Amidst the chaos of 2020, MGC initiated our new Wilderness Grant program. Learn about the projects we’re funding this year.

Meet Our Wilderness Grant Recipients

B. Thomas brings us the first installment of “Wild Thoughts,” creative writing about wild Montana.
Welcome to Volume 10, Issue 1 of The Wilderness Voice, our first edition in 2021!

Last year Susie McDonald, the founder of our newsletter and its longtime editor, publisher, do-everything-needed-to-get-it-done person, retired after many years of volunteer service. Many thanks Susie for a great decade of publications! Our new newsletter coordinator and do-everything person is Mikaela Howie, who is also on our chapter board. Please welcome Mikaela to our chapter newsletter!

We hope to publish three editions this year and then four editions in subsequent years. Let us know if you’d like to contribute an article or have thoughts about our content.

Our biggest and brightest news is the recent promotion of Emily Cleveland to the position of Conservation Director with MWA. Emily’s previous position was Senior Field Director, where she worked most closely with the Madison- Gallatin and Southwest Montana Chapters since April 2018.

We will certainly miss Emily as our local staffer, but wish her the best in her new assignment! She will be wearing two hats until her successor as field director is named in the coming weeks. Both Emily and the new Field Director will be based in Bozeman. Congratulations Emily, and thanks for the great guidance and support you’ve provided for our chapter and our regional landscape for the past three years! We look forward to working with you in your new position.

At our chapter’s Annual Meeting last December our membership elected three new members to our chapter board of directors: Forrest Schoessow, Tami Clark and Mark Gunther. Two members of our board retired at the end of 2020, David Steinmuller and Linda Grimm. In January of this year our new board elected officers for 2021 as follows: Roger Jenkins, treasurer; Doug Bartholomew, secretary; Jeanette Hall, chapter representative; Forrest Schoessow, vice president; and Tom Ross, president. Our at-large members of the board are: Richard Lyon, Lisa Lenard, Mikaela Howie, Lisa Trankley, Tami Clark, Mark Gunther and Stephanie Lindsay, our newest member who was appointed by the board in February.

We welcome each of our new members and have already benefitted from their contributions. Our chapter board now stands at 12 members.

Our board is active and engaged in a number of committee-led initiatives and activities, some of which are reported elsewhere in this newsletter. We welcome the input and participation of our chapter membership in our activities and are always looking for volunteers to help with events, participate on committees and to join the board. Our current committees are Membership and Outreach, Wilderness Essay, Wilderness Grants, Stewardship Programs and Leadership Programs. Please reach out to us if you are interested in helping or joining. It is a great experience working to support MWA’s goals with a bunch of talented, dedicated volunteers and staff.

Happy trails.

From the President

News and chapter updates

Tom Ross
Madison-Gallatin Chapter President

Monthly Board Meeting

Every third Tuesday
5:30 p.m. (online for now)

Chapter Leadership

President: Tom Ross
Vice President: Forrest Schoessow
Chapter Representative: Jeanette Hall
Treasurer: Roger Jenkins
Secretary: Doug Bartholomew

Board Members: Tami Clark, Mikaela Gioia Howie, Mark Gunther, Lisa Lenard, Stephanie Lindsay, Richard Lyon, and Lisa Trankley

Contact Us
mwamgc@wildmontana.org

Montana Wilderness Association
Madison-Gallatin Chapter
Meet Stephanie Lindsay

Learn about Madison-Gallatin Chapter’s newest board member

A native Montanan, Stephanie Lindsay left the state to pursue a decades-long career as a professional modern dancer, choreographer, and teacher. Following that career, she earned a doctorate in Leadership Studies which she taught through distance learning to refugees in Africa. Later, she taught graduate research courses to students in an integrated medicine and health sciences program. Stephanie was delighted to return to Montana where she now directs and teaches the Leadership Fellows Program in Bozeman at Montana State University. Stephanie uses arts- and nature-based modalities to deliver course content in leadership studies and trauma-informed education.

