

# Montana Family Forest News



## Wildlife in our Forests



# Wildlife in Your Forest

*Front cover, Peter Kolb (PhD)*

*MSU Extension Forestry Specialist*

50+ years of living in a rural forested setting has provided me with many wildlife encounters, some of which I have been able to capture on camera. A 1/2 acre pond in a relatively dry forested landscape is the most lucrative attraction and is frequented by species such as those pictured on the cover including the golden eagle, several moose of which a particular cow has now raised two sets of twins, one of which has turned into a large bull, and probably over the years a dozen different black bears, some of which were very shy and a few more brazen. Two or three whitetail does like to have their fawns in the riparian strip just below the pond that is attractive to the occasional cougar or bobcat that we rarely see, but capture on our stealth camera from time to time. Last but not least are the ever present pine squirrels (also called red squirrels). They are native to the northern Rockies and prolific reproducers. About mid-summer the immature youngers cause local population explosions that native predators such as raptors, weasels and martens cannot keep up with, and these omnivores get into everything, including the insulation of wires of your vehicles, or eating the eggs and young of local finches and songbirds. There are not restrictions to hunting or shooting them in Montana and thus sometimes I have found human assisted population control around the house might be warranted.

Forests provide the habitat for thousands of creatures, most of which we never see. Some, like the golden eagle may be only infrequent visitors, whereas others such as the diminutive black-capped chickadee may spend their entire lives in our 10 acre parcel. What we do or don't do determines who will visit and who will spend much of their time on our property. Cover, food, denning or nesting sties, and disruption from us are the keys to attracting or discouraging the many native and exotic species we are blessed with across Montana forests. During my 50 years living in forested settings I have found wildlife to be very versatile and capable of adjusting

to our presence. A lot, however, depends on how we choose to interact with them. Attempting to tame wild animals always ends badly for the animal. Consistent behavior from us is the most important key to developing cohabitation rules of engagement with wildlife in my opinion. If you start to feed birds during the winter, you are creating a dependency and are thus obligated to feed for the duration. We feed sunflower seeds because we try to enhance our local overwintering bird population. Some wildlife biologists consider this a bad practice. Suddenly stopping feeding might result in your local flock starving. If you encourage bears by providing easy food sources, or do not discourage them from enjoying your immediate home area, you can expect to see them often, and sometimes in close encounters. Most wildlife learns to avoid unpleasant encounters. They also don't ever love you like a domestic dog or cat might, but can learn to tolerate you. How you act trains them in how they act towards you. In general if you avoid eye contact, they will not perceive you as a threat. Animals communicate by body posturing—learn what is perceived as a threat, intimidation or fear. Like humans, animals have individual personalities, where one may be quite mellow, and another in a perpetual bad mood. On our 20 acres that several bears and moose visit as well as our local deer and wild turkeys, critters know that the area right around our house is our space because our trained dogs (or rarely a well placed egg sized rock bounced off their backside) will make life uncomfortable for them. Alternatively, 100-200 yards away, we yield to them. Over the years they have learned what to expect, as have we and although we see them often, rarely have any negative encounters with them. Still, we are always cautious, pay attention to their signals to us, and carry pepper spray for that one day when they are in a bad mood.

# From the Editor's Desk

This newsletter is possible through funding from the Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA). It highlights numerous articles focused on information and resources that forest landowners can use to better their knowledge and potentially implement on their own land. The overall concept is to provide articles that capture one's attention based on current issues and updates on various organizations on a state and national level. Our goal is to provide articles that will give important information and encourage landowners to develop new ideas towards their land. If you wish to view the full color version of this newsletter and for additional articles such as landowner spotlights please go to our website at <http://www.msuextension.org/forestry/publications.htm>.

Warm regards,  
Christina Oppegard

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## 2018 Calendar of Workshops and Events

| Workshop/Events                      | Date              | Location                     | Information   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|---|
| MT Forest Landowners Conference      | April 27          | Helena                       | <a href="http://mtlandowners.com/">http://mtlandowners.com/</a> |
| Ties to the Land                     | April 28          |                              |   |
| Forest Stewardship for Professionals | April 9-11        | Lubrecht Forest              |   |
| Forest Stewardship                   | May 3-4 & 11      | Lubrecht Forest              | Register by April 20th  |
| Forest Stewardship                   | May 31-June 1 & 8 | Red Lodge                    | Register by May 18th  |
| Forest Stewardship                   | June 21-22 & 29   | Bozeman                      | Register by June 8th  |
| Forest Stewardship                   | July 19-20 & 27   | Columbia Falls               | Register by July 6th  |
| Forest Stewardship                   | August 9-10 & 17  | Helena                       | Register by July 27th   |
| Forestry Mini-College                | Spring 2019       | Missoula                     |   |
| MT Natural Resource Youth Camp       | July 15-20        | Lubrecht Experimental Forest | <a href="http://www.mnryc.org">www.mnryc.org</a>                |
| Master Forest Steward                | TBA               | TBA                          |   |
| Project Learning Tree                | TBA               | TBA                          |   |

Registration information: <http://www.msuextension.org/forestrynew/calendar.html>

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## 2018-Where Do We Go From Here?

*By Allen Chrisman, Montana Tree Farm Chair*

At this time last year, I was looking forward to the Certification Assessment that would be completed for Montana Tree Farm in 2017. We had just contracted with our first ever Part Time Administrator, Elizabeth Richardson, to handle some of the paperwork to relieve our Volunteer Staff and help us focus on service to Montana Tree Farmers. We were also poised to implement a Membership Fee schedule that would both help fund that Part Time Administrator as well as cover the costs that would be assessed by National to help offset the costs of Third Party Certification, something we committed to when we decided to remain a Certified Sustainable Tree Farm Program.

As our Part Time Administrator, Elizabeth worked out great. She was able to help Angela with a lot of the clerical work, especially with the Certification Assessment. Elizabeth moved on to another employment opportunity in 2018, and we thank her for her service and wish her luck in her new venture. With that, we had a wonderful field of applicants for our Part Time Administrator vacancy, and selected Bonnie Yahvah Simpson from Libby. Bonnie comes to us with service in the military, experience as owner and manager of the Montana Athletic Club in Libby, and over 40 years in a Tree Farm family.

The results of the Certification Assessment were excellent for Montana. Thanks to Angela for leading the Assessment, and to the Inspectors and Tree Farmers who participated. We should all be proud of their efforts, and their contribution to Montana Tree Farm and the American Tree Farm System. A Certification Assessment by PricewaterhouseCoopers is not a thing to be taken lightly. We are pleased that our documentation and processes at the state level passed muster, and that our Tree Farmers are current with the 2015 – 2020 Standards. Thank you all for your efforts!

As you may have noticed, you have not received a statement for Membership Fees. At our 2016 Annual Meeting, the membership approved the recommendation from the Montana Tree Farm Steering Committee to enact a \$30 per year Membership Fee for each Tree Farmer (not each Tree Farm). A portion of this would be to fund the Part Time Administrator, and \$10 of it would cover the Annual Assessment from National to help offset the costs of the Certification Assessment necessary to insure that we are Certified Sustainable.

In late summer 2017, National asked those States who were considering but had not implemented a Membership Fee to pause in their implementation. National is reconsidering how best to cover the costs of the Certification Assessment, and they did not want States to overreact, impose membership fees, and lose Tree Farmers because of the cost. National wants to grow the number of Tree Farmers nationally, and does not want to lose Tree Farmers due to the cost of membership. We will be discussing the path forward for the American Tree Farm System at the National Leadership Conference in late January, and I will be on a panel to specifically address different options.

Montana finds itself in a slightly different position than some of our neighboring states. Oregon, for example, is able to solicit donations from a robust timber industry to cover their costs of Administration. The timber industry in Montana is very supportive of Montana Tree Farm through providing Inspectors and Steering Committee members, but does not necessarily have funds to subsidize the program. In addition, Industry would like Montana Tree Farmers to contribute to their own program, and I think that is reasonable. We all know that when you get something for nothing, that you may begin to take that value for granted over time. Conversely, if you are earning your way and contributing, you

can rightly take pride in an organization that you have helped build. Our phone survey some two years ago also indicated that our membership would support a reasonable fee for the services and certification received.

At this time, I do expect we will continue to implement a membership fee beginning in January, 2019. The amount may be adjusted based on what National decides to do with the Assessment fees. And if National comes up with other options for continued participation by Tree Farmers in the American Tree Farm System short of Certification, we will consider that and how we can work it into our State Program. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me.

I want to highlight our ongoing efforts to reach Tree Farmers through our Facebook page (search “Montana Tree Farm Program” on Facebook) and our website: <https://www.treefarmssystem.org/about-montana-tree-farm-program>. I know social media is not the first method of communication that Montana Tree Farmers use. However, even we “Old Dogs” can use these venues to find out information and connect to others. Give it a try, and let us know how it works for you!

Volunteerism: Our Montana Tree Farm Program runs on volunteers. With the exception of our Part Time Administrator position, we are all volunteers. And we are always looking for more members to step up and show interest. Like any other volunteer organization, we are stronger when we have more hands pitching in. And while we get great support from both Industry and our Cooperating Agencies (Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Montana Extension Forestry, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service), we need the strong voice from Tree Farmers themselves. Please contact me or another member of the Steering Committee to find out what you can do to help our organization reach more landowners and help them manage their land sustainably. Thank you for your commitment to Montana Tree Farm!

### **Steering Committee Members**

|            |                   |        |                |
|------------|-------------------|--------|----------------|
| Chair      | Allen Chriman     | Member | Debra Foley    |
| Vice Chair | Jared Richardson  | Member | Chris Town     |
| Treasurer  | Gary Johnson      | Member | Jim Watson     |
| Secretary  | Bonnie Simpson    | Member | Peter Pocius   |
| Past Chair | Angela Wells      | Member | Cindy Peterson |
| Member     | Mark Boardman     | Member | Joe Moran      |
| Member     | Mike Christianson | Member | Pat Mandzak    |
| Member     | James Costamanga  | Member | Ed Levert      |

# A Firewood Shelter for Serious Wood Burners

By Steve Arno, Montana Tree Farm

After 42 years of heating with woodstoves, and struggling in winter 2016-2017 to access snowed-in wood stacks I decided to build a firewood shelter. This winter, access to our wood piles has been easy thanks to the shelter designed and constructed with considerable help from my son Nathan.

Our family forest is primarily ponderosa pine, and most of the wood we've heated with over the years is "seasoned green ponderosa." Many neighbors shun ponderosa as a heating source, however it is widely used in South Dakota, New Mexico, and northern Arizona. We've found that it burns well and clean by early winter provided it is split, stacked exposed to open air, and covered on top by June. Our firewood shelter is designed to meet those requirements, and it works well for pre-seasoned firewood too.

