

Mark Mesenko

# THE CONFLUENCE

SUMMER 2016



— SWAN VALLEY —  
CONNECTIONS



## FROM THE DIRECTOR



Recently, board members of the Cinnabar Foundation came for a visit. As longtime supporters, they wanted to hear what we have been up to and check in on how the merger is going. I asked Luke Lamar, our Conservation Director, and Andrea Stephens, our Education Program Director, to provide an overview of the programs they oversee here at Swan Valley Connections. As Executive Director, I am intimately familiar with all that we are involved in, yet when I heard Luke and Andrea express our recent accomplishments and future plans in conservation and education to the Cinnabar board, I was awestruck. I realized that working day to day, moving from one project to another, we can lose sight of our overall accomplishments and the considerable impact we have, like building something one brick at a time and not seeing the enormity of your work until you step back and look at it all at once. This newsletter is only a glimpse at what is happening here at Swan Valley Connections. However, I hope it's enough to entice you to come visit or check out our website to get the full picture. When I step back and see our conservation achievements and the connections we make with our students and our community, I find myself grateful to have your support, which makes all of this possible.

*Maria*

Maria Mantas, Executive Director

## WELCOME JOHN INGEBRETSON

Please help us welcome **John Ingebretson** as our new Stewardship Forester. John fills in behind longtime Forester **Roger Marshall**, who retired in January. John comes to us with 30 years of experience in Natural Resource Management, having recently retired from the US Forest Service.

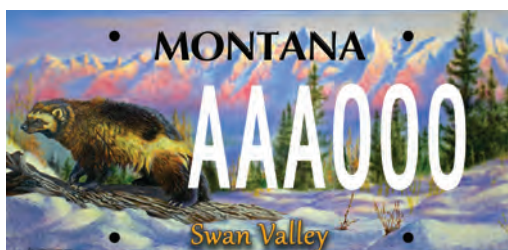
John was raised in Western Washington and began his career in 1976 on the Mount Baker/Snoqualmie National Forest in the Cascade Mountains, working in Silviculture and Timber Management. After working in the remote islands of the Tongass National Forest in southeastern Alaska, he came to the Swan Valley to work for the Flathead National Forest. In the 1990s, Fire Management broadened to include Fire Ecology and Fire History, and he became interested in those fields.



The diverse and fire adapted wildlands in the Swan Valley captivated him, so much so that 35 years later, he is still here! For many years he has interacted and worked with people who are passionate about this place. These folks include the late Bud Moore and the staffs of both Swan Ecosystem Center and Northwest Connections since their very inception.

"It is a privilege to serve on the staff of Swan Valley Connections alongside some of the most talented and committed people I have ever worked with." John said.

## PURCHASE A SWAN VALLEY LICENSE PLATE



Support conservation and education efforts in Montana's wild and beautiful 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](http://SwanValleyConnections.org/Swan-Valley-License-Plate). Sample plates (not legal for use on a vehicle) are also available.



# NATURAL RESOURCE SPEAKER SERIES

We invite managers, researchers and local experts to share their knowledge and resources with the community. Join us at the Condon Work Center or Holland Lake Campground throughout the summer to learn more about the natural world. Free and open to all!

*Holland Lake Campfire Program*

## MUSSEL DOGS

Watch these hard-working dogs demonstrate their amazing powers of detection!

**Tues., July 26th**  
**7:00-8:30 PM**  
**Holland Lake Boat Launch**

Sisters Rosebud and Ismay, under the direction of their human handler Deb, are trained to sniff out invasive mussel species at the state Watercraft Inspection stations. Come see them in action!


**FREE!** Bring a lawn chair or picnic blanket and flashlight.  
For details visit [SwanValleyConnections.org](http://SwanValleyConnections.org) or call 754-3137.

