

Madison River Ranch News

What's happening at the Ranch



From the desk of MRR Board President

John Graifemberg

This year has so far been dryer than historical averages. The MRR area is currently at 80% of normal precipitation. Lake Hebgen's water level is below last years level with a 68% capacity. The Madison River flow is at 650 cfs as compared to the historical level at this time of the year of 1,000 cfs.

Large portions of the western states are well below their normal precipitation levels. The Sacramento area, where I spend the winter, is the driest it has been in 100 years.



Photo by Mike Cramer

Decreased precipitation levels will most likely result in increased wild fire issues. Smoke from expected western fires will travel to Montana as it has in past years. Available firefighting crews could be stressed even more than last year. I suggest owners anticipate cutting of their vegetation early in the fire season. Rick Kratt, a current firefighter and association member, is anticipating replacing the current cistern fire hose connection valve. Different fire trucks use different size hose connectors. The current valve can only accommodate one size of hose connectors, while the new valve will accommodate three different sizes of hose connectors.

The association has not increased the annual budget over the last 3 years. The board anticipates a substantial increase in this year's budget. We did not budget the cost of the new

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The Annual MRR Meeting will be held on Saturday June 25 at 10:00 am Cliff Lake Village Schoolhouse



Photo by Mike Cramer

Fishing Article

By Gene Welch

Madison River trout populations

Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP) has a long-term record of Madison River trout populations. Their latest report includes data from 2000 to 2021. The data include abundance of different size classes of rainbows and browns per mile of river at three sites; Pine Butte (Kirby Ranch, upstream from the West Fork), Varney Bridge and Norris.

Trout were sampled by mobile anode electrofishing. Fish are attracted to DC current and are easily netted. The method was perfected in the 1960s for large rivers like the Madison. That study defined the benefits of no hatchery fish for the Madison and subsequently led to “going wild” in all Montana streams.

The method on the Madison involved three days completing fin clips on fish sampled from three runs in the river’s center and right and left banks. The clipped-fin fish were released into the river. Those sections were resampled for marked/unmarked fish a week later. Results allowed estimating population sizes from the ratio of marked (fin-clipped) to unmarked fish.

Abundance at Pine Butte for browns and rainbows 11 inches and over averaged about 1000 (500-1700) per mile of river for browns and 800 (400-1200) per mile for rainbows during 2000-2020. There was no long-term trend either up or down. Several factors can affect year-to-year variability in reproduction and survival, such as flow volume, suspended solids content, predation, temperature, food supply, etc. Also, there is some uncertainty in population estimates. The interesting point, however, is that there was no long-term trend in population abundance over a 20-year period for either browns or rainbows.

Abundance at Varney Bridge was less for fish 11 inches and over averaging about 700 and 300 per mile for browns and rainbows, respectively. Abundances were slightly below average for both browns and rainbows in 2019 and 2020 at Pine Butte and for browns at Varney Bridge.

Here’s the interesting part. Twenty five percent of trout over 11 inches at Pine Butte exceeded 16 inches on average (12-34%) with no long-term

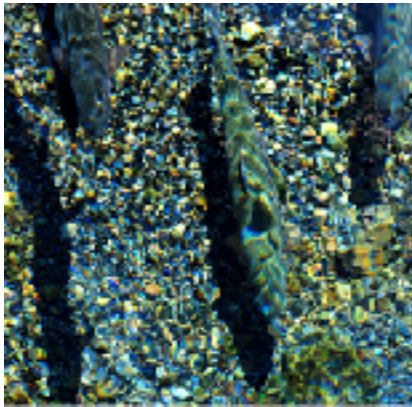


Photo by Mike Cramer

Ranch Recipes

Thanks

Sue McMahan

Lettuce Wedges with Blue Cheese Dressing

Juice of 1 lemon
 1 C Mayonnaise
 1 C Buttermilk
 1/2 C Sour Cream
 1 1/2 t. Garlic Powder
 1 1/2 t. Onion Powder
 6 oz. Blue Cheese, crumbled
 2 Heads Iceberg Lettuce
 1 tomato
 10 Slices bacon, cooked & crumbled
 Fresh Ground Pepper

Whisk together until smooth: lemon juice, mayo, buttermilk, sour cream, garlic and onion powders.

Add the cheese and mix just until blended.

Chill in an airtight container at least 2 hours before serving.

Core and quarter each head of lettuce.

Serve a generous dollop of dressing over each wedge and top with the bacon and tomato.

Season with pepper.



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MRR Board President Continued from page 1

UPS/FedEx shed, but instead funded the project from our reserve fund. We expect to replace the deteriorating main entry in the near future. The costs for road maintenance, weed abatement and mowing are increasing due to increases in labor, material and fuel costs. Legal costs will increase because of the complaint filed against the association by one of its members.

