

## October, 2008

Edited by Martha Crawley

### Presidents Corner

**After many years of dedicated service, first as vice-president, then president, Jeanne Loughrey decided it was time to retire from her position. Thank you isn't big enough, but it's all we've got. MANY, MANY thanks, Jeanne!**

*Jeanne's position was taken over by Bill Hoolan, so his column will appear in this space now.*

Greetings from Montana. Wow, what a good year for our Montana Ranch with so many more owners able to spend time on the ranch this summer. There are about 60 homes now with more built this summer and more planned for next year.

Good news to report on the bud worm front:

It was a rather short summer, and last spring hung on for an extra month with rain and chilly days. The reward was a much greener landscape. Flora and fauna were at their best, especially the conifer trees. They were better able to fight off the ranch's newest uninvited guest, the dreaded bud worm. You might remember from one of my past articles concerning this creature, how it was working its way up the valley for the past 10 years. Two years ago I wrote "The Huns are at the gates." Last year they attacked most every conifer spring bud simultaneously from the smallest to our largest hundred foot, 200 year old giants. Now here's the good news: This year their attack was only about 25 % as bad, though it was hard to tell, because of a July 31<sup>st</sup> freeze that killed many buds. I have noticed our ranch's indigenous conifers are more prepared for this potential late freeze and hold off budding till mid July. Most of the conifers that were brought onto the ranch and planted around our homes seem to bud in mid June and that's how they got into trouble. I have seen this late spring freeze happen twice in the past 10 years.

The real show is the abundance of wild animals. It was a good time for all. It seemed like every deer had twins. Some evenings, while driving across the ranch, one could see 10 does and 20 fawns. Also, the antelope seemed to be back like the old days, not just the stray 2 or 3 that folks were seeing in the past 10 years, but two separate herds of 15 each. When they run past you, with such effortless speed, the sage hides their legs and all you can see is their floating bodies. It is a beautiful sight.

Our ranch elk herd is getting bigger and staying longer. For many years the elk only migrated through, but about 5 years ago, 2 elk cows stayed long enough to have their calves. Each year since then, the elk herd seems to double in size. Anyone that came to the ranch this summer must surely have seen the 30 cows and 15 or so elk calves. They wandered all over the ranch and would hide out during midday in one of the four forested draws that lead down to the river. Many owners told me about all the elk that would walk by their place, grazing in the nearby fields. I don't think it gets any better than that.

Owners also reported many black bear sightings (about half are actually brown in color). Let me tell you with firsthand experience, when you walk into your garage and a black bear stands up in front of you, looking for the dog food or garbage, it is something you will never forget. It's one of those things you think will never happen to you. Yeah right! When it does, you'll be like me and close the garage door a whole lot more, especially at night. A few years back one of our neighbors had a grizzly bear in her garage and we all know that is a whole different and more dangerous situation. Hans Thallmayer, who lives up by the common well, saw a grizzly more than once up his way this year. A note to the new owners: These grizzlies and black bears don't wait till dark to come out; they have been seen many times wandering over the ranch in broad daylight.

Let me not forget the birds. I have written many times about how the Hungarian partridge and grouse have been increasing for the past 5 years or so and now are common. Things really have picked up this year with owner sightings, by owners who know their birds, of sharptail grouse and even sage hens. One of our guests commented, after riding his bicycle all the way down from the top of the ranch to our place by the river one evening, this ranch seems like a "reserve." Everything must have come out at once, as he couldn't quit talking about all the wild animals he saw: Moose, elk, deer, antelope and also the badger that lives at the intersection of Echo and Flatiron Trails. I'll save for another time what is happening on the river with the geese, ducks, Sandhill cranes, eagles, hawks and osprey. I will say, they all showed up at once on schedule to nest, with bad attitudes. It is a 60 day nut house with all the fighting and noise making.

In March, Sandra and I were treated to the sight of river otters sliding down the steep snow covered hill into the water at the big bend into the river. Looked like fun. I have only seen them twice.