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## 2015 HUNTING SEASON REVIEW

**Thurs., Aug. 11th, 7PM @ Condon Work Center**  
**Jessy Coltrane, Biologist, FWP**  
**Free and open to all!**

For details visit  
[SwanValleyConnections.org](http://SwanValleyConnections.org)  
or call 754-3137

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# MOOSE


10-year update of moose populations in western MT  
**Nick DeCesare, Biologist, FWP**

**Thurs., Aug. 18th, 7PM**  
**@ Condon Work Center**

**FREE!**

For details visit  
[SwanValleyConnections.org](http://SwanValleyConnections.org)  
or call 754-3137

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Walter J. Gschwend, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



## YOUTH EDUCATION



Swan Valley Connections will once again be offering summer camp in the Swan, providing opportunities for elementary- and middle-school-aged students to explore wetlands, catch frogs & snakes, hunt for animal tracks, hike to an alpine lake, set up and check game cameras, and learn about native fish from SVC field staff doing summer research. Dates are July 26-29. We are also offering a wildlife-themed camp to students in the **Explorer's Program at Potomac School**. They'll join us here in the Swan in early August. We enjoyed working with the Explorer's kids this winter when they turned out for a day of Snow School, learning about hibernation, snow physics, and winter ecology. **Hans Bodenhamer**, a Bigfork



High School teacher, brought a group of his students to the Swan in late May for a "herp hunt". We surveyed several wetlands for breeding western toads, Columbia spotted frogs and long-toed salamanders. This summer for the first time, SVC staffed a nature art segment of the summer art camp at the **Swan Valley Elementary School** for kindergarten through 8th graders. The SVES camp and the Potomac Explorer's program are both made possible by **21st Century Learning Grants**. We are delighted to be able to offer programming for northwest Montana's kids in conjunction with these grants.

## WETLAND RESTORATION

We care about maintaining and improving water quality, wildlife habitat, and native fisheries. We also care about the people who depend on these healthy, functional aquatic systems.

SVC continues to partner with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to restore manipulated and degraded wetland, stream, and riparian systems on private property in the Swan Valley. Last year, we completed two projects that helped restore 55 acres of wetland and streamside habitat. In 2016, we have plans to complete one wetland restoration project and one stream restoration project, and are always looking to partner on more projects with private landowners! Ditched and drained wetlands, unnaturally eroding stream banks, undersized culverts, over-grazing, fish passage barriers, and floodplain manipulation are examples of the degraded areas we work to restore.

If you have a drained wetland or degraded stream in need of restoration, please contact SVC for technical and financial assistance.

*Wetland restoration before (left) and after (right)*





# WILDLIFE IN THE WEST 2016

Wildlife in the West (WIW) is a five-week college field program addressing the ecology, policy, and human dimensions of threatened and endangered species and their recovery. SVC draws students from around the country for this unique program based out of the Beck Homestead from late May to July. WIW focuses specifically on grizzlies, lynx, bull trout and wolves, giving a nod as well to westslope cutthroat trout and wolverine. WIW students spend the first third of the program in the Swan Valley, learning the ecology and natural history of these species while developing broader skills in reading animal sign across the landscape and learning how to read – and wade through – rivers. The group typically heads off on a short camping trip in the Flathead



to study cutthroat and bull trout management before moving to the Blackfoot Valley for a week to study carnivore conflict management and novel solutions to conserving native fish in an agricultural landscape. This year we've added a unique element to the program: a circumnavigation of the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex. From Ovando the group ventured to the Rocky Mountain Front to compare wildlife coexistence issues there with those in the Blackfoot. The road home led through Glacier National Park, giving students the opportunity to reflect on the preservationist model of conservation. Our students often leave with more questions than answers, and we think that's a good thing. Successful wildlife management demands a deep understanding of both the ecology of a place and the human communities distributed throughout it.