This year's annual members meeting will be on June 25th. Dana will be sending out the annual members meeting announcement with proxy forms along with the directions to fill them out. For those of you who will not be able to attend the meeting in person, please fill out your proxy form and provide it to the person you have chosen to represent you.

There will be one open position for the board this year. I have notified the board that I will run for a second 3-year term. I would appreciate your support.

I want to thank Karen Roll, Barbara Gibbs, Marvin Gibbs and others that have contributed to this issue of the newsletter.

Madison River trout populations Continued from page 2

trend during 2000-2020. The average at Varney Bridge was greater at 34% (24-45%).

Fishing pressure on the Madison has not been as steady as the trout populations. Montana FWP has conducted statewide angling mail surveys every other year for more than 50 years (MT F&G in earlier years). They mail questionnaires to a random sample of resident and nonresident licensed anglers for each month of the year. The surveys estimate angling use in number of "angler days" – one angler fishing one body of water for any amount of time on a given day.

Fishing pressure during summer (May-September) on the Madison (below Hebgen to Ennis reservoir) increased over 2.5-fold during 2011 to 2019, from 68,031 angler-days in 2011 to 173,753 angler-days in 2019 (no data for 2021). Pressure increased during each two-year period by an average of 27% per year.

Trout population abundance and the fraction of larger fish has been rather steady in the upper Madison despite an over two-fold increase in pressure. Maybe the steady trout populations are due to the catch and release regulation, yet even that produces some mortality. Then there are ospreys and other predators, as well as unfriendly physical factors affecting fish reproduction and survival. Thus, one has to conclude that the Madison River is flat-out very productive. Also, the trout are wild, which has provided genetic resistance to unfavorable stresses from year to year. Let's hope the river's flow, food supply and other factors remain favorable to trout, but that's uncertain in a warming world.

Data used were kindly supplied by Mike Duncan, Montana FWP.

Wildlife on the Ranch

By Karen Roll

I'm always excited to see my first Mountain Bluebird of the year when my husband, Ken, and I return to the ranch in April or May. These birds which are members of the thrush family can be found throughout the northern Rockies states and into Canada in the summer. The male Mountain Bluebird has a sky-blue back, head and wings with a paler throat and breast. The female is gray overall with blue wings, rump and tail. Some also have a little rufous on the breast. According to eBird, they are reported in Madison County infrequently in March with larger populations reported from April through September. In the fall, many move to lower elevations before migrating to the southwestern states for the winter.

They prefer open habitats with few trees and nest in natural tree cavities or nest boxes. They won't usually nest within 200 to 300 yards of another nesting pair of bluebirds. The North American Bluebird Society recommends putting up two nest



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Introducing ... Jon & Sally Niess Family



Jon and Sally Niess live in Austin, TX, with their pups Mookie and Gladie, moving there in 2002 from Minneapolis. Jon took a new position with Vignette at the time and Sally wanted out of the cold!!! Austin was a great move for the family, they raised their kids Anna and Clayton there and have enjoyed the diverse opportunities Austin has to offer! Like most treasured cities, the current growth is crazy and not everything is palatable, but that's where Montana comes in!!!

Jon has had a long career in software sales including positions with Oracle, several startups, and ultimately as VP of International Operations with Netezza. Jon was able to step out of the software world with the sale of Netezza and fulfill his other passion besides fishing, he built a recording studio (Austin Signal). Jon wanted to provide a platform for Texas music artists to create and promote their art. He also introduced a Hand Cut Vinyl Record business, offering Individual Picture disks, and has produced analog lathe-cut vinyl from single microphone recording sessions.

Sally also came from a sales background. Her career started with Xerox, and progressed to software sales, eventually landing at Oracle. Her career involved traveling the US in multiple sales positions and managing a team of sales consultants. Jon and Sally were coworkers and friends at Oracle where they met and Sally left her career when they married to be home with daughter Anna. Clayton (aka Nemo) joined the family shortly after they married and made the family a perfect foursome! Sally went on to become a certified Bikram Yoga instructor and taught in Austin for years.

Anna and her husband Matt live in Hastings on the Hudson in NY. Anna is the Senior Director of Product Design for Slack, Matt is the Editorial Communications Manager at Cooper Union. Nemo is an Editorial Researcher for RANE and lives in Austin which makes the parents really happy!!! Many of you have seen Nemo on the river and have met his lovely girlfriend Christina.

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boxes 5 to 15 feet apart in areas where Tree Swallows are abundant. This provides nesting sites for both species and helps prevent competition between the two species. Mountain Bluebirds usually begin to nest in early April depending on weather conditions. They often have two broods each season but rarely in the same location. Often they nest at lower elevations for their first brood and then move up slope for a second batch. Nestlings remain in the nest 17 to 21 days before they fledge. The juveniles resemble females but have spotted underparts. The NABS also recommends cleaning out the nest boxes after each season.

