



THE CONFLUENCE



—SWAN VALLEY—
CONNECTIONS

SUMMER 2017

FROM THE BOARD

As I write this article, it is the first full day of summer. The weather is delightful, not too cool yet not too hot. Summer activities lie ahead, including hiking and biking, picnicking, fishing, and in general enjoying the pleasures of living in the Swan Valley. Along with these pleasures, though, come dangers and inconveniences inherent with country living, such as wildfires, noxious weeds, invasive species, bears, and others. This brings me to Swan Valley Connections (SVC), who we are, how we view our existence, and how we relate to the Swan Valley and its inhabitants. Many of you are very familiar and involved with SVC, but others are not fully aware of, or have misconceptions of us and our activities.



All organizations have a purpose for which they exist. The purposes of SVC are to encourage stewardship and sustainable use of our natural resources, to provide educational programs about ecology and environmental issues, and to focus on the inter-relationships of economic and social considerations in resource management. These purposes are on-going; that is, they have no end point; We can't say we have accomplished this or that purpose so let's move on to something else. To fulfill these purposes, SVC has its mission to conserve the intact ecosystems within and surrounding the Swan Valley, and to strengthen the connection between people and the natural world through collaboration and experiential learning. In action, we work to fulfill this mission through our many collaborative programs such as fuels reduction grants in which SVC helps provide financial aid to landowners for timber treatment. We annually fund crews to clear and maintain trails on both sides of the valley. To lessen human-bear conflicts, we host events such as the Spring Bear Wake-up Social and summer Bear Fair. We also loan bear resistant garbage containers. In the educational area, SVC provides short courses and programs for both young people and adults. Additionally, we offer collegiate field programs for credit; Wildlife in the West and Landscape and Livelihood, both very much hands-on courses. SVC has produced a comprehensive map of the valley which details recreational trails and destinations. And I would be remiss if I didn't mention the annual summer Shintangle, coming up Thursday, 20 July at the ball field.

SVC is involved in many other projects, all of which are undertaken to help enable people to appreciate life in the Swan Valley as we know it, to create conditions which provide sustainable jobs, and to promote places in which to recreate and enjoy. If and when we accomplish these things, we fulfill our vision that the Swan Watershed remains an intact ecosystem, supporting a resilient community that values its natural resources, and serves as a model for enduring stewardship. We see ourselves as an integral, productive component of the Swan community, and we hope you see us that way too.

Steve Ellis
Chair, SVC Board of Directors

Swan Valley Connections

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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 conserve the intact ecosystems within and surrounding the Swan Valley and to strengthen the connection between people and the natural world through collaboration and experiential learning. Images by Swan Valley Connections' staff, students or volunteers unless otherwise noted. All rights reserved to Swan Valley Connections. Change service requested.

SwanValleyConnections.org

BIRD WATCHING ON THE SWAN RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The Swan River National Wildlife Refuge is the largest complex of connected riparian habitat in the valley. Where the Swan River flows into Swan Lake, over 1500 acres of emergent marshes, riparian shrubfields, old river oxbows, cottonwood galleries, and spruce swamp forests provide habitat for a rich diversity of birds. The Refuge is a fantastic place to birdwatch, which is why Swan Valley Connections teamed up with Flathead Audubon to host a field trip in late May, the perfect time to see and hear birds as they set up territories for courtship. Cory Davis of Flathead Audubon, an expert birder, guided the group through several locations on the refuge where over

60 species were identified! Some of the more interesting sightings were Black-headed Grosbeak, Sora, American Bittern, Lincoln's Sparrow, and Cinnamon Teal. Many warblers were singing their hearts out, while Empidonax flycatchers perplexed the birders! Off in the distance three pairs of Sandhill Cranes were sighted as well as a small band of elk resting in a secluded portion of the Refuge. On your next trip to the Flathead Valley make some time to stop at the wildlife viewing platform just south of Swan Lake and enjoy this local treasure that's too good to pass by. If you're lucky you will be greeted by hovering black terns and winnowing snipe.



Black-headed Grosbeak



Wood Duck



Western Tanager



Common Loon

WELCOME TO HELENE MICHAEL

Welcome to Helene Michael, who recently joined our Board of Directors. Born and raised in Sweden, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Montana State University (MSU) and went to work for The Boeing Company in Seattle as a manufacturing engineer, supply chain manager and manufacturing supervisor and director. Twenty five years later she retired as the VP of Manufacturing for the 737 Airplane.

