



# Western Watersheds Project MESSENGER

Vol. XXI, No. 2

Fall 2014

**The Argenta Incident**

**Welcome, Kristin Ruether!**

**Point Reyes... Park?**

**Wildlife Killing Contests and  
the Failure of Government**



Working to protect and restore western watersheds and wildlife through education, public policy initiatives and legal advocacy.

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# The Argenta Incident



By Katie Fite

Vital sage-grouse habitat is being destroyed in north-central Nevada by a group of public lands ranchers who openly defy Bureau of Land Management grazing controls. These same cattlemen deny that grazing during drought harms wildlife and watersheds. Reluctant to face a showdown, the BLM allowed prolonged grazing damage to take place before finally enforcing closures.

The Argenta allotment is 141,689 acres of federal land located in the Mount Lewis Field Office, Battle Mountain District of the BLM. Since 2012, the area has suffered from severe drought. Following the 2013 grazing season, the BLM documented extreme impacts to riparian areas and upland sagebrush steppe habitats, especially in the higher elevation mountain pastures of the allotment. These mountain pastures contain large amounts of the highest priority habitat for Greater sage-grouse,



*Cattle Damage on the Argenta Allotment*

a species warranted for listing under the Endangered Species Act. BLM resource staff met with the Argenta permittees to recommend mountain pastures be closed to grazing in 2014 and in February the permittees ultimately agreed.

Nonetheless, following a highly publicized standoff between the BLM and Nevada scofflaw rancher Cliven Bundy in April, some of the Argenta ranchers went back on their word. Evidently emboldened by the BLM's failed efforts to hold Bundy accountable for not

removing his livestock from public lands, the permittees began a campaign to pressure the BLM to allow grazing on areas the permittees originally agreed to rest. Eventually, Battle Mountain District Manager Doug Furtado was singled out with intimidation and bullying for attempting to rein in abusive permittees.

Local supporters, including Nevada politicians, staged a "Grass March" horse ride, claiming it was akin to Gandhi's Salt March. Gandhi marched with poor people over vast distances in sweltering heat to gain access to salt for the public good. Here, the ranchers and politicians showboated so that an elite clique of highly subsidized cattlemen could continue to maximize exploitation of nearly free forage on public lands.

As a result, the BLM backed down and signed a closed-door agreement with the ranchers in late May prior to any public consultation. The agreement and decision required that, although cattle could be turned out on all areas of the Argenta allotment, the BLM would monitor levels of forage utilization, and once the cows had met certain "drought triggers," the permittees would have to remove their livestock within seven days.





*Calf Wallowing in a Stream, Argenta Allotment*

© KATIE FITTEWMP

The drought triggers were quickly met and exceeded. On July 9 and 10, the BLM comprehensively documented that 9 of 20 use areas had been over-utilized. The ranchers accompanied BLM personnel during this monitoring, but the public was not allowed to participate despite requests from Western Watersheds Project.

On July 23, the BLM sent a letter to the permittees notifying them that their cows must be removed by July 30. The ranchers did not remove their cattle; instead, their attorney sent the BLM a letter stating that they disputed the

validity and enforceability of the agreement, and that the BLM had incorrectly measured the amount of grass consumed by their cattle. They claimed that the drought triggers had not actually been met. On August 1, the permittees again met with the BLM in a closed-door meeting and were again told by the BLM to abide by the agreement and decision.

Meanwhile, the pressure on the BLM continued and the cattle remained present in de facto trespass. The intimidation campaign continued, with new signs calling for the “impeachment” of Manager Furtado, and agitators touting a nationwide

horse-ride while railing against BLM “tyranny.”

In response, the BLM did not issue trespass notices. Rather, it requested that an administrative law judge (ALJ) in Interior’s Office of Hearings and Appeals order the livestock to be removed, or alternatively confirm the BLM’s authority to remove livestock under the agreement. The ALJ declined to order the permittees to remove their cattle himself or based on the agreement, citing the BLM’s “plenary authority” to regulate and protect public lands under governing regulations for emergencies like drought. The ALJ remanded the appeal to the BLM, and on August 22, 2014, the BLM issued another decision for grazing on the Argenta allotment, this time closing the use areas where drought triggers had been exceeded based on its emergency regulatory authority.

The permittees immediately appealed the new decision and asked for an interim stay, which was denied. Two other groups of recalcitrant ranchers have also appealed the new decision. All this time, the ranchers had several hundred cattle grazing in defiance of the agreement and initial Decision. Finally, after months elapsed, the BLM has issued a trespass notice.

