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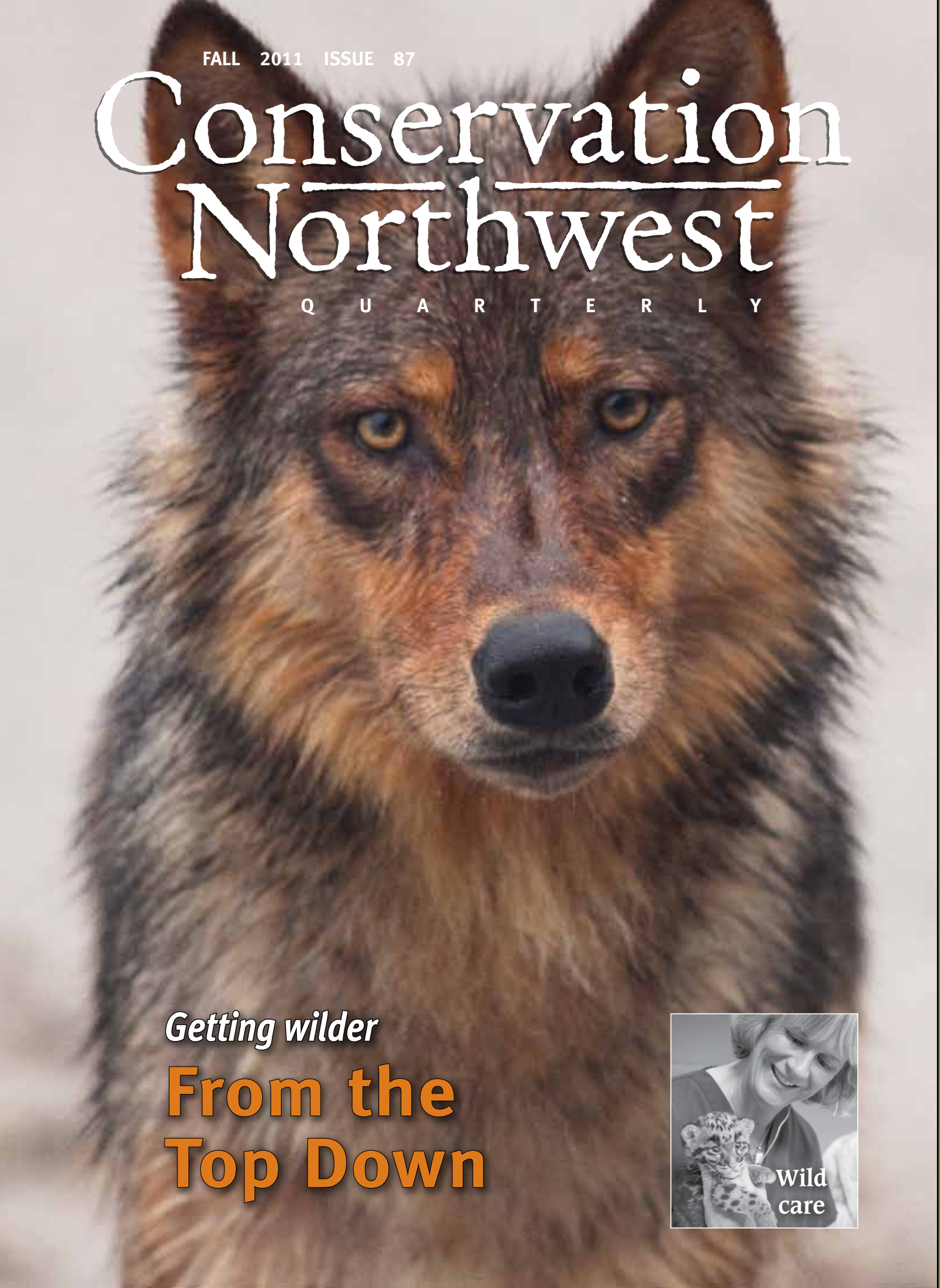
Conservation Northwest

QUARTERLY



Getting wilder

From the Top Down

Inside Conservation Northwest

Conservation Northwest
Keeping the Northwest Wild

Conservation Northwest protects and connects old-growth forests and other wild areas from the Washington Coast to the BC Rockies: vital to a healthy future for us, our children, and wildlife.

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Cover image © David Moskowitz

About the photo: A coastal gray wolf in BC. DNA analysis shows that wolves in the Washington Cascades' Lookout pack originated from coastal British Columbia. Coastal wolves are known to be strong swimmers and can cross rivers and catch and eat fish.

This newsletter features photos and captions by David Moskowitz from his forthcoming book, *Wolves in the Land of Salmon* (Timber Press, Portland Oregon), slated for publication in fall, 2012.

David is also author of *Wildlife of the Pacific Northwest*, a field guide to regional wildlife and wildlife tracking. For more information on his photography and other current projects, visit www.davidmoskowitz.net

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An entry to Conservation Northwest's show & tell photo contest, this stunning landscape by Paul Raymaker captures the rich colors of Blanca Lake in the Henry M Jackson Wilderness. See the summer's winning photo on the back cover!

VIEW FROM THE DIRECTOR

Wilder fortunes for the Northwest

Mitch Friedman. Photo by Jackie Branz

Washington State, land of the latte, Boeing, Microsoft, apples, salmon, spotted owls, and charismatic carnivores. Did you double take on that last one?

Well, wake up! Washington is suddenly a carnivore state, right up there with Idaho and Montana. It's time for us to recognize and celebrate it. Along with steady, healthy populations of cougar, bobcat, and black bear, we now have:

- Close to a half dozen wolf packs, up from zero just a few years ago
- A reintroduced population of fishers in the Olympics, and prospects for the same in the Cascades
- Two of the six grizzly bear recovery areas on the Lower 48, now with photo confirmation of grizzly bears in each, with more documentation of bears just across the BC border
- In the Okanogan Meadows area, the healthiest lynx population in the lower 48 states
- Wolverine confirmed in the Cascades, from Mount Baker to Mount Adams

That resurgence in top predators is not only good, but essential for every critter in the ecosystem, from butterflies to beavers and from song birds to salmonids. **Carnivores are agents for biodiversity.**

Conservation Northwest can claim a share of the credit for these wilder fortunes. Habitat trends, at least in the backcountry, are positive these days. More mountain roads are being yanked than built, and roadless areas and old growth are left alone.

We're making great progress in maintaining habitat links from the North Cascades to the Central Cascades, Rockies, and BC Coast and Chilcotin ranges. We've protected these species from trapping and other harm, and in the case of fisher, even given them a ride south, from BC to the Olympic Peninsula.

All this work will continue. But it's not enough. The current, organized backlash to wolves in eastern Washington, as throughout the Rocky Mountain states, puts to rest any notion that our society has somehow matured past the folklore and prejudice of our past.

While overwhelming majorities of Americans will tell a pollster they favor predators as part of nature, those who do not are able to muster substantial passion, political influence, and, in some cases, a well-aimed bullet.

Conservation Northwest serves you by being in the trenches. Our staff and volunteers are not hanging out in urban cafes reciting wolf poems. We're in the woods maintaining field cameras and fences—in communities like Omak, Twisp, and Orient—building relationships, correcting myths and solving problems. We're in Olympia, Washington DC, and Victoria getting policies enacted to keep the Northwest wild.

Here at Conservation Northwest, we love wolves and all the Northwest's charismatic carnivores. But we spend our time noting not what wolves can do for us, but what we can do for wolves. And we couldn't do this without you.

"Washington is suddenly a carnivore state, right up there with Idaho and Montana. It's time for us to recognize and celebrate it."

The Trickle Down

When God told Noah to load the Ark, he didn't tell the Biblical sailor to maroon the predators. Even back in the day, gods and men alike understood the need for balance in all things. So the lions, tigers, bears, and wolves all got to go sailing.

So what does "balance" mean on the dirt of the everyday ecological playing field? It is where complex interactions unfold between predator and prey, a shared balance that affects in ways not often apparent the myriad other species that share the neighborhood.

From the ecological perspective, balance is defined by the dozens of species interactions driven by struggles between predator and prey under the ground rules of natural selection.

This is the second installment in a two-part series on predators and prey. The first part ran in our spring/summer Conservation Northwest Quarterly.

Grizzly bear and salmon in Kenai, Alaska.

For the wolf and elk, cheetah and gazelle, orca and salmon the dynamic is clear: Eat and be eaten, adapt or die. But it doesn't stop there. The effects of those interactions ripple out across the landscape and the ecological communities, much like local economies.

How the ecological economy stays afloat

Consider what happens when you patronize a local restaurant, like Pascuale's local Torre Café, rather than a big chain store. At Pascuale's, in return for stories about the Genoan countryside and a rhapsody on the simplicity of sardines and spaghetti, you get to help diversify the local Bellingham economy. People congregate in a part of town that wouldn't see such social interactions without the cafe. It becomes a more interesting and lively neighborhood, in turn making Bellingham a more diverse and vibrant town.