NexGen Takes Flight

By Lisa Trankley, Committee Chair

The Madison-Gallatin chapter is creating a council comprised of young leaders interested in furthering MWA’s goals! The group will serve in an advisory role to our chapter board of directors, create and implement projects consistent with MWA’s statewide objectives, and attract and encourage young people to become active in MWA.

In February, eight impressive candidates met with the MGC Leadership Committee and each other in a Zoom discussion of the goals for the group and the interests of the candidates. The candidates have already made plans to discuss a charter or statement of purpose for the group, organizational ideas and a name for their group.

Stephanie Lindsay of the Leadership Committee agreed to be a liaison with the group and use her skills as a Professor of Leadership Studies at Montana State University to assist them as necessary. The Leadership Committee will also provide guidance to ensure the council’s activities are consistent with MWA objectives.

We are looking forward to watching this energetic and creative group grow. If you’re interested in learning more or even joining the new group, please contact Lisa Trankley at lisa.trankley@gmail.com.

Wilderness Essay Contest

By Jeanette Hall, Committee Chair

The Madison-Gallatin Chapter is pleased to offer our second annual Wilderness Essay Contest for high school seniors. The contest was again made available to seniors in Bozeman and Belgrade high schools and we expanded the field to include seniors at Park High School in Livingston, and Ennis, Twin Bridges, Harrison and Sheridan high schools in Madison County.

The purpose of the contest remains the same: to elevate the awareness and appreciation of Wildness, public lands and Montana Wilderness Association among high school seniors. The essay prompt this year included a quote on climate change and asked essay writers to discuss the impacts and relationship between climate change and Wilderness. Essays were limited to no more than 1,250 words and will be judged for ability to address the topic, creativity, and structure.

First place award winners will receive $300 each; merit award winners will receive $150. The deadline for submitting essays was April 1 and the committee judges are now evaluating the responses.

Awards will be given to the winners during the month of May.
ERIN CLARK
SENIOR FIELD DIRECTOR

Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act

Passage of the BCSA will set the stage and create momentum for other collaborative proposals

MWA’s top legislative priority is the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act (BCSA). Passage of the act will designate 79,060 acres adjacent to the Bob Marshall, Mission Mountains, and Scapegoat Wildernesses. These Wilderness additions will protect headwater tributaries of the Blackfoot and Clearwater Rivers, important lynx, grizzly bear, mountain goat, elk, and wolverine habitat, and will preserve quiet recreation access points into the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex. In addition, the bill will create two special recreation areas, one for winter snowmobile use and one for mountain biking, creating motorized and mechanized recreation and economic opportunities for the Seeley Lake and Ovando communities.

The BCSA has been championed and shepherded by Sen. Tester for nearly a decade now. His support for the bill is steadfast, and he is effusive about how the collaborative origins of the bill represent how we best get things done in Montana. If you have a moment, give his office a phone call at 202-224-2644 or send him an email thanking him for elevating BCSA as a priority and creating opportunities for the bill to move.

This bill may sound similar to another proposal we’re talking about in this region— the Lincoln Prosperity Project. That’s not a coincidence (read more on page 5). The collaboration and resulting proposal that created the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act (BCSA) helped inspire the similar proposal that community members just east, in Lincoln, Montana have drawn up. Passage of the BCSA will set the stage and create momentum for movement of the Lincoln Prosperity Project’s proposal and for other proposals being created around the state.

The BCSA landscape has had three legislative opportunities thus far— once as a component of the Forest Jobs and Recreation Act and then twice as a standalone bill. The bill hasn’t been included in any public lands legislative packages primarily because Sen. Daines, who serves on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee (SENR), has not supported the bill nor helped to move it through committee and onto the Senate floor.

While Sen. Daines remains on the SENR committee in the new Congressional session that just began in January, other realities have shifted his influence. The Democrats now hold the majority in the Senate and the leadership of the SENR committee has changed accordingly. Even without Sen. Daines’ support, there is now new potential and promise for BCSA to successfully pass through this committee. You can expect to see us continuing to encourage his support and holding him accountable if he doesn’t provide it, but even without his support 2021 should hold opportunities for BCSA.

