The change of the season is a natural time to reflect upon all the year’s successes and make plans for the year to come. I am so thankful for all the ways our community works to preserve and protect what we hold so dearly in southwest Montana and I want to reflect on a couple of extraordinary accomplishments here.

MGC has many successful programs collaborating with the Forest Service to maintain our trail system and educate users on proper “Leave No Trace” ethics. You can read MGC Board Member Doug Bartholomew’s reflection on his experience as a Trail Steward volunteer. I would also like to extend a special thank you to Roxanna McLaughlin. Over the past few years, she has spent time at local trailheads educating trail users and helping the Forest Service with stocking and updating signage. We will all miss Roxanna as she takes a break, and we are actively seeking folks willing to continue her great work. Please reach out to Roxanna at gaia_maid@yahoo.com or Sonny Mazzullo at smazzullo@wildmontana.org if you are interested in volunteering as a Wilderness Steward or on a Trail Crew.

In addition to our many hands-on experiences this year, MGC also found success in engaging our public with local research through our Wilderness Grant program and inspiring our younger generation with our Wilderness Essay Contest. You can watch our grant recipients present their MGC-funded research and read the essay submissions online at wildmontana.org/mgc.

I would like to extend an invitation to all MGC members to our first in-person annual meeting in three years! We are very excited to gather all together and have a great evening planned to celebrate our members’ achievements on Monday, December 12 from 6:30–8:30 p.m. at the Mason’s Hall. You can read more about the details of our meeting and our exciting speakers on page 3.

I would also like to put out a call for any and all MGC members to consider joining our board! We are a very active board with lots of opportunities to add your own flavor or just to gain the experience of being a board member. If you are interested, please consider joining a board meeting on the third Tuesday of every month at Fire Station #3 on Vaquero Parkway in Bozeman from 6–8 p.m. Email me at mikaelagioiahowie@gmail.com for more information.

Finally, I am super excited that Winter Adventures are back! Our chapter already has a few snowy events planned, and members will be able to sign up for their favorite trips starting December 18. Please come out and traverse with us on skis and snowshoes – or even learn to track wildlife! See you on the trail.
Madison-Gallatin Chapter Annual Meeting & Celebration

Join us Monday, December 12 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at The Mason’s Hall, 14 S. Tracy Ave., Bozeman

Join us for “Speakers & Sweets” to celebrate our chapter members and the year’s achievements, as well as hear from very special guest speakers. You also won’t want to miss a delectable dessert bar and the chance to win door prizes!

Forrest Schoessow, Ph.D. candidate and MGC board member, will talk about last summer’s chapter-sponsored Beartooth Expedition investigating glacier loss on the Beartooth Plateau. Forrest has stories that will fascinate both scientists and non-scientists alike. We’re also excited to have Joel Sather, a Forest Service resource specialist, talk to us about Wilderness management in the Madison Ranger District. Joel will discuss creative projects that our chapter has partnered with the district on in the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest.

Last but not least, we’ll elect MGC board members and hear an update on the chapter’s activities for this coming winter. Learn more about new and returning board members up for election at wildmontana.org/mgc.

Winter Adventures are Back

MIKAELA GIOIA HOWIE
Acting president and vice president of the Madison-Gallatin Chapter board

We are so excited to offer a host of Winter Adventures this year! Since 1960, Wild Montana volunteers have led group hikes all summer long, but there’s no reason for the fun to stop when the snow starts flying. Beginning in January, Wild Montana will offer Winter Adventures throughout the state and our chapter has some very special outings planned. Signups begin December 15 and you can read about the outings at wildmontana.org/adventures. Do your best snow dance and join us for what’s sure to be a fun season of winter hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, and more!