The Argenta incident is precedent setting, because the Battle Mountain District of the BLM attempted to bring some level of accountability to livestock grazing in the arid West. The Argenta ranchers are foiling their own livelihood through unrelenting destruction of habitat. Sage-grouse continue to decline across the West as a result of abusive grazing. This will inevitably lead to their listing under the Endangered Species Act. When sage-grouse are listed, ranching throughout the West will be restricted to levels that could spell the end of public lands cattle grazing.

*Katie Fite is WWP’s Biodiversity Director. She lives in Boise, ID.*



© KATIE FITTEWMP

*A Cage is Used to Reveal Potential Plant Growth, Argenta Allotment*

# A Summer with WWP

By Scott Smith



While pursuing my degree in biology with a focus on conservation and environmental policy from the University of Puget Sound, I

realized the impacts of cattle grazing were overlooked by all my professors. Topics such as eutrophication in the Puget Sound from agricultural runoff, collapse of fisheries, and glacial retreat on Mt. Rainier were much more pertinent to a curriculum based in the Pacific Northwest. So, when I looked into Western Watersheds Project I was surprised to find an entire organization dedicated to alleviating the effects of grazing on public lands. But, I gave the internship a shot, and this is a decision I do not regret.

When I began this internship, I was completely ignorant of the damage grazing has on public lands. Growing up in Idaho, I thought ranching seemed like any other way of life. A year ago, I wouldn't have given a second thought to the bare sand dunes or the massive washes prevalent in the Grand Staircase Escalante Monument. The pedestaling of sagebrush and absence of bunch grasses would have gone unnoticed in central Wyoming. I had never even heard of hummocks. Driving past a cow-filled pasture elicited minimal response other than the occasional “Oh

look, happy cows,” and now I can't help but feel a little ticked off.

After several weeks in the field, it became clear: grazing, which has been occurring for a century in some places, is devastating natural ecosystems throughout the West. The contrast I saw between exclosures (areas meant to keep livestock out, from small cages to fenced areas



© SCOTT SMITH

over a square acre), and their surroundings was quite telling. Inside an exclosure one can find thick coverage of willows 10 or more feet high, deep and clear waterways with rocky bottoms, a diversity of grasses that grow above the waist, and even the occasional fish. Step outside the exclosure and it feels like an entirely

different ecosystem, because it is. Grasses rarely grow taller than half a foot; trampled and collapsing banks feed sediment into the stream suffocating any life. A stream can double in width and become a fraction its original depth causing water temperatures to soar above fatal levels for fish and healthy macroinvertebrate communities. Even with an untrained eye, most would see that something is not right. It is stunning how the BLM refuses to change the status quo if it means frustrating permittees, even when faced with atrocious signs of degradation.

The refusal of the BLM and Forest Service to look at sound science that organizations such as WWP provide is depressing, but it motivates me to continue my conservation vocation. The insight into this stubbornness that my time with WWP provided will help guide me as I work to change this world for the better.

I was told by other environmental organizations that WWP does much to help them accomplish their goals. From the gritty lawsuits to the sometimes-monotonous fieldwork and data collection, WWP's work extends far beyond its own objectives. It was an honor to work with a group that is held in

such high regard by its partner organizations and is not afraid to do the dirty work. I look forward to seeing what WWP is able to accomplish and the chance to work alongside them in the future.

*Scott Smith was a WWP summer intern. He lives in Boise, ID.*

# Speaking out for Mexican Wolf Recovery

By Greta Anderson



The Mexican gray wolf (*Canis lupus baileyi*) is the smaller cousin of the Northern Rockies gray wolf (*C. l. irremotus*) and has a shared history of being exterminated during the early conquest of the west by the livestock industry. This wolf is now partially recovering in some parts of its former range, and also being endangered again by the people intolerant of this native predator on the landscape. The Mexican gray wolf only occurs in a small portion of Arizona and New Mexico and, with just over 80 in the wild, is fortunately exempt from the ill-conceived proposal to remove Endangered Species Act protection from wolves nationwide.

During the late summer of 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service opened a comment period on a proposed rule

change that would govern the Mexican wolf reintroduction program and expand the area where wolves are allowed to roam to encompass much broader areas in both states and down to the international border with Mexico. However, the Service neglected to let the wolves roam north of Interstate 40 into the Grand Canyon region, an area that experts agree provides important habitat necessary for the survival and full recovery of the species.

