The Confluence

Spring 2021

Swan Valley Connections

From The Director

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our spring edition of *The Confluence*, and our 2020 Annual Report. In this issue we celebrate growth, change, new life, coming into the light, and all the excitement of spring. We are focusing on our connection to plants, which manifest growth and the cycles of life.

Over the last year, I looked to nature for guidance. Nature constantly changes, adapts, and remains beautiful in all conditions. At SVC, we have tried to do the same. We intentionally worked to focus, stabilize, and unify the foundational contributions of Northwest Connections and Swan Ecosystem Center. These two organizations merged in 2016 to form SVC, and 2020 was a time to prioritize leadership, strategic planning, fundraising, property stewardship, and wildlife protection so that our founding visions can endure. We had the best laid plans for our college programs, fundraisers, and in-person activities, as connecting together on the land is our brand of business. When the pandemic hit last March,we found new ways to stay resilient, and make positive conservation impacts.

We welcomed Sara Lamar (neé Halm) as the Education Program Manager. Sara studied and worked with SVC's programs for many years before she left to obtain her master's degree, which she completed in June 2020. When Jonathan Bowler and Laura Cannon left SVC to pursue opportunities in Wyoming, Sara stepped into the Education Director role. Her multifaceted connections to SVC's history and this place, combined with her vision for the future, has significantly helped staff to carry our mission through change. We elected Kathy De Master and Tina Zenzola as new board members last year, and both hit the ground running. Kathy has since joined the education subcommittee, and Tina has taken on leadership roles in the development committee and strategic planning committee.

We worked with Shannon Stober of Verve Exchange, to help us with a strategic alignment and planning process for developing our shared vision, values, and goals. As we shifted so many of SVC's meetings to Zoom, the strategic planning process took much longer than we anticipated. We stayed persistent and finalized the foundational strategic alignment plan in early 2021. Shannon helped us understand our purpose today and for the future, and we are now excited to share our mission, vision, and values statements that we will use to guide us in the years to come.

Despite the uncertainty of the pandemic and its effect on our financial outlook, we have kept staff employed, exceeded annual financial goals, and have great momentum built for 2021. This would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the development committee, the generosity of our donors, emergency support from long-term partners, and federal pandemic assistance.

Although we postponed our college field programs and most in-person community education events last year, we developed plans for the future, created pre-recorded educational videos (including more Swan Valley Almanac episodes), and moved our potluck series to Zoom. These videos and presentations are now archived on our website for all to enjoy.

Despite COVID-19, we continued our excellence in forest stewardship, as well as wildlife monitoring and coexistence. This not only included new partnerships in our carnivore

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The Confluence is published by Swan Valley Connections, a non-profit organization situated in Montana's scenic Swan Valley. **Our mission is to inspire conservation and expand stewardship in the Swan Valley.** Images by Swan Valley Connections' staff, students, or volunteers unless otherwise noted.

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Front cover image: Micromoth (genus-Grapholita) on Rocky Mountain Maple Flower by Andrea DiNino

project and Swan Valley Bear Resources, but also new growth in our beaver program and continued partnership with the varied committees our staff supports. We also strengthened our relationship with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes through restoration at the Elk Creek Conservation Area, a property we own and manage together. Following COVID-19 protocol in place at the time, we planned and hosted two volunteer-driven workdays focused on empowering landowners with practical stewardship skills. One of these workdays focused on pulling houndstongue (a troublesome invasive plant), and the other focused on installing fences to promote woody native plant recovery in the Elk Creek floodplain. We officially named our quarter section of Section 31 (located across the highway from the Condon Community Library) as the Swan Legacy Forest property. We had a staff workday to install aspen exclosures to enhance the diversity of the forest, and we held two staff retreats on the property to increase our communication and connection with one another and to the land.

Thank you all for all you have given to us, and to this place, over the last year. As we move forward into 2021, we celebrate this season, this landscape, and each of you who are connected to it.

Warmly,

Rebecca Ramsey, Executive Director

OUR MISSION **is to inspire conservation and expand stewardship in the Swan Valley.**

OUR VISION **is that through exemplary stewardship, the Swan Watershed and adjacent landscapes remain wild, resilient places, where all people are connected to the natural world.**

We value…

- The responsibility to protect one of the last best, wild places on Earth.
- The abundance of public lands, the legacy that led to their conservation, and our responsibility to protect and steward them in perpetuity.
- The critical role private land stewardship plays in maintaining high quality habitat and the health of the land and all its inhabitants.
- Experiential learning that informs and inspires individuals of all ages to care for the natural world and be leaders in conserving it.
- Partnerships and collaborative decision-making that integrates science and local knowledge to support sustainable land management practices.
- Traditional ecological knowledge and the role of tribal people in current and future conservation, as the Swan Watershed has been used by many tribes and is the aboriginal land of the Salish and Kalispel people.
- Community involvement and the use of local, qualified contractors and the work it provides for the regional economy.