• Thursday, February 2: Cross-country ski at Hyalite
• Saturday, February 25: Ski or snowshoe trip to Palisades Falls
• Saturday, March 4: GPS Training: Zoom and Field (virtual event with optional in-person workshop)
• Saturday, March 11: Snowshoe or hike trip to Lava Lake
• Saturday, March 25: Wildlife Tracking on Fawn Pass via Snowshoe or Ski

Some outings will be dependent on weather conditions. Learn about required equipment, safety precautions, and more at wildmontana.org/adventures

No dogs or firearms allowed. Full adventure FAQ can be found at wildmontana.org/adventures

Left: Join us on a Winter Adventure (photo by Gloria Burgos)
Recognizing Our Wilderness Stewards

TOM ROSS
Madison-Gallatin Chapter board member

When our chapter launched its stewardship program in 2017, we were focused on giving back to our public lands through the physical maintenance and repair of hiking trails in the Lee Metcalf Wilderness and the Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area. We formed a Stewardship Committee with Richard Lyon and Dean Center as co-chairs, and with great support from Wild Montana's Matt Bowser and Sonny Mazzullo, we worked with the Forest Service to identify and adopt two trails, recruited volunteer trail crew members, and got to work under the banner of our Adopt-A-Trail Program.

Quickly thereafter, long-time chapter member and former board member Roxanna McLaughlin recognized a broader opportunity to support public lands and wilderness values while also spreading the word about Wild Montana. She single-handedly launched a Trail Ambassador program as a companion to our trail crew work. Initially, Rox organized volunteers to be present on the trails where our crews were working, alerting hikers to the work ahead, helping control traffic and supplying information about the trail and any use restrictions.

Her efforts and contributions quickly grew the Trail Ambassador program as she recruited more volunteers and responded to an observed need for more frequent and broader services. The local Forest Service personnel welcomed and encouraged their presence at more trails, and suggested they be known as Wilderness Stewards. Their work expanded to include the cleanup of litter and illegal fire rings, restocking toilet paper in trailside outhouses, talking to users about Leave No Trace principles, and advising users about trail conditions and wilderness use. They also collected extensive user survey data for the Forest Service, reporting the number of trail users, cars at the trailhead, dogs on the trail, hazardous conditions, improper activities, trail maintenance needs and more. Rox maintains an email list of volunteers who coordinate the date and trail where they would make their next appearance, working closely with the Forest Service. They would often set up a table at the trailhead, where trail users could find maps, bottled water and information about Wild Montana and our chapter, and learn about local wilderness areas.

They have been a friendly presence on many trails over the past five years, identifiable by their green Wilderness Steward shirts and eagerness to lend a hand doing whatever was needed on a particular day. I fondly refer to them as Rox’s Rangers, and they...
have all been great ambassadors for Wild Montana and our chapter, and we are greatly appreciative of their volunteer efforts – thank you all very much!

Regrettably, Rox is stepping down from her leadership of the Wilderness Stewards this fall. Small in stature but overflowing with energy and cheer, she will be greatly missed in this role, even though we know she will continue to be an active volunteer for our chapter. We are anxiously looking for someone to assume the coordination of this program, and invite all those who have an interest to please reach out to Rox at gaia_maid@yahoo.com or any member of our chapter board. We would really like to keep this valuable effort going next summer and need your help to do so. Maybe this is your time and your opportunity to give back?

Thank you, Rox, for your vision, dedication, and leadership that created and has been the driving force of the Wilderness Ambassadors for the last five years! It truly wouldn’t have happened without you.

Hello, hiking friends –

I want to thank everyone who showed up or tried this summer! While I’m stepping down as the Wilderness Stewards coordinator, I’ll still very much be involved with the chapter’s volunteer activities. There are ample opportunities all around the Gallatin and Madison areas to do good things, whether it’s a kind presence on a trail or organizing an effort, or getting out on a trail to help with the actual work to keep the trail in good shape.

The chapter is looking for someone to step up and fill my position leading the Wilderness Stewards, and I invite anyone who is interested or would like to know more to reach out to me at gaia_maid@yahoo.com.

I would love to hear from any of you as our seasons make their transit. You might see me as a volunteer on a Wilderness Steward day, or doing some work with another agency that loves all things Wild. Stay well, and stay safe!

For now, happy trails,

Roxanna

Gallatin County Trivia

1. What are the two tallest peaks in the Hyalite Alps, both of which stand 10,333 feet?
   (Hint: They are on opposite sides of Hyalite Creek, one is a “B” and one a “C”)

2. How many nearby peaks above 10,000 feet comprise the Hyalite Alps?
   (Hint: It’s more than you might think)

Answers on page 10
DOUG BARTHOLOMEW  
Madison-Gallatin Chapter member

Do you like big projects even if they involve getting a little dirty?

