



FALL 2023

The Journal



Photo by Keegan Rumsey, BMWF Board Member



Greetings FROM THE DIRECTOR

As the days shorten and temperatures cool, we find ourselves reflecting on the activities of the 2023 field season and basking in the autumnal glow of having successfully navigated this organization's greatest ever workload. Our capable and dedicated staff delivered more educational outreach, placed more interns, trained more crew leaders, supported more volunteers completing more Wilderness stewardship and trail projects in more places.

In the face of such an abundance of activity, a basic fact remains at the core – that meaningfully connecting people with wild places is a practice that the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation has carefully honed, and endeavors to intentionally provide, for each volunteer, stakeholder, and constituent.

About a month before our annual end-of-season staff work trip, our office in Hungry Horse received a small but heavy package. Its contents consisted of a card; a carefully wrapped fist-sized piece of red, rippled sandstone; and a generous donation. The author of the card confessed to having picked up the rock when, as a 12-year-old, he climbed toward the Continental Divide at White River Pass. Fascinated by the geologic implications of the slab from which it came, he apparently kept this memento through 40 years of attending high school, college, moving back and forth across the country, and ultimately teaching math at the University of Nevada in Reno. He requested we find a way to return the rock to its rightful place in the world which, conveniently, was the same place our September staff project was scheduled to occur.

Though adding some weight to our collective burden, it was a sincere pleasure to fulfill this request. While the rock is back with the slab from which it came, the Wilderness – along with the range of ideas, sensibilities, and implications that landscape conservation and stewardship stir – remain within that math professor long after his journey. We at the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation are honored to play a role in facilitating such wild connections that last a lifetime.

As we look forward to our next chapter of partnering for Wilderness stewardship, I wish to express my thanks to each volunteer, donor, packer, partner and staff member for their efforts to bring our mission to fruition.

Until next time,

Clifford Kipp
Executive Director



*Connecting People with
Wild Places through
Active Wilderness
Stewardship since 1997*

bmwf.org
406.387.3822
trails@bmwf.org

PO Box 190688
Hungry Horse MT 59919

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Three Photos and a Poem
by Victoria Williams, Volunteer

Not yet daybreak.
Waiting on the promise of coffee
as we're serenaded by the music
of a varied thrush.
A perfect morning.

Rediscovering Our Diversity
by Craig Bacino, Volunteer

The term "melting pot," has disappeared from our collective vocabulary. It was proudly used to describe the diversity that creates the common core of American society and culture. These days, however, differences and discord better describe America and Americans. In the odd chance that we forget the divisiveness, the news and social media remind us, daily, hourly, minute-by-minute, of it. How then to focus on our similarities and downplay our differences? Begin by searching for opportunities that promote cooperation and encourage communication with folks near and far. Volunteer for a trail project.

The backcountry is a refreshing refuge from extraneous chatter: no talking heads, no social influencers, no TV, radio, Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter to tell us what to think or how to act. Enter the wilderness and leave background noise behind. Life reduced to the basics.

In camp, working with fellow crew members, erect the kitchen, fetch water, dig a latrine, hang the garbage, collect and cut firewood, help cook and clean up. On the trail, clear brush, cut deadfall, remove rocks, dig new trail, build water bars and turnpikes, remove culverts. After hours, share stories and ideas, and maybe enjoy home-grown music together.

Everyone swings the same pick, pushes the same shovel, pulls on the same saw as the other crew members: investment managers, carpenters, students, nurses, engineers, bureaucrats, maintenance workers, and retirees. All have different abilities, different values, different viewpoints, but they share a common goal: to work and live in the wilderness for a short time, depending on each other.

Time up and project complete, leave the wilderness with the need for a hot shower, a sense of accomplishment, and an appreciation for the diversity that rises to the occasion for the common good.





The Place Overwhelms Me
by Joseph Ashby, Volunteer

The place overwhelms me
The wildness overwhelms me
The sense of solitude overwhelms me
Sharing it with others overwhelms me
The remoteness of it all overwhelms me
The history of the place overwhelms me
The sound and rhythm of the crosscut
overwhelms me
Having the ability to visit and walk over it
overwhelms me
The knowledge others fought to keep this place
wild overwhelms me
Spending time in camp after a hard day with
good food and friends overwhelms me
Standing on the trail looking at distant mountains
brings me to tears and overwhelms me
Being in the place overwhelms me

I will always be grateful to my friend Fred Flint
for encouraging me to come visit and bring my
Scouts for a little time in such a big place.



