

# **2017 MONTANA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING**

**Held Jointly with the  
NORTHWEST SECTION OF TWS**

## **HABITAT: The Science, Art, and Politics of Conserving It**

**March 6 - 10, 2017 at the Radisson Colonial Hotel in Helena, MT**

### **Theme**

#### **HABITAT: The Science, Art, and Politics of Conserving It**

Habitat is fundamental to the very existence of wildlife. It provides the necessities of life such as food, security, thermal cover and nesting cover. As scientists and wildlife managers, we strive to understand its influence on the ecology of wildlife populations. As land managers, we use this knowledge to inform decisions on maintaining or improving quality habitat across the landscape. Variables such as long-term ecological processes, landownership, and legislative actions greatly affect habitat quality and the need and/or ability to manage and conserve it.

Natural changes in the environment such as loss of aspen, shrub- and grasslands to conifer expansion and the large-scale mountain pine beetle infestations, have occurred across the inter-mountain west, including Montana. These changes have focused public and private land managers' attention on habitat restoration projects. Various techniques and tools are being employed to accomplish this task and are worthy of discussion as to their effectiveness.

In Montana, approximately 70% of the land is in private ownership, providing millions of acres of wildlife habitat, including critical habitat such as winter and birthing ranges and migration corridors. This highlights the role that private landownership plays in wildlife conservation while emphasizing the impact, positive or negative, that land use can have on wildlife populations by affecting their habitat.

Public land in Montana is primarily administered by federal agencies (Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service) and state agencies (Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks) that are tasked with managing habitat, often with varying mandates and objectives. Policies and programs within each agency define to what level habitat is managed for the benefit of wildlife.

Federal legislation has a major impact on habitat management in Montana. The Equal Access to Justice Act and the Endangered Species Act have allowed for large scale environmental litigation that can cripple federal land management agencies' ability to manage our public resource. Changes in the Farm Bill have led to a significant loss of sagebrush and native range habitat as CRP acres have been converted to cropland. Understanding the significance of such legislative mandates is important as we continue to move forward managing our public resources.

During the 2017 Annual Conference of the Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society, we aim to explore these topics in depth in order to better understand their role or influence in conserving habitat and how ultimately it affects our wildlife resources.

### **Registration Coming Soon!!!!**

Please see our website <http://wildlife.org/montana-chapter/> in the near future for conference registration information and more on the conference schedule, workshops, plenary session info, etc. In addition, I'll be sending you reminders on a regular basis so you won't forget this exciting upcoming event!

## Hotel Information

Hotel rooms are available for conference attendees at the rate of \$92/night (government rate) and \$129/night (non-government rate). A block of rooms has been set aside for each and will be held until February 10, 2017. After this date reservations will be based on availability. For reservations, call 406-443-2100 (mention **Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society**) or use the following links:

Non State Employee Link:

<http://www.radisson.com/reservation/itineraryEntrance.do?hotelCode=USAHEMT&promotionalCode=MTWILD>

State Employee Link:

<http://www.radisson.com/reservation/itineraryEntrance.do?hotelCode=USAHEMT&promotionalCode=MTCWS>

Other hotels nearby if needed or desired include the Super 8 ([406-443-2450](tel:406-443-2450)), Jorgenson's Inn and Suites ([406-449-0155](tel:406-449-0155)), and Howard Johnson ([406-443-2300](tel:406-443-2300)). **Remember, the legislature will be in session during our meeting so it is to your benefit to make your reservations early.**

**IF you run into any problems trying to make reservations at the Radisson Colonial Inn, let me know. Thanks.**

## Feeling Generous?

Want to be part of the event and give a little time? I'm looking for volunteers to help with the following: session moderators, judges for student posters and presentations, and help with the student mixer, registration table, **juggling and the puppet show** (just checking to see if anyone is reading this! Lol).

Please contact Vanna Boccadori ([mtws.preselect@gmail.com](mailto:mtws.preselect@gmail.com)) with your desire to be part of this amazing event!

## Need Meeting Time/Space or Information Table?

If you have a working group that needs some meeting time during the annual conference or if you'd like to set up an information table for your business or organization, please let me know ASAP so that I can accommodate your needs. Let me know the name of your group or meeting, when you'd prefer to meet, how many in your group, and whether you'll need food and/or beverage service during your meeting. Additional charges may apply to cover the costs of room or table rental, food and beverages.

