizzly bear, about 20 years old, who has recently been travelling incredibly far beyond the typical 60-100 square mile home range that is normal for a female grizzly. She's traveled thousands of square miles over the last 2 years. No one knows why she is wandering to the degree that she is. Some think her internal compass could be off (possibly from some unknown trauma), since this kind of movement is unprecedented for a female griz and of her age as well (she's a healthy adult with years ahead of her, hopefully). Throughout most all of her travels, she's been well-behaved and staying out of trouble. Meanwhile, we're excited she traveled within the Ninemile!

Here's a glimpse of her fascinating life, made possible by the work of Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks records and with data from her radio collar. Follow along with the numbers on the map, showing the approximate locations where Ethyl has been located. The lines connecting the 'dots' do not show Ethyl's actual path, they just connect the dots to make it easier to see.



1	2004	Sample of Ethyl's hair was found and DNA was analyzed around the South Fork of the Flathead River.
2	September 2006	First captured in an apple orchard near Lake Blaine east of KALISPELL. Wasn't threatening people at the orchard, but was moved and released for her safety and the public's.
3	September 2012	Trapped in an apple orchard, again near Lake Blaine and transported east of the HUNGRY HORSE Reservoir, in hopes of breaking her habit of using apple orchards in the fall.
4	March 2013	Spotted near mouth of the Blackfoot River east of MISSOULA.
5	Summer 2013	Spent the summer north of MISSOULA.
6	Mid-October 2013	In the Rattlesnake Wilderness north of MISSOULA.
7	Late-October 2013	Recorded in the NINEMILE area (no specifics about where in the Ninemile were provided).
8	Mid-November 2013	In IDAHO in the upper reaches of the Coeur d'Alene River near the Magee Airstrip.
9	Early December 2013	Outside of SMELTERVILLE, IDAHO.
10	Mid-December 2013	Outside of OSBORN, IDAHO in the upper end of Twomile Creek north of I90.
11	Late December 2013	Crossed I90 and probably hibernated in the St. Joe River drainage near AVERY.
12	Early May 2014	Located 5 miles south of ST. REGIS, MT
13	Early May 2014	Photographed scaling a rocky cliff area near Dry Creek (southeast of St. Regis).
14	June 2014	Summered in the BOB MARSHALL Wilderness area.
15	August 11, 2014	In GLACIER NATIONAL PARK about 12 miles southeast of Lake McDonald Lodge.

And word on the street is that recently she was somewhere outside of Eureka heading west to the Cabinets!

To find out more about Ethyl, google 'Ethyl the wandering grizzly' and you'll see numerous news articles about her!

Black bear rear-end. K.Paul



Bald eagle nest. Ninemile resident



Bald eagle. Ninemile resident



FUN TIMES AS ALWAYS! COMMUNITY AND WILDLIFE APPRECIATION POTLUCK

On July 19th we hosted our 5th Annual Community and Wildlife Appreciation Potluck at the Ninemile Community Center. It was a great day with perfect weather and delicious homemade food. After lunch we enjoyed a very informative and entertaining presentation on bears and how to use bear spray by Chuck Bartlebaugh. The Montana Natural History Center brought educational displays and offered fun activities for children. Several baskets filled with wonderful items were up for grabs at the silent auction and the winner of the raffle for the black powder rifle was announced.

We would like to thank everybody who joined us and the businesses who donated for the auction: Bernice's Bakery, Black Cat Bake Shop, Black Coffee Roasting Company, Caras Nursery, Empyrean, Grizzly Liquor, Hide & Sole, HinduHillbilly, Imagination Station, Juan de Santa Anna photography, Lake Missoula Tea Co, Mike Albans photography, Murdoch's, Native Ideals Seed Farm, Pink Grizzly Nursery, Posh Chocolat, Raven Ridge Fiber Arts, River Edge Resort, Rivulet Apiaries, Rockin Rudy's, Rustic Charm Jewelry, Sue Spanke, the Empanada Joint, the Good Food Store, the Silk Road, Wooden Images, and Your Energy Fix. Your support is greatly appreciated.



ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY CLEANUP - Or, How Really Nice People Clean up Others' Trash...and Find Critters

Eleven volunteers from the Nine Mile area met at Dale and Kandy Chiks' home this past June to clean up our adopted 2 miles of Highway 10. We didn't pick up last year as they were working on the road but still the road was relatively clean and it went pretty quickly and allowed us to be extra thorough. The road had quite a bit of recycled interstate added to the surface making a very thick base which probably won't need any surface work for a long time to come.

As we're all lovers of wildlife, a treat was finding a beer can in current use as a refuge by a snake, an eastern racer. A slender, rather long snake, it filled the entire can. It quickly moved on and away after we humans cut open the can and releasing it.

Special thanks to Dale and Kandy for again supplying some treats and running the event. Thanks also to Mick and Gerry Hines, Rod and Lynn Kruckenburg, Chris and Jeanie Siegler, Rickie van Berkum, and Pat and Sharon Sweeney who gave up a little sweat equity to make the roadside a bit more aesthetic and safer for wildlife (although we did remove possible snake hiding places!).



NINEMILE WILDLIFE WORKGROUP

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www.facebook.com/ninemilewildlife



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Please consider supporting our organization so we can continue our mission! Tax-deductible donations can be sent to the Ninemile Wildlife Workgroup! Please fill out this section and mail it with your donation to:

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