Western Watersheds Project provided oral testimony at a public hearing in Arizona in August and written comments on the rule change in September. As usual, WWP reminded the Service of its obligation to wolves, not ranchers. WWP objected to limiting the recovery area and expanding the opportunities for wolf killing by livestock permittees and the state game and fish departments. In particular, WWP opposed the blank check exemption proposed for Wildlife Services, finding that no WS employee would be in violation of the Endangered Species Act if he or she killed a wolf on the job. Given a 2013 “accident” in which a Wildlife Specialist with the agency killed a wolf he “thought” was a coyote, WWP cannot trust such provisions!

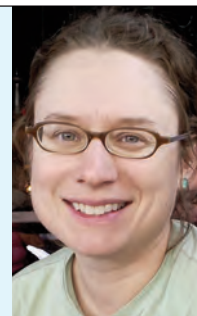
Another major problem with the proposed rule is the change that allows the removal of wolves having excessive impacts on wild ungulate populations. As the Arizona Republic put it in the headline of an excellent editorial in August, “What are wolves supposed to do? Order a pizza?” Given the overwhelming displacement of native ungulates by private livestock on public lands, WWP suggested that perhaps the Service should be considering the excessive impacts cows are having in deer and elk habitat instead.

*Greta Anderson is WWP's Deputy Director. She lives in Tucson, AZ.*



Mexican Gray Wolf

## Welcome, Kristin!



WWP is excited to welcome its newest staff addition and longtime friend, Kristin Ruether!

Her name is probably familiar to many WWP members because she has represented us on many cases during her last seven years as a staff attorney at Advocates for the West in Boise. Kristin's past victories on WWP's behalf have produced results on the ground including an agreement to rest 35,000 acres of sage-grouse habitat in Washington from grazing for 20 years; closing areas to grazing in Idaho's Pahsimeroi Valley; challenging the ill-sited Spring Valley Wind project near a huge bat cave in Nevada; and twice successfully defending the Greenfire Preserve grazing permits from cancellation by BLM for the “high crime” of non-use.

She also worked on grazing issues as a staff attorney at Oregon Natural Desert Association prior to coming to Idaho and after receiving her J.D. from Lewis and Clark Law School in 2005 and her B.S. in Biology from Cornell University. Her experience and interest in ending public lands grazing make her a perfect fit for WWP's Senior Attorney position! We're excited to have even more direct access to her energy and expertise.

Outside of work, Kristin enjoys volunteering with Boise's community of resettled refugees and serves on the board of directors of the Shanti Children's Foundation, which supports education for low-income Nepali children. She enjoys international travel and public lands adventures.

# Degradation Education

By Travis Bruner



The Devil's Park Spring exclosure buried deep in the backcountry of northern Nevada's sage-steppe landscape is supposed to be cow free. However, no one has maintained the fence and cattle guard meant to keep the trampling burger machines from defecating all over and denuding this rare spring area. While it was painful to witness the stream degradation, it was inspiring to imagine the area without grazing impacts, as a wildlife oasis and sanctuary for human experience of solitude.

This September, Karen Klitz, Kelley Weston, Bill Klitz, and I took twenty-one students from Whitman College's Semester in the West class out to this trespassed exclosure on the Salmon River allotment to observe its poor condition and dream about how it could be different. Visiting with Western Watersheds Project is a staple for Whitman College's Semester in the West, and Professor Phil Brick knew that a stop off with WWP would be a keystone ele-



2014 Class of Semester in the West

© SARAH KOENIGSBERG

ment of their Western lands education.

Karen has long documented trespass in the Devil's Park Spring exclosure and received no response from the BLM despite repeatedly informing the Elko office of this issue. (WWP has since sent another letter demanding action, and will follow up with the BLM.) The future environmental leaders in this class were visibly and vocally impacted by the story of our continued battle with the BLM to consider the Salmon River country something other than a source of cattle feed. For many of them, I

think it was a surprise to learn that we must turn to litigation so frequently to force the BLM and Forest Service to perform their jobs as mandated by federal law.

Earlier that day, the forty-foot trench known as Trout Creek was explored on foot and by Professor Brick's newly acquired drone. A noisy disturbance in that quiet landscape, the drone provided a rarely documented perspective, but its buzzing was menacing, like the long agitated moans of the cows that eat and trample everything in sight.

