

# INSIDE/OUTSIDE

CONSERVATION NEWS AROUND THE NORTHWEST



*A bobcat makes its way across Interstate 90, confronted by walls of snow on either bank.  
Photo by Don Whitehouse/WA DOT*

## Leaping the wall for wildlife

As the snow piled high in the Cascades this year, activity levels were also high for wildlife and people around the I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East Project. Conservation Northwest is a member of the I-90 Wildlife Bridges Coalition, working to make sure that improvements to I-90 include wildlife passage across this major barrier to animals trying to move north to south in the Cascades.

This snowy winter, Department of Transportation crews were busy keeping roadways open following avalanches and wildlife continued to try to make their way across the interstate, despite the towering 12-foot walls of snow on either side. That activity highlights the need for improvements proposed in the I-90 Project and adds momentum to the request for final funding for construction dollars to complete Phase 1 of the I-90 Project.

Last year the Washington State Legislature dedicated \$525 million to construct five of the six miles in the first phase of this fifteen-mile project. All that's needed now is an additional \$29 million to complete construction of the final mile included in the Phase 1 design. The addition of the final mile of roadway to the first phase allows for important further improvements for traffic flow, motorist safety, and wildlife connectivity. It also strengthens the project's progress toward future phases of design and construction.

A broad range of people and organizations—including conservationists, economic interests, and local county commissioners—are supporting additional funding to be sought for the I-90 Project in the 2009 reauthorization of the highway bill.

*For more on this exciting project to make I-90 safer for people and wildlife, go to [www.i90wildlifebridges.org](http://www.i90wildlifebridges.org)*

## March membership drive

This year during the month of March, help Conservation Northwest build our winning conservation team by sharing your passion for wildlife with conservation-minded friends and family and asking them to join, or by providing stable support yourself as a *Wildland Partner* monthly donor. Conservation Northwest's members supply more than 70 percent of our annual revenue and help us connect and protect old growth and wild areas from the Coast to the Rockies.

During March Membership Madness, sharing our work is easy! We've created simple online tools—including MySpace and Facebook widgets—sample emails, and printed materials.

Every new person you refer scores you entries in a raffle for some great Conservation Northwest gear. Becoming a *Wildland Partner* entitles you to be entered into the raffle as well. All new members in March **double their impact** with a matching gift from a challenge fund. *Take action at [www.conservationnw.org](http://www.conservationnw.org)*

## A call for Cascades wildlife monitoring volunteers

For five years, Conservation Northwest volunteers have monitored remote cameras that capture photographs of wildlife in key habitat areas throughout the state. We have now taken the North Cascades portion of the Rare Carnivore Remote Camera Project and combined it with wildlife monitoring near I-90 to create the Cascades Citizen Wildlife Monitoring Project. The program is a joint venture between Conservation Northwest, I-90 Wildlife Bridges Coalition, and the Wilderness Awareness School to record the presence of wildlife in the Cascades.



*Early morning photo of curious deer taken near I-90. Photo courtesy Cascades Citizen Wildlife Monitoring Project*

The newly combined effort is tapping into new digital equipment, greater planning for selecting camera locations, formation of an advisory council, and, hopefully, new volunteers like you!

The remote cameras are installed and managed by teams of citizen volunteers. Following training, volunteers are assigned to teams responsible for checking a camera each month from March to October. Camera excursions range from quick day trips along Interstate 90 to overnight hikes into the North Cascades.

The cameras placed along I-90 not only record the presence of wildlife using habitat near the proposed crossing structures; they also complement field visits made as part of our winter snow-tracking program taking place in the same area. Cameras further afield in the North Cascades target elusive wildlife such as wolverine and the North Cascades grizzly bear. This documentation is invaluable to conservation efforts to protect these animals and recover and connect their habitats.

Get involved! Visit our webpage at [www.conservationnw.org/wildlife-habitat](http://www.conservationnw.org/wildlife-habitat) to learn more. Or contact Marlo Mytty at [marlo@conservationnw.org](mailto:marlo@conservationnw.org) or 206.675.9747 x201.

## On “unmanaged recreation,” words from the chief



*Snowmobiles and bison. Photo courtesy Wildlands CPR*

This spring newsletter features the rising impact of off-road vehicle travel on national forests in northeast Washington. The chief of the US Forest Service, Dale Bosworth, has called unmanaged recreation

one of the four biggest threats to national forests, along with fire and fuels, invasive species, and loss of open space. “We believe that off-highway vehicles [OHVs] are a legitimate use of the National Forest System,” says Chief Bosworth. “But it’s a use that should be managed carefully. That’s what our new rule for OHV use on national forest system lands is all about: providing access that can be used and enjoyed into the future. And if we want to sustain that use, then we’ve got to work together.”