Our shelter holds three tandem rows (bunks) of firewood twenty-four feet long and six feet high. We cut most wood in 20-inch lengths, and each bunk contains about three cords. Other woodstove owners could use a similar design to build a different size shelter to meet their needs. Our shelter is constructed of rough-cut, full-dimension Douglas-fir lumber. Nine 6x6-inch posts bolted to a steel plate sunk into a concrete footing are arranged in 3 rows. These support a 22x28-foot steel roof that has two-foot eaves on all sides (see accompanying photos). Three 28-foot beams made



from paired 2x10-inch planks are bolted to notches atop each row of

posts through a "T" of plate steel. The plates help anchor the shelter against high winds. Twenty-two-foot-long, 2x8-inch joists are secured atop the beams at two-foot intervals with the steel hangers called hurricane clips sold at building centers. Clips accommodating full dimension-size joists may need to be ordered.

We screwed panels of steel roofing to 1x4-inch board purlins nailed at two-foot intervals atop the joists. To stiffen the structure, diagonal corner braces of 1x6-inch boards secure the beams to the upper part of the posts. Firewood is stacked in tandem rows, each row supported on both ends and in the middle by a 2x6-inch backstop board as shown in the photos. Two three-foot isles between the three bunks allow aeration to all the wood and provide snow-free access. We gather each day's wood by entering an isle with a wheelbarrow, free from falling snow or rain and the drudgery of digging wood out of a snow pile.







# American Tree Farm System National Leadership Conference Albuquerque, New Mexico January 31 – February 2, 2018

*By Allen Chrisman, Chair, Montana Tree Farm System*



Albuquerque, New Mexico, was the site of the 2018 American Tree Farm System National Leadership Conference. Montana Tree Farm Chair Allen Chrisman, Vice Chair Jared Richardson, and Past Chair Angela Wells were all fortunate enough to be able to attend this excellent conference.

The Conference opened with Plenary Sessions and Breakouts designed to create discussion about the future of the American Tree Farm System and how to continue to grow the program. The Inspectors of the Year from each Region were awarded, as well as the National Inspector of the Year. The National Outstanding Tree Farmers of the Year, the Rileys from Alabama, were recognized. The National Leadership Award went to George Kessler from South Carolina. George has been a leader in the South Carolina Tree Farm Program for decades. Since our nomination of Angela Wells was not selected, it was reassuring to see the Award go to someone who indeed deserved it.

Angela led a Breakout Session to discuss how to make partnerships effective and productive. She also participated in a Panel during the Friday Plenary Session to discuss the Conservation Initiatives in Montana and what Montana DNRC has learned during their implementation. Allen participated in a Panel during the Wednesday Plenary Session to discuss Opportunities for Change. Both Panels and the Breakout Session were effective and well-received.

At the end of the session American Forest Foundation CEO Tom Martin announced that the 2019 National Leadership Conference will be held in Louisville, Kentucky, February 26 through February 28, 2019. We are always looking for new Steering Committee members to attend the NLC. Let us know if you are interested!

## DENNIS SWIFT MEMORIAL Tree Farm Inspector Recognition Award

Each year the Montana Tree Farm System recognizes the top Tree Farm Inspectors at the annual state tree farm meeting. These inspectors along with the many other Montana Tree Farm Inspectors volunteer their time, equipment and vehicle use in promoting the Tree Farm System through their certification and inspection activity.

Are you willing to support Montana Tree Farm Inspectors by contributing to the Dennis Swift Inspector Recognition Award?

**YES**, I would like to show my support in recognizing the importance of our Montana Tree Farm Inspectors in promoting the Tree Farm Program by contributing to the Dennis Swift Inspector Recognition Award:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Please make your check payable to Montana Tree Farm System and return it with this slip to:

**Montana Tree Farm System, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 17276**

**Missoula, MT 59808-7276**

The Montana Tree Farm System is a 501 (C) (3) Organization



# Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship

Each year the Montana Tree Farm System recognizes a college student with an interest in forestry and a resident of Montana with a monetary scholarship. At the 2017 Montana Annual Meeting, the membership unanimously approved a recommendation from the Montana Tree Farm Steering Committee to name the scholarship the Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship after long time Tree Farm member Mary Naegeli.

Mary passed away on January 5, 2017 after a very active farming and forest management career. Mary Leuck and Don Naegeli were married on May 8, 1954. For the next 43 years—until Don passed away—they raised cattle and learned how to wisely manage their forestlands to protect water and maintain quality wildlife habitat at the same time in true multiple-use fashion.

There was no greater advocate for managing forest resources than Mary. In 1967 the ranch was enrolled in the American Tree Farm System which was administered throughout the western United States by the Western Wood Products Association.

Over the years, through carefully planned pre-commercial and commercial thinning operations, the Naegeli Tree Farm has produced hundreds of thousands of board feet of logs, hundreds of posts and poles and hundreds of cords of firewood used to heat the family home and outbuildings.

Mary was undoubtedly one of, if not *the*, most active and vocal proponents of the Tree Farm Program in Sanders County. In addition, she was an active member of the Whitepine Grange, the Green Mountain Soil Conservation District, served as a 4-H leader and was a pioneer in the Montana Forest Stewardship Program.

The Naegelis were named Montana Tree Farmers of the Year in 1982 and later as Tree Farmers of the Year for the entire Western Region in 1983. In recognition of her longtime service, Mary was honored in 2006 with Montana Tree Farm's Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Naegeli Ranch and Tree Farm is currently managed by son Bill Naegeli who remains dedicated to managing the resources passed on to him using the same basic principles learned from his parents.

Education and the scholarship were very important to both Don and Mary. We believe this Scholarship is a good way to honor their efforts and their memory.



## Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship

MT Tree Farm offers a \$500 scholarship annually to a resident of Montana enrolled (for the first time) or attending any accredited institution of higher education, on a full time basis, have a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or above, and must demonstrate an interest in forestry.

**Applicants must have a Tree Farmer or a Tree Farm Inspector as a reference.** Perhaps you know someone who qualifies for this scholarship. If so, please let them know about this great opportunity.

Contact Cindy Peterson at 406-243-4706 or [cindy.peterson@cfc.umt.edu](mailto:cindy.peterson@cfc.umt.edu) to be connected with one. For more information and how to apply go to: <http://www.mttreefarm.org/about-us/scholarship.html> application are due April 1, 2018.

The objective of this scholarship is to help a student with an interest in forestry and also to provide information to students about Tree Farm and the family forests of Montana. Making a connection between future foresters and land managers can lead to the development of long term personal and professional relationships.

# Jeremy Gillin - 2017 Montana Tree Farm Mary Naegeli Memorial Scholarship Recipient

By Cindy Peterson, MSU Extension Forestry



Jeremy Gillin was the recipient of the 2017 \$500 Tree Farm Scholarship. Jeremy is a senior in the W. A. Franke College of Forestry at the University of Montana. He will graduate in May of 2018 with a bachelor's degree in Forest Resource Management.

Coming from, “the concrete jungle” of Dallas Texas Jeremy has, “been astonished at all the incredibly large green trees that flourish in Montana. Hiking on trails in the forest exposed me to a wonderful serenity, and the idea of a profession came into focus. I began to learn about all the different types of trees in Dendrology (class), and the distinguished patterns that make up the ecology in a forest. How to manage forested lands respectfully and sustainably, while including ownership objectives. Trees don't just grow and produce oxygen, they provide soil stability, wildlife cover, recreational experiences, produce merchantable timber products, provide filtration for water, and much more.”

Jeremy realizes the importance and contributions of private forests and has an interest in working with the owners. “During my many explorations, I have seen numerous signs of “Certified Tree Farm. I know now how much pride they take for the care and management of their land. The landowner's interaction with the property they own, can and will provide a lasting set of values for generations. There are improvements to consider as new issues arise and learning of how a forest community can persist.”

“My explorations to the forest, usually begin with the views of private lands. Noticeable degradation conditions persist amongst most of these forested lands, restricting their capabilities. I would share my knowledge to the landowner, how to practice sustainable forest management, and if they desire create a plan to meet their objectives. A specific concern, is how to correctly manage a functioning farm capable of producing timber logs while providing aesthetic pleasing and good environmental practices. A healthy functioning forest ecosystem also limits soil erosion and act as a filter for water, providing cleaner drinking water for mammals, birds, and other animals. The preparation and proper thinning amongst their assets, could allow for their persistence for generations after a disturbance.”

Congratulations Jeremy and best wishes in your endeavors, studies, and career.



# Five-Minute Facts for Tree Farm Inspectors

## Keys to Re-Inspection Excellence

*By Angela Wells, Montana Tree Farm Certification Coordinator*

Each time I attend a Tree Farm National Leadership Conference, I am reminded that Montana's inspectors are the heart and soul of our certification program. Montana is one of the few states that regularly completes all its sample re-inspections, and other states often ask me how we do it.

This year, our inspectors will collectively tackle 80 inspections around the state, which amounts to about 15% of our total membership. The following factors are key to our re-inspection success:

### **Montana's Inspector Corps is Right-Sized**

Montana maintains a roster of between 40 and 50 inspectors for its more than 500 Tree Farms. In my tenure certification coordinator, our yearly re-inspection load has ranged from 65-85, meaning that if I were to dole out re-inspection assignments in a perfectly equitable fashion, no one inspector would do more than two per year. The reality is a bit more complicated, as I try to honor existing relationships between members and the inspectors who recruited them to the program by assigning re-inspections to those inspectors year after year. However, with the current number of Tree Farms in the Montana system and the number of foresters in the inspector corps, each inspector can count on being given an assignment at least once every two years. This strategy helps inspectors keep their qualifications current and spreads the burden between multiple individuals, while ensuring that all our members get a visit at least once every 6 years.

### **Montana's Inspector Corps is Diversified**

Montana's Inspector Corps comprises DNRC service foresters, MSU Extension Forestry Stewardship Workshop advisors, industry foresters, private forestry consultants, and volunteers. Our bench is deep, and the varying backgrounds of inspectors allow us to match them more appropriately with landowners. An example of this is Montana Tree Farm's effort to connect landowners who are interested in doing a timber harvest with inspectors who have specific knowledge of this process, or assigning re-inspections of smaller properties to service foresters or volunteer inspectors who can only dedicate a few hours to their visits. We also rely heavily on efficiencies gained through our partnership with the Stewardship Workshop Program to co-schedule re-inspections and stewardship reverifications for those landowners that made their way to the Tree Farm program via a stewardship workshop. This partnership and our diverse inspector corps allow us to avoid placing undue burden on any one sector, in contrast to states that rely exclusively on agency or industry foresters to complete all their inspections.