By patronizing a mom-and-pop shop like Pascuale's you help prevent what ecologists call "competitive exclusion," a dynamic whereby the "stronger" organisms outcompete the "weaker" ones. By exercising your spending choices you are in effect erecting economic boundaries that are protecting the little fish from the big ones.

Now, consider how predators benefit your ecological neighborhood. Apex predators, like bears, wolves, tigers, and lions are purveyors of biological diversity that operate similarly to human consumers. By preying on certain species, predators, biologists believe, can help level the ecological playing field, by limiting more dominant prey species, both numerically and behaviorally. This winnowing allows others to survive, which in turn makes for more diverse, complex, and resilient ecosystems.

For example, there is data to suggest that mule deer are at a competitive disadvantage to elk and white-tailed deer for the most productive habitats where these animals' ranges overlap. Since wolves prefer elk for dinner—because elk are the best "Full Meal Deal" in the West—the predator keeps the prey off-balance and on the go, essentially allowing for a redistribution of ecosystem wealth to the slight advantage of the mule deer.

By limiting the populations of grazers and browsers generally, carnivores ensure that overall ecosystem production remains robust, which in turn creates habitat for a wide variety of creatures, from birds to spiders. Removing the top predators dissolves the ecological boundaries and may cause one prey species to out-compete another for scarce resources, thus compromising the weaker one's ability to survive.

Joe Scott International conservation director,
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# of Apex Predators

The Alpha male of the beleaguered Lookout Pack left tracks along this ridge in the Washington Cascades. His female mate disappeared the year prior, likely a victim of poaching. © David Moskowitz

The enforcers

Release of the little guys

Similarly, apex predators are the neighborhood enforcers. They keep the so-called mesopredators in check—these are the skunks, opossums, raccoons, and house cats, and in some systems, coyotes and foxes. Not to villainize any wild animal, but unchecked mesopredators are like the small-time crooks and petty thieves of the neighborhood, who steal old ladies' pocketbooks and break into houses. Absent controls by greater powers, they can devastate the "little guy."

In an ecological context, the little guys are the neotropical migrant songbirds and the native rodents, which play critical ecological roles, including insect control, soil aeration, and the spreading of spores of fungi or seeds of native plants. Some of these changes are often at first invisible and the effects only become apparent over time, especially as they are exacerbated by the over browsing and behavioral changes of big ungulates once these deer, elk, and others are freed from the "ecology of fear" as the big predators are lost from the system.

The combination of "mesopredator release" and over-population of ungulates can have devastating ecological consequences for overall ecosystem productivity, richness, and diversity. Ecosystem productivity, diversity (the numbers of niches or "jobs" available), and richness (number of different species in a given area) are the building blocks and health of ecosystems.

It's not so difficult to imagine how influential predators are when you think about how natural systems work. Because prey species eat plants and their seeds, predation on the herbivores shapes plant communities, which in turn influences plant abundance and distribution. This affects interactions not only between the trees and plants themselves but also between the birds, insects, and mammals in a given system.

When the fur trade in the North Pacific very nearly wiped out sea otters, the otters primary marine invertebrate prey, sea urchins, grew unchecked, devastating their main food, the kelp forests, as well as the other invertebrates, fish, sea birds, and raptors that depend on the kelp beds. In essence, the top dog sea otter is the "keystone species" to the kelp beds, and its removal makes the neighborhood a lot less biologically diverse, functional, and interesting.

Insidious extinction

Loss of apex predators

Ecologists refer to the process following the loss of apex predators as "trophic downgrading," a process that reaches further into the machinery of ecosystems than anyone ever suspected. Trophic downgrading is an unbalancing of the stable, pyramidal structure of the ecosystem or trophic levels, with plant communities at the large base, herbivores in the steady middle, and carnivores at the smallest top. Recent research has shown that apex consumers affect "processes as diverse as the dynamics of disease, wildfire, carbon sequestration, invasive species and biogeochemical cycles." ("Trophic Downgrading of Planet Earth," James A. Estes, et al, *Science* 333, 301 - 2011)

Even salmon habitat and the prospects for recovering them in the long term could be partly dependent on healthy predator populations and natural predator/prey systems.

In a retrospective study, researchers from Oregon State University found that salmon streams on the Olympic Peninsula may have undergone profound changes since wolves were eliminated early in the 20th century. The researchers postulate that freed

Continued next page

Coyote, a "mesopredator" whose prelevance has increased following the loss of wolves from an ecosystem. © Alan Bauer

"Apex predators" continued

from their wolf overlords and human hunters, Roosevelt elk may have actually changed the way the rivers in the Olympic National Park function by turning the Peninsula's river corridors into an all-you-can-eat smorgasbord.

The OSU team concluded that eight decades of elk gorging has led to the restructuring of plant communities along river banks in the park, mostly through the lack of cottonwood and big leaf maple "recruitment" or sapling growth into larger trees and the loss of many shrub species to overbrowsing. This overeating has led to increased stream bank erosion, channel widening, loss of sediment deposition on river banks, and reductions in salmon.

Conservation and carnivores

Who's your daddy

Researchers have examined the question of whether human hunters can fill the ecological role of top predators. In a very basic sense, controlling absolute numbers of prey animals, hunters can be pretty efficient.

However, the role of apex predators and their influence on ecological communities is complex and often poorly understood. The differences in present-day human and carnivore predation include significant habitat alteration and degradation for hunter infrastructure, including roads; differences in the intensity and timing of predation (e.g., fall vs. spring); the "take" or killing of different prey sex and age classes; collateral mortality of non-targeted species; and changes in the interaction of different carnivore species and alteration of carrion/scavenger relationships, among others.

For human hunters to be stand-ins for predatory animals in an ecological sense, they would have to kill more very young, old, and weak at close range, all year round, and largely without contemporary luxuries like lodges, road systems, and other trappings. The primary difference in death by human hunter and death by carnivore is that the former is usually additive and the latter is usually compensatory. Humans kill mostly prey in the prime of their reproductive lives; carnivores kill mostly older, non-reproductive animals (see spring/summer newsletter).

Roosevelt elk in the Hoh River valley show very low vigilance. With removal of wolves in the early part of the 1900s, elk numbers increased rapidly and biologists noted significant changes in riparian and rainforest structure from elk feeding activities. © David Moskowitz

"What escapes the eye…is a much more insidious extinction: the extinction of ecological interactions." –Daniel H. Janzen

This fence was erected to exclude elk as part of a study on the effects of elk browsing on forest structure. Before construction, the inside and outside of the exclosure were identical. Outside of the fence, elk have prohibited brush and saplings from growing, while inside, understory plants and trees have flourished. © David Moskowitz

In the book, *Large Carnivores and the Conservation of Biodiversity* (2005), one of the authors, Kent Redford, points out that the conservation and restoration of large carnivores is both a utilitarian and values-based issue. There is ample data from marine and terrestrial ecosystems that demonstrates the influence that apex predators have in shaping ecological communities and promoting biodiversity and productivity.

Owing to their large home ranges and overall sensitivity to human disturbance and habitat fragmentation, large carnivores have become a significant and convenient surrogate for conservation planning and their presence a metric for conservation success.

However, human beings have a very long and complicated history with carnivores that is reflected in the mythologies and lore of human cultures worldwide. It can be argued that our very identities are inextricably intertwined with large predatory animals. Over the course of human evolution, our role relative to carnivores has changed from being just "another flavor of meat," in the words of science writer David Quammen—where apex predators made us "acutely aware of our membership within the natural world"—to one where we truly have dominion over bears, lions, tigers, and wolves and their ever-tenuous foothold in a shrinking world.

Our relatively new stewardship role over carnivores is tempered and often over-ridden by our ancient and conflicted relationship. Now that relationship translates to competition over game, loss of livestock, and perceived competition around economic and recreational activities.

Continued next page

Conservation Northwest has advocated for and advanced carnivore conservation largely from the utilitarian focus but not without an awareness that societal values and emotional connections with predatory animals will be pivotal in their conservation.

Predators' value and place

Playing catch up

Do the big fierce animals excite, intrigue, and stir us enough to allow them the space and tolerance to thrive, evolve, and continue to help shape our ecosystems? Or will we retreat into a medieval narrative whose premise is fear, loathing, and misunderstanding? These are the questions of our time.

There is an indigenous Colombian myth that says: "The jaguar was sent into the world as a test of the will and integrity of the first humans" (From *One River*, Wade Davis, 1996, as cited in *Large Carnivores and the Conservation of Biodiversity*).

It is estimated that in the mid-1700s there were roughly 190,000 grey wolves in the area now covered by the lower 48 states, nearly 120,000 of which roamed the Great Plains amidst enormous herds of bison, elk, deer, and pronghorn. West of the Mississippi, there were an estimated 50,000 grizzly bears, whose populations stretched down into central Mexico.