As we talked along the bank of Trout Creek, one student asked about Allan Savory and his theories. Kelley, Karen, and I teamed up to debunk the Savory myths of magical hooves massaging nutrients into the land, filling it with endless native grasses. The students asked several critical questions. Some saw the flaws in Savory's thinking, while others were reluctant to let go of his fantastical scenarios. Regardless of their conclusions, I hope they will carry their experience with us on the Salmon River allotment with them as they encounter others in their future who attempt to hypnotize them into the idea that arid public lands benefit from cattle grazing.

*Travis Bruner is WWP's Executive Director. He lives in Hailey, ID.*



© PAUL RUPRECHT

Trout Creek, Salmon River Allotment



*"To be whole. To be complete. Wilderness reminds us what it means to be h*



A stylized, painterly landscape. The foreground is filled with large, rounded, grey and brown rocks. A narrow, winding path or streambed cuts through the rocks, leading towards a large, rugged mountain range in the background. The mountains are rendered in shades of blue, grey, and brown, with a soft, hazy sky above. The overall style is reminiscent of a watercolor or oil painting, with visible brushstrokes and a soft, atmospheric quality.

*... human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from.”*

*-Terry Tempest Williams*

# Point Reyes... Park?

By Karen Klitz



Point Reyes National Seashore is 71,000 acres of central California coastal prairie, a remnant of coastal grassland and chaparral especially known for

its tule elk. However, it is also one of thirteen "conserved and protected" parks governed by the National Park Service that still permits livestock use.

In 1962 when the park was designated, arrangements were made to allow existing dairy ranches to enter into limited leases. Eventually money was provided for buy-outs of the private properties and owners were offered 20- or 30-year leases. Language was included which stated that the leases would end when the original owner or spouse died (whichever lived longer). Over \$19 million dollars was paid to the 15 ranch owners between 1963 and 1978 to buy their land. But amazingly enough, politics intervened, and Special Use Permits have allowed



© KAREN KLITZ

*Cattle Feedlot on Point Reyes National Seashore*

the ranches to continue within the National Seashore.

Meanwhile the so-called "Pastoral Zone" has been enlarged from 15,000 to 28,000 acres. This includes plowed fields to grow cattle forage and other crops. The operations now include beef cattle, sheep, chickens, ducks and turkeys in addition to the 6 dairy operations and silage. The public is excluded from the Pastoral Zone except for the few roads that lead to the beaches.

There are the usual serious impacts

from livestock operations: vegetation alteration and removal, trampling and soil compaction, erosion, pollution of soil and water from the waste of several thousand cows, a large proportion of exotic plants and invasive weeds in the Pastoral Zone, endangerment of native species, and losses to archeological cultural sites.

Dairy pasture in the 40% of the National Seashore that is designated Pastoral Zone - this is what Secretary Salazar referred to as an example of



© DAVID MCSPADDEN <http://bit.ly/1rqZ660>

*Tule Elk Reserve, Tomales Bay, California*

"sustainable agriculture."

In 1978 ten tule elk were re-introduced to the Point Reyes peninsula, from where they had been exterminated in the 1800s. They were released in the north end, with a substantial fence to keep them out of the Pastoral Zone. This elk herd increased to about 450. In 1998, 28 tule elk from that herd were re-introduced to a southern portion of the park, in the Wilderness area. Some of these elk have been moving north into the Pastoral Zone, to the alarm of the permittees, who have been complaining with increasing emotion and volume to the Park Service.

In April 2014 the Park sent out a Scoping Letter with questions and proposals concerning the management of the trespassing elk. Cattle forage is being eaten and fences are being damaged. The Park wants to know how it should reconcile these users in the Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan, but it did not consider alternatives to continued livestock grazing.

In 2012 Secretary of the Interior Salazar used his discretion to continue livestock grazing in the Park, to extend the permits for 20 years, and Senator Feinstein also publicly supports the ranchers, but there has been no additional legislation to make them permanent. WWP's California State Director Mike Connor submitted Scoping Comments. He enumerated the natural resources of the Park and urged the Park Service to offer alternative proposals to cattle grazing and to complete a full Environmental Impact Statement.

On September 18, the NPS released the 3000 comments it had received, and WWP is in the process of reading those comments. The Park has not given a date for when their proposed Ranch Comprehensive Management Plan will be released.