### **Inspector Qualifications Aren't Just for Decoration**

While Montana Tree Farm is glad to offer Inspector Training to anyone seeking to keep their certified forester credential current or their resume shiny, our expectation is that trained inspectors will do inspections. My policy as certification coordinator is that anyone who is trained as an inspector will get an inspection assignment at least every two years. This helps inspectors keep their skills fresh and keeps their training current. In practice, I find that most inspectors are eager for an assignment and look forward to the opportunity to connect with landowners. As we prepare for the roll-out of the new Tree Farm Standards of Certification in 2020 keep in mind that we will most likely not offer additional inspector trainings in 2019, as the current standards will expire at the end of next year.

## All Inspections are Required Inspections

While technically the American Tree Farm System divides our yearly inspection sample into categories of “required” and optional inspections, Montana’s Tree Farm program treats all inspections as mandatory. A 2015 survey of members revealed that re-inspection visits with are one of the top reasons for membership in the Tree Farm program. By treating all national sample inspections as mandatory, we ensure that we are providing an inspector visit to our members at least once every 6 years. To achieve this, we strive to release re-inspection assignments early in the year and set a due date of September 1<sup>st</sup> to ensure a cushion of time to re-assign any unfinished inspections before the national deadline of December 1. We also use the \$100 inspector incentive paid to us by National for completion of each required inspection to offer non-monetary gifts of appreciation to our inspector team.

### “Backlog” is a Four-Letter Word

Inevitably, there are a handful of inspections that don’t get completed in their assigned year. The reasons are varied but typically fall into one of three categories: unavailability of landowners, missing management plans, or conflicts such as fire season that prevent an inspector from making a visit. These inspections go into our backlog for the upcoming year and we deal with them as a top priority in one of several ways. Landowners who are unable to schedule a re-inspection in their assigned year are asked to do so in the following year. Landowners who are unable to produce a plan are moved from “certified” status to “pioneer” status for the following year. If a landowner is unable to make meaningful movement toward scheduling a re-inspection or producing a plan after a year on the backlog list, he or she is removed from the program with the option to re-enroll at any time provided the criteria are satisfied. Re-inspections that are backlogged due to inspector unavailability are moved to the top of that inspector’s priority list, or are re-assigned altogether. In this way, the Montana Tree Farm program is able to stay current with visits to more than 500 Tree Farms on a six-year re-inspection cycle, no small feat for a program of our size.

I cannot emphasize enough how important Montana’s inspectors are to our state program. Each time I have a chance to share our successes on the national stage, I am mindful of the fact that the talent, diversity, and alacrity of our inspectors is not to be taken for granted. We are highly dependent on a strong timber industry, tax-payer support of natural resource agencies, and the goodwill of volunteers around the state to make this program run.

## We want you... and your nominations!



The Montana Tree Farm committee is looking for nominations for Tree Farmer, Educator, and Logger of the Year. Nomination forms can be found at [www.treefarmssystem.org/montana](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/montana) in the "Awards" section.

Please contact Mark Boardman at 406- 892-7014 or [mboardman@stoltzelumber.com](mailto:mboardman@stoltzelumber.com) for more information.

Nominations are due by July 27<sup>th</sup> 2018.

Image credit: [https://corrwnons.wikimed ia.org/wiki/File:Uncle\\_Sam\\_9628pointing\\_finger%29.jpg](https://corrwnons.wikimed ia.org/wiki/File:Uncle_Sam_9628pointing_finger%29.jpg)

# Presenting Paul Cockrell, 2017 Montana Tree Farmer of the Year

By Angela Wells, Montana Tree Farm Inspector

If you ever have the occasion to visit the 2017 Tree Farmer of the Year, you can expect to encounter one of Montana's hardest-working individuals. Most likely, he'll be covered in sawdust from one of his many pre-commercial thinning projects (he does all the work himself). Almost certainly, he'll be able to out-hike you up and down slopes of some of the Blackfoot River drainage's most rugged terrain. Inevitably, you'll come away with a vision of how hard-used land can be restored under the patient and loving hand of a true forest steward.



*Paul Cockrell (left) receives his 2017 Tree Farmer of the Year Award from Mark Boardman and Angela Wells at the September Tree Farm Annual Meeting in Thompson Falls. Photo credit: Allen Chrisman.*

Paul Cockrell and his wife Diane purchased their property in 2008. Previously owned by the Plum Creek Timber Company and the Anaconda Company before that, it bears the signature of mixed uses including industrial timber extraction, homesteading activities, and a little bit of grazing. The timber, a mix of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir with a few lodgepole and larch scattered throughout, ranges in age from ten to 80 years. Two-thirds of the property is greater than 20% slope, and it contains no water features. It's a challenging piece of ground, as are many Montana properties in the Tree Farm System.

Paul came to the Tree Farm program by way of a 2011 Stewardship Workshop. In fact, "Look into the Tree Farm Program" was listed as one of the goals in his Forest Stewardship Plan. With that out of the way, Paul has thrown himself into achieving his other stated objectives. These include managing for forest health, addressing a significant weed problem left by previous owners, utilizing wood harvested from his property in every conceivable manner, improving conditions for resident wildlife (deer, elk, birds, and an intermittent population of bighorn sheep) and continue to enjoy the property for its recreational values.

One of Paul's most distinguishing characteristics as a model landowner is his resourcefulness in finding support to achieve his objectives. In his early days as a property owner this included assistance from the Missoula County Weed District and Bitterroot Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc. Most recently he has partnered with two adjacent property owners to develop a Forests in Focus project that buffers residences in the Blackfoot River corridor from potential impacts from severe wildfire. Wood harvested on Paul's property which is not suitable for pulp, milling, or burning in the wood stove often finds its way into his hand-crafted Adirondack chairs, which are a fixture at the Montana Tree Farm silent auction each year.

Paul is quiet but articulate in his knowledge of forest stewardship, a quality he displays when hosting groups of Stewardship Workshop participants on his Tree Farm. As a member of the Montana

Forest Stewardship Steering Committee he served as a scoring member for DNRC fuels reduction grant proposals for 3 years straight. He will take over as chair of MFSSC in the summer of 2018.

Paul has also represented the Tree Farm program twice in the third-party assessment process, most recently this past summer. Not surprisingly, as the assessment team made its way up the winding road to his Tree Farm, they encountered a certified weed-spraying contractor headed out after a day's work and, not far beyond, Paul himself. Sure enough, he was carrying a chainsaw, and he was covered in sawdust. As the assessment interview concluded and the team drove away the assessor wondered aloud if the whole scene was staged. We in the Montana Tree Farm program know that this is a standard day in the life of 2017 Tree Farmer of the Year Paul Cockrell, caring for his piece of Blackfoot Valley paradise the way he knows best.



## Montana Tree Farm's New Website

[www.treefarmssystem.org/montana](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/montana)

For current information on our program, how to become a member, opportunities for recognition, and upcoming events.

And, speaking of events

Save the Date

Montana Tree Farm Annual Meeting

September 29, 2018

Fair Grounds, Eureka, Montana

More details to follow in your personalized invitation this summer or visit

[www.treefarmssystem.org/montana](http://www.treefarmssystem.org/montana)



# The Gray Wolf Reintroduction-Landowner Impact

By Mike Christianson, MFOA President



This seems an opportune time to catch up on the gray wolf since it was reintroduced to the Northern Rocky Mountains in 1995. I have done my best to hit the high points of events over the past 22 years.

## The Plan

In 1987 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in cooperation with the Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Team released the “Northern Rocky Mountain Wolf Recovery Plan”. The primary goal of the plan was to” remove the Northern Rocky Mountain wolf from the endangered and threatened species list by securing and maintaining a minimum of ten breeding pairs of wolves in each of the three recovery areas for a minimum of three successive years.” The three recovery areas were northwest Montana, central Idaho, and the Greater Yellowstone Area. (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1987)

## The Reintroduction

The Wolf’s Recovery Plan reintroduction occurred in 1995 and 1996 (hereafter the “reintroduction”). The 1995 reintroduction released 14 wolves in Yellowstone National Park (YNP) and 15 wolves in central Idaho (that later migrated from Idaho to the Bitterroot Valley, Montana). In 1996 the reintroduction was completed with the release of 17 additional wolves in YNP and 20 wolves into central Idaho. (Prior to the reintroduction, there were 48 wolves in and around Glacier National Park (northwestern Montana) that had emigrated from Canada). (Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks).

## Population Increases, by numbers

Wolf population growth exceeded expectations. (Guercio, 2009) By 2002 the northern Rockies wolf population met the biological recovery criteria established by the USFWS. “Estimates of the wolf numbers at the end of 2002 were 284 wolves in the Central Idaho Recovery Area, 271 in

the Great Yellowstone Recovery Area, and 108 in the Northwest Montana Recovery Area for a total of 663. By state boundaries, there were an estimated 263 wolves in the state of Idaho, 217 in Wyoming and 183 in Montana...Of approximately 80 groups of two or more wolves, 43 met the definition of “breeding pair,” an adult male and female raising two or more pups until December 31. This made 2002 the third year in which 30 or more breeding pairs were documented within the three-state area. Recovery criteria have been met for removing these wolves from the Endangered Species List...” (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service et al., 2003)

By the end of 2005 “Estimates of wolf numbers...were 565 wolves in the Central Idaho Recovery Area..., 325 in the Greater Yellowstone Recovery Area..., and 130 in the Northwest Montana Recovery Area... for a total of 1,020 wolves...By state boundaries, there were an estimated 512 wolves in the state of Idaho, 252 in Wyoming and 256 in Montana. (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service et al., 2006)

By 2010 “A total of 108 verified packs of 2 or more wolves yielded a minimum count of 566 wolves in Montana. Thirty-five packs qualified as a breeding pair...” (Sime, 2011)

This rapid growth led to the first delisting (under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)) in 2002, which was postponed and also blocked by litigation for the next nine years. Delisting was ultimately achieved in 2011, through an act of Congress. “At the end of 2011, the Northern Rocky Mountain gray wolf population consisted of a minimum of 1,774 wolves and 109 breeding pairs, thus far exceeding the Service’s recovery goals”. (Defenders of Wildlife, Et Al., Appellees v. Ryan Zinke Et Al., Appellants, 2017) To remain delisted (under the ESA) in Montana, wolf population must not fall below 150 wolves or 15 breeding pair. (Montana Fish, 2011) By 2016 the Montana Fish, Wildlife &



Parks (FWP) confirmed a minimum of 447 wolves in Montana, 109 packs, and 50 breeding pair. (This high population followed the 2016 harvest of 255 wolves by hunting and trapping.) Thus, by the end of 2016, the Montana wolf population was more than three times the required minimum. (Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, 2017)

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) provided a \$50,000 grant in 2016 to FWP to assist in creating a reliable and streamlined method to count wolf population, with the hoped result of managing wolves in sustainable levels. The RMEF over the years contributed more than \$925,000 in grants to support proactive wolf management. (Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, 2014)

The FWP said “The focus will be on ensuring that Montana’s conservation and management program keeps the wolf off the federal endangered species list while pursuing a wolf population level **below current numbers** to manage impacts on game populations and livestock.” (Emphasis Added). (Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks)

### **Acrimony and Litigation**

Acrimony and litigation surrounded the reintroduction and is on-going. It seems there has been less media coverage of gray wolves in the recent months and years. Perhaps the lack of media coverage is due to lack of much new to report. As Aesop pointed out, how many times can one cry wolf? Proponents of reintroduction included several recognized organizations, including Defenders of Wildlife, Natural Resources Defense Council, Sierra Club, Center for Biological Diversity, Humane Society of the United States, Fund for Animals, and Earthjustice. (Earthjustice, 2017) Opponents of reintroduction included stock growers associations, ranching organizations and individual ranchers, outfitters and guide associations, and sporting organizations.