I first got involved with Wild Montana about 15 years ago through trail crew work. My wife and I saw a volunteer opportunity in a flier, when most communication came through the post office, for an eight-day project at Heart Lake in Yellowstone National Park. We’d heard about Heart Lake from friends who had backpacked there and we thought this would be the perfect chance to explore this part of what we think of as our “backyard” backcountry. The experience was more than what we expected and one we still cherish. Today, while we’re not doing the strenuous projects we used to, we’re still excited to help improve the trails we all use to access our “backyard.”

As a part of Madison-Gallatin Chapter’s Adopt-A-Trail Program, we have volunteered on projects to maintain and restore the Lava Lake and Cliff Creek trails. In 2022, I volunteered on a crew that focused on restoring the trail following along Cliff Creek, which is accessed from a trailhead just beyond the Big Creek Forest Service Cabin in Paradise Valley. There was a muddy hole on the trail that needed to be addressed. The work involved creating a french drain of sorts that would keep the trail tread firm while giving the excess water a way to get past the trail and flow into the creek.

The crew dug out the trail, knee deep in mud, cut fallen logs which were as thick as our hand saws could manage, and crushed rock with hammers to fill the drain. To tell the truth, it was great fun getting down and dirty! And the much-improved trail can be used by all.

Our chapter works with the Forest Service to identify trail maintenance needs in the Custer-Gallatin National Forest, building relationships that offer significant help in our backyard public lands. The Adopt-A-Trail program gives our members opportunities to put their “boots” to work for wildlands, as well as provides hands-on opportunities for non-members to learn more about Wild Montana’s mission. These projects make a real difference in maintaining access for all to the spectacular wild and public lands in our backyards!

Learn more about our Adopt-A-Trail and Wilderness Stewards programs at wildmontana.org/mgc, as well as other opportunities to get outdoors with fellow wildlands enthusiasts – including our upcoming Winter Adventures. I hope to meet more of you on the trails next season!

Madison-Gallatin Chapter Trail Crew volunteers aren’t afraid to break a sweat (photo by Dustin Rothenberg)
Raptor Fest: A Raptor-ific Time!

TAMI CLARK AND MIKAELA GIOIA HOWIE
Board Member and Acting president and vice president of the Madison-Gallatin Chapter board

On October 8, our chapter participated in Bridger Bowl’s Raptor Fest as the community welcomed migrating raptors to town. The festival celebrates a long-standing collaboration with the Bridger Mountains Hawk Watch, which began counting migrating raptors of 18 species on the Bridger ridge in 1991. Golden eagles put on a magnificent display every fall, showcasing the largest known golden eagle migratory pathway in the Lower 48. Wild Montana Field Organizer Hannah Breslin and Wild Montana Public Lands Director Maddy Munson were on site to greet those in attendance. Community members learned about the importance of the Custer-Gallatin National Forest to migratory raptors and other wildlife that call our public lands home.

Thanks to eight volunteers: Cathy Stamm, Mary Casey, Cathy Nolan, Jan and Lisa Arnot, Tessa D’Arlenne, Barbara Jackson, and Tami Clark, our chapter delighted hundreds of young kids and helped them to learn about raptors and our wildlands. The volunteers spent time cutting out 200 raptor masks for younger participants to decorate themselves and learn more about how to identify different species.

Our chapter provided educational games, raptor field guides, and scientific bird-watching journals for our more serious birders. This fun tabling event allowed us to showcase Wild Montana and discuss our conservation efforts with parents, grandparents, and guardians. All had a raptor-ific time, and we’re so thankful to our wonderful volunteers!

photos by Cath Stamm and Tami Clark
They Keep Calling and I Keep Returning

TOM ROSS
Madison-Gallatin Chapter board member

Even when I try to resist the siren call of the Gallatin Crest, thinking I’ll replace this destination with some other hike, it seems I always end up leading a summer Wilderness Walk to the Windy Pass area. It’s a powerful spot for me, full of energy and peace, and I visit it at least a couple of times each year. Maybe that’s why I sometimes have second thoughts about sharing it with others. But then it certainly isn’t mine to keep guarded, and it’s already a well-known destination for those who love wild, wide open high country. So once again, I led a Wilderness Walk to Windy Pass this summer. And once again, I’m glad that I did.