Today there are approximately 1,500 grizzly bears in a couple of wild pockets like Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks, and even their future remains in doubt with looming climate change and possible removal from the protection of the Endangered Species Act. The Eastern cougar is gone. Wildlife agencies, cattlemen, hunters, and conservationists joust in meeting rooms, the media, and the courts about how many "breeding pairs" of wolves should be allowed to roam from small remnant and recovering populations in the Midwest and West.

The ancient Colombians probably weren't the first, and aren't the only, indigenous culture to recognize the value and place of large carnivores. One can only hope that the rest of us can catch up.

Lookout wolf pups, 2008. Conservation Northwest

"The loss of apex consumers is arguably man's most pervasive influence on the natural world." –Estes et al.

During the rut, male deer are more susceptible to predation because their attention is focused elsewhere. © David Moskowitz

Links to human health

Is it possible that even human health can be affected by the lack of large predators in an ecosystem?

If you've spent any time in the Eastern states like Connecticut, you may have noticed that white-tailed deer outnumber the BMWs—most of which have probably run over a white-tail at least once. You may have also noticed that large four-legged predators are scarcer than Yugos—no wolf or cougar controversies there.

In fact, the Eastern cougar was recently declared extinct by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Wolves haven't likely patrolled the mid-Atlantic and southern New England states for more than a century. Today the main predator of deer is the automobile.

Let's forget for a minute how deer numbers in the absence of significant predation are negatively affecting the forests and understory plants of the East and focus for a minute on a little creature that benefits immensely from the white-tailed population explosion—the deer tick.

Deer ticks carry the dreaded Lyme disease and white-tailed deer help them deliver it—to people and to other wildlife. But the delivery system breaks down when deer densities are more consistent with historic levels of 10 animals per square mile instead of the current more than 50 deer per square mile in some areas.

It seems that too many deer—and not enough predators—are not only bad for your garden but potentially bad for your health as well.

RETURN OF THE WOLF

A time for Washington's wolves

Springtime on the east slope of the Cascades in the territory of the Lookout Pack. Two new reproducing wolf packs were recognized in Washington this summer, one in the Cascades, the other between the Kettle River Range and the Selkirk Mountains in northeastern Washington. It's getting wilder out there. © David Moskowitz

Jasmine Minbashian directs the wolf program for Conservation Northwest. She is currently working with the BBC on a documentary about wolves returning to the Cascades, which will air early next year. A portion of this article first appeared in the International Wolf Journal in Sept. 2011.

It was just before dawn when our truck pulled into the wildlife refuge parking lot. The sun had not yet risen above the eastern horizon, but the sky was slowly starting to brighten the Methow Valley after a night's rest. It was a frosty February morning on the eastern flanks of north-central Washington's Cascade Mountains. I was tagging along with a group of biologists to check some deer traps that were part of an innovative study to understand the effect of wolves and predation on ungulate populations.

We were gathering our field gear together when we heard a large chorus of coyotes greeting the morning sun. The yips and squeals were unmistakable, and the coyotes undoubtedly sounded like they were having a good time. Once the cacophony subsided, we went back to scurrying around the truck, gathering our gear. But less than a minute went by when a new sound instantly forced our whole group to freeze like statues of ice. It was the long, low howl of a large canine, coming from the opposite direction of the coyotes and from the direction we would be heading. We all exchanged wide-eyed glances and at the same time mouthed the word: Wolf!

For me, this sound was almost difficult to comprehend. I had heard wolves in Yellowstone National Park and northern Minnesota, but never in the Cascades—even after 15 years of working toward their recovery in my home state of Washington. After all these years of silence in the mountains, could this really be what I was hearing?

We quickly strapped on our packs and headed down the trail toward the sound. The low, mournful howl continued steadily, raising concerns that perhaps a wolf had been caught in one of our deer traps. After arriving at the study site, we were relieved to find no wolves in our traps. Scratching our heads, we were perplexed as to where the sound was coming from. Casually, one of our colleagues pointed to two figures on the hill above us that were watching from a safe distance.

With binoculars we could see clearly that these figures were indeed wolves: A grand, older looking animal, which resembled the breeding male of the Lookout pack that I had seen in remote camera photos, and a younger sleek animal accompanying him. They watched us for quite some time until letting out a big yawn; then they slowly walked away, as if to say, "You humans are boring."

Lookout Pack

When first documented in 2008, the Lookout pack had six wolf pups, a subadult male, and an older breeding pair. This discovery was heralded as a triumphant return of a native mammal that was poisoned and persecuted to virtual extinction in the Cascade Mountains. Even more remarkable is that these animals returned completely on their own, with no help from us. DNA testing has linked the Lookout pack to wolves farther north in British Columbia.

Sadly, three years later, the story is not as uplifting. As of this writing, only two animals are believed to remain in this pack: the older breeding male and a younger animal of unknown gender—probably the two I saw on that February morning at the wildlife refuge. The breeding female has not been spotted since May 2010, and her radio collar has been silent. No signs

Jasmine Minbashian, Special projects director,
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of breeding or new pups have emerged this spring, and local biologists believe the future of this pack is all but lost.

Worse yet, the severe reduction of this pack is likely the result of illegal killing. The federal and state cases of poaching are ongoing against those charged with the crime.

To address this major challenge to wolf recovery in Washington, Conservation Northwest recently partnered with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to establish a state reward fund to apprehend poachers who illegally kill Washington's endangered wildlife, including wolves and grizzly bears.

Despite this major setback, wolves are returning to other parts of the state, with two new packs documented this summer, one south of the Lookout pack in the Teanaway area of the Cascades, the other near the Selkirks of Washington and Idaho.

This is an important year for the future of wolves in Washington. By the end of this year, Washington's Fish and Wildlife Commission will vote on a final Wolf Conservation and Management Plan, which has been in the works for more than three years. This visionary plan is strong enough to conserve, manage, and recover wolves in a balanced way that will ease the transition for everyone.

Earlier this year, a federal budget rider stripped Endangered Species Act (ESA) protections for Rocky Mountain wolf populations, which includes wolves in the eastern third of Washington, where now three of the state's confirmed packs live: the Salmo, Diamond, and Smackout packs. These packs are now the responsibility of Washington state and are managed under state law. Having a viable state plan in place for wolf conservation and management is immensely important.

We are just beginning to see the return of wolves to Washington, and only time will tell whether Washington is a state where wolves come to die or if it's the beginning of a grand natural recovery throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Teanaway wolf in the Cascades, April 2011, documented on remote camera. There are now five confirmed packs in the state, including the newest, the Smackout pack, near Abercrombie Mountain in the Columbia Highlands.
Western Transportation Institute

Take action

Wolves are on the upswing in Washington. But wolves in the eastern third of our state recently lost federal endangered species protection, and poaching is a real and ongoing threat.

This October and November is **make or break** time for Washington's wolves! Please take time to urge the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission to approve the Department of Fish and Wildlife's science-based wolf recovery plan.

Washington's wolves can't thrive or survive without a statewide management plan in place. **Please take action!**

What you can do for wolves

The Commission needs urgently to hear from you and the majority of people in Washington who support our wolves. They are already hearing in a big way from those who oppose wolves in our state.

Attend a hearing for wolves in Olympia

On Oct 6 & Nov 3, the Commission takes public testimony.

Send a personal letter for wolves

On Dec 2-3, the Commission votes to approve the plan. Before Dec 1, take action at **conservationnw.org/wolves**

Here's why:

- The wolf plan was developed through the hard work of a diverse group of stakeholders, reviewed by scientists, and publicly vetted across the state. A majority of the working group members support the plan. It is appropriate to honor the efforts of the stakeholder group and the Department of Fish and Wildlife, and adopt the final plan.
- According to scientists, a minimum of 15 breeding pairs must be present for 3 years and distributed across 3 recovery regions before wolves may be removed from protected status.
- It is inappropriate to put a cap or an upper limit on the total number of wolves in Washington, since predators are self regulating.
- Lethal "take" (legal killing of wolves) should only be used as a last resort, if non-lethal methods have proven unsuccessful.

Contact the commissioners directly:

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission
600 Capitol Way North
Olympia, WA 98501-1091
Phone: (360) 902-2267; Fax: (360) 902-2448

"GHOST BEARS" TAKE SHAPE

Rare sighting of Cascades grizzly bear

Joe Scott International conservation director, joe@conservationnw.org

Grizzly bear in Washington's North Cascades. Joe Sebille

A potent symbol of the last of the grizzlies in the Cascades—or the first of a new generation? We have a choice.

This July brought news of the first verified grizzly bear sighting in the US Cascades in 15 years. Hiker Joe Sebille captured the photo south of Highway 20 in fall of 2010, and sent the photo in to biologists this spring, when it was confirmed, and later announced to the excitement of many.

While the sighting garnered significant media and public enthusiasm, it wasn't an isolated event. Late in 2010, a grizzly bear was recorded by a BC government research camera just north of the border in Manning Provincial Park. And a BC hunter video taped an adult male grizzly bear east of Manning Park in 2002.

Those three verified sightings in the trans-boundary Cascades are joined by many unverified sightings on both sides of the border. And, as these stories continue to unfold there will be significant media attention on the issue and the region.