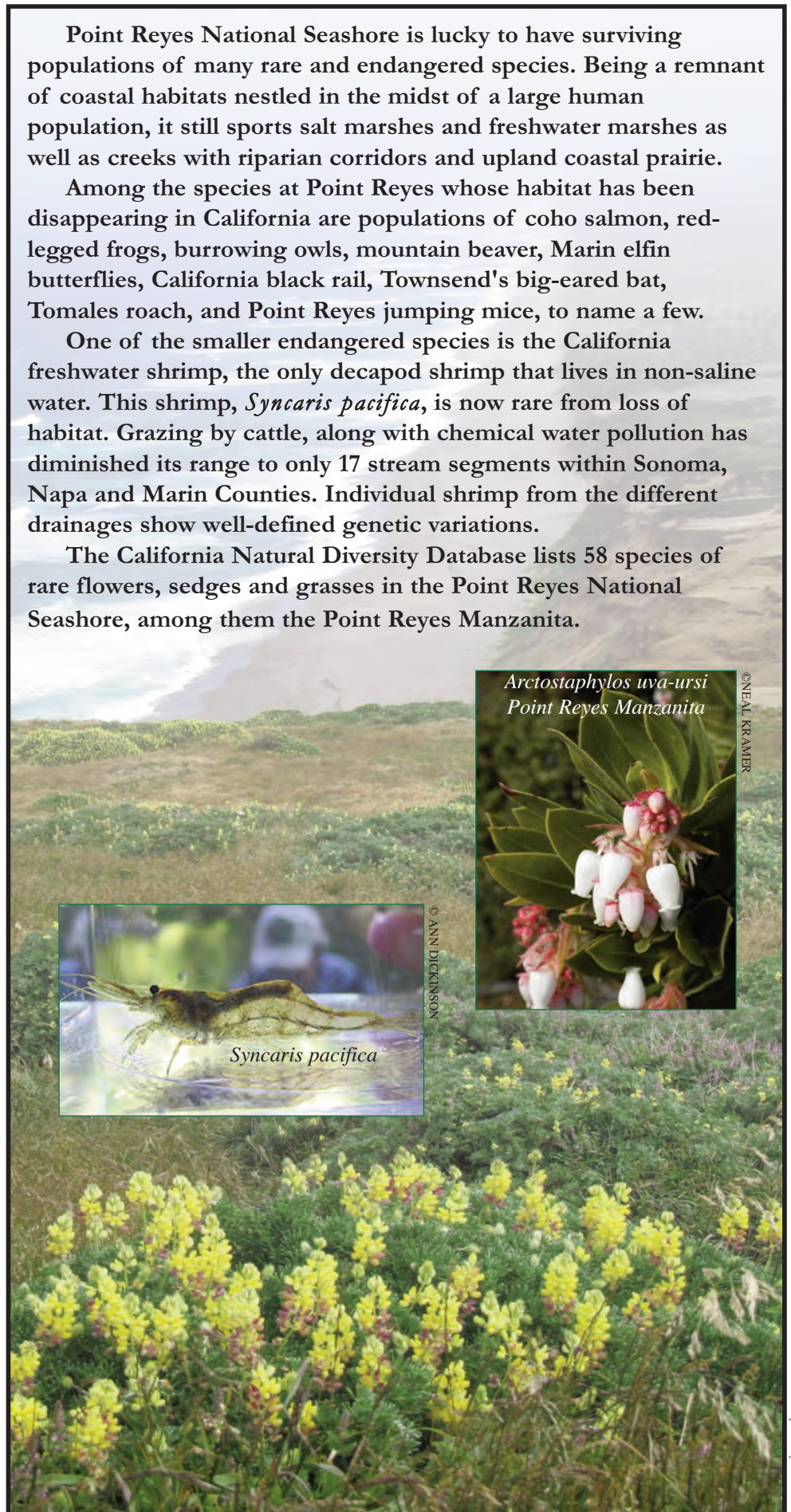
*Karen Klitz is on WWP's Board of Directors. She lives in Berkeley, CA.*

Point Reyes National Seashore is lucky to have surviving populations of many rare and endangered species. Being a remnant of coastal habitats nestled in the midst of a large human population, it still sports salt marshes and freshwater marshes as well as creeks with riparian corridors and upland coastal prairie.

Among the species at Point Reyes whose habitat has been disappearing in California are populations of coho salmon, red-legged frogs, burrowing owls, mountain beaver, Marin elfin butterflies, California black rail, Townsend's big-eared bat, Tomales roach, and Point Reyes jumping mice, to name a few.