Photo Essay

PARTNER PROJECT:
GLACIER
HIGH
SCHOOL

*Photos by Riley Sinclair,
Volunteer*

The evening before their
hike in, students from
Glacier High School's
Environmental Club learned
about Bob Marshall and
traced his route through
the Wilderness that would
eventually carry his name.
The next morning they set
off from the same place
he began his epic trek –
Meadow Creek trailhead.



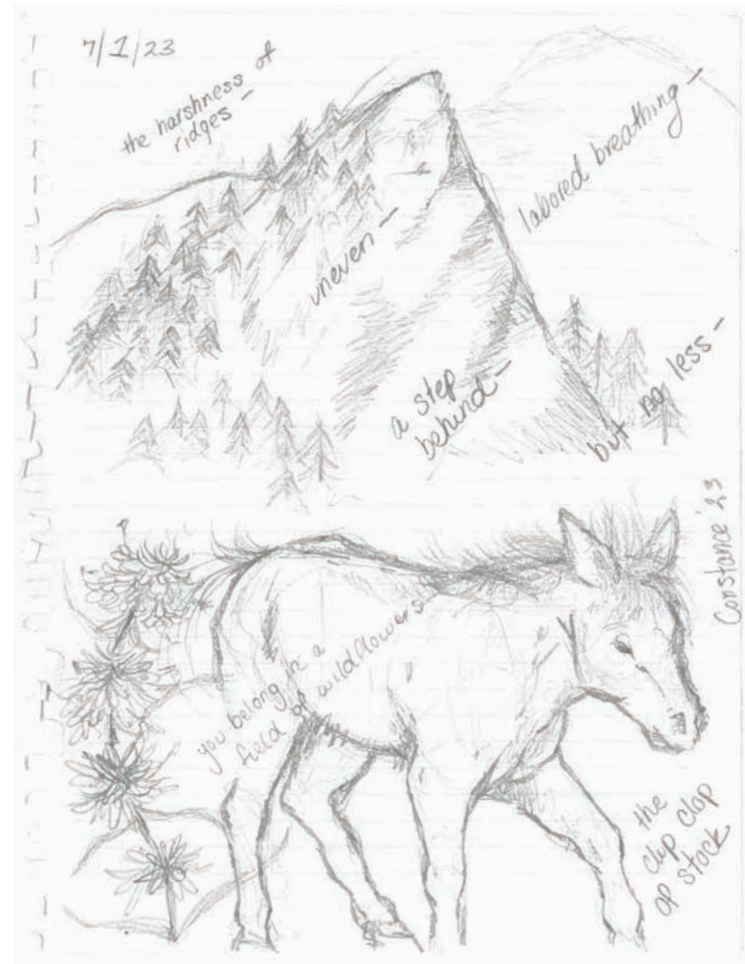


At first intimidated by the miles, this crew crushed their nine mile hike in to Black Bear Creek. They spent three days mapping invasive Spotted Knapweed for future weeds projects and clearing Hodag Ridge trail. They brought their own passions to the project – botany, photography – and left with new strengths, more comfortable and confident in the backcountry.





Backcountry Sketches
by Constance Roberts, Volunteer



STEWARDSHIP BEYOND TRAIL WORK

by Kellie Carim, Erynn Castellanos,
Lauren Redmore, and Jaclyn Rushing

OVER THE PAST 26 YEARS, Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation volunteers have become an integral part of stewarding the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. Many of our projects center around keeping trails open by clearing brush, sawing logs, cleaning waterbars – ensuring that people who want to visit Wilderness are able to get to their wild destination. Though trail work is crucially important to provide “primitive and unconfined recreation” as required in the Wilderness Act, it is equally important to support other qualities of Wilderness character and create connections to wild spaces in a range of capacities beyond trail maintenance.

Our relationship with Wilderness is dynamic and complex: fostered by our interactions with biophysical, emotional, and spiritual connections to wilderness character including wildlife and an untrammled landscape. Wilderness visitors and non-visitors alike find value outside of recreational endeavors, such as geological, scientific, economic, educational, scenic, historic, or cultural benefits. By widening what counts as stewardship to include other qualities of Wilderness character, we can offer new, culturally relevant volunteer opportunities to ensure that our nation's

Wilderness areas are valued by all Americans. Especially in a time of global climate change and limited capacity of federal agencies, broadening stewardship activities to include citizen science can account for the growing needs of ecological monitoring while connecting volunteers to other Wilderness values beyond recreation.

