

INSIDE/OUTSIDE

CONSERVATION NEWS AROUND THE NORTHWEST

Cascades bears of the last frontier

The PBS program Nature in May featured “Bears of the Last Frontier,” a three-part series on the bears of Alaska. Hosted by bear ecologist Chris Morgan of Bear Trek and the Grizzly Bear Outreach Project, this



Cascades bears need a transfusion. Photo: Chris Morgan

compelling documentary has gotten millions of Americans excited about bear conservation as we work to protect the fewer than twenty grizzlies thought to survive in the North Cascades of Washington and Canada.

Says International Conservation Director Joe Scott, “Grizzly bears have always been on the frontlines in the battle against species extinctions in North America—first to go and last to return. Nowhere is that truer than in our Washington and British Columbia Cascades, where Cascades grizzlies were persecuted and hunted nearly to extinction decades ago. Their numbers remain precarious, despite not being hunted since the late ‘60s.”

“Today,” says Scott, “they need more than just to be left alone. They need a transfusion and a need a real commitment to recovery in the form of bear transplants from other areas.”

Visit our website, conservationnw.org, to see what you can do for bears.

And **attend our annual Hope for a Wild Future auction on June 8**, when a lucky participant will win a trip with Chris to learn about bears firsthand.

Best laid plans for forests

The US Forest Service this summer will release its long-anticipated forest management plans for the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee national forests. To comment on these plans is a once-in-a decade chance to influence the future of our national

forests. The forest plans include travel management, from ORV routes to quiet trails, as well as wilderness recommendations.

The Forest Service needs to know what you think, and hear your support for wilderness protection and the type of recreation and wildlife habitat you support on public forest lands. Sign up for our email list to get the latest news as it breaks—and to take action. Sign up at conservationnw.org.

On another note for forests: New National Forest Management Act rules are also underway. Thank you for speaking up to strengthen these important rules for managing our national forests in ways that best protect wildlife and forest habitat!

Forest preserve on its way

Forests are a natural way to protect cool, clear, clean water; and in the Lake Whatcom watershed, protecting the forest and the water is a high value. The watershed has traditionally been managed for clearcuts, yet it is a drinking water source for nearly 100,000 people in and around Bellingham, Washington.

A transfer of lands management from the state (with a focus on logging) to the country (with a focus on park) is coming close to fruition to provide a cleaner Lake Whatcom watershed. The new Lake Whatcom Forest Preserve would protect 8,700 acres, or 28% of the lands, around Lake Whatcom, a final vote is expected this summer.

Two key parcels are at stake: Stewart Mountain above the lake’s Northshore Trail to the north, and Lookout Mountain to the south above Sud-

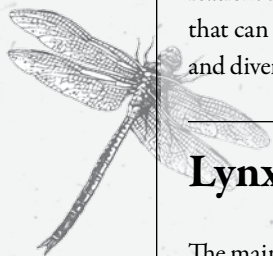


den Valley and next to Galbraith Mountain, the popular mountain biking area. The north shore parcel has beautiful, remnant old growth on its steeper slopes. Forest cover is important to stabilize the naturally unconsolidated soils and to prevent landslides into the lake.

Conservation Northwest has worked long and hard protect-

Marbled murrelets are one of the birds known to frequent Lake Whatcom old growth. Photo: Roger Contor

ing state lands in the Lake Whatcom watershed. We're pleased that the county is pursuing this project and envisions managing the area for old-growth forest, water quality, and low impact recreation. These efforts will protect nearby residents from landslides that can be triggered by logging, and restore old-growth forests and diversity for future generations. Win-win!



Lynx in the Kettles

The main stronghold for Washington's lynx is in the "meadows" area of the Pasayten and on the Loomis Forest, but lynx are also known to frequent the Kettle River Range, an area where the animals were almost entirely eliminated by trapping in the 1990s.

But the rarest of Washington's wild cats have been slow to return. To help find out why and to connect populations between the North Cascades and the Rocky Mountains, Conservation Northwest is supporting a cooperative multi-agency lynx survey in the Kettle River Range led by the US Forest Service. We are supplying volunteers and contributing \$12,000 towards a comprehensive survey of the range, using transect surveys and hair snag stations.

High quality habitat and an ample prey base of snowshoe hares make the Kettle River Range in the Columbia Highlands a choice place for lynx recovery and we are proud to support this effort through our Columbia Highlands Initiative.