In mid-July, co-leader Mikaela Gioia Howie and I were joined by a small group of eager and happy hikers for the annual excursion: Catherine Cussaguet, Stephen Cole, Lisa Trankley and Tami Clark. We had a few folks who had to cancel in the days before the hike, but we ended up with the perfect size group to suffer the torturous ride to the trailhead and then reap the rewards of an outstanding summer day in the alpine, spent with good company.

We arrived relatively early at the trailhead and were surprised to see more vehicles than I had ever encountered, but no people. I admit to immediate misgivings about how popular our wild places have become in the last couple of years, and I assumed we would have lots of company on the hike, shifting my mood a bit. But everyone seemed well prepared and we quickly got underway. Portal Creek was running low and easy to cross. The first couple of miles through the mature stands of fir and spruce were as pleasant as ever. Everyone in our group seemed to be enjoying themselves and we didn’t see anyone else on the trail, which seemed odd. It’s always fun to see the delight on everyone’s face when this trail emerges from the thick forest into the edge of the alpine meadows that blanket each side of the crest. We soaked in the view, agreed on a destination, and headed toward the Windy Pass cabin and fields of wildflowers beyond that seemed endless, only broken by interspersed small islands of trees.

The mystery of the vehicles was solved when we arrived at the cabin. We found ourselves at the turn-around spot for the Devil’s Backbone Race, a 50 mile out and back trail run along the Gallatin Crest from Bozeman. The vehicles at the trailhead had been left there the evening before by those racers who judged that running 25 miles on the crest was sufficient, and who planned to hike, or run, to the trailhead rather than complete the last half of the race. We arrived at the cabin/aid station about the same time as the second-place racer. We voiced some encouragement, and silently...
groaned in sympathy, as he headed back up the trail. We encountered a few other solitary runners as we continued our hike. (I learned later that nine racers completed the course; not sure how many did not finish.)

We enjoyed a pleasant lunch at 10,000 feet elevation with 360 degree views that encompassed the Crazies, Bridgers, Absarokas, Beartooths, Taylor Hilgards, Spanish Peaks and Tobacco Roots. We strolled through the meadows, looking down over the few remaining snow cornices into the watershed of Big Creek and enjoying the views of southern Gallatin peaks that link the crest to Yellowstone National Park: Elephant Head, Ramshorn and Steamboat Mountain. Sphinx Mountain, Lone Peak and Wilson Peak were prominent to the west and The Sentinel and Hyalite Alps to the north. Across the Paradise Valley was the AB Wilderness, and across the Gallatin Valley stretched three of the four units of the Lee Metcalf Wilderness. Wildflowers and smiles were abundant. We took a longer route back to the main trail; none of us were in a hurry to leave the sea of flowers and stunning scenery.

We were at the heart of the Hyalite Porcupine Buffalo Horn Wilderness Study Area, the subject of intense efforts over many years by many parties to advance the goal of a more permanent protection – an eventual designation by Congress as the Gallatin Crest Wilderness Area. A huge step in that direction was taken when the Custer Gallatin National Forest elected to designate the heart of this WSA as recommended Wilderness in the final version of their land management plan, released in January 2022. Many of our members and readers were heavily engaged over the last five years in that forest planning effort, and for that, I and many others thank you! We still have significant hurdles ahead, but hope springs eternal. And I hope you have the opportunity to visit and appreciate first-hand the many values of this landscape that you have helped secure for future generations.

After all, there is a very good chance someone will be leading a Wilderness Walk to Windy Pass next summer, and a good chance you could end the day with smiles like these.
Hello, Madison Gallatin Chapter! I just wanted to take a moment to introduce myself as the new Bozeman field organizer. I am originally from urban Oakland, California. As a dirt-loving kid, I was lucky enough to spend my weekends in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, collecting grasshoppers and blackberries in the summer and learning to ski at a tiny little resort in the winter (which has everything to do with my love of Bridger Bowl).