Here are the steps we expect the bill to achieve over the next six months:

- Re-introduction in the Senate by Sen. Tester,
- a hearing and mark-up in the SENR committee, and
- a Senate floor vote.

The bill will then be well positioned for inclusion in any public lands package that comes together in the Senate.

What can you do right now? Consider joining us for one of the Wilderness Walks that will take place on the BCSA landscape this summer, so that you can get to know the landscape firsthand. Reach out to let me know you’d like to write a letter to the editor for a local paper encouraging BCSA as a public lands priority for all Montanans. Talk to your friends about this bill and the opportunity it presents for our state and for generations to come, and encourage those people to then call Sen. Tester or Sen. Daines’ offices to let them know they’d like to see the bill pass in this Congressional session (Daines’ office: 202-224-2651). If you know of any business owners, share info with them about the bill and encourage them to reach out to me to become an endorsing business. They’d be joining over 160 other businesses from around the state!

The BCSA has traveled a long road, but we’ve never waivered on it as a priority and our destination feels closer than it has ever felt before. Thanks for continuing to lend your voice to optimizing its chances for passage.
On March 18, I attended a virtual open house for the Lincoln Prosperity Proposal which would provide new management for 200,000 acres within various areas of the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest. The purpose of the agreement is to boost local economies, create jobs, protect public lands, and enhance outdoor recreation. Once fully in effect, the agreement would strengthen the local economy of Lincoln and surrounding areas, provide sustainable management of forest lands and water, and enhance outdoor recreation.

The Lincoln prosperity group that developed the proposal is composed of 14 members who have worked collaboratively over many years to bring this proposal to fruition. Zach Angstead represents MWA in the group which includes ranchers, outfitters, loggers, foresters, firefighters, conservationists, trail vehicle riders, mountain bikers, snowmobilers, and community council members. Besides MWA, The Wilderness Society and Montana Wildlife Federation are also represented in the group. Several prosperity group members spoke during the open house, and it was clear that dedication to their community and its prosperity carried them through many challenges and difficult conversations to ultimately yield an agreement acceptable to all.

Of the many decisions made by this collaborative group, the agreement would create 56,000 new acres of wilderness around the Lincoln Valley which would expand the Scapegoat Wilderness by 16,000 acres and designate a new 40,000-acre Nevada Mountain Wilderness Area. Although significant accomplishments at the local level, federal legislation is required to ultimately attain these goals. Other decisions include plans for forest conservation and restoration, stream protections, fishing, hunting, wildlife watching opportunities, and motorized and non-motorized recreation options. To learn more about the proposal, view a map, and become a supporter, visit [lincolnprosperity.com](http://lincolnprosperity.com).

### Wilderness Grant Program

Amidst the chaos of 2020, Madison-Gallatin Chapter initiated our new Wilderness Grant Program. The goal of the grant program is to foster a connection between the our chapter and local researchers who are working to enhance Montana’s Wilderness and wildlands, the public’s enjoyment and understanding of wildlands, interactions between wildlife, habitat and recreationalists, and other creative research and activities in furtherance of wilderness values.

The recipient of our first call for proposals, during summer 2020, was Briana Whitehead who gave an excellent presentation on her project entitled, “The Response of Paraffluvial Soils to Beaver Mimicry Restoration in a Montane Stream,” that many of our members were able to join “pandemic style” via zoom.

During the fall of 2020, we funded three more awardees whose research is focused on bettering our understanding of threats to Montana’s waters and offers insights to the Pika population of Gallatin Canyon.

April Craighead of the Craighead Institute was awarded $500 towards completing her research detailing the impact of climate change on our alpine Pika friends. Learn more about the Gallatin Canyon Pika’s by reading through April’s final report that can be found at [wildmontana.org/mgc](http://wildmontana.org/mgc), under Wilderness Grants.

Paul Helfrich, a master’s student in the Department of Biology at Montana Tech University, was awarded $800 to help complete his research regarding “Tetracapsuloides bryosalmonae in the Big Hole River: Detection via eDNA”.