Swan Valley Connections
Summary Balance Sheet
As of December 31, 2020

	Dec-20
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Cash & Equivalents	509,510
Accounts Receivable	78,425
Inventory	4,698
Prepaid Expenses	11,513
Total Current Assets	604,146
Fixed Assets	
Equipment	1,100
Vehicle	107,230
Land	282,000
Accumulated Depreciation	(56,693)
Total Fixed Assets	333,637
Investments	37,075
TOTAL ASSETS	**974,858**
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	4,186
Payroll Liabilities	58,714
Tuition Deposits	10,700
Total Current Liabilities	73,600
Long Term Liabilities	
Loans	87,958
Total Long Term Liabilities	87,958
Total Liabilities	161,558
Net Assets	
Unrestricted Net Assets	589,131
Board Designated Net Assets	183,394
Temporarily Restricted Net Assets	8,226
Permanently Restricted Net Assets	32,549
Total Net Assets	813,300
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	**974,858**

Summary Profit & Loss 2020

Revenue:	**2020**
Government Agency Grants & Contracts	347,657
Tuition & Course Fees	4,720
Private Foundation & NGO Grants	159,600
Donations	177,033
Program Services, Events & Other	57,487
Investment Income/(Loss) & Interest	5,510
Total Revenue	**752,007**
Expenses:	
Stewardship & Restoration	72,678
Education	80,498
Wildlife & Aquatics	126,900
Recreational Trails	49,667
Conservation	44,698
Public Info & Visitor Services	27,186
Outreach & Communications	53,269
Elk Creek & Swan Legacy Forest Mgmt	23,485
Total Program Expenses	**478,381**
Facilities	0
Administration & Fundraising	162,148
Depreciation	19,913
Total Expenses	**660,442**
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	**91,565**
Other Income:	
Total Change In Net Assets	**91,565**

Swan Valley Connections' executive committee oversees the fiscal management of assets, balancing long term financial stability with current operational needs. The executive committee provides oversight for investment (through a professional investment manager) of fiscal assets to provide long term growth as well as current income within a balanced and appropriately conservative investment portfolio. In addition, the executive committee recommends for approval by the entire board of directors an annual operating budget and the strategic allocation of unrestricted and board designated net assets to support the continuing mission of Swan Valley Connections.