Litigation regarding the wolf has continued. See the recent 9<sup>th</sup> circuit case involving Wyoming listing, Defenders of the Wildlife v. Ryan Zinke, (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. March 3, 2017). (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service et al., 2014)

### **Livestock Losses**

The stock grower, farmer, and rancher (hereafter “producer”) bore a disproportionate and the largest economic burden from the reintroduction, with the majority of cattle and sheep depredations occurring on private lands. Depredation of livestock steadily increased since the reintroduction. (Steele, 2013) (Boyd D., 2017) Producers want to be left alone to raise their livestock and crops as their families have done for generations. (Herring, 2005) (Homefire Productions Montana PBS, 2007) The producers raised their concerns about the reintroduction but they were no match for the proponents.

The producer’s economic burden from the wolves at a minimum consists of three different costs (not considering the possible costs from elk, addressed below):

- The **killed livestock** (Steele, 2013)
- The **indirect costs** such as missing livestock, unconfirmed livestock losses, weight loss, additional illness and disease from stress, lower reproductive rates, loss of genetics, and time involved to verify losses (Bangs, 2006) (Steele, 2013) (Clark, 2017) (Howery, 2004) (Muhly, 2010)

The **proactive costs** incurred to prevent livestock losses such as costs to hire range managers and range riders/herders to stay or live with livestock to protect them; purchase, install, and move electric fences to more closely herd stock away from wolf dens; promptly remove carcasses killed by wolves to avoid attracting more wolves; purchase and train guard dogs; and purchase donkeys; and other costs to deter wolves. (Bangs, 2006) (Lance)

### **Killed Livestock**

There has been effort to appease the producers through “compensation” for their livestock killed by wolves. Defenders of Wildlife, a staunch proponent of reintroduction, to its credit, funded landowner reimbursement in substantial amounts for stock animals killed by wolves from 1987 to 2010. (Clifford, 2009) (I found no other non-profit organization that contributed substantial funds, though it is possible there were others.) The

State of Montana became involved with reimbursing landowners, with mixed success. The Legislature created the Livestock Loss Board (LLB) in 2007, 12 years after the reintroduction.

The LLB was established to address economic losses due to wolf predation. (Montana.gov, 2007) (Montana Livestock Board, 2016) The Board distributed significant sums for reimbursement for livestock kills (on a ratio of one to one). The majority of predation affected calves (Rashford, 2010) and one study concluded that producers of calves should receive compensation equal to **21 times the value of the killed calf.** (Steele, 2013)

### Indirect Costs

“Compensation for killed livestock does not reimburse producers for the indirect costs of wolf damage...” (Bangs, 2006) There was no reimbursement for indirect costs from the LLB, or from any other source that I could find.

### Proactive Costs

“Compensation for killed livestock does not reimburse producers for the proactive costs.” (Bangs, 2006) The LLB offers grants requiring a 50% cost share, with the burden on the producers to prove their costs of proactive management. Funding for loss prevention has been sporadic and limited. (Montana Livestock Board, 2016) (Livestock Loss Board, 2016) In 2016 the LLB funded six proactive grants totaling \$96,113. (Boyd D., 2017) (I found only the LLB as an entity offering reimbursement for proactive measures. There may be others that I did not find.)

The wolf team exerted extraordinary measures to prevent the loss of livestock. These measures included expending millions of dollars on collaring wolves to track their movements in order to come up with a plan (using expensive helicopters), training wolves to flee from cattle through rubber bullets, shock treatment (using back packs attached to cattle), and other diversions, moving troubled wolves, destroying wolf dens to encourage them to den and raise their offspring elsewhere, and lastly lethal means. I found no article expressing significant success with any of these. (Homefire Productions Montana PBS, 2007)

(Bangs, 2006) At some point the emphasis on treatment of wolves evolved into what producers might (and by inference should) proactively do to prevent losses from wolves. Producers implemented some of these proactive measures because they viewed them as necessary for economic survival. (Lance) (Bangs, 2006)

### The Elk Controversy

Some producers have asserted that the reintroduction created a fourth loss. They argue the reintroduction caused elk to change their migratory patterns and use of habitat. Thus, the predation risk from wolves resulted in elk seeking safety by spending more time on private lands, away from forests. This grouping on private lands resulted in damaged fencing, and trampling and eating crops. (Proffitt, 2009) (Muhly, 2010). There are studies supporting the producers’ concerns. (Knight, 2008) (Herring, 2005) (Laporte, 2010) (Fortin, 2005) (Hebblewhite, 2006)

Some of the outdoor community questioned whether the reintroduction of wolves resulted in the substantial reduction in elk population. The lower elk population resulted in economic harm to the outdoor industry, including hunters, professional guides, and the entire industry that supports hunting. (Dickson, 2002) Although there is clear evidence of reduced elk population, I found no study quantifying the extent to which the reintroduction was responsible. (Yellowstone Park Staff, 2007)

Only complete removal of either wolves or livestock will eliminate the potential for wolf depredation. (Bangs, 2006) Neither is likely. (Kellert, 1996)

It is difficult to write about the reintroduction 22 years ago as if it were over and done with. What do we have to show for it? We have a robust population of gray wolves, more than three times the minimum established through our laws, with the wolf removed from the Endangered Species List. The burden on the producer is not solved. “Compensation only mitigates for damage and does not provide incentive for allowing wolves to be present.” (Bangs, 2006) Compensation for a killed animal helps; but where is the compensation

for the indirect losses and the proactive measures to make the producers whole? High rates of predation can threaten the long-term viability of western ranches. (Rashford, 2010) The irony is the producers are true stewards of the land, producing and sustaining the open land, pastures and forests for not only livestock but for all wildlife. The producers end up competing with the reintroduced wolf for the very land they have worked so hard to support.

The reintroduction is viewed both positively and negatively. Some have had the opportunity to enjoy the wolves and even manage their forests to attract wolves. And then there are the producers and outdoor industry members. Each view deserves respect.

## About the Author

Mike Christianson is President of the Montana Forest Owners Association (MFOA) [www.montanaforestowners.org](http://www.montanaforestowners.org). MFOA is a Montana non-profit corporation formed in 1995. Its purpose is to protect and support the rights of non-industrial private forest owners (which include producers on forest lands). He is not a specialist on the wolf reintroduction. He gleaned the information in this article from reading many publications. There is no warranty as to the accuracy of its content. Your comments are welcome. [info@montanaforestowners.org](mailto:info@montanaforestowners.org)

Bibliography for the articles is on page 30



## THE 2018 FOREST STEWARDSHIP WORKSHOP SCHEDULE



“It’s really wonderful to contemplate the positive impact active management can have on not only the health and beauty of the forest and wildlife, but on our own enjoyment, appreciation and satisfaction.”

John Wells, participant and family forest owner



Sponsorship: USFS and MT DNR

### What will I learn?

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July 19-20 & 27 **Columbia Falls**

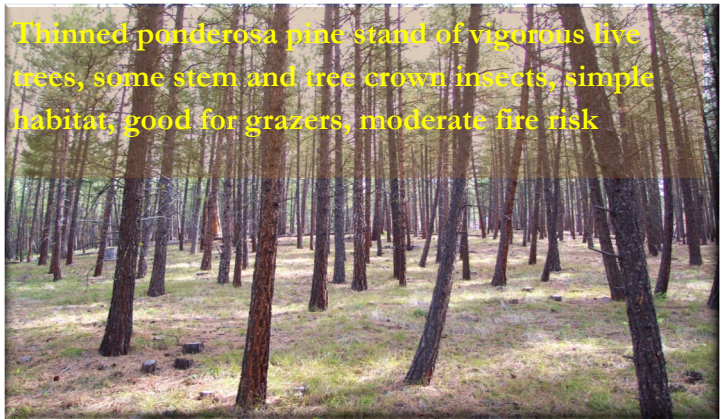
August 9-10 & 17 **Helena**

# Managing Forest Structure and Woody Debris for Wildlife

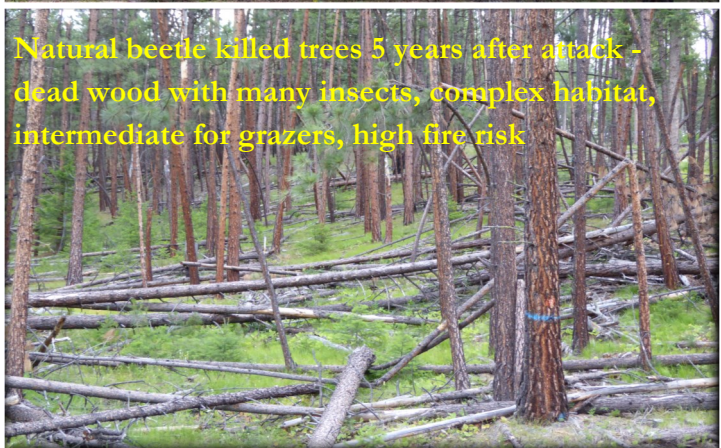
*Peter Kolb, MSU Extension Forestry Specialist*

The common axiom: “diverse habitat allows for diverse wildlife” is one that is fairly intuitive, however, there is also a personal favorite saying that states: “multi-tasking can mean doing everything equally poorly”. Providing the right habitat for wildlife requires not only understanding what species you are trying to attract or provide for, but also at what landscape scale particular species prefer to live and travel across. Consider the difference between the diminutive hummingbird and the much larger raven. We all know that hummingbirds are pretty happy to spend most of their summer months hanging around a pretty small area that has a quality and consistent food source, and raising young in that same space. Yet when temperatures drop, they are capable of traveling 100’s to 1000’s of miles to a warmer overwintering spot. The raven on the other hand, by its very nature needs to be on the move over several thousand or more acres, even when there is a consistent food source such as road kills within a small stretch of highway. They are simply curious birds with a broad home territory. Though they are very capable of traveling great distances such as the hummingbird, they tend to form attachments to specific valleys or river drainages that they may rarely leave. Some species need to be on the move, whereas others are capable of travel, but also happy to stay local if their needs such as food and denning sites are met.