This year we partnered with the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute to include citizen science projects on three of our Volunteer Adventures. Volunteers assisted with scientific research by collecting water samples for environmental DNA analysis. Environmental DNA (eDNA) is simply DNA that organisms leave behind in their surrounding environment. For aquatic species, this DNA can be easily captured by collecting water samples. These eDNA samples are then analyzed in a laboratory to determine whether



particular aquatic species are present in a given stream reach.

Our volunteers assisted University of Montana Wildlife Biology graduate student Leah Simantel in collecting eDNA samples from tributaries of the South Fork Flathead River that have been impacted by wildfires.

The crews hiked over 80 miles to collect 27 samples on three different trips offered by BMWF. The eDNA samples will help Forest Service researchers as well as fisheries and wilderness managers understand how wildfire recency and severity may limit or even benefit populations of precious native species like sculpin, tailed frog, and bull trout.

All three of these species evolved in river systems that regularly experience wildfire. However, the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex is unique in that fire is not actively managed or suppressed within the wilderness boundary. When lightning strikes in the Bob, the fires are allowed to burn without human intervention. As a result, this is one of the best places to study how wildfire may be detrimental to these species, removing them from certain streams, or how it may enhance or expand their habitat. This information is useful not only for understanding the health of aquatic species in the Bob Marshall, but also for informing how wildfire can be managed outside of wilderness to benefit these sensitive aquatic species.



FOR TWO OF THE THREE TRIPS we worked with local Montana groups Here Montana and Latino Outdoors Missoula, to explore how citizen science can be an inclusive way to engage diverse communities in wilderness stewardship.

One participant shared their reflections on the importance of increasing representation of people of color in wilderness science and conservation: "One of the scientists was a person of color, and that was super super cool! . . . That was probably the highlight of my trip. [I] was like, 'Oh yeah, this person is also a scientist, and she's good at it, and she's passionate about it! And you know, she's fighting for the same things that we're fighting for!'"

We hope to continue this work again next year, and be part of helping more people feel connected to their public lands, whether that be through trailwork, art, science, education, or helping groups reconnect to their history. As we grow the number of opportunities for people to join us in different capacities, we hope to also grow the number and diversity of people that see themselves represented in Wilderness.

If you're interested in learning more about this work, contact BMWF Education & Partnership Specialist Erynn Castellanos at erynn@bmwf.org for more information, and sign up to help us in 2024 to continue adding to this data!

To learn more about our partners, check out Society for Wilderness Stewardship at www.wildernessstewardship.org and Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute at leopold.wilderness.net

In 2023, these projects were generously funded by the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance. Learn more at www.wildernessalliance.org



DID YOU KNOW?



BULL TROUT are perhaps the most iconic aquatic species of the Bob Marshall Wilderness Area. Although they are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, the population in the South Fork Flathead River basin is the most robust in all of Montana. Bull trout are strong swimmers and require cold, clean, and connected waterways – all elements that have been maintained because of the undeveloped qualities of the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

Like bull trout, **TAILED FROGS** are also a cold-water specialist in Rocky Mountain streams. However, they tend to occupy different types of habitat and do not often overlap with bull trout in stream habitat.

Finally, **SCULPIN** are a stream bottom fish that were historically used as bait fish. Biologists know very little about the diversity of the sculpin species and factors that influence their persistence. In particular, they are not as strong swimmers as bull trout and cannot hop out of the water to use riparian habitat like tailed frogs. As a result, they are likely to respond very differently to stream disturbance events.

FIELD REPORT

Courtney Mitchell – Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute Dayen

I started as a Dayen with the Society for Wilderness Stewardship, working with the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, just prior to the citizen science trip with the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation and Here Montana. My goal was to participate, and learn about the experience of volunteers to understand the social impact of this experience. After a crash course in learning about participant observation – a method used by anthropologists to systematically participate in and observe social events – I prepared myself to go to Sunburst Lake in the Bob Marshall Wilderness with several other participants. The 10 mile hike into the Bob Marshall Wilderness was going to be the most strenuous hike I'd done – let alone with 50 pounds on my back – so I was nervous of what was to come.