One of the smaller endangered species is the California freshwater shrimp, the only decapod shrimp that lives in non-saline water. This shrimp, *Syncaris pacifica*, is now rare from loss of habitat. Grazing by cattle, along with chemical water pollution has diminished its range to only 17 stream segments within Sonoma, Napa and Marin Counties. Individual shrimp from the different drainages show well-defined genetic variations.

The California Natural Diversity Database lists 58 species of rare flowers, sedges and grasses in the Point Reyes National Seashore, among them the Point Reyes Manzanita.



*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*  
Point Reyes Manzanita

©NEAL KRAMER



© ANN DICKINSON

*Syncaris pacifica*

© DOUG KERR <http://bit.ly/1wa7USI>

Point Reyes National Seashore

# Oregon Spotted Frog

By Paul Ruprecht



Western Watersheds Project is hopeful that new federal protections for Oregon spotted frogs will help turn the tide for the struggling Jack Creek population

found on southern Oregon's Fremont-Winema National Forest. In August, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Oregon spotted frog as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The agency will soon designate "critical habitat" for the species as well, and has proposed including parts of Jack Creek.

The Oregon spotted frog has disappeared from as much as 90% of its historic range. The Fish and Wildlife Service identified loss of wetlands as a major threat to the species throughout its range and within the Williamson River sub-basin, which includes Jack Creek. However, the listing decision noted that drought and livestock grazing in particular had negatively impacted the small, isolated Jack Creek population. Biologists have documented startling declines of spotted frogs in Jack Creek since 1996, when the population was discovered. In the late 1990s, they counted over 300 egg masses, but by 2013 located only a few dozen. There are now fewer than twenty known breeding females there.

The Forest Service authorizes grazing on the Antelope allotment where the Jack Creek frogs live. The allotment is typified by dry lodgepole pine forest with little herbaceous understory. It is no surprise that livestock favor the lush meadow and wetland complexes along Jack Creek and disproportionately linger in those areas. Unfortunately, grazing there harms spotted frogs, and the unique "fen" groundwater dependent ecosystems that also occur within the allotment.



*A Sandhill Crane on the Antelope Allotment*



*Cattle Damage on the Antelope Allotment*

Cows trample sensitive fens and stream banks, causing sediment pollution and reduced flows. Trespass grazing is rampant, and has been frequently documented. In 2013, concerned local observers even documented a crushed spotted frog floating in a cow hoof print in an area not authorized for grazing.

In May, WWP and several other environmental groups filed a lawsuit challenging the Forest Service's authorization of grazing on the Antelope allotment. Although the court denied our motion for an injunction to prevent grazing in the summer of 2014, continued pressure from Advocates for the West attorneys Laurie Rule and Liv Brumfield caused the Forest Service to cut the 2014 grazing season short and order

livestock removal a month early.

The ESA protections mean the Forest Service will now have to carefully consider how its actions could affect Oregon spotted frogs and their habitat. Specifically, the Forest Service will have to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service over potential effects to frogs from the grazing it authorizes. The groups plan to amend their suit to include claims that the Forest Service must comply with these consultation obligations before it can allow grazing to resume. WWP will continue to push the Forest Service to close these unsuitable areas to grazing altogether.

*Paul Ruprecht is WWP's Oregon Staff Attorney. He lives in Portland.*



*An Oregon Spotted Frog Found in Jack Creek*

## Montana Update



By Josh Osher

As reported in the Spring 2014, WWP has been expanding its on-the-ground presence in Montana.

For the past several years, I have been working on broad level policy issues for Western Watersheds Project, attempting to fend off the efforts of public lands ranchers and their political allies to weaken existing environmental laws and exclude the public from the decision making process. While it is certainly satisfying to feel like some of my efforts in Washington, DC are bearing fruit, I am very glad that WWP has now given me the opportunity to also work directly on ending the harmful grazing practices and policies impacting my own home state of Montana.

Since taking over last February, I have been responding to agency proposals, protesting and appealing grazing decisions, and spending time in the field witnessing firsthand the destructive impacts of public lands ranching. Montana is such a big state that my first challenge was to figure out where to concentrate my effort.