2020

landowners served and projects completed with SVC

FUELS REDUCTION

3 projects

16 acres

BEETLE REPELLENT

108 landowners

5970 packets

43 acres

SWAN VALLEY BEAR RESOURCES

31 containers

5 electric fences

LAND STEWARDSHIP

56 landowners

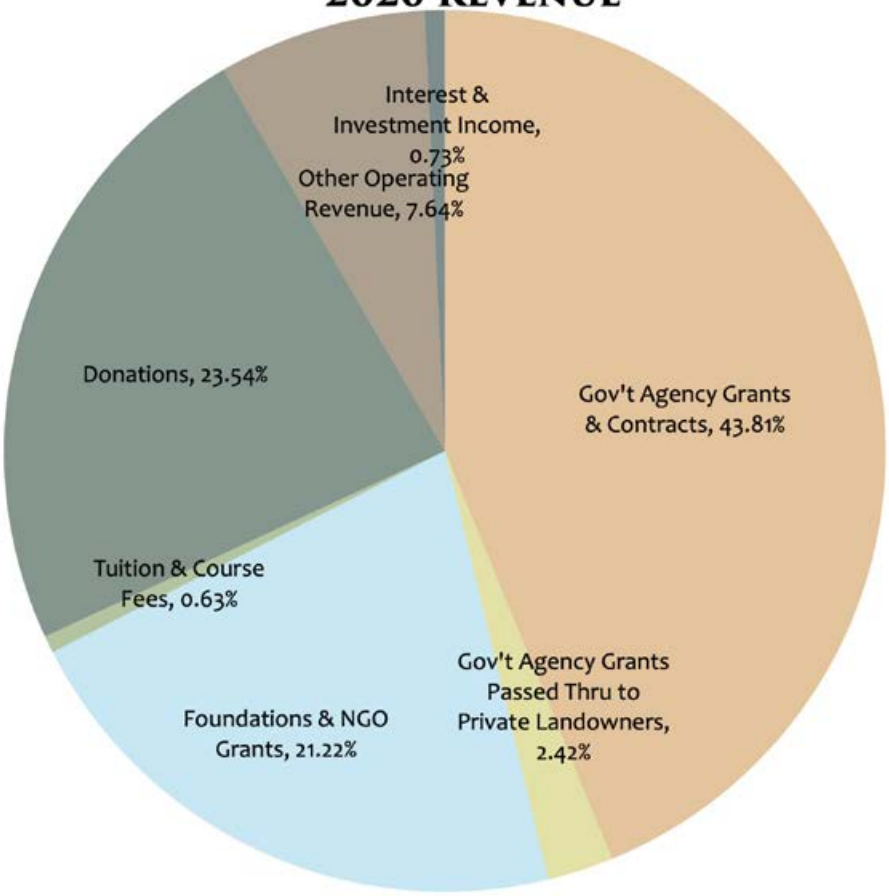
3334 acres

TOTAL

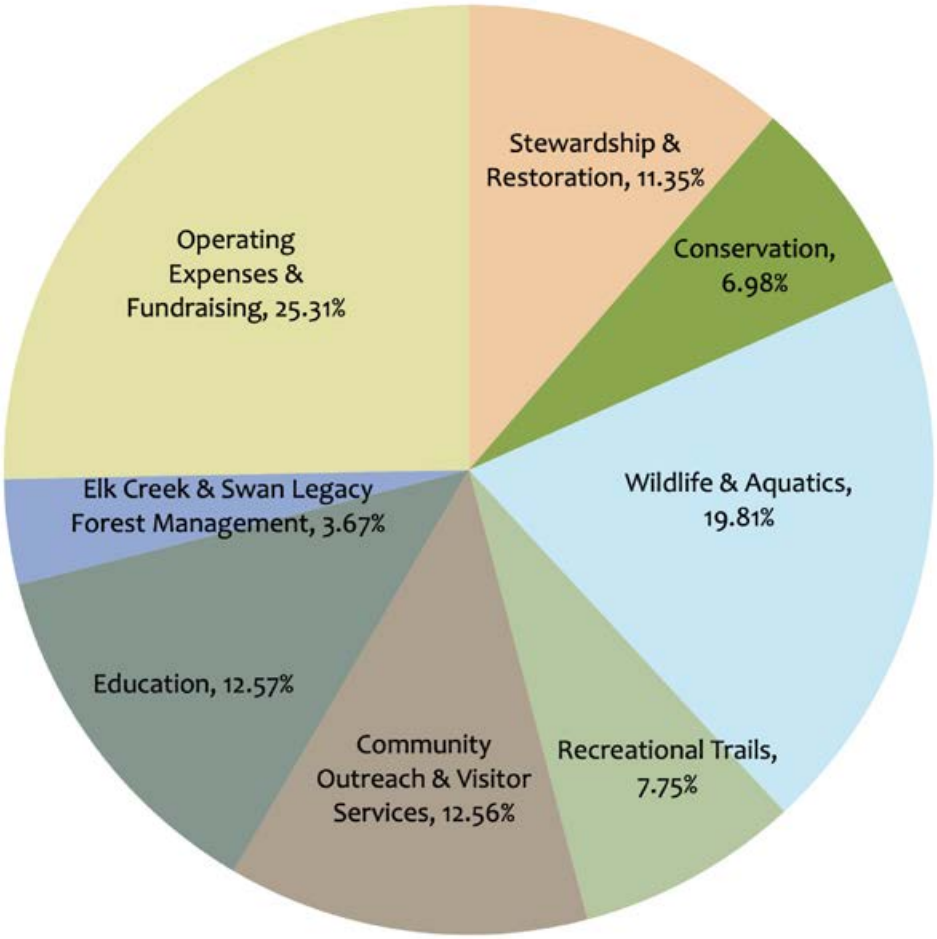
203 landowners and projects

3393 acres managed

2020 Revenue



2020 Expenses



Ode to Dead Wood

By Rob Rich

On January 14, 2021, hurricane-force winds swept through Montana, toppling power poles, expectations, and trees throughout the Swan Valley. Electricity and plans were restored soon enough, but now, nearly three months later, obvious evidence of the invisible gusts remain. And beyond where chainsaws whined for days of cleanup, the windfalls draw me to trees I had failed to notice before. Their sharp breaks press me with questions, summed up in one word: *Why?*

Consider three trees along a wetland. The first, a ponderosa pine, had sunk a deep taproot, but had grown too tall for its own good. Its long, three-needled greens had caught the west wind like a capsizing sail, snapping the trunk. The second, a shallow-rooted yet ever-adaptable lodgepole pine, had eked out a good life in the high water table. But as it grew taller, it grew more vulnerable, and the wind gave it a final tip, wrenching its roots from the loose wet soils. The third tree, or what was left of it, was untouched by the wind. Its jagged, crumbling trunk had collapsed long ago. It may have gone with the wind, but it was also charred by fire, and pocked with rectangular holes that led to even more porous galleries – revealing a pileated woodpecker after carpenter ants after the tree's weakness. This third tree had likely been dying for a long time, even as it filled with, and attracted, life. Now hairy with lichen, the life still comes to it.

Each of these trees might have endured for several more decades in spite of their weaknesses, because trees are *always* dying inside, and rarely for one reason. Roughly 95 percent of the mass of a "living" tree is dead wood cells. A tree's leaves, buds, and needles are certainly alive, transforming carbon dioxide and sun into sugars for growth. A tree's root tips are alive, extending through the dark in search of water, nutrients, and support. And trees live in their cambium, the thin layer of dividing cells that draw on the roots' and leaves' harvests to expand the outer bark. But as the cambium layers wood within the cores of trunks and branches, the cells harden and perish. The innermost layer, which we call heartwood, does

not beat at all. Far from being a pulsing muscle, it is a massive cellulose cemetery of trapped sunlight.

And yet, the tree's rigor mortis provides great structure and strength, allowing trees to achieve heights, shapes, and weights that non-woody organisms can't match. If trees could be said to move and pose, they do so because of how dead wood reflects the ecology of a place. At high elevations, prevailing winds warp whitebark pines into stunted, gnarled forms called krummholz ("crooked wood," in German). The feathery boughs of western redcedar slow rain to a drip, and the stiff spires of subalpine firs shed snow. By healing their wounds, responding to their habitats, and amassing more and more of their dead matter within, trees can adapt and endure for centuries.