## Abstract/Presentation and Poster Submission

This notice serves as the **1<sup>st</sup> call** for oral and poster presentations. Presentations related to the theme as well as all aspects of wildlife conservation and management are welcome. University students are highly encouraged to participate. Special consideration will be given to teams of research and management professionals who present the management need, policy, and application aspects as well as the data collection and analysis aspect of a project. Oral presentations will be scheduled in 20 minute blocks for individuals or 40 minute blocks for teams, which include 5 minutes for questions. Student posters are to be set up Thursday morning. Awards will be presented for best student posters and presentations.

### **THE DEADLINE FOR ABSTRACT SUBMISSION IS FEBRUARY 6, 2017.**

Electronic submissions are preferred. See paper/poster abstract guidelines below. Please submit abstracts to:

Vanna Boccadori  
2016 President-Elect  
[mtws.preselect@gmail.com](mailto:mtws.preselect@gmail.com)  
1820 Meadowlark Lane  
Butte, MT 59701  
[406-494-2082](tel:406-494-2082)

**Abstract Guidelines**

Please submit your abstract electronically to my email address given above. If you do NOT have access to email, please submit your abstract on a CD along with a hard copy; clearly label both with pertinent ID information including name of the lead author, abstract title, lead author contact phone number and email address.

The person submitting the title/abstract should provide a separate detailed list of information for each author including: place and full address of employment, email and phone number, what authors are students, and whether the presenting author is a student and if so whether s/he wants the presentation judged. Indicate the representing author with an asterisk next to their name.

Follow the format for the publication in the **Intermountain Journal of Sciences**  
(<http://www.intermountainjournal.org/>)

Use WordPerfect or Microsoft Word, single space, a paragraph indent for all but the first 2 lines, and no hard returns within a paragraph. Abstracts should be no more than 250 words (excluding abstract title and author information) and should contain a statement of the issue, project objectives, a brief summary of the methods, major findings and key conclusions.

#### **Format Example**

\*\*\*Please be sure to follow this format (see detailed instructions above). Abstracts in a different format may be returned to the author for reformatting and will need to be resubmitted.

### **TEN YEARS OF WOLF-UNGULATE DYNAMICS IN THE MADISON-FIREHOLE DRAINAGE OF YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK**

Matthew S. Becker\*, Ecology Department, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana 59717

Robert A. Garrott, Ecology Department, Montana State University, Bozeman, Montana 59717

Patrick J. White, Yellowstone Center or Resources, Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming 82190

This study utilizes long-term research on a tractable and relatively unexploited wolf-elk-bison system in central Yellowstone, from 1996 to 2006, to investigate wolf recolonization dynamics, predation rates, and prey selection. Employing a combination of ground-based radio-telemetry and ground-tracking and monitoring methods, over 670 kills, 1400 locations and 3200 kilometers of tracking data were amassed from multiple wolf packs preying on a resident elk herd and a migratory bison herd. The ratio of wolves to ungulates is possibly the highest predator-prey ratio ever recorded, as wolf density, space use, and predation pressure in the study area increased. Wolf use of the study area increased from a few itinerant wolves, to multiple established packs, before decreasing to primarily one pack. Elk comprised the preferred prey for wolves, and the ratio of preferred to alternative prey was predictably variable, both within and across years and packs. Prey selection trends demonstrate that wolves are increasingly utilizing bison as prey, such that bison comprised the majority of wolf diets in winter 2006. The potential implications of this on future wolf-ungulate dynamics are addressed.

### **Poster Guidelines**

It is recommended that posters be 36"x48" and mounted on foam board. Easels will be available. Posters will be exhibited from 9AM Thursday, March 8, 2017 until the banquet that evening. Judging will occur throughout the day and awards given at the banquet.

### **Sponsors**

It's true. Money does not grow on trees. Sponsors are a vital part of providing the quality conference that we enjoy each year. If your organization/business or an organization/business that you know of would like to sponsor some aspect of the annual conference (snack breaks, evening social, door prize, etc) please let me know ASAP. I'll be happy to take the ball and run with it if you'll provide me with a contact.

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Thanks so much for your interest and participation. I look forward to seeing you at the Conference!  
Vanna