I will continue WWP's focus on addressing grazing impacts in the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, which I had a chance to visit this past spring on my first trip in the field. Another area in need of sustained WWP attention is Southwest Montana. This very diverse landscape still supports all of the native wildlife that existed before the arrival of Euro-Americans. It is a crucial stronghold and migratory



*Bighorn Sheep on the Upper Missouri Breaks National Monument*

corridor for grizzly bears, wolves, bison, elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorn antelope, Canadian lynx, wolverines, greater sage-grouse, arctic grayling, westslope cutthroat trout and many other species that have been eliminated from so much of their former range. Unfortunately, it is also an area that is hemmed in by livestock that graze nearly all of the accessible public lands. This prevents the migration of grizzlies and bison, tramples and pollutes the creeks and rivers that native fish depend on, and destroys the habitat of sage-grouse and other sage brush obligates.

In some cases, I am truly hopeful that the agencies are really trying to reign in the "Anything Goes" culture

of grazing that led to the degradation of these vital landscapes. In other cases, it is clear that the agencies are bowing to political pressure and willing to turn a blind eye to the harmful impact of continued grazing in sensitive riparian areas and key sage brush habitat. In all cases, it will be only through our constant vigilance that the agencies will either do the right thing on their own or be directed by the courts to follow the law and responsibly manage the land for the benefit of all users including the wildlife whose lives truly depend on it.

*Josh Osher is WWP's Montana Coordinator & Public Policy Consultant. He lives in Hamilton, MT.*

# Wildlife Killing Contests and the Failure of Government

By Travis Bruner



This winter, wildlife in the northern Rocky Mountains will likely be terrorized by a swarm of armed humans elbowing and off-roading each other out of the way in a frenzied race to see who can kill the most animals in 72 hours during Idaho's "Predator Derby."



© BANKDIS <http://bit.ly/1ZITQAS>

If permitted, the killing contest would take place every winter, beginning on January 2, 2015, and would include prizes for killing a wide variety of wildlife species, including wolves, coyotes, weasels, skunks, jackrabbits, raccoons, and starlings, across a large swath of eastern Idaho. Last year, the contestants killed 21 coyotes and at least one badger.

The Bureau of Land Management, charged with managing public lands on our behalf, received 56,490 comments in opposition to the event and 10 in

favor. Still, the environmental assessment released this week clearly signals that the BLM intends to issue a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) to conduct slaughtering contests on BLM lands.

The BLM's analysis superficially considered impacts to recreation, wildlife habitat, social and economic values. But it failed to sufficiently address the potential for lost Idaho tourism and recreation that may result from draconian predator management policies, loss of wildlife, and the damage to wildlife habitat from bloodthirsty competitors speeding around on wild lands with little regard for anything but amassing dead animals.

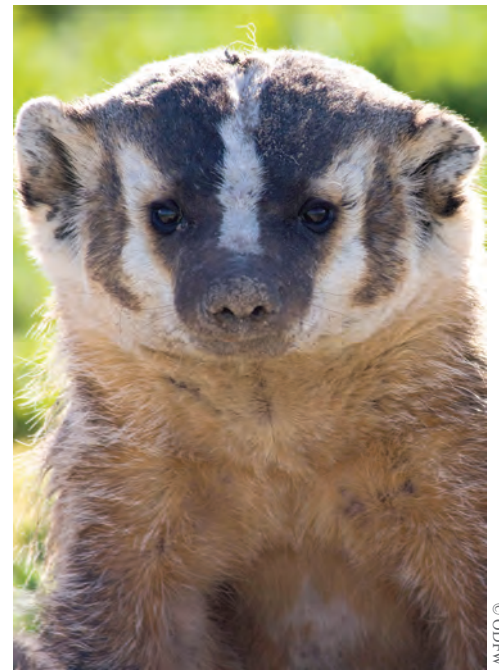
Furthermore, the assessment failed to adequately address an alternative SRP request for a wildlife-viewing contest submitted by Western Watersheds Project and Center for Biological Diversity for the same dates and location. Rather than thoughtfully consider the inherent conflicts between the two events, BLM requested that the wildlife-viewing contest be rescheduled. If held prior to the Predator Derby, viewers' experiences will be degraded substantially from knowledge of the impending doom of the animals, and if held after, some of the wildlife will be dead and gone.

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) also has authority to stop this killing contest in Idaho. IDFG manages wildlife in trust for the public and determines hunting regulations in Idaho. In 2000, the IDFG Commission adopted a Predator Management Policy, stating that IDFG "will not support any contests



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*The Common Starling - Sturnus vulgaris*



© ODIRM

*Badgers are on the list of potential bounty during the predator derby.*

or similar activities involving the taking of predators which may portray hunting in an unethical fashion, devalue the predator, and which may be offensive to the general public."