## 28,000 acres restored

It’s a big job—shifting the Forest Service toward ecologically sensitive forest restoration and stewardship of national forest lands. But Conservation Northwest is in it for the long haul, and we made several gains last year showing what’s possible. In 2007, while maintaining strong protections for old growth we helped thin overgrown second-growth forests, decommission unused roads, and reduce flammable forest fuels near communities in the young managed forests abundant to Washington.

Our work last year helped improve more than 28,000 acres around the state. And for every acre restored and project influenced, we submitted comments on many more to enhance the health and well-being of forests, streams, and wildlife habitat.

*To read more about our work restoring forests, go to [www.conservationnw.org/oldgrowth/forest-restoration](http://www.conservationnw.org/oldgrowth/forest-restoration)*

## Good news for lynx

In a move that will help protect Washington’s rarest wildcat, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has decided to reexamine an earlier decision to exempt from protection habitat critical to recovery of Canada lynx. The news comes in light of revelations that a top agency official, Julie MacDonald, meddled with scientific findings for lynx and other wildlife. Last year the government failed to include the vast majority of lynx habitat in Washington when designating critical habitat protections under the Endangered Species Act. Conservation Northwest and other conservation groups vowed to take legal action, and many others spoke out against the plan.

The Interior Department’s inspector general said that he would expand an investigation into similar decisions that denied or limited protections for eighteen endangered wildlife species—including, in the Northwest, the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, and bull trout.

## Government’s squirrely plan under scrutiny

With the news of wildlife protections derailed by political meddling, the agency charged with protecting US wildlife has been discovered doing just the opposite in cases involving lynx, marbled murrelet—and now, western gray squirrel. The Interior

Department's inspector general, at the request of Representatives Jay Inslee (WA) and Peter DeFazio (OR), has just agreed to investigate political interference by top agency officials into the effort to protect the western gray squirrel, an animal that represents an exceedingly rare ecosystem, Washington's pine-oak woodland prairies.

Only three main population clusters of native western gray squirrel remain in our state: in the Methow and Chelan valleys, in southern Klickitat County, and in southwest Washington near Fort Lewis. There are also small populations found scattered in the canyons of the greater Yakima area.



*Protecting squirrels means protecting rare oak-woodland prairie habitat: here, at the site of the proposed Cross-Base Highway.  
Photo Kirt Wieland*

For years Conservation Northwest has urged the US Fish and Wildlife to recognize Washington's western gray squirrels as a distinct population segment and endangered species. That distinction would afford the rare mammal the protections it needs to survive.

## Wetlands protected from cattle

Last year's ten-year management plan update for the Ice Caves Grazing Allotment originally did little to protect fragile wetlands and rare plants and wildlife from the impact of too many cattle. But reason and cooperation have won out for public lands on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest south of Mount Rainier.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) established between the Gifford Pinchot National Forest and the Gifford Pinchot Task Force and Conservation Northwest now helps protect the lands from overgrazing. The agency agreed to reduce the number of cow/calf pairs to a level the system can better withstand, and to ensure that local streams are protected with fencing partially paid for and maintained by the permittee.

Each year the Forest Service will evaluate in writing whether Aquatic Conservation Strategy protections for fish and streamside wildlife are being met. In the MOU, the agency also pledged to work toward retiring the nearby Twin Buttes Grazing Allotment.

## Plight of the pika

Smaller than a marmot, the pika is a round-eared rodent of the mountainous West, thought of fondly by hikers, who thrill at its high-pitched peeps ("eep!") emerging from rocky slopes near treeline. Unfortunately today the pika has become a canary in the coal mine for global warming. Pushed by warmer weather to ever-higher elevations, the pika is disappearing rapidly from much of its historic territory.

"They've been driven upslope a half mile since the end of the last ice age," said Donald Grayson, an archaeologist and paleontologist with the University of Washington who has documented the presence of pika over the past 40,000 years.

The plight of the pika has grown so dire that conservationists are seeking endangered-species protection for the animals, even more reason why government needs to take seriously the need for real solutions to global warming.

*Source: The Denver Post, January 14, 2007*

## Useful educational tool for mountain caribou

Two Canadian conservation groups, Northwest Wildlife Preservation and Wildsight, have together created a new educational manual on mountain caribou. This beautiful, illustrated resource has a variety of engaging and curriculum-relevant activities for a range of ages. The new caribou manual is available to schools and communities to raise awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of mountain caribou and their Inland Temperate Rainforest habitat, as well as the many other threatened plants and animals that also rely upon this unique ecosystem.