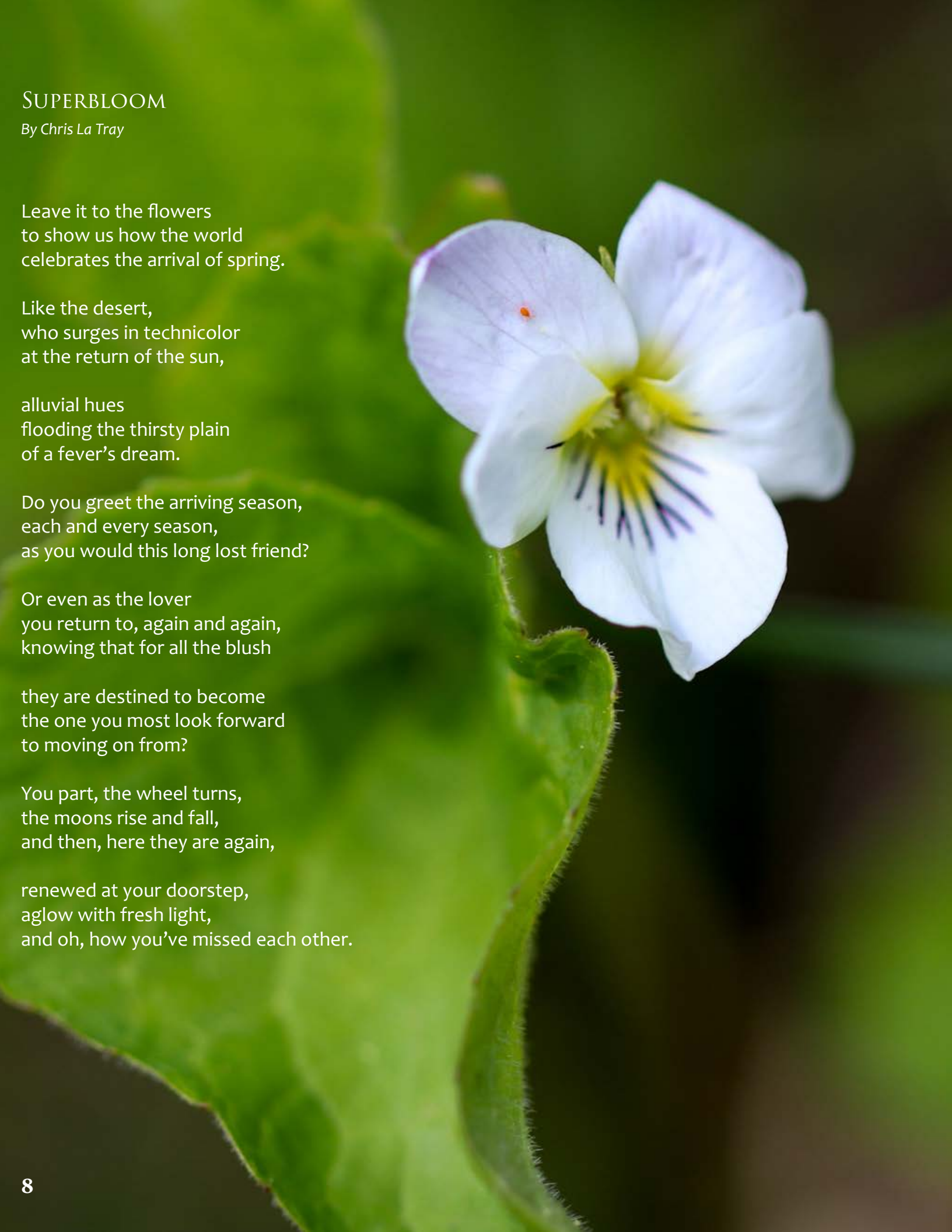
When photosynthesis ceases and a tree's life finally ends, the life-giving process of decay begins. The means of a tree's decay can be as slow, diverse, and complex as its cause of death. Trees that die while standing, often called snags, might start by shedding their needles or leaves, which adds nitrogen to the soil. As the bark loosens, overwintering butterflies like the mourning cloak may find a shingled refuge, or brown creepers might find a protected niche in which to nest. As woodpeckers and ants complete their binge among the rotting wood, their cavities become vital to nesting ducks and owls, swallows and bluebirds, nuthatches and so many more. Where the holes hollow out even larger sections of a snag's core, bats, flying squirrels, and black bears can roost, nest, or den as well.

When a snag becomes too structurally weak from serving its users, or if external conditions bring a live tree down, the rotting, fallen remnants become coarse woody debris (CWD). But even then, their giving is not done. Through extensive contact with the ground, CWD provides small mammals, amphibians, and invertebrates with moist cover, and for larger animals like martens or bobcats, it offers networks to travel, forage, hide, scent-mark, or den. Alongside all the wildlife benefits of CWD, entire fungal and lichen communities have evolved particularized relationships to thrive on the decay. Plants can take root on the softened, soil-like "nurse logs" of their fallen kin, and CWD can ultimately become part

of the fertilizer to nourish future trees. And the magic of these localized microhabitats is not confined to land: CWD's benefits are just as boundless in aquatic systems, where it enhances fish habitat with the dynamic, intricate, nutrient-rich structure that is essential to watershed health.

In larger habitats, as with individual trees, it's hard to know where the death ends and life begins. What we do know is that the resilient forests require decay. While intermittent wildfire has its own restorative benefits, slowly dying wood constantly sustains and renews our forests in subtler ways, including through the vast storage of water and carbon. Instead of quickly releasing or removing all the energy a tree built up in its life, as can happen in fires or forestry, wood that dies and decays in place can unleash its rewards over time.

Since we've suppressed fire throughout the American West for decades, people must also reckon with if, how, or where to build and protect homes in our increasingly fickle, flammable climate. But given the varied ways it attracts life and holds moisture across the landscape, dead wood is part of the answer, not the curse. It might take decades to know why, but we might find hints, if we look.. Under a moldy log, perhaps a long-toed salamander. In the abandoned, long-dead heartwood of a stump, a chickadee's nest – with some eggs unhatched, and cracked shells where birds beat their wings and flew.



Superbloom

By Chris La Tray

Leave it to the flowers
to show us how the world
celebrates the arrival of spring.

Like the desert,
who surges in technicolor
at the return of the sun,

alluvial hues
flooding the thirsty plain
of a fever's dream.

Do you greet the arriving season,
each and every season,
as you would this long lost friend?

Or even as the lover
you return to, again and again,
knowing that for all the blush

they are destined to become
the one you most look forward
to moving on from?