It's a relief to have concrete evidence that grizzly bears do indeed still roam the Cascades, particularly on the US side of the border. But like the exception that confirms the rule, it serves to underscore the reality that Cascades grizzly bears are hanging by a thread. Their lifeline is the federal North Cascades Ecosystem (NCE) Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan.

Thankfully, nature is resilient and full of surprises, also evidenced by resurgent wolverines and wolves.

This famous grizzly bear photo has given us all a reprieve—at least for the time being—from the frustration of observing helplessly as grizzly bears disappear from our own backyard: a 10,000 square mile grizzly bear recovery zone.

To us, this reprieve is a second chance, but only if we act in a timely way. We've known for decades that Cascades grizzly bears have been on thin ice owing to more than a century of persecution, overhunting, habitat destruction, and mismanagement, all of which compound the limitations of the grizzly bear's slow reproductive biology. In 1967, when the last legally hunted grizzly bear was shot by a hunter in what is now the national park, there were likely fewer than 30 in the Cascades population.

Another 2010 grizzly bear, a female, just over the BC in the North Cascades border. BC Ministry of Environment

It is highly probable that in the ensuing 44 years, the total population has declined from those couple dozen animals. The paucity of verified presence is not for lack of effort, from remote cameras to hair snag efforts conducted tirelessly by agency biologists and wildlife monitoring volunteers. Most recently, out of 900 bear hair samples obtained in 2010 by government researchers, none tested positive for grizzly bear. Similarly out of 6,500 digital images taken by the team's motion sensing cameras, none were determined to be grizzly bears.

Recovery from such desperately low numbers without direct intervention would be without precedent and contrary to everything we know about grizzly bear demographics and genetics. Addressing this need is at the heart of the Endangered Species Act. Yet despite there being a NCE Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan approved in 1997, which stated the need to evaluate a range of recovery options including population augmentation, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has yet to take the next steps. In the time since Regional Director Ralph Morganweck approved the document, we've had three different US presidents and nine different FWS Directors.

Numbers from polling reflect unusually strong public support for grizzly bear recovery in the North Cascades. This can in part be attributed to the cutting edge Grizzly Bear Outreach Project's decade of work, mostly funded by the FWS and Washington State. Follow-up actions to such a program are critical, lest such an extensive effort go for naught.

There are enthusiastic partners in a grizzly bear recovery effort. In 2007 the Washington Legislature appropriated a $454,000 contribution to a NEPA process that would implement the NCE grizzly bear recovery plan. That money evaporated the following year when the FWS took no action to initiate an environmental impact statement. But it demonstrates state-level political support.

The bi-national Skagit Environmental Endowment Commission has dedicated at least a quarter of a million dollars

for the same purpose. But those funds won't remain in the bank forever. Agency partners like the US Forest Service have pledged in-kind support for the recovery process.

The ingredients for one of the most potentially compelling conservation stories in decades are present in Western Washington. But the FWS is in charge of writing the narrative. Will they see this sighting as an opportunity to implement the Cascades recovery plan or just another bit of yesterday's news that goes out in the recycle bin?

This August, conservation groups (led by Conservation Northwest) sent a letter to the current FWS regional director, Robyn Thorson, members of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, and Washington State congressional leaders urging them to take immediate steps to implement the North Cascades Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan by initiating NEPA on important recovery actions. A good first step could be to call together all the potential public and private partners in the effort to brainstorm strategies and solutions to obstacles to the grizzly bear recovery process.

We have a choice. The bear in the photo will be a potent symbol of the last grizzlies in the Cascades or the first grizzly bear of a new generation.

A passion for documenting wildlife

Patrick McGowan, team leader in the Teanaway wildlife monitoring effort, penned this account of his monitoring fieldwork.

My whole career has been in medical research, searching for information that might lead to new cures. Outside of my job, I still thrive on the pursuit of information as we struggle to find solutions to big issues.

My family's favorite place to escape is the Teanaway valley, in the Washington Cascades. Throughout the past decade, I've noticed more aggressive logging and private land owners who are intent on establishing a town in the heart of the valley.

The Teanaway's female wolf, relishing the lure. Conservation NW

This would be a tragedy because the Teanaway is home to many species, some of which are quite rare. I discovered that the presence of rare mammals in the Teanaway was largely unsubstantiated. I began documenting the presence of these rare species by placing motion-sensitive cameras on trees, and I'd been doing this for several years before I began working with Conservation Northwest.

Six or seven years into the pursuit, I have witnessed amazing things in the Teanaway: mountain goats traveling across the floor of the valley, cougars playfully wrestling, bobcats with kittens, spirited pine martens, a wolverine running, and sites where bears congregate together and comically rub on trees to announce their visits. I have been charged by an angry bear sow, seen hawks steal birds from nests, and watched as bears tried to eat my cameras.

I have discovered hidden areas and quietly observed animals behaving naturally. The information gathered has expanded my understanding of wild animal behavior immensely. Though I have never personally seen a 9 x 9 point bull elk, or a mountain lion, short-tailed weasel, or flying squirrel, my cameras tell me they are there, and in large numbers—likely watching me as I traipse through the woods.

I still remember the night when I discovered that I had captured a photo of a likely wolf in the Teanaway. It had been a long day, but I knew that I couldn't sleep without taking a quick look at the photos captured by the cameras I had serviced that day. Coyote, bear, bobcat, more coyote.... What the heck! Oh my gosh! It was 1 o'clock in the morning but I was now very much awake: I had obtained a photo of a wolf.

The discovery set in motion a flurry of activity by government agencies to verify the observation. The BBC spent a day filming me on a snowmobile, reenacting the discovery. When the identification was verified by DNA and the announcement was made public, it was front-page news. To the hard-working Conservation Northwest volunteers who had made it possible, it was the culmination of years of planning and many miles of hiking in the Teanaway valley.

While I celebrate the return of the wolf to much of its native habitat, I realize that it brings with it much controversy. The wolf has returned to areas now shared by many more people and livestock than during the wolf's previous tenure. This has not always ended well for the wolf. It is my sincere hope that we continue to gather information about these wolves to guide us toward decisions that provide the best solution to our cohabitation with these incredible predators.

I thank Conservation Northwest for being a great and generous partner in wildlife monitoring. Mostly, I would like to thank the incredible volunteers whom I have worked with. They have worked very hard gathering data for an organization that strives to inform and represent on behalf of our wild inhabitants. Our efforts have helped to raise awareness of the Teanaway and guide the conversation between the developer and parties interested in preserving this beautiful valley.

WOLVES, DEER, MOOSE & ELK...

Jay Kehne Outreach associate, jay@conservationnw.org

Doing the math: One hunter's perspective

Here on the east side of the mountains, there's been a lot of talk about how wolves might affect Washington's deer, elk, and moose populations. Lots of folks are throwing around numbers about elk herds in Montana or deer populations in Idaho. Discovering the truth depends on how you do the math. What makes sense is to check where these figures originated and then do the math yourself.

Carrying capacity

In Idaho today, 23 of the 29 elk management units are at or above management objectives set by the Idaho Fish and Game for elk numbers. Those objectives are set based on what habitat is available—the carrying capacity—for producing the browse necessary to support deer and elk on a given unit of land.

One of the areas in Idaho often cited that is not above targeted numbers of elk is the Lochsa. In the late 1970s and early '80s, the Lochsa was home to about 5,000 elk; as of 2011, numbers are below 2,000. Wolves moved into the area sometime after their release into Yellowstone and central Idaho in 1996; there are currently approximately 1,200 wolves in Idaho. Simple math would say wolves are responsible for this loss.

But the Lochsa has a long history of fluctuating elk populations, dating back to the 1860s when hungry prospectors helped completely eradicate elk (and wolves) from the West. Indeed, very few elk were seen between 1861 and 1930.

Elk numbers rebounded with the setting aside of game preserves as well as massive revegetation following large forest fires that burned between 1910 and 1934, opening up thousands of acres of prime elk habitat. As elk numbers grew and with no wolves to kill the older, nonreproductive numbers, hunters got used to large numbers of elk and very easy pickings. With a 36% hunter success rate in 1948, thus started and continued the "elk nirvana" cited by wildlife biologist Oz Garton (see our spring/summer 2011 newsletter).

But these high elk populations were hit by severe winters. Lands were browsed to stubble and timber stand grew dense again, setting the stage for dramatic elk declines, even before wolves entered the scene.

Wolves certainly affect ungulate populations, however in most cases the effects are minor and need to be compared to whether the prey population exists at or above the carrying capacity of the habitat available. In fact, wolves are known to have a positive effect on the overall health of the habitat—which can heal from overbrowsing, and the health of the herd—which becomes more productive when older weaker cows are removed from the population. Elk cows produce calves for up to 10 years, yet they often live up to 18 years. When wolves prey on older, non-calving cow elk that are using up forage, cow-to-calf ratios and elk habitat both improve.