*Download your copy from [www.mountaincaribou.ca](http://www.mountaincaribou.ca)*

## Technotrash to-do

In the US today more than 90 percent of today's "technotrash" is tossed, not recycled. But those of us living in Washington State have an opportunity to change this and recycle more.

The Take It Back Network, which includes Tacoma, King, Snohomish, Pierce, and Yakima counties, accepts a variety of electronic equipment such as computers, monitors, printers, and cell phones for a small fee. The program is a partnership among government agencies, retailers, repair shops, non-profit

organizations, waste haulers, and recyclers. Program members are committed to providing environmentally sound recycling services. They also agree to recycle materials either domestically or in developed nations, and upon request will provide customers with documentation about how and where materials are recycled.

For those outside the Take it Back Network, GreenDisk, a company based in Sammamish, Washington, accepts technotrash—including CDs and jewel cases—for a small fee. Of the materials collected, items such as diskettes and jewel cases are often able to be refurbished and sold again. Other items, such as CDs, are mostly recycled and sold on the open market. While GreenDisk tries to look for local companies to buy their materials, typically most of the recovered plastics are sold to companies in China and others across the Pacific Rim.

For more information, visit [www.takeitbacknetwork.org](http://www.takeitbacknetwork.org) or [www.GreenDisk.com](http://www.GreenDisk.com)

## June 11, save the date for the Hope for a Wild Future auction

Please mark your calendars now for our fifth annual *Hope for a Wild Future* auction in Seattle on Wednesday, June 11. If past years are any indication, this event is not to be missed. The evening includes great food and wine, special activities for children, and fabulous auction items (including trips to places we're working to protect). The money raised (nearly \$190,000 last year) from our generous supporters is an important part of our revenue that helps keep the Northwest wild.

Please make our 2008 event a success by volunteering at the event, donating an auction item/experience—or simply attending and sharing in the fun!

Contact Marlo Mytty at 206.675.9747 x 201, [marlo@conservationnw.org](mailto:marlo@conservationnw.org) for more information.

## Thanks for keeping it wild!

A supportive membership and passionate volunteers and interns—people just like you—dramatically magnify the power of our work to keep the Northwest wild. Here in Washington State we have a unique opportunity to decide what legacy we leave for the next generations: will it be a legacy of wildness or one of extinction? We'd like to thank *you* for choosing to leave a legacy of wildness and for your amazing contributions to the

exciting work we do. The following people were integral to our success this winter:

### Office volunteers:

Becky Weiland •  
Chris Baldini •  
Clover Martin •  
Colling Molaski •  
Doris Ferm • Emily

Jeffreys • Karey Baker • Jessica Haffner • Susan Rhodes • Terry Clark • Tom McNeely • Tom White

**Outreach and event volunteers:** Andrea Lawson • Harvey Berman • Karrie Cooper • Katie Ward • Ryan Harried • Selah Prather

**Remote camera volunteers:** Brenna Forester • Sue Madsen  
**Interns:** Chelsea Davis • Claire Browning • Emily McMahon • Heather Deimert • Hilary Kingman • Holly Slatterly • Jenny Frederick • Kathleen Powers • Steve Smith



*Volunteers working the trail with Conservation Northwest last summer in the Salmo-Priest Wilderness Area. © Karen Jurasin*

In late April, Conservation Northwest is planning to host volunteer appreciation events to honor our volunteers in Seattle, Spokane, and Bellingham. Please contact Rose at [rose@conservationnw.org](mailto:rose@conservationnw.org) or 800.878.9950 x10 for information about these events or to RSVP. New volunteers are also encouraged to attend to learn about our many exciting programs and to sign up for future volunteer opportunities.

**Want to volunteer? Get engaged!** Visit our website: [www.conservationnw.org](http://www.conservationnw.org), click on "Get Involved" then "Volunteer Sign-up Form" and fill out and submit the form with your interests marked. We'll follow up with you as opportunities arise.

Contact one of regional volunteer coordinators to discuss your interests and availability:

*Bellingham:* Rose Oliver, [rose@conservationnw.org](mailto:rose@conservationnw.org) or 360.671.9950 x10

*Seattle:* Marlo Mytty, [marlo@conservationnw.org](mailto:marlo@conservationnw.org) or 206.675.9747 x201

*Spokane:* Crystal Gartner, [crystal@conservationnw.org](mailto:crystal@conservationnw.org) or 509.747.1663

*Eastern Washington:* Derrick Knowles, [derrick@conservationnw.org](mailto:derrick@conservationnw.org) or 509.747.1663