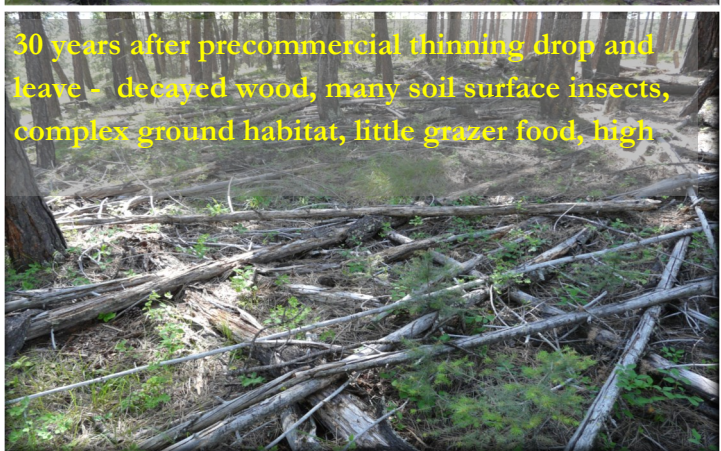
Forests and their inhabitants have existed long before humans had any impact on them, and thus wildlife species have co-evolved with many different configurations of tree species, local climates, disturbance patterns and other wildlife species. They also have their preferences both as a species and as individuals. As we learn more about the impacts of forest management on different wildlife species, it has also become evident that some wildlife species are very adaptable to the human presence and management actions, and others are not. The later group typically falls into



Thinned ponderosa pine stand of vigorous live trees, some stem and tree crown insects, simple habitat, good for grazers, moderate fire risk



Natural beetle killed trees 5 years after attack - dead wood with many insects, complex habitat, intermediate for grazers, high fire risk



30 years after precommercial thinning drop and leave - decayed wood, many soil surface insects, complex ground habitat, little grazer food, high

Picture 1. All forests go through various phases from young to old, vigorously growing to insect and disease killed, and potentially burned. Each phase has its own advantages and risks to certain vegetation as well as wildlife species. Pictured above are not healthy versus unhealthy forests, but simply forests in different phases that are each habitat for different specific wildlife species. Each also has different potential tree growth rates and risk potential from wildfires. For diverse wildlife the key landscape question is how much of each phase exists, in what patch shape and size, and how does this patchwork meet the risk/benefit criteria of the landowner and surrounding community.



Picture 2. Woody debris is most valuable when it accumulates in different configurations. Suspended logs keep some wildlife off the ground where it is vulnerable such as young birds including the fledgling horned owl (A). Dense patches of trees with irregular surface debris is a favorite resting and fawning spot for both whitetail and mule deer (B). All species of grouse prefer logs to roost and drum on during mating season such as the lower elevation Roughleg grouse (C).



Picture 3. One of only a few native salamanders, the long toed salamander needs open water to reproduce, but as an adult is found in all forest types under punky wood, logs and in rodent burrows. It may take 100+ years to create an old large punky log pictured above, though there are techniques where such a log can be simulated by piling groups of smaller logs.

the threatened and endangered class, especially when our actions alter the habitat that they specifically need. These changes may include altering certain forest structures such as woody debris, tree species density or composition, introducing domestic animals (probably one of the biggest changes), noise, the enhancement of certain native wildlife species, and the introduction of weeds. With this awareness, managing forests for our use as well as wildlife means managing to emulate natural patterns and processes that wildlife need in coordination with fire hazard reduction and forest products that people need. Across the diverse ecology of the northern Rockies this is a complex task, but one that private forest landowners might be better suited to provide than other landowners that manage lands at a larger scale. Often private landowners are not as constrained by the need to maximize profit from forests as are industrial forests, or by the many political agendas that face public lands. Being willing to spend time and personal resources to manage for and improve micro habitat can pay back big returns such as providing and maintaining bird nest boxes (clean them out every year), bat houses, specific woody debris structures (make new ones periodically), localized water sources (water troughs need an escape board so critters can get out), and specific forest stand configurations (dense complex patches) that can also be protected from wildfires.

Private forest stewardship goes well beyond managing a forest for maximum tree growth or tree health, but for many landowners has evolved to managing for functional ecosystems that includes experimenting with different techniques and monitoring how effective they are. Dead trees and woody debris are two forest components that are perceived differently today than even 10 years ago. Of greatest concern is the contribution of woody debris towards wildfire risk. Alternatively, woody debris is also valued for its contribution to wildlife habitat, water quality and soil properties. The Montana Slash Hazard Fuel Reduction Act requires that fuels generated by forestry work are treated to keep flame lengths below 4 feet in the event of a wildfire during a standard bad fire day—which is basically during hot dry weather following several weeks without rainfall. Any woody debris must be

minimized so that it does not accumulate over treatment areas to depth higher than 24 inches, or within 100 feet of property boundaries, houses or any other infrastructure. However, the law specifically offers an exception for wildlife as stated:

(a) Sufficient slash may be retained for the purposes of soil nutrient recycling, wildlife habitat and control of surface water runoff.

(b) This may include slash broadcast over the timber harvest unit and skid trails; concentrated slash in the form of slash filter windrows and other appropriate surface water runoff controls as defined by the Montana best management practices; and designated piles for wildlife habitat. Any such designated wildlife pile shall not be placed within 100 feet of a residence, property line, road with legal public access or active railroad right-of-way.

(c) The slash inspector shall recognize such beneficial and legitimate uses of slash and shall discount such slash from the general standard during the hazard assessment inspection.

Where and how woody debris is distributed will depend on what wildlife species you are trying to provide



#### **Fine woody debris pile with side overhangs:**

**Wildlife:** many smaller bird species, grouse, turkeys, rabbits, squirrels, small to medium sized predators (weasels to bobcats).

**Longevity:** about 10-15 years before snow compacts pile.

**Soils effect:** high inner bark to wood ratio offers good nutrient cycling, minor soil heating impacts when burned.

**Fire risk:** easily ignited, flames lengths can be 3x pile height.

**Prescribed burning:** dries out quickly, relatively easy to burn in winter or spring, short duration fire—4-8 hours, can extinguish with water, active coals 12-20 hours depending on pile size.



#### **Coarse woody debris piles, loose random stacking:**

**Wildlife:** mice and voles, amphibians (salamanders), toads, squirrels, rabbits and hares, small predators (martens, weasels).

**Longevity:** 50+ years.

**Soils effect:** low inner bark to wood ratio offers very poor nutrient cycling, fungi may rob surrounding soil of nitrogen to digest wood, eventual soil moisture reservoir as wood decays.

**Fire risk:** moderate to difficult to ignite, flames lengths can be 2x pile height after prolonged drought, usually supports smoldering fire

**Prescribed burning:** dries out slowly, best to burn in fall, may need accelerant to ignite. Burn time 24 – 96 hours. Hard to extinguish



for, and what fits best within your forest management plan and forest ecology. Wetter Douglas-fir, grand fir, subalpine fir, cedar-hemlock and in some cases lodgepole pine forests naturally had periodic woody debris accumulations and thus have wildlife species adapted to take advantage of such situations. Dry Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine forests historically burned more frequently and on average did not support more than a few isolated woody debris accumulations from fallen over trees, or patches of tree mortality.

The location of woody debris piles can also be important. Piles that are to be burned should be in open spaces at least 20 feet from live trees. Wildlife piles may get more use if they are located in close proximity to trees or clumps of trees. This needs to be done with recognition that if a wildfire occurs, the trees near such piles will most likely be killed by the heat from burning piles.

Where, how big, and the distribution of woody debris should be decided upon with the same consideration that live tree densities, species and patch sizes are planned. Optimum forest patch size and shape will also vary by what wildlife species you wish to manage for in relation to the surrounding forest.



Scattered woody debris



5-yr old oriented piled logs



**Left picture:** Tree spacing and species can have a profound impact on which wildlife species and abundance occupies an area. Openings offer better forb and grass forage for grazers as well as wild flowers for hummingbirds, and regeneration opportunities for sun loving tree species. A north facing slope might require a larger opening and a south facing slope a smaller spacing for the same species. Multiple smaller openings (top picture) versus one larger opening (lower picture) also cater to different species - particularly birds. Variable density thinning surrounding openings can also offer different denning and microsite opportunities and also help break up and isolate fuel beds and fire risks. Wildlife also like connecting corridors among dense and open areas.



20-yr old oriented piled logs



40-yr old oriented piled logs

**Right pictures:** An even distribution of woody debris (top picture) provide some soil micro habitat, but may not have much impact on localized moisture and temperature, and use to wildlife. Larger logs that are valuable to sawmills, offer the best thermal and moisture protection, thus habitat. Creating simulated large logs by orienting stacked smaller logs can emulate a large log, and offers the cracks and hollows for small wildlife that an older large diameter rotten log might, but in a much shorter time frame. Young Ponderosa pine and grand fir decay quickly, Douglas-fir, larch and cedar more slowly.



# Communicating about Estate Planning and Finances:

*By Marsha A. Goetting, Ph.D., CFP®, CFCS, Professor and Extension Family Economics Specialist*

At some point in their lives, parents and adult children will face the challenge of talking about the financial and estate planning issues associated with potential chronic illness, disability, mental incapacity or death. Perhaps the conversation is triggered by the death of a relative or neighbor. Or, possibly a serious illness of a parent who requires hospitalization and then care in a nursing home causes the adult children to confront the need “for action.” In our family it was several people from my home town expressing concern about my mother’s driving that “triggered” the daughters to act. But as anyone that has been there knows, we don’t always make best decisions during the time of a family crisis.

Most of us do not like to think of the day when we or our parents may not be able to manage physically or mentally. We also don’t want to think about the death of our parents, much less our own. In fact, truth be known, almost all of us at one time or another has thought what if we became mentally incapacitated? What if we lost what we have worked a life time to because of long-term health-care costs. Even when we seem to be overwhelmed with day-to-day living, there is a needling thought at the back of our minds, what if....?

While we may believe the best way to minimize feelings of helplessness and stress that results from a crisis is to plan ahead, emotionally we often find it difficult to talk about incapacity and death. The situation can be more complicated if there have been years of underlying tensions or misunderstandings among our parents and siblings. Or, if one of the “kids” feels animosity towards another sibling because the “favored child” has already received more than his “fair” share from Mom and Dad, disagreements can arise.