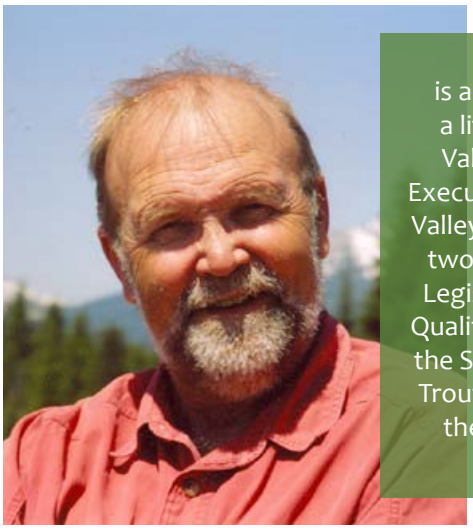
You part, the wheel turns,
the moons rise and fall,
and then, here they are again,

renewed at your doorstep,
aglow with fresh light,
and oh, how you've missed each other.

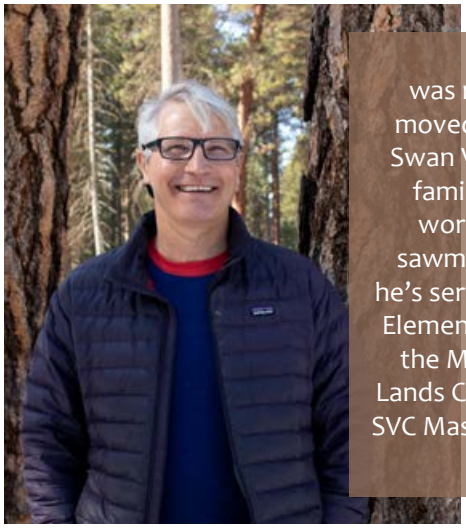
Welcome

We're thrilled to welcome four new board members and three new advisory board members to our team this year!

JESSY STEVENSON grew up in the foothills of the Mission Mountains, a fifth-generation Montanan on her father's side and a descendent of the Blackfeet Nation on her mother's. Jessy currently serves as the Montana Public Lands Fellow for American Rivers and serves on the Flathead Rivers Alliance advisory board.



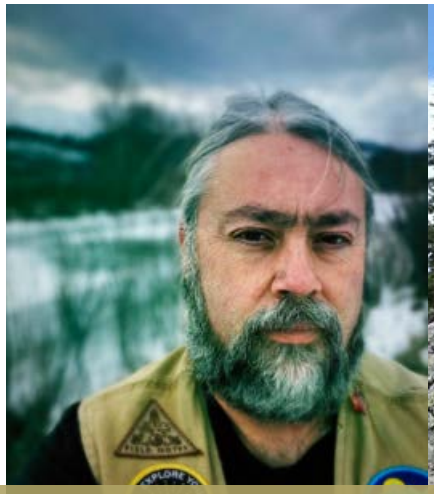
GREG TOLLEFSON is a native Montanan with a lifelong tie to the Swan Valley. He has worked as Executive Director for the Five Valleys Land Trust, has served two terms on the Montana Legislature's Environmental Quality Council, has served on the State Council of Montana Trout Unlimited, and chaired the Rock Creek Advisory Council.



DAN STONE was raised in Denver and moved to the woods of the Swan Valley to raise his own family. He's retired after working 35 years at the sawmill in Seeley Lake, and he's served on the Swan Valley Elementary School Board and the Missoula County Open Lands Committee. He's also an SVC Master Naturalist alum.

DONN LASSILA has been a part-time resident and homeowner in the Swan Valley since his childhood in 1965. He currently serves as the Chief Compliance/AML Officer for the Peak Trust Group. Donn and his partner are global citizens maintaining residences in Montana, Alaska, Nevada, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Advisory



Chris La Tray is a Métis writer and storyteller. Chris is an enrolled member of the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians and lives near Missoula, Montana.

Steve Kloetzel has worked for The Nature Conservancy of Montana since 2004. Prior to that, he worked as a restoration botanist and ecologist. Steve lives in Ovando, Montana.

Pat O'Herren is a Swan Valley resident, who retired as the Chief Planning Officer and Director of Community and Planning Services for Missoula County in 2018.

Of Lynx and Fire

By Luke Lamar

August of 2003 was a scary time to be a Swan Valley resident. When lightning sparked fire in the Mission Mountains Wilderness, the blaze roared out of the high country into the valley bottom, threatening people's homes. Residents feared the unknown, which was even more ominous in the blinding smoke that choked the valley, blocking views of the mountains and the fire's progress. They scrambled to pack up their most prized possessions in case they had to quickly evacuate. Luckily, firefighters were able to stop the wildfire from burning further east, and no homes or structures were lost.

The aftermath of the 11,000 acre Crazy Horse Fire left the forest blackened and charred. Some areas within the fire perimeter burned with high severity, where not a single green tree lived. As so often happens, the local and national media portrayed the forest, and others burning across the western U.S., as "destroyed" and "gone forever." As the fire roared, I remember listening to a disgruntled community member proclaim, "my kids will never see trees there again in their lifetimes" as he violently shook his fists at a helpless U.S. Forest Service liaison trying to give an update on the fire's activity and containment at a Swan Valley Community Hall meeting.