During the summer, they primarily eat insects but will also feed on fruits and berries. They often forage from a perch such as a fence post, dropping to catch prey on the ground. They can also hover above an insect before capturing it.



Photo by Mike Cramer

Jon & Sally Niess Family Continued from page 4

Jon has been fishing in Montana for 40ish (yikes!) years. He has an insatiable passion for fly fishing and the Madison has always been his favorite river. Jon brought Sally to MT in 1992 and they fell in love and have been returning ever since. It was a dream come true to finally purchase a place in 2020 in MRR. It was strange timing as Covid was raging and socialization was limited. Sally's passion is riding horses, not really interested in fishing, and she really missed her horse back in Texas. Knowing this was Jon's happy place, Sally planned to visit MT from "time to time." Then 2021 happened and the ranch became Sally's favorite place as well due to the amazing ladies she has met at MRR, the WOW group, and all of the FUN people who are part of this incredible community.

We feel very fortunate to have met such wonderful people and share the beauty, peace, and wildlife that Montana offers. We look forward to MANY more years of happy memories being made at MRR!!

Volunteer Opportunities

Greetings everyone! I hope that you are well. Interested in spending a couple of hours with your neighbors helping on a work project on the Ranch? We have a short list of projects that need completing this next summer. Some of these you can grab a neighbor and complete, others will be scheduled. Hope you find a way to get involved and help us keep up on some general maintenance items.

Sunday after Member Meeting Project - Common Area Jack Fence - this winter some top rails have been knocked down by elk, or are in need of replacement. This will be an easy, social, and fun project. We will plan on completing this project Sunday after the Member meeting - 9:30 am.

Mail Shed Painting - planning on painting in mid to late May. If interested, email volunteer@madisonriverranch.org and we will keep you up to date on date and time.

Common Area Toilet Screen - we will have a larger work project to build screening for the toilet in the common area. This will take some planning, one idea is to use material from our old mail shed. This will need some "engineering" and expertise. Planning on early June. If interested, email volunteer@madisonriverranch.org

Roads - even with our annual grading and maintenance, some holes will develop (far fewer when we drive under 25 mph!). Grab a neighbor and fill in holes with loose gravel.

Common Area Mowing - as you are available, weed eating under jack fence in common area helps to keep up general maintenance.

If you have ideas for other work projects, please send them to the board email. Looking forward to seeing you this summer.

Mark Juranek, Treasure MRR

Jeanne Mae Loughery 1930 - 2021

Boise, Idaho - Jeanne Mae Loughery passed away peacefully at home the morning of December 8, 2021 with her daughter at her side.

Jeanne built one of the first cabins on MRR. She served on the Board as the treasurer and president.

She was a much appreciated contributor and truly loved the ranch and her cabin.



She loved and raised four children, three cats and two dogs while loving two men in her life. She lived life with a keen respect for nature and wildlife; roaming the rivers, lakes and hills of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming in search of trout and the tricky chucker. She valued order and attention to detail; capitalizing on this she was the Controller of Bogus Basin and Peter O'Neill Enterprises in her later years. She leaves three sons and a daughter, six grandchildren and five great grandchildren in Idaho, Wyoming and California.

The family requests that you limit your condolences to cards or notes (JeanneMaeLougheryMemorial@gmail.com) and if you so desire, a donation to The Humane Society of the US, Montana Wildlife Federation, or the local ASPCA in her name. At her direction, there will be no public service or memorial.

MRR Board of Directors**John Graifemberg, President**

Lot 61

Dana Dawson, Secretary

Lots 64A, 64B, 95

Mark Juranek, Treasurer

Lot 60

Phil Botsko, Board Member

Lot 9

Hilleary Hoskinson, Board Member

Lot 2

Marv Gibbs, Webmaster

<http://www.madisonriverranch.org>

Barbara Gibbs, Karen Roll, Newsletter Editors

RemindersGate combination
#1004FedEx / UPS combination
5971**Thank You All**

Many thanks to all the helpers that make MRR such a special place to be: Board Members, weed sprayers, roadside litter cleaners, photographers, web designers, road crews, gate keepers, delivery trucks and mail delivery people, newsletter contributors, and YOU.

We Would Like To Meet You

We would like to meet our neighbors on the ranch! One of the usual articles in the bi-annual newsletter is an introduction. There are many new ranch owners that have not yet had a chance to write an article to introduce themselves. It is interesting to learn what drew people to the Madison River Valley and the Madison River Ranch.

To share your introduction contact a Board Director via the ranch website:

<http://www.madisonriverranch.org>