Planning ahead requires anticipating these negative situations—family disagreements, dependency, disability, incapacity, and death—and exploring solutions to these uncertain, hard-to-face problems. While a discussion of such topics and what legal tools are needed could make everyone feel uncomfortable or uneasy, it’s vital that the conversation be initiated.

One way to begin a conversation about estate planning with parents is to share your preferences and plans in the event of your own serious illness or death. This may open the door to further discussion. Understandably parents may question the motives of adult children who express concern about estate planning, but have not taken the time and effort to have their own legal documents prepared (will, living will, power of attorney for finances, power of attorney for health care).

What is the best way to communicate with family members about the estate planning process? Because families are unique, methods may vary, but some basic decisions to consider include:

1. **Who to involve:** Who do you trust (or not) and how would you like each family member or others to be involved in the conversation? Do you involve “in-laws” in the discussions? Do you include grandchildren who have reached adulthood? What professionals do you want to consult: attorney, certified public accountant, insurance agent, and/or certified financial planner?
2. **What to discuss:** What are the topics to be discussed as part of the estate planning process? Legal tools to explore include: wills, living wills, trusts, financial power of attorney, and health care power of attorney. Non-legal tools could include written



directions for funeral arrangements and a letter of last instruction.

3. **When and where to meet:** When and where should family members meet to discuss issues? Can it be done via phone or should it be face-to-face? When and where discussions are held can have a tremendous impact on outcome. The experts say to avoid discussion of estate planning during such emotionally demanding events as holiday celebrations or family reunions. Yet, these may be the only occasions when all family members are together. Explore modern alternatives. With advancements in technology meetings could be held via the Internet.
4. **How information is shared:** Plan how key information will be shared. Having all family members with background information about topics is also important. One source of information is MSU Extension. We have 40 different MontGuides (fact sheets) in the estate planning area. [www.montana.edu/estateplanning/eppublications.htm](http://www.montana.edu/estateplanning/eppublications.htm) Another possibility is to send your parents appropriate books or articles about estate planning from financial magazines and newspapers.

Remember, it's difficult for many people to talk about finances and estate planning, especially when including a discussion about incapacity and inability to manage. Talking about potential loss of control can be even more difficult if your parents are already experiencing health changes. Grief, frustration, uncertainty and anger may be expressed. Feelings are likely to be particularly strong if your parents fear they are giving up control. Even if these feelings are not verbalized, be aware that your parents may have them. Be sensitive to and acknowledge your parents' feelings and preferences. Recognize his or her needs to be independent and in control, and do all you can to maintain your parents' dignity throughout the estate planning process. After all, it is their estate!

Although facing the possibility of dependency, disability, or incapacity – not only of our aging parents, but also of ourselves is challenging, planning ahead is wise. Planning ahead can help families avoid disagreements over care and

finances. Planning ahead can help alleviate the stress of making difficult choices in crisis situations. Understanding the financial and legal issues involved in planning for incapacity and death may help to protect parents' assets from mismanagement, fraud, or exploitation by family members, caregivers or guardians.

Estate Planning Publications are available at : <http://www.montana.edu/estateplanning/eppublications.html>

A sample of Montguide topics are as follows:

1. Accessing a Deceased Person's Financial Accounts.
2. Beneficiary Deeds in Montana.
3. Designating Beneficiaries through Contractual Arrangements.
4. Dying Without a Will in Montana: Who Receives Your Property?
5. Estate Planning for Families with Minor and/or Special Needs Children.
6. Estate Planning in Montana: Getting Started.
7. Life Estate: A Useful Estate Planning Tool.
8. Life Insurance: An Estate Planning Tool.
9. Medicaid and Long-Term Care Costs.
10. Nonprobate Transfers
11. Personal Representative Responsibilities.
12. Probate in Montana.
13. Property Ownership.
14. Revocable Living Trusts.
15. Settling an Estate: What Do I Need to Know.
16. Talking With Aging Parents About Finances
17. Transferring a Montana Vehicle Title After the Death of an Owner
18. Transferring Real Property Owned in a Joint Tenancy or in a Life Estate Without Probate
19. Transferring Your Farm or Ranch to the Next Generation.
20. Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate? Transferring Non-Titled Property
21. Wills.



# Forest Stewardship Foundation

*Ed Levert, Forest Stewardship Foundation Chair*

My, has time flown by. We are presently in the middle of planning for the 9<sup>th</sup> annual forest landowner conference in Helena. It seems like just yesterday that we launched this successful program for landowners, resource professionals and the general public. We have been so fortunate to have worked hand in hand with co-sponsor Northwest Management, Inc. to make this happen. This year's conference will be held on April 27. We are continuing the theme from last year, "Becoming a Better Forest Steward". Once again we will have a multitude of relevant and interesting subjects and presenters. We hope to see you there.

I constantly run into landowners who have invested so much time and energy into their property, yet have not a clue as to who will end up with the property when they are gone. If you are one of these people, stay another day after the landowner conference and attend the Ties to The Land workshop on April 28. We are very thankful that Kirk and Madeline David will once again be the instructors of this national award winning workshop designed by Oregon State University and representatives of Tree Farm. This workshop will help you make that difficult decision.

So, what else is going on with the foundation. We continue to be a sponsor of the Montana Collaborative Network in their effort to effect successful collaboration between federal, state and private ownerships. We remain poised to help fund stewardship workshops if there is a shortfall of funding. We are also looking at putting together relevant information for new landowners, covering the full range of topics that they need to be aware of. This would be done in cooperation and coordination with the Forest Stewardship Steering Committee. Our bi-annual Forest Steward's Journal is coming out in February and you will be able to view the electronic version on our online at <http://www.ForestStewardshipFoundation.org>. This issue discusses the 2017 Montana fire season and is sent to over 1300 people.

How can you help our non-profit organization continue to offer services to landowners? If you are not already a member you can join us by sending \$25 to the Forest Stewardship Foundation; PO Box 1056; Libby, MT 59923. Consider becoming a board member by calling me at (406)-293-2847 and lastly, if you are coming to this year's landowner conference consider donating to our silent auction, which is an important fund raiser for us. Please contact Tom Jones at (406) 334 3635 for information about the auction.



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The Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation and Northwest Management, Inc. invite forest landowners, professional foresters, and forestry contractors to attend the **Ninth Annual Forest Landowner Conference:**

# Becoming the Best Forest Steward Possible

**Friday, April 27**  
Radisson Colonial Hotel  
Helena, Montana

## 2018 CONFERENCE AGENDA:

**Cost for the Conference** is \$40 per person. Includes lunch.

**A block of rooms** has been reserved at the Radisson Colonial Hotel. Call (406) 443-2100 for reservations. Mention that you are attending the Montana Forest Landowner Conference to receive a \$99.00 rate for a standard room.

Reserve your room online by following this link: [MFLC-Radisson-2018](#)  
When at the website select your check-in date

**Continuing Ed. Credits** are available for SAF Certified Foresters and MLA Accredited Logging Professionals.



**8:00 - 8:30AM / Registration**

**8:30 - 8:45AM / Welcoming Remarks:**

- Ed Levert - Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation
- Gary Ellingson - Northwest Management, Inc.

**8:45 - 9:45AM / Opening Session:**

- Introduction to The Montana Nature Conservancy: Montana's Second Largest Private Forest Owner
- Steven Kloetzel and Chris Bryant - Montana Nature Conservancy

**9:45 - 10:00AM / Break with Refreshments**

**Morning Concurrent Sessions: Choose One**

**Session A. Forest Wildlife:**

**10:00 - 11:00AM / How do Birds and Mammals in the Forest Communicate Danger?**

- Erick Green - The University of Montana

**11:00 - 12:00PM / Studing Montana's Moose Population: What are Scientists Learning?**

- Nick DeCesare - Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks

**Session B. Forest Management:**

**10:00 - 11:00AM / West Kootenai Wildlife Management Area: A Story of Forest Management, Wildfire, and Post-Wildfire**

- Jason Parke - Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Forester

**11:00 - 12:00PM / Evaluating Forests Using Lidar Technology**

- Mark Conroy, PhD - Northwest Management, Inc.

**Noon - 1:30PM // Luncheon with Presentation:**

- The Wild Days of Montana's Early Christmas Tree Industry 1937-1968
- Rich Aarstad - Montana Historical Society

**1:30PM / Close Silent Auction:**

**Afternoon Concurrent Sessions: Choose One**

**Session A. Forest Insects and Disease:**

**1:45 - 2:45PM / Consequences of Blister Rust in Limber and White Bark Pine**

- Katie McKeever - Montana DNRC Forest Pathologist

**2:45 - 3:45PM / How do Wildfires Impact Beetle Populations?**

- Amy Gannon - Montana DNRC Forest Entomologist

**Session B. Forest Management:**

**1:45 - 2:45PM / What is a Forestry BMP Audit? Why Should Landowners Participate?**

- Roger Ziesak - Montana Department of Natural Resources & Conservation

**2:45 - 3:45PM / Status of Montana Wood Products Industry and Log Markets**

- Todd Morgan - UM Bureau of Business & Economic Research

**3:45 - 4:00PM / Closing Session:**

- Closing comments and announcement of Silent Auction winners

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: **April 20, 2018**



### Conference Registration Form

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: **April 20, 2018**

COST: \$40 per person

REGISTER ONLINE:

Go to [ForestStewardshipFoundation.org](http://ForestStewardshipFoundation.org) then click on the **Events** tab at the top of the page and drop down to the Montana Forest Landowner Conference. Payments can be made by credit card (Pay Pal) when you register on-line.