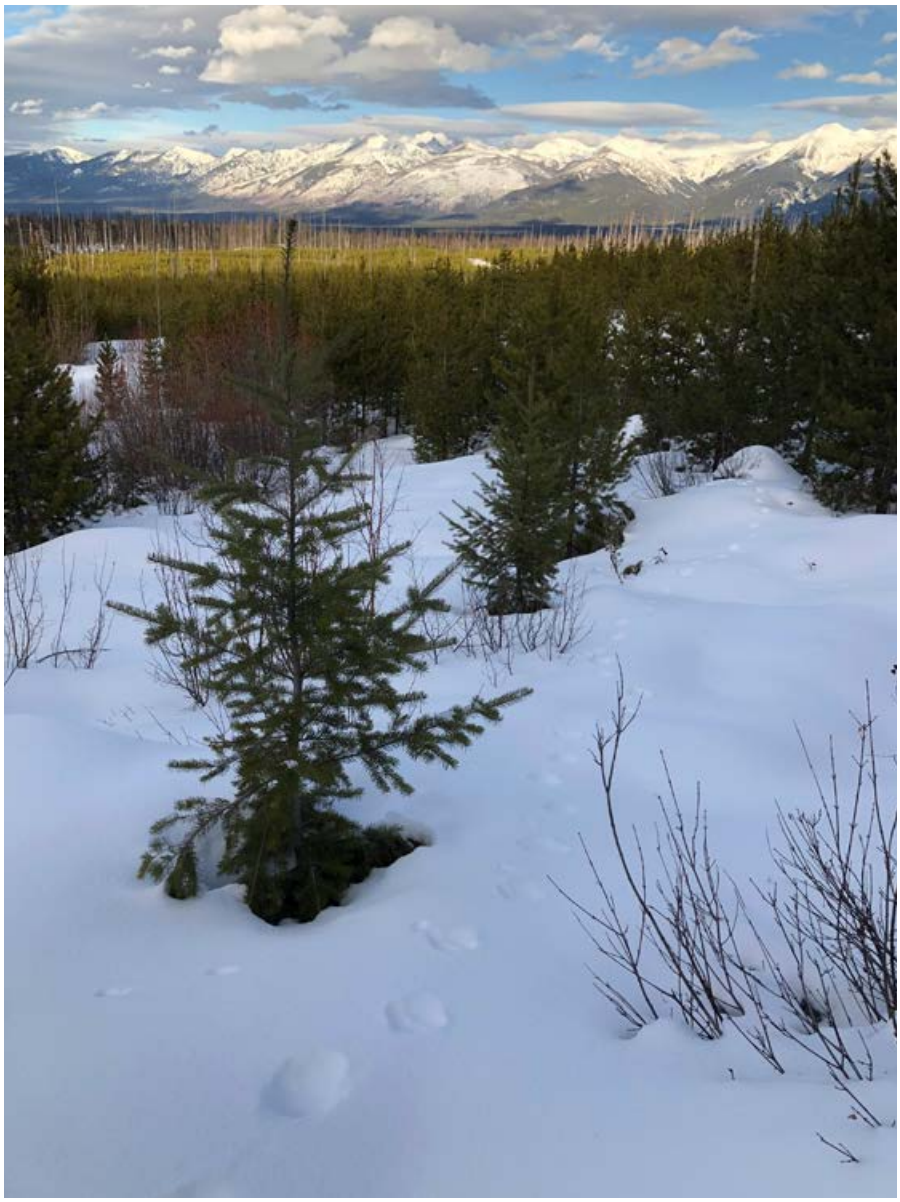
But with wildfire comes a natural restart to forest succession that benefits many plants and animals. The forest is not destroyed, but is reborn.

Fast-forward 18 years. The lodgepole pines that burned in the Crazy Horse Fire, — and which have evolved with wildfire to have serotinous cones, adapted to open and release their seeds from the heat of a wildfire, — have germinated and regenerated into a young forest so thick I can barely squeeze myself between the stems. With the flush of nutrients following the fire and the ample sunlight reaching the ground, a flush of woody shrubs also appeared. Deer, elk, and moose flourished in the burn as they snacked on the nutritious buds of the regenerating aspens, willows, and Rocky Mountain maples. These plants make valuable habitat contributions that help fulfill the dietary needs of our ungulates, particularly during the winter months.

As I meander through the dense, regenerating forest, I find the tracks of snowshoe hare in the snow everywhere I look. The forest has now grown up to provide suitable hiding cover for the prey species that so many species like owls, hawks, coyotes, bobcats, and others predate upon. The hares are also drawn to the wildfire perimeter for another reason — their preferred winter diet consists of conifer needles, specifically those of lodgepole pines. The Mission Mountains accumulate several feet of snow over the course of the winter, which causes most animals, like deer and elk, to migrate to lower elevations and slopes on the Swan Front that receive more sunlight and less snow. Some predators, like mountain lions, wolves, coyotes, and bobcats, constrict their home ranges and follow the prey into lower elevations. Sometimes, they have to migrate down in elevation because their anatomy doesn't allow them to exist in deep snow conditions. For example, a bobcat has a foot roughly 2x2 inches in size to carry its weight. When deep, fluffy snow stacks up, a bobcat literally can't stay afloat on top of the snow in the high country.

And yet, among the hare tracks, I do find tracks from another species using the forest, one of the rarest mammals on our landscape — the Canada lynx. With its large, furry feet (roughly 4x4 inches in size) that act much like snowshoes and a body size similar to a bobcat, it can stay afloat on top of the deep snowpack and exploit a niche where other competitors can't exist. The lynx specializes in predating upon hares; over 90% of its diet consists of the rabbits. Where there are high densities of hares, there is a high likelihood of finding lynx as well.

Finding the lynx track was not a coincidence. I was there surveying the landscape for rare carnivores, specifically lynx, wolverines, and fishers, as part of SVC's monitoring and research project. When we first surveyed the area from 2013-2016, we did not find any lynx using the forests within the Crazy Horse burn. But with a few more years of growth, the hares and lynx are now finding this burn to be productive habitat. With the support of partners from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Blackfoot Challenge, The Nature Conservancy in Montana (TNC), Bureau of Land Management, Southwestern Crown Collaborative, and others, we are surveying about 1.5 million acres with the Southwestern Crown of the Continent landscape, and we are seeing that about 15-20 years after a fire, lynx are using the dense regeneration within burns. And lynx are not isolated to the habitat renewed after the Crazy Horse Fire; we're also finding lynx using the 2003 Snow-Talon Fire in the Copper Creek area north of Lincoln, and the 2003 Mineral/Primm and Boles Creek Fires, and 2007



Jocko Lakes Fire west of Seeley Lake. This is just one of the reasons why we monitor and research these rare carnivores. We also aim to track changes over time, find areas that complement or require further research, and inform adaptive management. After all, we can't conserve a species if we don't know anything about it.