In college at UC Santa Barbara, I began to explore the natural world in earnest both academically and recreationally. I earned my bachelor’s in ecology and evolutionary biology with a minor in earth science – a ploy to get me outside under the guise of academics. Outside of the classroom, I was the president of the outdoors club on campus and spent far too many hours driving to the Sierra on weekends.

To shorten my commute to the mountains, I googled “best snow in America” and moved to Jackson, Wyoming, site unseen, via my bicycle when I graduated college.

In Jackson, I worked for a joint powers board, encouraging the growth of locally grid-tied renewable sources and finding funding for energy efficiency projects. After two years in Jackson, I got the itch to explore more and began assistant teaching for field biology courses in Alaska, Hawaii, and Iceland. During these courses, I began learning different land management practices and the cascading effects that they have both on the landscape and the surrounding communities. At the intersection of community, the environment, and recreation, I decided that this field married all of my interests.

I am so excited to hopefully bring some personal expertise but more likely, learn so much from the southwestern Montana community about how we can continue working to protect and manage our wild places.

Answers: 1) Mount Bole and Mount Chisholm are both measured at 10,333 feet. 2) There are nine named peaks and two unnamed peaks with summits above 10,000 feet in the Hyalite Alps. All of these peaks are within about 2.5 miles of Hyalite Lake.
What a year it’s been! I began working for Wild Montana in August 2021, and it has been amazing being the Bozeman Field Director and meeting many of our passionate Madison Gallatin Chapter members. At the beginning of this summer, Wild Montana restructured how our program staff approaches our work. Instead of geographically distributed field directors, we now are leaning into the areas of expertise each of our staff contributes. This means you’ll have the chance to see and hear from more of our staff on a regular basis, not just the staff in our region.

I’ll still be around Bozeman in my new role as public lands director focusing on Forest Service and BLM planning processes and projects across the state. Zach Angstead’s new role is Federal Legislative Director, and you’ll be hearing from him about legislative efforts as they move through the U.S. Congress. Aubrey Bertram continues as our Staff Attorney, but she’ll also be investing more time into expanding climate and energy work. Noah Marion is still our State Policy Director and will be in touch about the upcoming state legislature session. And lastly, Erin Clark has moved into the new role of Organizing Director and has been building out a brand new team of field organizers around the state. Hannah Breslin began as our Bozeman Field Organizer at the end of August 2022, and we could not be more excited to have her on staff.

There have been a lot of exciting things happening at Wild Montana this summer, from fantastic Wilderness Walks and trail stewardship projects to the passing of historic legislation. I wanted to share a few highlights from what’s been happening with our program work and what you can expect in the coming months.

**Inflation Reduction Act**
In August, Congress passed and President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act. The bill brings desperately needed changes to our federal onshore oil and gas leasing program, offering the first meaningful reforms to the program in over one hundred years. Those reforms include an increase in onshore royalty rates and an end to the practice of noncompetitive leasing. These changes will make America’s public lands cleaner and safer, leave local communities better off, and give taxpayers a much fairer rate of return as we transition to a clean energy economy. We’ve worked on these reforms, championing these individual pieces of legislation, for years, and are thrilled that the Mineral Leasing Act was finally updated in many ways.

**What’s next?** The Department of the Interior and the BLM will implement the provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act through a rulemaking process in early 2023. This means there will be the opportunity for additional analysis and public comment. We’ll be hosting informational sessions when this process happens to ensure you to how to get involved and have your voices heard!

**Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act**
This summer, the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act (BCSA) reached a historic milestone and received a markup in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The BCSA was created by Montanans and is supported by 83% of Montanans. Unfortunately, Senator Steve Daines voted against the bill. Had Daines voted yes, the bill would have advanced directly to the Senate floor.

**What’s next?** A tie vote in committee is not the end of the road for the BCSA. Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has the authority to advance a bill to the Senate floor. If he were to do so, the full Senate could then debate and vote on the bill. We’re working hard on this next step and are asking Senator Daines to help get the BCSA passed this year. We’ll keep you informed on how you can help pass the BCSA!