Finally, Bryan Chamba, also completing his graduate degree at Montana Tech University was awarded $500 in support of his research Microbial metal fluxes in metal-rich springs and seeps for healthier watersheds. He will present his findings in a virtual presentation during the summer of 2021.

The Wilderness Grant Program is open to the general public and we anticipate another request for proposals this coming fall.

Please also stay tuned to announcements of upcoming presentations of the unique research you support with your MWA membership!
From nowhere, he now sits just barely inside the faintest glow from my campfire, just at the edge of wildness, warmth and companionship. Visible only as a darker shadow imposed on the surrounding darkness, motionless and silent so that his intentions are unknown to me, perhaps to him as well.

How long has he been sitting there, watching, sensing? I can occasionally make out his profile, mostly his erect ears and broad head. Is he focused on me, or casting his senses outward, into the darkness? Friend or foe? Or just pausing in his own journey with no thought of either? He is unmoved by the distant howling but vigilant, perhaps assessing his options.

My small fire provides safety and warmth yet he inspires chills, a sense of wildness and aloneness that can breed fear if fear resides. I sit uneasily, trying to determine if my place in this setting is well earned and hence respected by his keener senses. My thoughts are transported; what is he thinking? Does he fear, or is he driven by a consuming hunger? I know his place in the wild better than my own, and his place is indeed well earned and respected. Does fear simmer in both or just one of us?

We both sit, unmoving and silent, me barely warmed by my dwindling fire and him just at the boundary of my vision, my fear, my comfort. Snowfall hisses as it kisses the coals and spreads its blanket across the rocks and duff. My firewood is just beyond the circle of light, that perimeter of fear, and the night is growing colder and wetter, as am I. My tent and gear are farther yet, beyond the edge.

No movement betrays his intentions. Is my fear larger and closer than I dare to acknowledge? My dwindling fire is comfort, safety. But the darkness and the wild are his home, his place. I’m a guest, welcome or not. Is he looking at me, or through me? I can’t see his eyes but he must see mine. He may see my soul. He knows my place, even as I know his. I slowly put the last nearby scraps of wood on the fire, hoping for a bit more light, aided by the now white ground; just a bit more light to see him, to see his eyes, to judge his intentions. But the night swallows the firelight, just shy of enough! Yet I am now better illuminated for his appraisal. He’s slightly downwind of my fire and on higher ground. He was drawn not by scent of food, save possibly me, but perhaps by my smoke and his curiosity.

He must have lurked for some time before deliberately picking his ground just beyond the range of my inferior senses and at the edge of my fear. We have both chosen our ground, mine first for my comfort and convenience, his secondly and more strategical-ly to suit his purposes, still unknown to me.

It’s cold, damp and I’m bone tired and chilled after a long day in the mountains. My fire is dying in the snowfall and my hunger grows. It’s time to test my place in nature, test my fear, my courage. A passing cloud reveals the moon for a brief moment, shining through a small hole in the threatening sky and I slowly stand and turn toward him, figuring to trigger some instinct in one or both of us. A pale light washes quickly across the landscape, altering perception and revealing that he sits with his back to me, looking out into the wild, his senses on high alert.

I give a low whistle and he immediately arises and trots to my feet, curling up by the dying embers. I warm my hands in his fur before getting another log for the fire. My dog and I will sleep well tonight. I’m comforted by my place in this wilderness and our connection to it.
Pandemic Hiking

by Roger Jenkins, Chapter Treasurer

While hiking on what Susie might call an “Un-trail”, we had both stepped over a VERY fresh and very large pile of bear scat. We finally rejoined an old Forest Service road, but it was so grown up with tall grass that you could only tell from your feet that you were walking on a road bed. Suddenly, a fairly good sized large brown object rose above the tall grass and looked at us. I could tell it was a young grizzly. It looked at me, and then its eyes shifted to Susie, behind and to my right. Well, I thought, this critter looks like the long-lost twin of “Baby Bear” – a three year old female that we saw several times on Katmai Nat’l Park’s east coast several years ago. I wondered how this might play out ... First had come the lock downs, and then the stay-at-home orders for our State and some surrounding states. We had had several trips planned between the first of April and the end of June of 2020, all of them (and many more to come, as it turns out) were in the toilet. We understood, for sure. The start of a pandemic surely must be the scariest part, because you don’t know how bad things will get. But to say we were disappointed, albeit safe, was a huge understatement. As soon as the Stay-at-home order was lifted for Montana, Susie, campground-reservation-finder-extraordinaire, got to work. In about an hour, she had found an opening in Logan State Park. Never heard of it? Well, neither had we, but it is popular with boaters. So by mid-June, we were off, to try to find lemonade from the pandemic lemons.