TO REGISTER BY MAIL:

Complete the form below, place in envelope and mail along with payment to: **Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation**, P.O. Box 1056, Libby, MT 59923

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

**Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation**

ATTENDEE(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

DAYTIME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please indicate which sessions you plan to attend*

Morning Concurrent Sessions *Choose One*  A. Forest Wildlife  B. Forest Management

Afternoon Concurrent Sessions *Choose One*  A. Forest Insects and Disease  B. Forest Management

**Questions?**

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(406) 544-7169



**9<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Montana Forest Landowner Conference  
Agenda**



*“Becoming the Best Forest Steward Possible”*

*Radisson Colonial Hotel, 2301 Colonial Drive, Helena, MT*

**Friday, April 27, 2018**

- 8:00 - 8:30 AM      Registration*
- 8:30 - 8:45 AM      Welcoming Remarks:  
Ed Levert, Montana Forest Stewardship Foundation  
Gary Ellingson, Northwest Management, Inc.*
- 8:45 - 9:45 AM      Opening Session:  
The Montana Nature Conservancy: Montana's 2<sup>nd</sup> Largest Private Forest Owner  
Steven Kloetzel and Chris Bryant, Montana Nature Conservancy*
- 9:45 - 10:00 AM      Break with Refreshments*
- Morning Concurrent Sessions (Choose one)*
- 10:00 - 11:00 AM      Session A: Forest Wildlife  
How do Birds and Mammals in the Forest Communicate Danger?  
Erick Green, The University of Montana.*
- 11:00 - 12:00 AM      Studying Montana's Moose Population: What are Scientists Learning?  
Nick DeCesare, MT FWP*
- 10:00 - 11:00 AM      Session B: Forest Management  
West Kootenai Wildlife Management Area: A Story of Forest Management,  
Wildfire, and Post-Wildfire  
Jason Parke, Montana FWP Forester*
- 11:00 - 12:00 PM      Evaluating Forests Using Lidar Technology  
Mark Corrao PhD, Northwest Management, Inc.*
- 12:00 - 1:30 PM      Luncheon with Presentation  
The Wild Days of Montana's Early Christmas Tree Industry 1937-1968  
Rich Aarstad, Montana Historical Society*
- 1:30 PM                  Close Silent Auction*

## Afternoon Concurrent Sessions (Choose one)

- Session A: Forest Insects and Disease**  
**Consequences of Blister Rust in Limber and White Bark Pine**  
*Katie McKeever, MT DNRC Forest Pathologist*
- 1:45 - 2:45 PM
- 2:45 - 3:45 PM**      **How do Wildfires Impact Beetle Populations?**  
*Amy Gannon, MT DNRC Forest Entomologist*
- Session B: Forest Management**  
**What is a Forestry BMP Audit? Why Should Landowners Participate?**  
*Roger Ziesak, MT DNRC*
- 1:45 - 2:45 PM
- 2:45 - 3:45 PM**      **Status of Montana Wood Products Industry and Log Markets**  
*Todd Morgan, UM Bureau of Business and Economic Research*
- 3:45 - 4:00 PM      **Closing Session:**  
 Closing Comments



# Ties to the Land Workshop Saturday, April 28, 2018 9:00am to 5:00pm



## The Human Side of Estate Planning

Your family forest legacy:  
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Registration Deadline: April 20th  
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 refreshments

For more information and to register:  
<https://www.foreststewardshipfoundation.org/ties-to-the-land-workshop>



## Residents of Rust

By Katie McKeever, PhD; Forest Pathologist, Montana DNRC

White pine blister rust (WPBR) is a non-native fungus that affects all five-needle pines in our forests including western white pine, limber pine, and whitebark pine. The fungus invades branches leading to reduced cone production, and girdles stems resulting in tree death. Since all ages of tree can be infected, stand damage can be significant when mature overstory trees and regeneration are impacted. Combined with losses from mountain pine beetle, WPBR has virtually eliminated western white pine as an abundant timber species in western Montana and threatens limber and whitebark pines in our sensitive high-elevation ecosystems.

The complex lifecycle of this fungus includes five spore stages that require two groups of plants to complete. The two types of plants that sustain the lifecycle are referred to as primary and alternate hosts. The primary host supports two spore stages and is typically killed by the fungus. The alternate host generally suffers minor damage and serves as a home for the fungus to increase in quantity as it develops through the three remaining spore stages. With WPBR, the primary hosts are the five-needle pines and the alternate hosts include flowering shrubs such as currants & gooseberries (*Ribes*), louseworts (*Pedicularis*) and scarlet paintbrush (*Castilleja*). Mature spores from the alternate hosts infect succulent needles on the pines, allowing the fungus to move into the twigs, branches, and stems of the trees. The first sign of blister rust on bark appears as sweet, oozing, resinous droplets. In the following year, the infection advances to produce dry, granular orange spores encapsulated in thinly-skinned blisters that burst through the bark of the stem and give rise to the name “blister rust” (Figure 1, Right). These rusty-colored spores are then dispatched back to the alternate hosts where the fungus causes leaf infections that are non-lethal but serve to propagate the fungus and multiply the spore supply for the next round of tree infections. Wounds, or cankers, produced by the fungal growth inside the woody tissues of the tree grow and coalesce to encompass the circumference of the tree branches and stems, resulting in branch dieback and tree death (Figure 2, next page).

A common sign of a blister rust-infected tree is the sight of gnawed-off bark from the feeding of rodents. This has been observed to occur with nearly all of the pine stem rust fungi in the west and it is postulated that the sweetness of the bark layer when the oozing droplet spore stage is produced, as well as the thickness of the bark when it is swollen with infection, are an attractive food source for the small mammals. As heavy feeding is observed to remove nearly all of the diseased bark in the infection area on the stems, it is more than reasonable to wonder what favorable affect this may have in reducing future spore production from that canker. Such a question has been addressed by research done in various regions of the west, and results show that rodent feeding on cankers can be quite effective at reducing the sporulation potential of blister rust infections on trees with some estimates as high as 95% reductions in the area of infected stem tissue. As enticing of a control method as this sounds, it is important to keep in mind that in any given year not all trees have furry visitors, that missed areas of consumption will continue to expand and sporulate, and that spores can travel many kilometers on air currents from



Figure 1: Spore-filled blisters revealing the canker on a young pine stem (left). Dieback occurs when the circumference of the branches or stems are girdled by the fungus.

other infestations.

Interestingly, other legged creatures may be at play on rust cankers as well. Scientists have shown that insects, mites, spiders, and other arthropods can both aid and inhibit the dispersal of spores between blister rust hosts. Observation of rust infections in a Canadian study showed a reduction in spore production due to insect activity on the trees. These tiny inhabitants of the rust cankers were categorized as those that either directly consumed the fungal spores for food or those that excavated the woody tissues underlying the spore layer for shelter and reproductive galleries. In both instances, the activity of the insects was shown to quantifiably reduce spore production from those infected stems; in some cases, up to ten percent. Conversely, other researchers have focused on the ability of arthropods to actually contribute to spore dispersal through casual visits to sporulating

cankers. The dry dusty spores adhere to their legs and bodies and are then distributed to alternate hosts when the insects move on. In an innovative experiment, these researchers introduced naturally spore-laden insects collected from rust cankers on pines into a chamber with healthy *Ribes* leaves and demonstrated the ability of the insects to transfer infective spores to the healthy plants. Importantly, it was noted by the researchers in this study that it is exceedingly difficult to actually track the movement of individual insects as they go on their merry ways, so the frequency of actual visitation from one host to another while bearing infective spores is still as yet unknown.

As fun as these stories are, and as enlightening as they are to the some of the intriguing research done by the scientific community, it simply serves as a reminder of the complex world that exists from macro to micro scales on something as common as a blister rust canker and the challenges that are faced when we try to contain and control diseases in the natural world.



*Figure 2. Wounds, or cankers, produced by the fungal growth inside the woody tissues of the tree grow and coalesce to encompass the circumference of the tree branches and stems, resulting in branch dieback and tree death*



# The Haves and the Have Knots

By Cameron Wohlschlegel - Forester, F.H. Stoltze Land & Lumber Co.

As a forest landowner you most likely have many objectives. Forest landowners typically choose to manage their forest for wildlife, timber, forest health, or a combination of these and more. When choosing how to manage for wildlife it is important to remember, all wildlife share the three fundamental necessities of food, water, and shelter. As a landowner it is up to you to determine how you can influence your forest through management strategies to improve, maintain, or provide all or one or more of these necessities. Different animals require different needs and it is impossible to manage for everything on every acre as some would like to believe. Therefore, it is my belief that in order to effectively manage for multiple species or for one specific species, a landowner has to make observations from their forest to determine what they have and what they have not.

When managing for wildlife on your property a landowner should ask themselves a few questions. These questions should help you narrow your objectives on what to manage for. First, what do I have? The answer to this question will tell you what animals and types of trees and plants you have to work with for shelter, food, and other specific needs. What don't I have? What do I want? This will tell you what plants and animals are absent from your property and raises the question of what might you like to see utilizing your land? What is adjacent to me? This question is important, it will allow you to take into consideration on a larger landscape level what role or niche your property has been playing or has the opportunity to play. For example, you could be surrounded by Forest Service land that is designated as old-growth. These stands are usually tended from below and lightly harvested if at all. Having this habitat type next to you would fulfill the need for shelter, leaving your property plenty of opportunity to fulfill the food necessity. Another example would be having your property surrounded by a recent forest fire or farm fields; these areas are

going to provide heavy forage production. This would incline me to manage my forest towards the shelter necessity. One also has to ask themselves is what I want feasible? If you're in love with a specific species yet that species is absent from the landscape does it make logical sense to manage for it? Sometimes your property isn't large enough to attract certain animals or converting it to a suitable habitat would be extremely difficult. I urge landowners to be realistic and work with what habitats and animals they have present. This is a much easier, realistic, and achievable solution. Remember some animals are locals and some are migrants that utilize a larger landscape. Just because you have seen a rare animal doesn't mean it's a resident. It is possible to manage your forest for multiple species but directing decisions towards the residents is usually my primary objectives and advice.

So, what are some practices a landowner can do to improve their habitat? Some simple and easy applications that come to mind are: Developing a spring into a pond, or placing water troughs throughout your property. This would help to fulfill the water requirement. Providing water is an easy way to introduce a resource into a landscape where it may not be present or not in sufficient enough quantities. In regards to shelter, landowners can create snags through girdling. Snags are great for woodpeckers and small mammals, trees of 10 inches DBH and up are the best. Leaving a few piles of limbs and larger woody debris known as "rabitat" instead of burning can help create hiding cover for smaller mammals. Planting trees or specific plants is a great way to create and influence habitat. Through planting you can design future shelter or introduce different species to the site which may provide an alternative food source. Shelter and forage can also be integrated into a timber harvest. Using a "group select" style cut and having designated cut and leave patches creates irregular shaped openings where forage grows and leave patches for shelter and hiding cover. Another easy way to make good browse habitat is to hinge cut



deciduous trees such as Birch, Maple, and Alder. Hinge cutting will cause stump sprouting from the cut portion of the bole but will also allow the tree to leaf out once more on the forest floor making the leaves easily accessible for wildlife to consume.

There are many different techniques and applications a forest landowner can use to achieve their wildlife objectives. However, it is very

important to define realistic objectives and parameters through observations and education of oneself. It is also extremely important to determine what your property has and what it has not. Knowing what you have and what you don't have will guide you in your decision to manage your property to the best use or combination of uses regarding both flora and fauna.