Read more about our WIW students' experiences at [SwanValleyConnections.org/blog](http://SwanValleyConnections.org/blog)

## NATIVE FISH CONSERVATION



SVC is continuing its work with westslope cutthroat trout in partnership with the **USFS**, **FWP**, and the **University of Montana** (UM). Staff and interns will be sampling 7 tributaries of the Swan River. Our purpose is to complete a baseline inventory, which began in 2010, of the distribution and abundance of our imperiled state fish. While electrofishing each tributary, we gather tissue samples which are analyzed at UM's Conservation Genetics Laboratory. The information obtained will help answer important questions about the genetic status of the Swan's cutthroat: how many tributary populations are still genetically pure? Which are hybridizing with invasive rainbow trout? Is hybridization spreading? Which tributaries are seeing a spread in brook trout invasion? Data from this project is critical for managers as they decide how best to protect and conserve the Swan's native fishery. We will also be continuing our snorkel census work on the main Swan River, working with the USFS and UM to refine a technique for quantifying the fish assemblage inhabiting the mainstem in late summer, hoping to create a baseline from which to assess changes in populations of native and non-native fish.



# SWAN VALLEY BEAR RESOURCES

Every year, Swan Valley Bear Resources (SVBR) partners with various agencies and organizations to provide educational events aimed at promoting human-bear coexistence. This spring, SVBR hosted a Spring Bear Wake-Up Social at the Condon community hall that featured presentations by U.S. Forest Service Swan District Wildlife Biologist (and founding member of SVBR eight years ago) **Mark Ruby** as well as Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Kalispell area Wildlife Biologist **Jessy Coltrane**. The event not only provides excellent information, but serves as an annual reminder for residents to contain their bear attractants as bears emerge from hibernation.

In June, SVBR moved its popular summer event, the Bear Fair, north to target Ferndale area residents where bear-related conflicts and mortalities have been occurring at high frequencies. The event brought together regional bear experts, organizations, and companies to share information about bear ecology, behavior, conservation, and conflict reduction strategies. We'd like to thank the **Rocky Mountain Roadhouse** for providing a great venue and tasty food. We would also like to acknowledge our dynamic presenters: **Lori Roberts** (Research Biologist, FWP), **Chris Servheen** (former Grizzly Bear Recovery Coordinator, USFWS), and **Tim Manley** (Grizzly Bear Management Specialist, FWP). In addition, **Vital Ground**, **Counter Assault**, **Montana Outdoors Legacy Foundation**, **Gallagher Fencing**, **Defenders of Wildlife**, **Montana Land Reliance**, and **Cenex CHS** were also present, offering informative displays and demonstrations.

To learn more about how Swan Valley Bear Resources can help you, visit [SwanValleyConnections.org/Swan-Valley-Bear-Resources](https://SwanValleyConnections.org/Swan-Valley-Bear-Resources).





# Swan Valley Shintangle

## Fundraiser

**SAT., AUG. 20TH, 6PM**

33 Bar Ranch, Barber Creek Road, Condon



*Featuring:*

## **Moonshine Mountain Band**

**TICKETS: \$35 IN ADVANCE;**

*Includes Dinner (children under 12 \$15)*

*Dinner tickets sold in advance only, purchase by Tues., 8/16*

**\$20 AT THE GATE (Music Only)**

*(children under 12 free)*

**CASH BAR (BEER and WINE)**

**Tickets available at Swan Valley Connections  
or online at [SwanValleyConnections.org](http://SwanValleyConnections.org)**

**For information call 406.754.3137**

**Bring a  
chair!**

**Bring a  
flashlight!**





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Condon, MT 59826-9005

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## COMING UP:

**July 26 - Mussel Dogs - Evening Program**

**7 PM @ Holland Lake Boat Launch**

**July 26-29 - Wildlife Explorers' Summer Camp**

**August 11 - 2015 Hunting Season Review - Evening Program**

**7 PM @ Condon Work Center**

**August 11-12 and 19 - Forest Stewardship Workshop**

**@ Condon Work Center**

**August 18 - Moose Population Status - Evening Program**

**7 PM @ Condon Work Center**

**August 20 - Shintangle Celebration & Fundraiser**

**@ 33 Bar Ranch**

**August 29-November 1 - Landscape & Livelihood**

**College field semester**

**For details visit [SwanValleyConnections.org/Events](http://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](http://SwanValleyConnections.org)

Swan Valley Connections is a 501(c)3 non profit - all gifts are tax deductible  
(EIN 81-0512368)

## Thank you for your support!

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New address? Check here. ☐ Keep my donation anonymous. ☐