Idaho has about 105,000 elk, which is at or slightly above the state game management objective. Montana has about 145,000 elk which is 14% above the objective, and Wyoming has about 95,000 elk, also 14% above the objective. Even with wolves—elk and deer populations are well above carrying capacity.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation figures from 1994 (pre-wolf) and 2008 show that elk hunter success in Idaho was 21% then and 22% now. In Montana, hunter success figures were 16.5% and 21.5% and in Wyoming, 44% and 40%, respectively.

A Pacific Northwest coastal wolf peers down from its rock perch on the edge of dense western red cedar rainforest in Clayoquot Sound, British Columbia. © David Moskowitz

Hunters are getting their elk, with wolves and without.

If wolves really are "decimating" elk, as is claimed in some hunting blogging sites, then why are harvest numbers the same or better *after* wolves came on the scene? And if 4,000 wolves in the Great Lakes Region haven't changed deer densities or annual hunter harvest success rate since 1987, why should hunters worry about 1,500 wolves spread over five western states? That is, as long as you do the math correctly.

Continued next page

A plan for wolves—and deer

If Washington's wolf plan is approved, the projected 15 breeding pairs will eventually result in a population of about 300 wolves in Washington. This number of wolves is expected to take about 3,000 elk and 5,000 deer per year.

Washington hunters currently kill about 8,000 elk and 38,000 deer annually. Compare that to the estimated more than 300 elk and 12,000 deer killed by vehicles each year on Washington's highways. Elk in Washington number about 57,000 and deer (mule, white-tailed, and black-tailed deer), 300,000. According to the draft wolf plan, "Information from other states with wolves suggests that wolves will have little or no effect on elk and deer abundance or hunter harvest across large areas of Washington."

History has shown us that elk and deer populations rise and fall over time. Wolves are just one of many contributing factors to ungulate population dynamics. Washington's proposed plan even calls for the Department of Fish and Wildlife to consider reducing wolf abundance in localized areas should ungulate populations become clearly negatively affected by wolves.

It seems that doing the math can favor both wolf recovery and elk and deer hunters. In the end, the facts and the math tell us that wolves help keep elk herds strong, and the biggest threat to ungulate populations is not the wolf but rather the loss of habitat across the West.

It's time to set aside the unfounded fears of wolves and their affect on ungulates in our state and focus on creating the greatest outdoor experience possible...one that includes the return of wolves on the landscape!

Glimpsing wolves

Jay Kehne

Elk and deer will change their behavior with wolves back in the mix, and some hunters will declare that there are fewer elk or deer in their favorite hunting locations. But as a wildlife biologist or a seasoned sportsman will tell you, hunters will have to adapt and hunt a little differently where wolves are present. It may create a more challenging hunting experience. That's something I can easily attest to.

The first time I heard a wolf howl, I was elk hunting along the Salmon River breaks in Idaho. We backpacked 6 miles to find our elk on extremely steep slopes. The first time I glimpsed a wolf, I was with hunting buddies backpacking a deer out of the Frank Church Wilderness, when a small pack stayed just out of sight but followed us for half an hour.

My first good view of a wolf was of one of the last two wolves belonging to the Lookout pack. I was with my 11-year-old daughter who had come with me to see if she could see her first wolf.

I will never forget any of these experiences, and I can say as an avid deer and elk hunter that the presence of wolves has made it even more enjoyable to spend time in the mountains and woods every fall.

Keeping the Northwest wild

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THE ART & SKILL OF DAVID MOSKOWITZ

Off-trail for wildlife

Sitting for days in a blind in the Selkirks, David Moskowitz enjoyed the challenge of getting to know the Diamond Wolf Pack via secondary evidence: raven activity, food caches, scat, and other signs. He wasn't more than a few hundred yards from the pack—he could hear howls from a nearby rendezvous. In the extremely dense forest, however, he hadn't actually captured any of the photos yet that he wanted for his new book, *Wolves in the Pacific Northwest*.

Hours of patient and often difficult fieldwork is nothing new to Moskowitz. A professional wildlife tracker, photographer, and outdoor educator for more than 15 years, David is uniquely suited to understand the Northwest's wildlife renaissance on the ground, in animal sign, like scat and tracks.

"The Methow is a great example. I've lived and worked in the Methow for over a decade now. You really get the sense that it's a landscape in transition, and—between the wolves and the wolverines—that it's recovering. It's exciting to go out to places I've been numerous times and suddenly there's wolf scat there, and it's full of deer hair and bones.... It's like, 'Wow. There's something different going on here!'"

Of the grizzly bear photo captured recently he says, "I have been up and down all over the Cascades and hadn't seen grizzly sign, so it was really great to know that animal is out there." David expects that it will only become more likely find increased evidence of grizzly in the future as well.

"We are feeling the results of changes that were made in our society decades ago. The choices we made as a culture to stop predator control in the '60s are finally starting to show results here in the Northwest. It's exciting, and humbling to realize the timescale by which natural systems respond to changes."

Moskowitz' upcoming book deals with even more massive timescales

Cont. next page

Dave Moskowitz

"Moskowitz" continued from p. 14

as he traces beyond the last century of wolf extirpation and subsequent recovery. "The Pacific Northwest is a continually evolving landscape, and wolves' relationship with it has evolved again and again, over time. Humans' relationship with this landscape—and with wolves—has also evolved as our ecology, the landscape, and technology have changed."

Given this long-term view, he points out that human interaction with wolves is "predictable and natural." It's not surprising that people see wolves as competition, he says. Wolves may see smaller carnivores in the same light.

What's important to Moskowitz, though, is that humans move beyond old cultural stories and consider what our relationship with wolves really is. He wants people to ask, are they truly a material threat to our basic existence? And maybe more importantly, "What are the services we need from the land and are wolves helping create more resilient, stable ecosystems that are going to help us meet our basic needs? I think the answer is pretty clearly, yes, they may be doing that."

Moskowitz hopes his new book will help readers think critically about such questions, but don't expect it to be all facts and history lessons. Like all good trackers, he has a pretty good pile of stories to share, like searching for the elusive Diamond pack.

You can hear the joy of a tracker in the wild as he recounts stalking along creek beds to mask his scent near where he has seen prints in a wetland. Finally he settled in what must have been a rather unglamorous vantage point: a clump of alders in the middle of a beaver pond. But the wet seat and his patience paid off. A wolf loped along the edge of the marsh, and David finally got the photographs he needed to introduce us to one of Washington's newest wild residents. We look forward to meeting all of them!

This moose was missing her calf. It had been killed and fed on by members of Washington's Diamond pack. © David Moskowitz

The book **Wolves of the Pacific Northwest** is due for release next fall. In the meantime, enjoy more of David's stories and photos from the field on his blog, davidmoskowitz.blogspot.com

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WILDLIFE MONITORS

Documenting the wild side

Sarah Smith Communications intern, ssmith@conservationnw.org

Volunteers and sponsors of Conservation Northwest's wildlife monitoring programs are improving our knowledge of Washington's wildlife. Volunteers hike, ski, or snowshoe into the backcountry to monitor remote cameras, sometimes in remote wilderness and sometimes closer to human-affected landscapes, like Interstate 90 in the Cascades.

By putting in hard work and long hours, volunteers help document rarely-seen predators like wolves, bears, martens, and lynx, as well as prey like deer and elk. In 2008, Cascades Citizen Wildlife Monitoring Project volunteers, led by Ray Robertson, documented the Lookout pack: Washington's first confirmed wolf pack in more than 70 years. Then again this summer, it was cameras placed by monitoring volunteers that captured the first photographs near the Teanaway valley of Washington's fourth new wolf pack.

Bonding to nature

Volunteering provides more than exercise and beautiful views; it is an opportunity to connect with nature and revitalize a passion for wild animals. United by an enthusiasm for wildlife and wilderness, volunteers form bonds with their team members who share their same excitement.

Patrick McGowan describes his work for Teanaway wildlife on page 11.

Artist Bill Whipple, 64, has been a remote camera volunteer for five years. He recalls a childhood bursting with a fondness for wild animals. At age 15, Bill drafted a 114-page report on the weasel family, inspired partially by his pet black-footed ferrets. As a young man, Bill envisioned becoming a biologist. Today, wildlife monitoring feeds his childhood dream.

Continued next page

Monitoring volunteers spend a lot of time in the woods en route to remote camera sites. Volunteer Keith Possee encountered this pine marten near Oval Lake in the North Cascades. Keith Possee

Get involved.
Learn more about the Cascades Citizen Wildlife Monitoring Project. Go online to conservationnw.org/monitoring

"Skunks, wolverines, fishers, and martens are all animals I like a lot," Bill said. "It's fun to be around people who know what those are and get excited by them...the actual shots we get from the cameras are really interesting too."

Bill said discovering Washington's wolf packs or getting a "nice shot of wildlife" doesn't excite him as much as unexpected "strange nighttime" photos do. Odd camera angles and unpredictable animal close-ups are the images that Bill finds offbeat and intriguing.