The story of lynx and fire, like most wildlife management, is not a simple, one-size-fits-all explanation. Fires burn at varied intensities, each with different impacts. There can be low-severity fire, where the understory vegetation burns up, but most mature green trees live. There can be high-severity fire, where the fire rips through the canopy and leaves most trees and vegetation burned and dead. Or there can be a mix of both in a given area.

After the 2017 Liberty and Rice Ridge Fires, SVC partnered with renowned lynx researcher John Squires and the Rocky Mountain Research Station, USFS, and TNC to look at lynx and wolverine habitat use immediately after those wildfires. This was an interesting research opportunity, as we knew lynx existed in these areas prior to the fires. While the results are still being analyzed, anecdotally we found that lynx were still using the burns, mostly in low or mixed severity areas, or along the edges between burned and unburned forests. The high-severity fire areas leave little vegetation left for snowshoe hares to eat or hide in, and thus the lynx don't seem to like those areas either, until 15-20 years later when those locations have regrown with dense, young stands of timber.

As with all natural forest succession, the lodgepole pine trees eventually crowd each other out, competing for limited resources of water, soil nutrients, and sunlight. As this happens and the trees grow taller, their lower limbs self-prune, leaving few conifer needles available for the snowshoe hare to feed on, and with it, that particular forest type grows out of productive lynx habitat. But, if another wildfire event doesn't come along to restart the cycle again, the shade-tolerant spruce and fir tree species begin to pop up in the understory. As they grow in among overstory-dominant tree species, a mature, multi-storied forest develops, which the lynx finds to be particularly productive habitat. If left alone, these forests will diversify and grow into mature, multi-storied forests, until another wildfire or forest thinning treatment restarts the succession process. Having the right mosaic of multi-storied forests and younger, dense regeneration seems to be important for the specific needs of lynx.

As I follow the lynx track looking for any genetics it has left behind (hair, scat, urine, hairball, etc.) that will allow us to analyze its DNA to determine its sex and unique individual, I look ahead at the sunlight shining brightly off the high peaks in the Mission Mountains. I also look back, and it occurs to me that not only am I following a fascinating story of lynx and wildfire, but I am also standing on ex-Plum Creek Timber Company land, a place that, without the monumental land conservation Montana Legacy Project deal, could have easily been sold to the highest bidder as private property and developed into a subdivision. Instead, it is now part of a large, connected block of public land and habitat, owned by each American. And on this land, people can recreate, hunt, fish, snowmobile, harvest timber, or track one of the rarest carnivores in the lower 48, if that's your thing.

Recovering our Roots:
Reconnection with our Plant Relatives

By Rose Bear Don't Walk, Salish Ethnobotanist (MS Environmental Studies, University of Montana)

It's been a long year.

It has been a full year since the pandemic started, and so much has changed for our society. But despite everything, the plants are still here. As spring approaches they have continued to grow, change, and adapt. In our own human ways, we have tried to adapt as well. One good outcome of 2020 was that I found myself out and about in nature a lot more often. I would say that 2020 was a year that I spent the most time outdoors.

As a Salish ethnobotanist, I spent a lot of that time studying, understanding, and harvesting our traditional food plants. Ethnobotany is the scientific study of the relationships formed between people and regional flora. Plants have been used for centuries by cultures around the world for food, medicine, tools, shelter, religion, and much more. For the Salish people whose traditional territory spans northwest of what is now Montana, plants were an integral part of our culture, cosmology, and livelihood. Being a Salish citizen and a resident of the Flathead Indian Reservation, part of my work as an ethnobotanist is to elevate the traditional teachings of plants and allow for a deeper understanding of them in modern society.

In Montana we are incredibly lucky to have access to beautiful and bountiful landscapes. We have mountains, streams, glaciers, prairies, and much more that are worth exploring. I know many Montanans are outdoor enthusiasts who love to hike, run, fish, ski, and recreate here. And I'm sure the outdoors helped them through this pandemic like myself. But how are we giving back to the spaces we use? I see more and more people reaching out for land acknowledgments and recognizing that much of our outdoor spaces used to be inhabited by the Salish, Pend d'Oreille, Kootenai, Blackfeet and many others that existed on it for centuries. That's a good step in the right direction, and it's important work, but another good way to honor the first peoples of this land is to acknowledge and respect the land itself.