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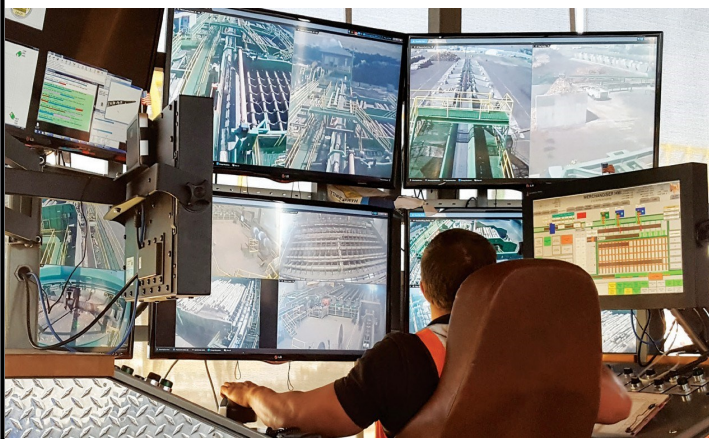
If you like/dislike certain things about this newsletter. Please send us your thoughts!

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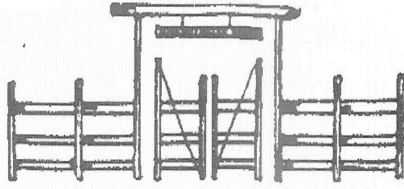


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# How well do you know your local birds?

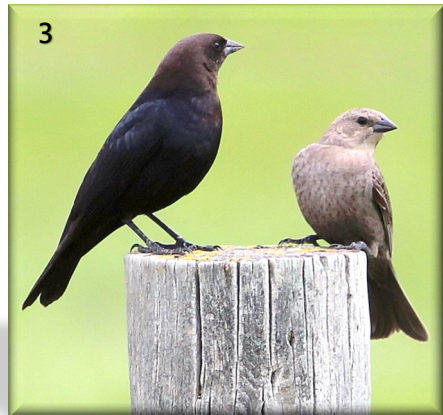
1. **Evening Grosbeak (male)** - one of 4 Grosbeak species found throughout the west, the male of this species can also have an almost neon green beak. In late winter flocks of these birds can empty a feeder full of sunflower seeds in a matter of minutes. Predominantly a seed, bud and fruit feeder these birds will take occasional insects as well. They build very flimsy nests on the ends of conifer branches. Offering a warbling song it most identified by a loud “clee-ip” sounding chirp.
2. **House Sparrow (female)** - this species introduced in the 1850’s near Brooklyn New York to control insects was the result of poor observation as it is a true omnivore, preferring to eat easily obtained fruits, grains and any house scraps thrown out to them. They are aggressive birds found mainly around human habitation in large flocks, often noticed to drive away other native birds as well as rumored to destroy other birds nests and eggs - possibly eating the latter. It now plagues towns in large flocks and can easily be heard year round with a loud “cheep-cheep-cheep.” Typically where it is found few native birds exist. Luckily it does not like habitat any distance from houses.
3. **Brown Headed Cow Bird (black male, brown female)** - native to the U.S. where it historically would flock around Bison herds, feeding on seeds and the many insects kicked up or crawling on the beasts, it has adapted well to human habitation and likes to hang out in small flocks around domestic livestock and horses. It has been placed in the rogues gallery along with the House sparrow because the females are prolific egg layers—up to 80 per season—one at a time in other birds nests. Its eggs tend to hatch quicker and the single youngster is very aggressive, either kicking other eggs or hatchlings out of the nest thus killing them, or outcompeting them for food with similar results. Most native songbirds do not recognize the intruder and thus raise it as their own. It can be easily heard with a loud “ttrrrriilllll” or females calling to males with a loud “sweeeit” from the very top of a tree. Fragmented forests that are grazed with livestock or any pasture is its preferred habitat.
4. **Red Crossbill (female)** - One of two species that look very similar except the white winged crossbill has two white stripes on the shoulders. The males are often more red in color with black wings. These birds have the unique beak that crosses at the tips and as a species are specialized to eat conifer seeds, mainly from ponderosa pines. Their population often cycles with prolific cone crops and they will nest and have offspring depending on available food source regardless of time of year. Nests are built like cups on outer conifer branches. They are commonly attracted to bird feeders with sunflower seeds and can be very vocal with a “jip-jip” sounds as well as a less distinctive warbling song.
5. **Chipping Sparrow** - Summer inhabitant of dry conifer forests, nests at eye level in dense branches, feeds on many seeds and insect larvae—easily identified by Chip-Chip-Chip sounds, especially when near its nest. Long light grey to white eyebrows helps distinguish it from the 6 other native sparrow species.
6. **Red Breasted Nuthatch** - one of the smallest birds foraging for insects in bark crevices of conifer forests it is unique because it can climb headfirst both up and down tree stems. It also eats seeds during the winter and has the habit of jamming sunflower seeds in bark cracks to peck them open. Along with chickadees and pine siskins it seems to have a natural “tameness” to humans and can with patience be enticed to grab sunflower seeds directly from an open hand. Makes a nasal “neet-neet-neet” sound as it forages.
7. **Brown Creeper** - less common in the Northern Rockies and the only one of its species in N. America this secretive little bird forages for insects on tree bark of older trees in denser pine forests by starting at the bottom of a tree trunk and then spiral climbing its way to the top. It builds its nest in loose bark fissures with conifer needles and grass woven together with spider silk. It has a barely audible high pitched “trees-trees-trees—see the trees” call.
8. **Mountain Chickadee** - (compared to black capped chickadee on cover) in the summer this little fellow nests at higher elevations around 8000 ft but in winter is often found at lower elevations raiding feeders for sunflower seeds. A true bark gleaner, all of the 4 varieties of Chickadees scour bark and crevices for insects and spiders. A cavity nester it can use small hollows in 3” diameter stems as well as larger diameter trees anywhere from 2 to 20 ft off the ground. It is aptly named as its strong voice is often heard as “Chickadee-dee-dee”. Naturally tame to humans it is easily hunted and killed by house cats.
9. **Pine Siskin** - There is little difference between males and females of this little bird though males might have more yellow coloring in their back half. Often traveling around in flocks they are ready visitors to bird feeders,

normally eating a variety of seeds and some insects. They typically hang out high in the crowns of trees, flocking to the ground for seeds, small gravel or sand, and also show little fear of humans, and unfortunately house cats. There are claims that they are increasingly migrating further south in the winters, but I have found them common around my house near Missoula during the summer and winter. They often share my feeder with chickadees, nuthatches and grosbeaks and offer a loud vocal “zweet.” They typically nest during the summer in the high branches of mature conifers.

10. **Hairy Woodpecker (male)** - a common and medium sized bird with a white belly it can be mistaken for a Downy (smaller, striped underside of tail and shorter beak), 3-Toed (uncommon and more prone to be in beetle killed or burned forest), or sapsuckers (yellow bellies). They are apt bark gleaners as well as able and willing to remove bark in search of bark beetle larvae in the winter. They like to excavate nesting holes in decayed stems and actually had one nesting 2.5 feet off the ground in the hollowed out head of small wooden carved bear in my front lawn. They rhythmically drum on trees during mating season and utter a loud “peek—peek—kee-ik-ik-ik.”
11. **Downy woodpecker (male)** - easily mistaken for a Hairy woodpecker, Downy woodpeckers might be considered “cuter” than their larger cousins have a more rounded, fluffy and delicate appearance including a shorter thinner beak. Commonly found but inconspicuous, they are not terribly shy, and found quietly climbing around on tree stems of all species including aspens. Their call is a gentle “pik” or “ki-ki-ki.”
12. **Northern Flicker** - one of the most visible and often obnoxious of the woodpecker family, famous for hammering out drum staccatos on metal chimneys or house flashing, as well a drilling through house siding to den in house attics. Also often seen dust bathing in antpiles in the meadows the Flicker has a wide ranging diet that includes ants, other insects, berries, and nuts. It has also been seen attacking other birds though the reasons for this are unknown—perhaps defending its territory. It also likes to excavate holes in rotten larger trees. It can be heard uttering a loud “Flick-flick-flick flick.”
13. **Clark’s Nutcracker** - a medium to large bird, named after explorer William Clarke, it is also famous for being able to open whitebark and limber pine cones and hide over a 1000 seed caches every year, remembering 99% of them. Considered an important mutualist for seeding members of the stone pine family into craggy mountain tops all over the world, this species and its cousins are very versatile also venturing to lower elevations and feeding on ponderosa pine seeds as well as insects, and other plant seeds, and even occasionally on carrion. They may be seen tracking hunters in the fall hoping for a snack from a fresh killed deer, elk or hunters sandwich. The picture presented does not show of its black wings which is a distinguishing identifier that can help avoid confusion with the “Grey Jay”, a smaller and more delicately built cousin with the affectionate name “camp robber jay” for its seeming tameness to people and willingness to accept, or steal food of all sorts from human visitors. The Nutcracker nests on horizontal tree limbs in nests made out of twigs and can be heard uttering a loud and harsh “Kraaaaak—kraak-kraak.”

Managing for birds - food, nesting sites and safety are the key components for attracting and maintaining local bird populations. Although some biologists question the wisdom of concentrating local birds around feeders as it makes them easier prey for local predators, helping them find food through harsh winters certainly seems to bolster their local populations, as well as providing endless entertainment for bird watchers. Stopping feeding in the spring helps them disperse into the surrounding forest in sustainable populations. Many species of birds form what are known as “guilds,” which are basically commonly found groupings of bird species for particular habitats. Whether this is simply naturally occurring assemblages of different species that do not interfere with each other, or sought out associations with species that seem to mutually benefit each other with predator detection is unknown. Having been an avid amateur bird watcher my entire life it certainly seems that there are some species that appear to enjoy each others company, and other species that really dislike one another. Figuring out what nesting sites each species prefers is also an important component for forest management, and may be a reason to keep certain forest structures, ranging from tall old trees to dense younger stands, as well as providing nesting boxes for cavity nesters. Be aware that different species like different sized openings, and that a thin strip of tin around the opening can keep predatory squirrels from chewing larger holes into nest boxes. Finally, safety is an important feature, especially since many of us have a cat or two to keep rodents at bay. Most cats really prefer to chase birds as they are easy eye catchers. Keeping feeders at least 5 feet off the ground (I once watched one of my cats jump 4-ft straight into the air next to my feeder and grab a bird out of it much like a basketball player dunking a basketball) on non-climbable posts or suspensions is as important as keeping low branches and hiding spaces away from feeders. Mine are pruned as high as the feeder so that birds have nearby perches that are out of reach of my cats. Cats are also trainable, as mine have learned a rubber band gun or squirt gun seems to get them anytime they are near my birdfeeder.

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