Our first day of hiking from Logan State Park (about halfway between Kalispel and Libby) was an attempt to get to a meadow a few miles north of where we were camped in our little travel trailer. The start of the “trail” (note the quotes) was an old road bed, but after a mile or so following Barnum Creek, the trail became quite faint. OK, there were places that one might discern that someone had hiked a few weeks ago, but the route was just a slog thru brush. We made several attempts to get to this meadow, but decided after a while that we would have burned sufficient calories to justify our dinner for that evening, so we turned around. It was less than a half-hour from our turn around point when we came upon the aforementioned young bear. It took a look at us, and turned to its right, and ran off rapidly, because, well, you never know what those crazy bipeds with many-colored clothing will do ... We did not even have time to pull our bear spray out of our holsters, let alone a camera, before the bear was gone. Susie and I chatted for a minute, and came to the conclusion that the bear did look young, which might mean that it was running back to its mother to notify her of the presence of those crazy colorful bipeds.

We moved carefully down the road bed past the spot where the bear had run off into the woods, bear spray in hand. But no momma bear came rushing thru the brush to defend her offspring. Which was completely fine with us. After we got a few hundred yards downhill of the encounter spot, we decided that the potential threat had lessened, and so put our bear spray away. As we hiked back to the car, both of us agreed that it was really neat to see a grizz while out hiking, because it was probably the first time outside a Nat’l Park while we had experienced such. But that said, Susie made it clear that our next day’s hike would NOT be on what she considered an Un-trail.

Hey, I can get the message. So the following day, we headed down the road a bit further and turned west into the Kootenai Nat’l Forest toward a trail head for the Geiger Lakes in the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness. The Wilderness was part of the landmark Wilderness Act, signed into law in September, 1964. It is pretty isolated, and it being nearly 400 miles away from our home, we had yet to visit it. Our plan was to drive up the Forest Service road along Lake Creek until we got to the trailhead, and hike to at least the lower of the Geiger Lakes.

Apparently, several other folks had the same idea on this day, which was gorgeous. The hike is up through woods, but patches of sunlight revealed some lovely wild-flowers, a great excuse to take a breather...
and photograph. The route to the lower Geiger Lake is but a couple of miles, and we decided to press on, understanding that the likelihood of encountering trail blocking snow at this time of year was substantial. Sure enough, as we gained the ridge 450 feet above Lower Geiger Lake and prepared to drop down on a north facing slope, we ran into more and more snow. We had decided it would be more prudent to turn around and look for a lunch spot. We found one that had wonderful views of the lower lake. Susie was happy to be on a real-trail, as opposed to an Untrail.

This, indeed, was a real “lemonade” kind of day.

Throughout the summer and early fall, we would continue to use our “rolling isolation unit” (aka, our small travel trailer) as an “advanced basecamp” as we would continue to seek out more lemonade kinds of days. To be sure, we encountered both lemons and lemonade on travels elsewhere in Montana, as well as the Bighorn mountains in Wyoming, the Uinta Mountains of Utah, the Sawtooths of Idaho and Ruby Mountains of Nevada. And wildfires and wild weather provided for additional challenges beyond the pandemic. But such just meant that the lemonade, when you found it, was so much sweeter.