Helene has an Honorary Doctorate in Engineering from MSU and has been actively engaged in the student mentoring program, Women in Engineering presentations and the Engineering Advisory Council. She is an active member of the MSU Alumni Foundation Board of Governors.

Helene also serves as a board director for the Upper Swan Valley Historical Society. She and her husband Tom are permanent residents of Condon.



Shin-tangle

A Summer Celebration



JUL 20th, 6-9 pm

Condon Ball Field, Hwy 83 MM 43

DINNER • SQUARE DANCING with The Beet Tops!

Tickets: **\$25/Adult; \$10/Child** (12 and under)

CASH BAR (BEER and WINE)

Tickets available at **SwanValleyConnections.org**,
Condon Work Center, or at the gate

For information call **754-3137**

Proceeds benefit SVC programs

EXPLORE MONTANA'S SWAN VALLEY

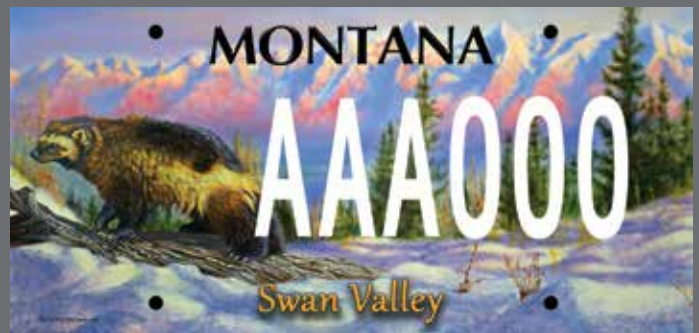
recreation | history | nature | multi-use map



EXPLORE MONTANA'S SWAN VALLEY MAP AND GUIDE

Our Swan Valley Map and Guide contains interpretive narratives accompanied by historic photos, watercolor artwork, and professional landscape and wildlife photos to showcase the valley's glacial legacy, its rich human history and culture, and the natural values that make it so special today. The map and guide is available for purchase online at **SwanValleyConnections.org** and in our office at the Condon Work Center.

SUPPORT CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION EFFORTS IN MONTANA'S WILD AND SCENIC SWAN VALLEY



The Swan Valley license plate features a spectacular painting of a wolverine in its natural habitat by renowned artist Ron Ukrainetz. For details on how to purchase a license plate visit **SwanValleyConnections.org/Swan-Valley-License-Plate**. Sample plates (not legal for use on a vehicle) are also available.

Raffle Tickets: 1 for \$5 or 6 for \$25

More tickets available at the *Shintangle* event!

Be sure to print your name and phone number on the back of each ticket, along with the raffle item number of your choice, and return to SVC in the enclosed envelope.

Tickets purchased via mail must be received by 7/19. Drawing to be held at Shintangle on 7/20. Winners need not be present.

#1

Headboard , blued lodge pole & ponderosa pine

Size: full bed, 6' outside x 4'6" inside

Handmade by Pam and Dan Hamilton (\$700 value)



#2

Spend a **half day**
on the Lower
Swan River
with SVC's
Jonathan Bowler
(\$500 value)



#3

Mountain Goat and Ptarmigan photos prints

by Cory DeStein, 24" w x 16" h each

(\$350 value)



#4

10 yards of ¾" minus road mix gravel

Delivery within a 20-mile radius of SVC

Donated by JRD Enterprises (\$150 value)



#5

Dinner for two plus a bottle of wine

at The Laughing Horse Lodge

(Gift Certificate, \$100 value)



#6

\$50 gift card to Swan River Gardens

Donated by CLB Landworks



Resiliency is how well landscapes respond to disturbances such as insects, disease, drought, or wildfire. This resiliency includes the mixture of tree species, spacing of those trees, and diversity in the age of trees across the landscape. In the Seeley-Swan, it is these ecosystem components that determine how an area responds to the impacts of wildfire. Restoration treatments are an opportunity to consider where and how we conduct management activities, and maintain the ecological function of fire. Possible restoration treatments include mechanical thinning or prescribed fire. Both of these treatments can create a more resilient forest by altering the stage of succession, improving wildlife foraging habitat, removing the least vigorous trees, increasing tree species diversity, encouraging natural vegetation, and restoring a mosaic of landscape patterns and variation.