Volunteer Guthrie Schrengohst recalls an exciting experience he had in 2010, shortly after installing cameras near Manastash, in Washington. Several days after the camera's

Keri Young and Kelli Young-Beach hiking in to their remote camera site. Cathy Clark

installation, Guthrie reviewed the images. The first image showed Guthrie applying a lure to a stump. The very next image was of a cougar rubbing its head on the exact same spot.

"I have never seen a wild cougar, so it was exciting to see pictures of us standing in the exact same place," Guthrie said. "It's just great to know these animals are out there, and to see what goes on once the people leave the forest."

The allure of lure

Animals tend to avoid humans who venture into their habitat. Lures are strongly scented attractants that overpower human scent and function as a magnet for wildlife. Wildlife from elk to wild turkeys to bobcats can't help but be drawn to investigate. Strategically placed lures help keep animals near the camera for more than one photograph too, which helps researchers identify animals and study their numbers and behavior.

Each lure is specially designed to draw in a particular species. Bill Whipple said bear lures smell sweet like marzipan. A lure derived from beaver glands is called "Essence of Beaver," and it doesn't smell too bad either. With names like 1-800 Predator and Beast Feast, it's no surprise that animals return to the scent more than a year after its application, despite rainstorms and other biological factors. Bill often uses a lure named Gusto with a scent he described as "musky but not terrible," similar to the pungent odors of coffee and marijuana.

"My favorite lure is 'Silent Partner,'" Bill said. "It's named because trappers get lonely and they need a bottle of smelly stuff to keep them company."

Lead volunteer Patrick McGowan said the use of lures is controversial to some, since it is a form of baiting, but at this point their benefit to wildlife research is overwhelming.

Many lures smell like carrion to attract predators and scavengers. Upon investigation, ungulates and other prey species exhibit fearful or anxious behavior, whereas predator species may rub up against the scent out of pleasure.

"[Lures] improve the chances of getting an animal in the vicinity of the camera, and keeping them around long enough to get multiple shots," McGowan said. "All of the information we've gained has benefitted wildlife, but there's always room for improvement."

Guthrie Schrengohst's gets close to a cougar. Conservation Northwest

Something for everyone

Exhilaration lingers around every corner for monitoring volunteers. Cathy Clark hasn't been volunteering for very long, and her cameras haven't captured any wildlife photos, but that doesn't hinder her enthusiasm for the project.

"It is probably how many hunters feel, not bringing home a trophy [animal]," Clark said. "[Hiking into the camera sites, we're] watching the changes in the seasons, noting the wildflowers and the birds and animals we see and hear, and the signs they leave. We are still out there, enjoying our wilderness together and having a good time."

The volunteers' relationship to wildlife and other like-minded people keeps them coming back for more. There is something magical and magnetizing out there in the wild country, something that attracts volunteers year-round—regardless of rainstorms, setbacks, and other biological factors. It is a chance to connect and make a difference for Washington's wildlife.

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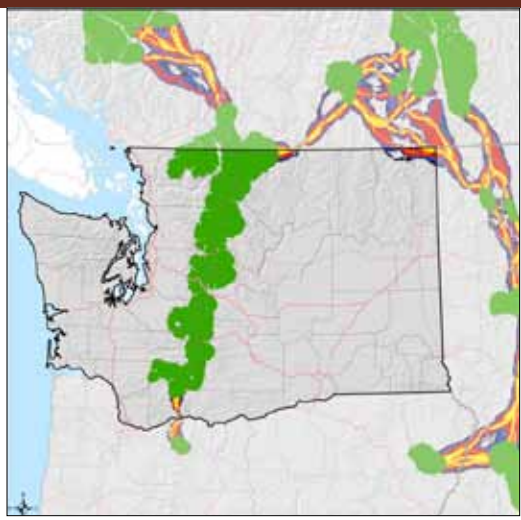
WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY

Staying connected in a changing world



Linkage zones for wolverines. Green is habitat concentration area; yellow, red, and blue are normalized least-cost corridors.
WWHCWG, from their statewide habitat connectivity analysis

Wildlife are often on the move, following the changing seasons and looking for food, mates, and new habitat. "Connectivity" for wildlife demands that we maintain links between habitats and resources. By studying how animals move today and how they have moved in the past, we can best select and protect connecting lands to help wildlife survive and weather climate change.

> "The story of our age is nature going to pieces. Nature won't work in pieces, not even those we've made special efforts to safeguard. The future of wildlife is tied to its freedom to roam."
> –Doug Chadwick, *The Wolverine Way*

At Conservation Northwest, we are driven not only to protect the best of what is left from the Washington Coast to the BC Rockies, but to ensure that we maintain a connected network of protected areas so that wildlife can move within and between them.

Our thinking for wildlife is not unique. It's what every person lives by when evaluating a new house in a new neighborhood. We need useful pathways connecting our homes to schools, stores, community, and other amenities—or the property is worth little. Similarly, a hard-fought-for wild area maintains its value for wildlife only if it is not an island.

To ensure we were all working with the best available science to guide wildlife conservation and connectivity in our region, in 2008 we helped form the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group. The first goal of its members—which include scientists and others from state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities, and tribes—was to develop a collaborative blueprint for wildlife connectivity in Washington and neighboring habitats.

Last year, the Connectivity Working Group published a statewide connectivity analysis of wildlife in Washington.

Wolverines (*Gulo gulo*) were one of the wildlife featured in the analysis, and also the animal that inspired biologist and author Doug Chadwick to write, "The future of wildlife is tied to its freedom to roam." The small and recovering population of wolverines in Washington state has already shown wolverines' tremendous ability and need to move. A fiercely independent female wolverine named Sasha was followed with a radio tag by the PNW Research Station in 2009. Sasha traveled a home range of 578 square miles, spanning from just north of Lake Wenatchee State Park nearly to Washington Pass.

For the analysis, species and connectivity experts in the Connectivity Working Group used models to map the highest quality habitats, hoping to build our understanding of how to keep connected a network of habitats to continue the recovery of wolverines and other wildlife in the Northwest. The models were then used to identify the paths of least resistance for wildlife to move between these habitats.

The colorful map above includes a wealth of information to guide management and conservation. It shows where the greatest opportunities—and barriers—exist to give wolverines room to roam. On close inspection you'll see the clear need to maintain the north-south connections of "green" high quality habitat in the Cascade Mountains, while noting the barriers between these habitats from highways, like Interstate 90 and Highway 2.

The colorful connections the model makes between green areas indicate the relevant ease of different pathways between the high quality habitats. These linkages show that wolverine survival is strongly dependent on British Columbia and what happens there for management and conservation.

In the statewide connectivity analysis, the Connectivity Working Group modeled sixteen focal species, from pine martens to sharp-tailed grouse to mule deer, which together represent all the major habitat types in Washington. We also ran a model to display how we can best maintain connections between the most natural landscapes remaining in our region. Each of these maps and models on their own and in comparison tell a conservation story of our age. We must decide how we leave nature not in pieces—but keep it whole, connected, and functioning.

Connectivity models, maps, and links to an online interactive map gallery are available at the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group website, **www.waconnected.org**

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PLANNING FOR FORESTS

Okanogan-Wenatchee

Bodie Mountain Roadless Area in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest deserves wilderness recommendation. © Eric Zamora

In new forest plans for the next two decades for eastern Washington's national forests, the US Forest Service has recommended roadless areas and rivers for long-term wilderness protection, added improved grizzly bear habitat connectivity, embraced restoration of overstocked forests, and begun to address climate change. This summer, the agency took public comment, in person at open houses around Washington and by mail and email. What people told them? It's a good start, but there is much more to do:

- **Protect mature and old-growth forests.** Retain the Late-Successional Reserves on the Okanogan-Wenatchee and the "Eastside Screens" on the Colville to ensure that the wildlife that depend upon older forest conditions have sufficient habitat to survive.
- **Protect wildlife habitat.** Provide clear direction to protect, restore, and connect habitat that supports viable wildlife populations, and retain the "survey and manage" standard which protects the diverse smaller species that run the forest ecosystem.
- **Protect clean water.** Add clear standards for maintaining high-quality habitat within key watersheds and riparian reserves. All management actions must "maintain and restore" aquatic conditions at the scale of the individual forest stand and the entire watershed.
- **Safeguard wilderness lands and roadless areas.** Propose more eligible lands for wilderness protection, and maintain the wild character of roadless areas.
- **Adopt climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.** Inventory carbon stocks and protect carbon stored in old forests, soils, and wetlands. Provide habitat connectivity to allow wildlife to adapt to a changing climate and vegetation patterns.

Old fir habitat and nesting hole. © Eric Zamora

The planning process is a lengthy one: Work on the revised plans began over five years ago, and in June 2011 the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests released a summary of their draft environmental impact statements and proposed actions for revised plans for the two forests. Final environmental impact statements and Records of Decision for both forests are expected in fall of 2013.

We will follow the Forest Service's progress closely to make sure the final management plans best serve people and wildlife in the Northwest. Thank you for taking action!