It had been raining, and I kept asking myself what I had gotten myself into going on this trip. After a few hours, we reached our campsite and were dismayed to realize the space was not big enough for our group. We decided to hike the rest of the way to Sunburst Lake where we knew we would find an adequate campsite. But it was raining, and we were all soaked and tired from the long hike. Some were even irritable, including myself. But we trekked through 4-foot-tall vegetation and, about a mile and a half later, we made it to Sunburst Lake and were greeted by a small burst of sunshine.

Seeing the sunshine peek through the clouds and over the lake was a once in a lifetime experience. Hiking through the most beautiful wilderness I have ever seen was a bonus on top of that. We set up camp and enjoyed the rest of our night. Over the next couple of days we collected water samples, and also enjoyed our time by swimming, fishing, building a fire, and getting to know more about each other.

When I think of wilderness, I think of untouched, beautiful land. Wilderness is important to me because it protects a wide diversity of plants and wildlife that we all care about. Being in wilderness gave me a sense of connection with that land and appreciation for what it has done for us and will continue doing for us in the future. I walked away from that trip with an understanding that no one should take wilderness for granted.



REMEMBERING A LIFE WELL LIVED

Editor's Note: Gordon Ash was a pillar in our Bob community and inspired many with his passion for this landscape. We're honored to share his obituary at the request of his wife, Susan Kemper.

Gordon Ash, 67, of the Creston area of Kalispell, died July 1 after a short battle with cancer. Born in Oakland, California to Rod and June (Fischer) Ash, both strong advocates of conservation, Gordon developed a life-long passion for conservation, wilderness, and the outdoors, especially hunting, fishing, and the backcountry. Gordon's introduction to Montana began in the early 60's with camping trips to the Glacier Creek area of the Swan Valley. In 1969 Gordon, his parents June and Rod and siblings David, Ellen, and James became summer residents in a one room cabin on Condon Loop Road. There began his love affair with Montana and the wild lands he would call his lifelong home.

He moved to Missoula in 1973 to attend the University of Montana and began his career in Forestry and Recreation. Gordon graduated from the University of Montana in 1979 and worked briefly with outfitters, before spending 25 years with the Flathead National Forest at the Spotted Bear Ranger Station. There he was the wilderness ranger at Big Prairie in the Bob Marshall Wilderness. He met his wife and partner, Susan Kemper, at Big Prairie. Along with a busy and productive career of managing and maintaining trails and administering outfitter camps in the Bob, he explored many a trail with Susan and wetted more than his fair share of fly lines in the backcountry.



In 2006, Gordon and Susan moved to Twin Bridges where Gordon worked for both Dillon and Madison Districts on the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest. Gordon retired in 2019, and in 2020, he and Susan returned to the Flathead Valley with their dogs, horses, and mule. Gordon continued to actively advocate for conservation and wilderness, serving on the Flathead Conservation District.

Gordon never forgot a friend, and they never forgot him, from his beloved UM college friends, to many young workers in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, to mentors, coworkers and to others he met on his life's journey. All were greeted with a sincere bear hug, friendly banter, and a welcome to join him in whatever he was doing. Gordon had a rich life, well led through his love of friends, Grizzly football, camping, fishing, travel, his many beloved animals, and the backcountry. He was a

lifelong steward of the land and land ethics. He is survived by Susan (wife of 30 years), his siblings, numerous nieces and nephews, and his four-legged family of dogs: Ramblin' and Ziggy, horses: Summer, Merlin, and Jocco, and mule: Thumper.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to MT Public Radio, the Bob Marshall Foundation, Swan Valley Connections, or your own favorite charity.

For more of Gordon's tales, go to bmwf.org/stories to hear him speak at the 2016 Stories from the Bob.



Physic Flowered Buckwheat Aug. 23 11/15



Campsite at Colvin Cr. Bob Marshall 8/23 11/15



Buckwheat Aug. 23 11/15

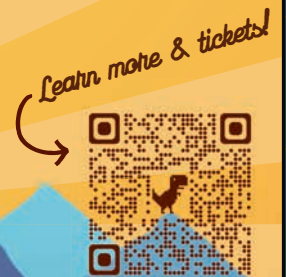
Watercolors
by Marcha Johnson,
Volunteer



Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation
PO Box 190688
Hungry Horse, MT 59919

THE *Bob* FEST

MUSIC-FOOD-FUN-FOR THE BOB



Friday, Nov. 10th 2023 • 6-9 pm • Flathead Co. Fairgrounds

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