Improving forest resilience will also usually promote the re-establishment of large, old trees, which are below historical numbers in many areas due to historical forestry practices. Ponderosa pine and western larch are two species that are fire resistant due to their thick bark and lack of lower limbs, making them more likely to survive a wildfire event. Historically, these fire-resistant trees survived multiple disturbances, providing a critical seed source for forest regeneration. Selective harvesting of these species, combined with fire suppression and the impacts of current regulatory requirements, have resulted in a shift of tree species composition towards more shade-tolerant species that are generally younger in age and smaller in size.

Today, management treatments should be designed to create forests that are adaptable and resilient to natural disturbances by reducing stand density, promoting species composition to more historical conditions, and creating mosaic forest patterns. This can reduce the risks of uncharacteristic wildfires and allow it to play a more natural role on the landscape.



Condon Mountain Fire 2012, USFS J. Ingebretson



USFS, James H. Miller



**Fuels Reduction FUNDS
AVAILABLE for privately-
owned, forested lands**

For more information:

(406) 754-3137

SwanValleyConnections.org/Forest-Stewardship



Lightning on the Landscape, "Geology for Today"

WILDLIFE IN THE WEST

Wildlife in the West 2017 has set a high-water mark in many regards. We admitted 14 students this year – the largest student enrollment we’ve ever had for any college program. 7 of our students are from the University of Wisconsin at OshKosh – an all time sending record for a single university. And the huge snowpack this winter means they have been able to hike on snow (a first for several students) as well as safely wade through streams higher than we’ve ever seen them during Wildlife in the West. All around, it’s been an amazing program so far and an incredible opportunity for this diverse group of students.

The group spent the first 10 days of the program in a natural history intensive: studying 3 terrestrial species (lynx, grizzly bear and wolf) and 1 aquatic species (bull trout). These 4 creatures delivered the keynote address which kicked off the program as a whole. Students howled for wolves and heard wolf pups howl back. They found and photographed lynx tracks. They have scrolled through hours of video footage from a game camera they’re maintaining and discovered bears splashing in a “bear bathtub,” including a cub who wasn’t exactly planning on taking a dip and needed a bit of help out from mom. While no one has actually laid eyes on a bull trout, they all have explored key spawning streams and felt the power of the water.

The program moves into policy and community involvement issues after the initial ecology introduction. Students visited the Flathead Valley and circumnavigated the Bob Marshall Wilderness Complex, stopping in the Blackfoot Valley to study ranching and wildlife coexistence issues, then moving on to the Rocky Mountain Front to understand how those same issues play out in a very different social and ecological context. The group wound up this long road trip with two days in Glacier Park studying how climate change is impacting aquatic and alpine ecology.

Check out our blog for details and photos from this wonderful group of students.



At least one bear discovered this Ponderosa before our WIW students did. The group was out hunting for wildlife sign and paused for a photo next to this clawed up tree.



Wildlife in the West students visit Hungry Horse dam to explore the tradeoffs involved in isolating native fish populations versus opening the South Fork of the Flathead to invasive fish species.

Summer Youth Programs: SVC Partners With Seeley Lake Elementary School

July 13th - Bug Bio Blitz

July 18th - Bear Ecology

July 27th - Wetland Ecology

August 2nd - Stream Ecology

For more information contact:

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COMING UP



Sara Halm

Wildflowers

Thurs., July 13, 7:00 pm

At Beck Homestead, 1200 Ed Road, Condon

Join us for a wildflower walk in the woods and wetlands near the Beck Homestead with native plant expert Maria Mantas. Free. Everyone welcome.



Shintangle - A Summer Celebration

Thurs., July 20th, 6:00 - 9:00 pm

At Condon Ball Field, Hwy 83, MM43

BBQ Dinner • Raffle • Square-dancing with The Beet Tops!

Tickets: \$25/adult; \$10/child (12 and under) are available online at SwanValleyConnections.org, at the Condon Work Center, or at the gate.

For details visit SwanValleyConnections.org/Events

Support Swan Valley Connections

Make your check out to "SVC" and send to:
Swan Valley Connections, 6887 MT Hwy 83, Condon, MT 59826-9005
or, donate online: SwanValleyConnections.org

Swan Valley Connections is a 501(c)3 non profit - all gifts are tax deductible
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New address? Check here. ☐ Keep my donation anonymous. ☐