Honoring Dick Rivers

In this newsletter we honor Dick Rivers and note with sadness the passing of an amazing sportsman and conservationist. Dick devoted much of his life volunteering for wildlife and healthy habitat and exploring from the Columbia River to the Canadian Rockies to Hells Canyon.

For wildlife, no one said it better than Dick: "I think it is easier to create a world view than it is to change one. And so, one solution to ensuring the continued existence of large predators and large wild areas may be as simple as taking kids camping. Then take them again and again to make sure they're addicted. Then maybe someday they too can be awakened in the middle of the night by the howl of all that is wild."

To send written memories or a contribution, or to nominate a sportsman or sportswoman for the newly created, annual Dr. Dick Rivers Sportsman Conservation Award, contact Jeff Holmes with the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers at washingtonstatebha@yahoo.com, 509-868-3337.

Derrick Knowles Columbia Highlands wilderness director, derrick@conservationnw.org

RECOMMENDING WILDERNESS

Colville National Forest

Hall Mountain, fertile wildlife habitat, should be added back into wilderness recommendations. Aaron Theisen

On treks like the famed Kettle Crest Trail, northeastern Washington's Columbia Highlands offer some of the finest wilderness experiences in the state. But the Kettle River Range and Selkirks Mountains are exceptionally significant not only for recreation. Wildlands here provide room to roam between the Cascades and Rocky Mountains for an incredible array of wildlife, including grizzly bears, moose, mule deer, mountain caribou, lynx, bighorn sheep, and wolves.

For 35 years, local citizens have worked tirelessly to protect the Columbia Highlands' remote, wild peaks and unprecedented wildlife habitat. In a recent proposed forest plan for the Colville National Forest, the Forest Service is at last coming to agree with them.

This summer, the agency offered a proposed revised plan for the forest, including wilderness recommendations. The recommendations are a significant step towards eventual permanent protection by Congress for some of the wildest country in Washington.

For wilderness protection, the agency has recommended 101,000 acres of critical wildlife habitat: Abercrombie Mountain, the Salmo Priest Wilderness Additions, and much of the Kettle Crest including Hoodoo Canyon. Unfortunately, the recommendations left out many of the roadless areas we are proposing in our Columbia Highlands Initiative—including Thirteenmile Canyon in the Kettle River Range. Thirteenmile features giant ponderosa pines and low-elevation canyon habitat, and serves as a secure bridge of habitat for wildlife moving between the Kettle Crest and wild country to the west in the Okanogan Highlands. It also connects to other roadless lands to the north in the Kettle Range.

The agency's recommendations also ignore sizeable chunks of qualifying roadless lands on the Kettle Crest, leaving them vulnerable to uranium mining, logging, and ORV trespass through the 15- to 20-year life of the proposed forest plan. All are critical components of any serious wilderness system for the Colville National Forest.

Thirteenmile Canyon's ponderosa pines are some of the biggest in the state. © James Johnston

This summer, people in northeast Washington and around the state responded, all together sending in more than 1,000 letters and emails urging wilderness protection for several hundred thousand more acres of deserving wild country.

Wilderness protection for the crown jewels of the Colville is one of the highest wildlife and wildlands conservation priorities in the Northwest. So how do we get there? The public comment process was a historic opportunity to move the wilderness ball forward through the Forest Service's forest planning process. Next, Congress needs to step in to permanently protect these lands as wilderness.

Conservation Northwest has kept our eye on that ball, despite the political challenges of moving forward conservation objectives in such remote and politically conservative terrain. We continue to adapt and make gains for wildlife and habitat through our Columbia Highlands Initiative. As part of the Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition, we've worked collaboratively with timber companies and local communities, gaining successful forest projects that generate timber while protecting roadless areas, old growth, and habitat for rare and endangered wildlife. Still, increasingly polarized politics and ongoing opposition from a few entrenched special interests have so far kept the long-awaited wilderness bill from moving into Congress or anywhere near the President's pen.

Additional opportunities for public comment on the forest plan are expected when the Forest Service releases their final draft for review in late 2012. In the meantime, whether you were one of the hundreds of people who attended public meetings, wrote personal letters at Conservation Northwest sponsored events, or submitted comments to the Forest Service via email, it is time to take a next step. Let Senator Maria Cantwell know that protecting the wild country and wildlife habitat of the Columbia Highlands is a conservation priority for all of us here in Washington.

Send **Senator Maria Cantwell** a message today, asking her to permanently protect wilderness in the Columbia Highlands. Learn how—visit conservationnw.org/wilderness

Special wild places

More than 1,000 people have written recent letters to the Forest Service urging wilderness recommendations for wild, roadless areas in the Colville National Forest.

Dave Braun was one of those who attended a summer letter-writing event in Spokane that drew 170 people: "Conservation Northwest put on an outstanding event. It was great to see so many Inland Northwest hikers show up and share their thoughts on the Colville National Forest revision plan. Makes me smile, all the avid recreationists and conservationists who really care."

Message sent from Thirteenmile Canyon, one of the places left out of the Forest Service's wilderness recommendations. Steve Schubert

FOR COLUMBIA HIGHLANDS

The secret is out

Derrick Knowles Columbia Highlands wilderness director, derrick@conservationnw.org

This summer we made encouraging progress towards protecting special places in the Columbia Highlands: the movement just happens to be playing out locally and not yet at the legislative level in Washington, DC. Most notable was the release of a "proposed action" for a revised forest plan for the Colville National Forest, recommending permanent wilderness protection for parts of the forest.

Hall Mountain campsite. Aaron Theisen

Though the recommendations left out more than half of qualifying wilderness acreage we've proposed in the Columbia Highlands Initiative, they are a step in the right direction and an important step towards eventual, permanent protection by Congress.

The Colville National Forest is a paradise for recreation and secret is out: There were more cars at trailheads and more hikers out on the trails this summer and an increase in visitors, from cyclists to bikers to road trippers, flocking to Sherman Pass, the Kettle River Range, and the town of Republic. From Colville to Bellevue, awareness is growing around the Northwest of how special, beautiful, and important the Columbia Highlands are for wildlife and our quality of life and economy. That rise in appreciation can only help catalyze local pride and interest in making sure it stays that way for the future.

Finally, reports from the field of signs of rare wildlife are encouraging, from the new Smackout wolf pack near Abercrombie Mountain, to increasing sightings of wolves in the Selkirks and Kettles, great gray owls near the Kettle Crest, and grizzly bears in Pend Oreille County.

So, while our ongoing efforts to see legislation introduced to permanently protect special places and significant wildlife habitat in the Columbia Highlands may be stymied for the time being by political forces largely out of our control, we continue to work locally and on the ground to make gains for wildlife and wildlands that still matter. Join us!

Room to roam

Northeastern Washington forests are important to a rich and diverse array of wildlife, from grizzly bears and wolves to elk and mule deer, providing habitat and room to roam between the Cascades and Rocky Mountains. Yet today, just 3% of the Colville is protected as wilderness—one of the smallest amounts of any national forest in the West.

Innovative work by the Columbia Highlands Initiative has led to on-the-ground conservation successes in a proposed management plan that balances local economic, recreation, wilderness, and access needs.

The recommendations for wilderness and restoration in the proposed forest plan for the Colville National Forest are a nod toward that progress.

Great gray owl with vole. © Paul Bannick

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COLLABORATION BRINGS ACCESS

Along the new Gibraltar Trail

This summer, volunteers picked up picks, pulaskis, and grubhoes to construct the new Gibraltar Trail in the shadow of the Kettle River Range of northeastern Washington. The trail is a collaborative success, the product of five years' work between the Forest Service, recreation groups, and conservationists, including the Kettle Range Conservation Group, Conservation Northwest, and Washington Trails Association.

When complete, the trail will provide nearly 20 miles of non-motorized and motorized recreation opportunities right outside Republic's back door—constructed entirely through volunteer labor using traditional hand tools.

Unlike many of the region's older trails, which were designed to service lookouts or mining operations, the Gibraltar Trail is designed purely for recreation, which means the route takes time to linger by small ponds, massive ponderosa pines and rocky viewpoints of the Kettle Crest along the way.

In addition, the trail is also being constructed with the specific needs of mountain bikes in mind. Gentler grades and bigger turns mean experienced mountain bikers can spend more time enjoying the ride and less time pushing the bike. Most of the trail is under 4000 feet of elevation, providing excellent early- and late-season snow-free mountain biking.

It's all part of Conservation Northwest's balanced plan for the Colville National Forest. Should wilderness legislation for the Kettle Crest be introduced, the Gibraltar Trail will offer a fantastic alternative to trails on the Crest that would no longer be open to mountain bikes. In fact, with its challenging terrain, panoramic views and proximity to the town of Republic, the trail is certain to spur recreational tourism—and bring dollars to downtown Republic.

The Gibraltar Trail is a great new place to mountain bike and hike just outside of Republic in northeastern Washington. Shallan Knowles

During a time when budget strains have forced trail closures across the region, it's impressive to see a new trail being constructed. Even more impressive is how much can be accomplished when conservation and recreation groups—and hardy volunteers from around the state—work together.