Poll supports balance

A new poll of voters in northeastern Washington found 57% supported a balanced approach to managing the Colville National Forest, which includes wilderness protection.

Poll results showed support that crossed partisan lines and the rural/urban divide. Support from off-road vehicle users was only somewhat less than that expressed by hunters, hikers, and others, but still the majority view. Today, the Salmo-Priest Wilderness, the only protected wilderness in north-



Ranchers to conservationists support balance.
Photo: courtesy Jeff Dawson

east Washington, represents less than 3% of the Colville National Forest. Protected wilderness in the Columbia Highlands makes up less than 1% of the state's total designated wilderness.

"The Northeast Washington Forestry Coalition is taking the right approach," said Russ Vaagen of Vaagen Brothers Lumber, who serves as vice president of the Coalition. "People want a balanced approach and wise use of our forest that creates jobs, provides access, and takes care of wildlife and our special places."

Our wolves—wins and losses

Thanks to the more than 600 of you who championed Washington's wolves over these past months, writing a letter or attending a hearing, to successfully stop three harmful, anti-wolf bills introduced earlier this year into the Washington state legislature.

To address a major problem for our wolves after several were poached in the past two years, Conservation Northwest recently helped expand a state reward fund to apprehend poachers who illegally kill Washington wildlife, including wolves and grizzly bears.

Wolves this year didn't go untouched by Congress: The budget bill funding the government contained a rider that stripped federal protections from Northern Rockies wolves (which includes the eastern third of Washington) by delisting them from the Endangered Species Act. It was the first time Congress members—and not agency biologists—have removed protection from an animal formally recognized in danger of extinction.

Go online to learn more what more you can do for Washington's wolves! Sign up online for our email alert list; it's the best way to stay up to date. Join up at conservationnw.org.

Wolves at the Burke

This summer, make sure to visit two new traveling photo exhibits at Seattle's Burke Museum, one based on the award-winning book *The Owl and the Woodpecker*, the other on gray wolves. Both exhibits feature the compelling images of naturalist-photographer Paul Bannick, who also happens to be Conservation Northwest's development director. North America's owls, woodpeckers, and wolves enrich the very habitats on which they depend. They are worth fighting for. *Conservation Northwest members please go online to www.conservationnw.org/coupon to find a coupon for \$2-off museum admission.*

Caribou get a winter break from snowmobiles at Revelstoke

New closures at three local snowmobile areas near Revelstoke, BC, will help protect mountain caribou and recover the Selkirk herd population of this endangered North American mammal.

Conservation Northwest and our BC allies pushed hard for the recreation closure, recommended by scientists as part of the 2009 Mountain Caribou Recovery Plan. The caribou management area around Revelstoke was one of the areas remaining in the plan where promised public recreation closures had not yet been implemented.

“Caribou are already hurting in winter—undermined by scarce food, harsh weather, and threats of avalanche. They don’t need the added stress of snowmachines,” said Conservation Northwest’s international conservation director Joe Scott.

Cougars in the news

A healthy cougar population has a complex and fascinating social structure. For instance, large toms (males) control cougar activity within their respective territories, and reproduction varies depending on prey availability. For these reasons, hunting pressure on cougars can have results that confound managers and scientists.

A bill to extend legal use of dogs in hunting cougars died in this legislative session, but expect cougar controversy to stay at a rapid boil all year. Conservation Northwest helped pass Initiative 655 in 1996, which garnered about 65% of the vote and outlawed hound hunting except in limited situations. We did so out of concern that hounds can harm non-target wildlife, livestock and people, and raise ethical questions regarding fair chase. We also believed that cougar management goals could be met by hunters not using hounds.

Outcry from (mostly northeastern) parts of the state led to the legislature authorizing a pilot program that counties could opt into, allowing some hound hunting. That pilot program is



Looking forward. © Art Wolfe

about to sunset, so the legislature considered whether to extend it. Conservation Northwest testified against the extension, but then raised eyebrows by switching positions to support the bill.

We changed after discussions with leaders in the WA Dept. of Fish and Wildlife and with the bill’s chief proponent, Representative Joel Kretz (R-Okanogan County), revealed that we had common ground to pursue together.

Most importantly, we have come to see that the “boot hunt” (on foot, without hounds) is having a terrible impact on cougar populations. Because of this issue and others, Representative Kretz and Conservation Northwest’s director Mitch Friedman agreed to hold a forum to advance common understanding. That forum is planned for June.