Undoubtedly, this event is offensive to the general public, devalues predators, portrays hunting in an unethical fashion, and is not "hunting" in the traditional sense of the word. Only rarely are wildlife hunted for subsistence in the modern United States. With few exceptions, most of today's hunters engage in what could only be described as a distortion of what was once a basic human survival strategy. Some modern hunters demonstrate respect and admiration for the natural world. But a killing contest is nothing but a violent slaughter of defenseless creatures where the trigger-pullers seek glory, not protein.

It's time for the BLM and Idaho Fish and Game to stop irrationally implementing the wishes of 10 extremists and start acting on behalf of the 56,490 reasonable people who would like to prevent indiscriminate wildlife killing on our shared public lands.

*Travis Bruner is WWP's Executive Director. He lives in Hailey, ID.*

# A Change of Heart

By Morgan Atkinson



As an Environmental Humanities major at Whitman College, I spend the majority of my time studying how people perceive their relationships

and interactions with the natural environment that surrounds them. Rather than looking at humans and nature as two separate entities, I've come to realize how truly interconnected the two are and the importance of how that connection grows and affects our society.

By the end of my past year at Whitman I was ready to immerse myself into this relationship rather than simply read about what Henry David Thoreau and Aldo Leopold had to say about it. My Western Watersheds Project internship gave the opportunity to look into one of the most relevant relationships between humans and the natural world in the West: ranching on public land.



Burnt Creek, Wildhorse Allotment



Burnt Creek, Wildhorse Allotment

I spent the majority of my internship up over Trail Creek Summit, east of Sun Valley, Idaho, in different grazing allotments on the Challis National Forest. I was familiar enough with this area to see its beauty, but not familiar enough to clearly see the damages caused by grazing.

Before the time I spent exploring the Wildhorse, Copper Basin, and Antelope allotments, I was expecting the grazing impacts to be subtle within the arid landscape. My expectations were quickly shattered as I walked through the degraded and trampled ecosystems. The differences between the images of the pristine basin that was home to the untouched mountain lakes I had in my mind from previous experiences and those in reality didn't take as much effort to uncover as I had originally hoped. Rather than seeing what one would expect to find when encountering a healthy riparian area, I was able to see why Western Watersheds Project works so hard to protect public lands from grazing. There were no longer subtle impacts I was used to seeing in the fields of sagebrush, but rather completely altered stream banks that the cattle

had overtaken.

Growing up in the Wood River Valley, wilderness areas which I was exposed to, in my eyes, were unspoiled. When there were the occasional noticeable traces of cattle, I brushed it off as something that was simply inherent to the landscape, as most tend to do when it comes to the tradition of ranching in the American West. It was as ingrained in my mind as the trails I hiked and explored. Time spent closely looking into an area I thought I knew gave me the slap in the face I needed to realize that cattle impacts are not inherent to the landscape, but detrimental. In the past, along with many others, I found it easy to see public lands grazing as acceptable because, at least in parts of the Challis National Forest, grazing is tucked away in far canyon reaches away from everyday recreation. This summer, the blatant negative impacts presented themselves clearly and will forever shape the way I think about the industrialization of our public lands.

*Morgan Atkinson was a WWP Summer Intern. She is a senior at Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA.*



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## Thank You for Your Continued Support!

Every day the public lands, streams and wildlife throughout the West benefit because of the work done by Western Watersheds Project. The agency management plans we challenge, the allotments we monitor, and the lawsuits we file all help to protect and restore our western public lands. As the end of the year approaches, we invite you to consider ways to help us keep the fight going into 2015!

- **Remember WWP in your 2014 end of year Annual Giving.** Any size donation is greatly appreciated and makes a difference! Everything WWP does to influence the restoration of western public lands is based on a vision that western North America may be one of the only places on earth where enough of the native landscape and wildlife still exists to make possible the restoration of a wild natural world.
- **Make a gift of appreciated stock.** Talk to your accountant or financial planner about the potential tax benefits of making this type of donation.
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- **Help others learn about WWP!** Recently, WWP supporters hosted events in Pocatello, Idaho and Berkeley, California to help us spread the word about our important work. You can host an event too and WWP will help. We'll supply informational materials, send out email/printed invitations combining your guest list with local WWP supporters, and even have a WWP representative attend a "meet & greet" which can be customized to your area of interest or concern.