Double your pleasure

The Gibraltar Trail when completed will be nearly 18 miles long with several trailhead and loop options. Northeastern Washington's newest trail is a combination of new singletrack and existing, closed forest roads, and is being built by volunteers and lots of hard work.

Slightly less than 12 miles of the loop will be open to non-motorized use. Easements across state and private land will eventually allow for a non-motorized connector trail from the Ferry County Fairgrounds in Republic, which could add another 5-6 miles of trail.

A mile of the new trail will be open to motorized and non-motorized use and link to existing motorized routes, with future motorized routes to Republic a possibility.

Many thanks to Spring Trust for Trails, REI, and others for their financial support in getting the Gibraltar Trail moving forward.

Karen Povey with a clouded leopard. Seth Bynum

JOIN OUR WILDLAND PARTNERS

In a keystone role

Julia Spencer Membership associate, julia@conservationnw.org

Joining our Wildland Partners monthly donor program this year is Karen Povey. She has worked in wildlife conservation for more than 25 years, currently for the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, focused on research and conservation of the clouded leopard (cloudedleopard.org).

Karen illustrates the high caliber of our members and their involvement, not only in our critical work for wildlife but in other important causes working toward a common vision for a wilder world.

According to Karen, "Having seen the impact of rampant development fragmenting and eliminating habitat in the tropics, I've become even more aware of the urgent need to protect wildlife corridors vital to the survival of carnivores in my own backyard in the Pacific Northwest." She notes that the conservation of clouded leopards has many parallels to the carnivore conservation work of Conservation Northwest. Similar to wolves, wolverines, lynx, and fishers, clouded leopards rely on large tracts of contiguous forest habitat to maintain viable wild populations.

"I'm proud to support Conservation Northwest in their efforts." she said, "not only to preserve habitat but also to serve as advocates for wildlife, advancing awareness of the role of predators in a healthy ecosystem. I'm optimistic that our shared commitment to this goal will benefit species here in Washington as well as those half-a-world-away in the Asian tropics, ensuring that these amazing animals not only persist, but thrive, in the future."

Partner with us

Wildland Partners keep the Northwest wild. Please join today! Your membership is automatically renewed; gifts show up conveniently on your monthly statements; and we send a year-end tax receipt for your total charitable gifts.

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STAFF CHANGES

Happy trails to Seth Cool

Jodi Broughton Business and development director, jodi@conservationnw.org

The Cool family: Seth, Marissa, Isadora, and Benicio. Jodi Rosati

We wish a fond farewell to Seth Cool, who left us in June to move to Spokane with his wife Marissa and their two children. Coming to us fresh out of Huxley College with an environmental science degree in 2000, we could never have imagined all the projects that Seth would eventually take on during his long and colorful tenure with Conservation Northwest.

He started as executive assistant to Mitch Friedman then quickly moved on to tackle complex issues such as grazing and local hydropower dam proposals. In 2004, he traveled to Georgia and Florida to participate in the Ancient Forest Roadshow.

Seth showed strong leadership in administering the Washington Invasive Species Coalition where he helped create the statewide Washington Invasive Species Council. He also co-authored the popular booklet, "Garden Wise: Non-invasive species for your garden."

Seth was a leader on the Whatcom Legacy Project and efforts to protect Blanchard Mountain and became a point person for state wildlife issues such as grazing and hound-hunting, and on wildlife from cougar to mountain goats. Most recently he worked on the Lake Whatcom Community Forest Preserve and was our "go to guy" for the 2011 state legislative session.

Whew! Seth supplemented his professional work by engaging in local politics and Lake Whatcom issues. We'll miss Seth's keen wit and outspoken yet easy-going nature; his dog and sidekick, Buddy; and the whole Cool family. We wish them all the best of luck in future endeavors.

BOARD NEWS

Paul Bannick Development director,paul@conservationnw.org

Saluting generosity & leadership

Tom and Sonya relax in the Methow Valley, another area benefitting from their philanthropy. Courtesy Braided River

We are thrilled that Tom and Sonya Campion will be celebrated as the "Outstanding Philanthropic Individuals" of 2011 by the Washington chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Few have done more to keep the Northwest—or even North America—wild than the Campions. It is hard to imagine having succeeded in any of our major campaigns without the leadership and generosity of Tom and Sonya. As critical as their support has been to us, this award recognizes that they have shown similar generosity to other organizations, particularly to those supporting the Northwest and Tom's prime interest, the Arctic.

Wildlife and wildlands stir something in Tom's soul and once he cares, his motivation, passion, and persistence are unstoppable. Conservation Northwest has been a fortunate beneficiary of his energy and business acumen since our founding in 1989, and Tom has been a leader on our board ever since.

Since Sonya entered Tom's life, her grounded intellect and breadth of philanthropic experience has been invaluable in helping us and many other groups chart better courses in pursuit of fundraising objectives.

Tom possesses a rare set of business skills that enabled him to found Zumiez, a clothing company for snowboarders, skaters, and other active youngsters. To Conservation Northwest, Tom brings the same skills to bear that allowed him to grow Zumiez to 400 stores. He is bold, but not rash; deliberate, but not conservative. This style has enabled Conservation Northwest to take calculated major risks that have paid off. In 1998, with a budget of only $250,000, we committed to raise over $18 million in just 15 months to save 25,000 acres of vital lynx habitat from logging in the Loomis Forest. We got it done.

Sonya lent her expertise and counsel of The Collins Group during both the Loomis Forest Fund campaign and The Cascades Conservation Partnership that followed. As our board treasurer, Tom asked tough questions of this campaign. When Tom got the answers he needed, he didn't hesitate to take the needed risk and back it up with his money, time, and reputation, helping us to protect 45,000 acres in the Cascades by raising over $80 million in private and public funds.

While their skills and energy alone are great boon to conservation efforts, Tom and Sonya also give very generously. On top of this, they make financial requests, host meetings and events (even the occasional staff retreat), and do everything needed to move forward our mission over the long haul.

The Campions are heroes to those of us who work at Conservation Northwest and we are thrilled to see them recognized for this prestigious award. Congratulations, Tom and Sonya!

Congratulations also go to the **Wilburforce Foundation** for being chosen as the "Outstanding Philanthropic Foundation" for 2011. Wilburforce is one of Conservation Northwest's top supporters.

To our board—Hellos and goodbyes

Michel Girard

Conservation Northwest says goodbye to long-time board member Nancy Ritzenthaler. Nancy joined us just after the Loomis Forest campaign and has guided us through many organizational transitions and hosted several house parties to benefit our campaigns as well as generously supported us herself. We will miss her!

We welcome aboard new board member Michel Girard. Michel recently ran Cameron Catering and now operates a management consulting firm. He brings 15 years of high tech and a decade of small business experience to our board and enjoys helping businesses run, grow, and thrive.

Michel says one of his strengths is that he can look at complex problems from a variety of perspectives and come up with creative solutions. But perhaps his biggest asset on our board will be his ability to ask for money. "I can walk up to a complete stranger, make them feel comfortable, and then ask for money." (Thanks, Michel, we're counting on you!)

Michel joined our board because he believes, "Conservation Northwest has the best combination of staff, leadership, and vision to tackle the complex issues of the day."

Michel lives in a small house in Seattle now but lived on the water for 10 years. "My true heart lies with the ocean. I love every moment I get to spend out on the water traveling with and amongst the wildlife. And, I love weather. It is probably one of the reasons I love living on a boat—you have to learn to work with Mother Nature." –*Jodi Broughton , jodi@conservationnw.org*

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Celebrate the return of Washington's wolves with our newest T-shirt. SEE INSIDE BACK PAGE

SUMMER OF SHOW & TELL

We have a winner!

Barbara Christensen Social media and IT, barbara@conservationnw.org

One thing's for sure: Our members like to play outside in some beautiful places, so we asked them to show us where they had been with a fun online show & tell photo contest.

Best in Show. Photo Kerrie Sumner Murphy

The photos ranged from sweeping vistas in the potential wilderness areas of the Columbia Highlands to captivating critters—owls, bighorn sheep, weasels, mountain goats, marmots, and more.

Our Facebook fans voted on their favorite for "Best in Show," and the clear winner was this charming long-tailed weasel, captured by volunteer Kerrie Sumner Murphy. Kerrie told her husband Thomas that she wanted to see a weasel when they started a 7-mile hike near Lost Lake, Manastash, that morning to check Conservation Northwest remote cameras. He commented, "I guess the weasel wanted to be seen too!"

A personal favorite—and runner up for Best in Show—was the amazing landscape by Paul Raymaker of Blanca Lake in the Henry M Jackson Wilderness (see it on our inside front cover). Paul features other photos on his website, raymaker-photography.com, each capturing the rich colors of nature. I can just imagine being there, feeling the power of wilderness, and it makes me want to work even harder for the other wilderness quality gems in our state that aren't yet protected!

Thank you to everyone who entered their fun photos. We hope we see your photos on our Facebook wall soon.