Dirty coal doesn’t add up

Peabody Energy wants to ship coal—and lots of it—to Asian markets though Bellingham and other coastal Washington communities. The coal is already being shipped by rail from the Powder River Basin via the Columbia River Gorge and then north to Puget Sound and north to the Westshore Terminal at Roberts Bank, BC.

That’s almost certainly the route that Peabody Energy would use to move at least 24 million tons of coal to a proposed Gateway Pacific Terminal at Cherry Point, which is just a few miles south of Roberts Bank. Cherry Point is home to spawning grounds of native Cherry Point herring, a main food source for orcas.

Building coal export terminals could mean moving large quantities of coal through virtually every populous community in western Washington. That means train traffic and coal dust pollution all along the seaboard, and then the coal returns to us as air pollution once it is burned overseas! Such a deal.

Thanks for the story and the math from our friends online at Sightline (search “trainspotting”). To do something to stop that coal, go online to [Climate Solutions](#) or to [Bellingham’s ReSources](#).

Return of the pronghorns

This year pronghorns are being returned to south-central Washington State and the Yakama Nation reservation. Pronghorn have existed here for much of the past 10,000 years according to anthropologists, and at one time were found all along the Columbia basin, from the Tri-Cities to Grand Coulee Dam.





Pronghorns are true Americans.

Pronghorns were nearly gone by around 1915, and a first attempt to bring them back led to a population that petered out by the '80s.

Yet they have always been important to the Yakama. Reporter Andy Walgamott (*Northwest Sportsman*, March 2011) quotes former Yakama wildlife manager Arlen Washines explaining that elders recalled watching pronghorns drink from the river and that they provided subsistence meat to the tribe.

Sometimes called antelope, pronghorns are unrelated to animals of the African plains and are found only on the plains and grasslands of North America. Like bison, seemingly endless numbers once covered the West, stretching from Saskatchewan to just north of Mexico City. And like bison, pronghorns nearly became extinct, declining from an estimated 30-60 million in the early 1800s to less than 15,000 by 1915. A moratorium on hunting lasting until the 1940s and a federal tax on firearms and sporting goods funding conservation efforts are credited with stopping the decline. Today there are about a million pronghorn in the West.

The major threats to pronghorn are fencing (pronghorn are good at running, but lousy at jumping), loss of habitat (development and conversion of grasslands), getting eaten by coyotes (when fawns), and vehicle collisions.

Lightning fast, pronghorns can hit top speeds of around 60 mph and cruise for miles at 40 mph over rough terrain. Indeed, the only faster land animal in the world is the African cheetah. The ancient North American lions and cheetahs were actually larger, by about half, than their African counterparts today. The pronghorn evolved in the evolutionary context of these predators—but survived them in the end.

Our volunteers: Only the best

Many thanks to: Aaron Theisen, Adam Martin, Alex Molina, Alyson Desmond, Alyssa Artiano, Amanda Edwards, Amber Beamer, Andrew Forcier, Angela Morrill, Annika Barnes, Ariel Davidson, Ashley Bies, Barbara Morkill, Blake Brady, Brian Booth, Brooke Nicholson, Cathy Clark, Chris Russell, Corbin Powell, David Snair, Debra Welsh, Doris Ferm, Doug Beeman,

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Conservation Northwest also thanks Integra Telecom and Nichole Porter for their donated services.

Salute to interns

Conservation Northwest is lucky to have top-notch interns. Here we salute two.

Marissa Eder: "I enjoyed the wide range of work I did as an intern; interns at other places don't get to do near as much. By

working on the website, web writing, and other projects, I learned a lot. I'd had no idea that there was so much collaboration with other groups and that so many people were involved. It's quite impressive. Connecting with ranchers to protect ranchlands for wildlife and people makes so much sense. There's a lot of development going on where I grew up, in the Seattle suburbs. I've often thought: Why destroy, when there are better options?"

Dorothy Miller: "Not only have I helped Conservation Northwest, they've helped me. My job was to work with membership and members and researching companies that support conservation. Before this I didn't know where I wanted to work, and I now have a list of what is interesting to me. Now I'm seriously considering options of law school or environmental consulting to best help spur conservation of our wildlife and wild lands."



Marissa (left) and Dorothy (right).