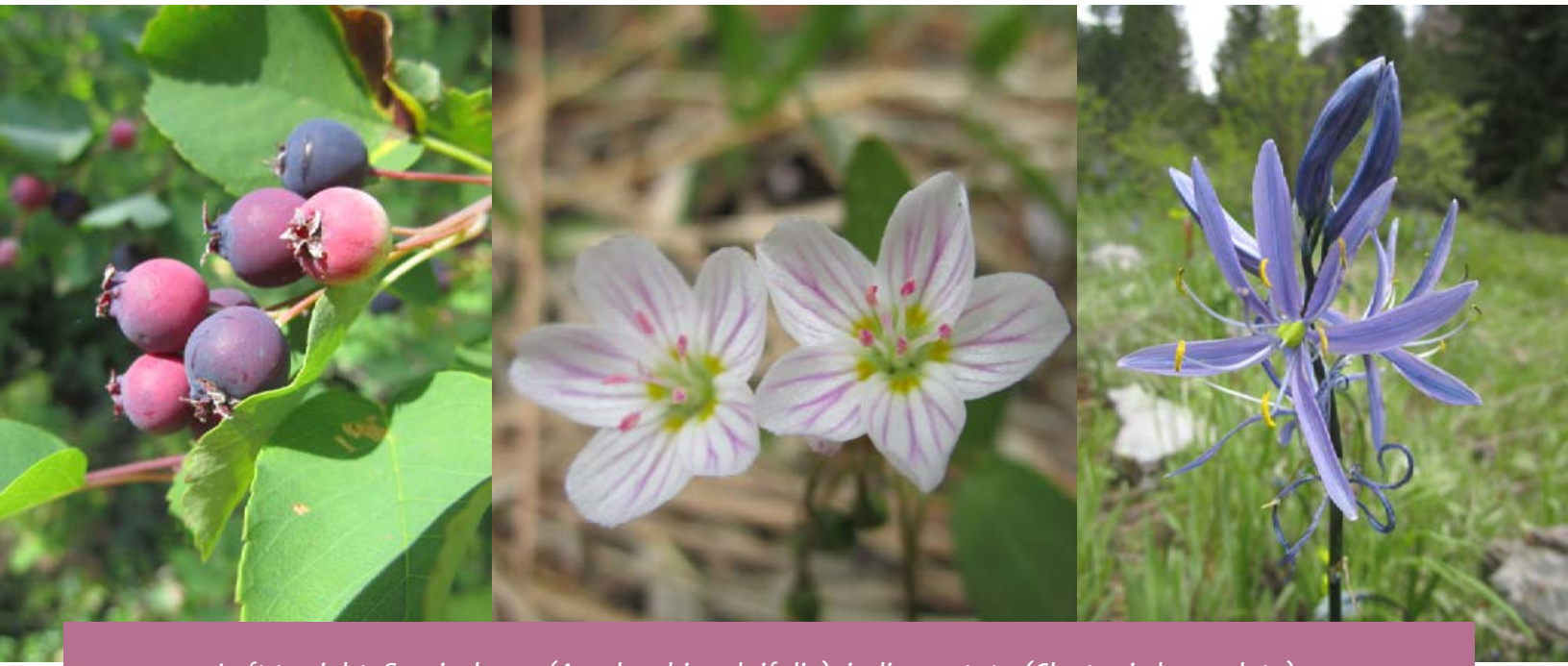
Before there were people, there were plants and animals. Our Salish creation story reminds us that

in addition to being made from this earth, it was first made habitable for us by our plant and animal relatives, our teachers. We learned all of our valuable lessons in life from natural beings and we carry their lessons with us today through our stories, language, and our ways of life. I like to use some of these lessons as a guide to my work with plants. These lessons help me to honor our roots, recognize the interconnectedness of everything, and greet the natural world with gratitude.

When I do presentations and workshops with Montanans, many are surprised at the plethora of edible plants we have in our own backyards. These are plant foods the Salish and other tribes have been harvesting, processing, eating, and honoring for centuries, and some of them are downright delicious. From the humble indian potato (*Claytonia lanceolata*) of early spring, to the invaluable staple of camas (*Camassia quamash*) in summer, to the abundance of service and huckleberries (*Amelanchier alnifolia* and *Vaccinium spp.*) going into the fall, Salish traditional food plants allow us to live and eat season by season. Not only are these plants incredibly nutritious, but they also allow us to connect with our culture, language, and sense of place in the world. When I interact with plants, I feel an ancestral connection as well as gratitude and love for the plants that carried the Salish people through many years of life.

"How do we create a new relationship with the natural world?...How can I see the living things around me for what they are?"

Raising awareness about our plant relatives for Salish and non-Salish alike reaffirms their place as valuable beings in our society. Without the plants we wouldn't have made it this far. As we make plans for spring and summer recreation, let's stop and ask ourselves these questions: *How do we create a new relationship with the natural world?* We can start by learning about native plant species and their identification, so we don't step on them or destroy their habitat. *How can I see the living things around me for what they are?* We can remember that all natural beings have life and are connected to their ecosystem; we can't understand the gift of chokecherries (*Prunus virginiana*) without acknowledging the birds that eat them, just like we can't harvest the bitterroot (*Lewisia rediviva*) without praying over it and applying practices that sustain its longevity, just like our ancestors once did. Humans, animals, and plants all have a role in the ecosystem. *What will your role be?* Well, I'll leave that one for you to answer.



Left to right: Serviceberry (Amelanchier alnifolia), indian potato (Claytonia lanceolata) , and camas (Camassia quamash). Photos by Rose Bear Don't Walk

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April 14
Swan River National Wildlife Refuge Wetland Restoration Project
Virtual Tour

April 15-16, 17-18, & 21-22
Wildlife Tracking Specialist and Standard Certifications
With David Moskowitz and Casey McFarland

April 23-25
CyberTracker Virtual Conference

May 4
Adopt-a-Highway and Grounds Cleanup Day
Volunteer Opportunity

May 5
Whitebark Pine
Zoom Presentation with Bob Keane (USFS)

May 6-7
Missoula Gives

May 8
Birding: A Swan Valley Field Ecology Workshop/
Global Big Day

May 17
10th year of Wildlife in the West Begins!

June 1-30
Seeley Lake Community Foundation's
Change Your Pace Challenge

June 2
Swans
Zoom Presentation with Greg Neudecker (USFWS)

June 5
Rare Plant Walk
With Maria Mantas

June 12
Elk Creek Conservation Area Workday #1
Volunteer Opportunity

June 27-July 2
Montana Master Naturalist

July 7
Native Fish of the Swan Valley
Zoom Presentation with Beth Gardner (USFS)