Artist’s Corner

An Ode to Spring by Pregrine’s Perspective, MWA Member

Early blooms find Success
Stark naïveté against Odds
Determination of Life

Photo by Mikaela Gioia Howie
Philosophers and big thinkers have been arguing for the past 50 years or so that there is no such thing as “true wilderness” anymore, that humans have extended our technological grasp so far into every nook and cranny of the planet, leaving no place untouched by human influence. And, indeed, global climate change is impacting the most remote regions; global trade has brought invasive species across trading routes to decimate wild native populations; pollutants dumped into waterways in urban sites make their way into mountain spring water through the deeply interconnected networks of natural systems. And while I de-fault to an integrated, eco-centric lens when thinking about the value of wilderness as a refuge for countless species of flora and fauna, when communicating the value of wilderness to those less eco-minded, I have found it helpful to shift to a more anthropo-centric perspective.

Scientifically, ecologically, we know what lasting value wilderness has for conserving delicate ecosystems, even if they cannot be fully protected from humanity’s “advancements.” But why should humans really care about protecting these spaces? The human reach is virtually inescapable. Incredibly, virtual reality, some scholars argue, may be the best way to find a true wilderness experience in the future. So why do we bother protecting wilderness? Why do we still seek out wild spaces? If we shift our thinking away from imagining wilderness experiences as primal, pristine communion with nature, what is there still to benefit?

Wilderness, it turns out, even a new reality of what constitutes “wild,” is still integral to the American psyche. Knowing there are still spaces we can escape to where, while we may still see other humans and will certainly find examples of human interference with natural systems, we will not hear the clatter of semis on the freeway, we can feel dirt and grass beneath our hiking boots instead of concrete, we can see the stars as clearly as our ancestors could and imagine and wonder about our own origins, uninterrupted by nothing but coyotes communing and owls searching, unencumbered by screens artificially and myopically illuminating the world around us.

We don’t just love these spaces; we need them. We rely on their mere existence for sanity. Yes, you can find nature in urban spaces, you can enjoy some natural beauty on Sourdough Trail or even a walking path that runs from Main St to the mountains. These are good things, and we need them too. But we have to be able to know there are places we can not just admire and appreciate nature, but where we can become part of it, disappear into it, even if this means a new idea of wilderness.
I haven’t spoken to anyone who is not excited about the return of MWA’s Wilderness Walks this summer. These walks were one of the many causalities of the covid-19 pandemic in 2020 but plans are underway to resume this wonderful program in 2021, reconnecting with a tradition that dates back about 60 years. A final evaluation of the safety of conducting walks this summer will be made in early May, but given the positive news about expected vaccine availability and the outdoor setting of the events, it currently seems very likely that we will be good to go!

Of course, we will observe proper protocols regarding ride sharing and social distancing before, during and after the hikes. Watch your emails from MWA for more information in the coming weeks.

All Wilderness Walks will take place in July, August and September this summer, so the season will be a little shorter than normal. Nevertheless, our great volunteers across the state have submitted plans to conduct almost 80 events across all seven of our chapter regions! Those Wilderness Walk events include traditional hikes, educational and artistic trips, trail runs, family outings, state park visits and many more interesting themes.

As usual, a brief description of each will be listed in MWA’s annual Discover Wild Montana book that is slated for publication in late May. MWA members who have contributed at least $40 toward their household membership in the last 12 months will receive the Discover Wild Montana hiking book. Shortly after its publication, MWA will open an online portal to register for the Walks.

These events are free and open to the public, with MWA members getting a few days head start in registering. Group size is limited and many of the events fill up very quickly, so have your hikes selected beforehand and watch your email for the opening of registration so you can make your selections quickly.

Within the Madison-Gallatin Chapter area, we have 12 events scheduled for this summer, including trips into Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area in the Gallatin Range, Yellowstone National Park, Lee Metcalf Wilderness in the Madison Range, and the Crazy Mountains. Those hikes range from about 4 to 16 miles roundtrip, in addition to a trail run of about 8 miles.

Like most of our activities, MWA relies on volunteer leaders and co-leaders to plan and conduct our Wilderness Walks each year. Many of you have filled those roles in the past and it is testimony to the rewards of doing so that many of the same folks volunteer each year. Please consider volunteering next winter to lead a hike in the summer of 2022 – you will be glad that you did.

Visit wildmontana.org/walks for more info.