Last but not least, I have got to tell you about the wolves. I am told there are 3 different packs in the area, and I believe it. Over the past 8 winters we have lived on the ranch, we might see a wolf about once a year and always

far away. Well things have changed. The ranchers that graze their cattle in the forest to the north and south of us have full time range riders trying to keep the peace. The wolves seem to be killing their cows on a regular basis. They shoot a wolf after every 2 or 3 dead cows to try to teach the rest of the pack a lesson. No one knows how this mess will work out. This winter we saw 6 wolves on the ranch, 2 white, 2 black and 2 gray. In the winter, riding our snowmobiles, we see their tracks everywhere. When you are riding along and look up to see one or two wolves, standing motionless, a few hundred yards away, watching you, your hair stands up a little bit. That's exciting, but read on, things get better. Now picture this, it was May 22<sup>nd</sup>, the sun had just come up, I poured myself a cup of coffee, opened the front door and walked into the front yard to feel the sun. It was peaceful and quiet, then I heard a commotion over my right shoulder and as I looked up the driveway there was my youngest German Shorthair Pointer, Abigail, running down the driveway as fast as she could with 2 wolves not 50 feet behind her and gaining. I couldn't believe my own eyes, I was speechless. It was only when Sandra screamed that they broke off the chase, slid to a stop and stood there for about 5 seconds, not 60 yards away, before trotting off. These are some bold, beautiful creatures. It's amazing how big they are when you get to see them up close. I am told this is not uncommon in the valley the past few years and they have even caught some dogs. I have always dreamed of living in the wild like this but things are getting a little sporty around here.

Now for a little business, the ranch as we know it was started in 1989, we have had 2 board presidents, John Legler and Jeanne Loughrey. I know them well, they gave the job their all. For many years, I have been VP, it was a good job. Just keep the ranch infrastructure in working order, after all, the president takes all the heat. This summer the board voted me as president, I hope I have not jumped from the frying pan into the fire.

The ranch is growing up so fast, with so many different ideas and opinions, and so many things that have to be done or maybe should be done. Every year it gets a little more complicated, you know, damned if you do and damned if you don't. In my opinion, last year's summer meeting was the best ever, many owners attended and for anyone who hasn't, let me tell you, everyone is heard on any issue. Some several times. The room is full of smart, passionate people and the ranch is better because of it. Mark off a few days on your calendar and try to come back to the ranch for next summer's meeting, especially all the new owners. As I have said in the past, you are surrounded by yet-to-be-met good friends. How lucky we all are to share 3000 acres of beautiful Montana !

Feel free to call me at any time, 406-682-4334.

Best Regards, Bill Hoolan

### **Memo from Martha:**

We were at our cabin most of the summer, and it was a splendid one. I've never seen it so green there, owing to all the snow last winter and spring. I agree with Bill that the Homeowners Meeting this year was a particularly productive and civil one.

#### ***Thought for the day:***

"It is a mistake to try to look too far ahead. The chain of destiny can only be grasped one link at a time." Sir Winston Churchill

### **Ranch Recipes**

This recipe was a hit at a get-together this summer. Jodi Wells told me about it, and the recipe is from Karen Welch.

#### **Fresh Broccoli Salad**

5 c. chopped fresh broccoli (2 lg. heads)  
½ c. raisins or cranraisins  
¼ c. chopped red onion  
2 T. sugar  
3 T. white wine vinegar  
1 c. mayonnaise

Mix together. Chill 3-4 hours.

Top with 4 slices cooked, crumbled bacon and ¼ c. roasted, salted sunflower seeds.

### **Fishing With Mike Wells**

#### **Soul Fisher – Fall 2008**

There are as many ways to fish and reasons for fishing as there are people who fish.

Recently I was taking inventory and attempting to sort through the avalanche of lingering, current and impending real and/or media hyped crises facing humanity, nature, the nation, the economy, etc. I stopped to reflect on what I typically do during trying times to feel human and whole. A respite from the 'modern' world and a reconnection with nature can usually help me regain my bearings. For me, this respite will involve fishing. Though the Greater Yellowstone area in general and the Madison River in particular are more conducive to this 'reconnection', when the wheels are coming off I will take advantage of whatever is available.

With southern California closing in on me I rise early, grab my 8 weight and head for the beach in hopes of hooking anything. Surfperch, corbina, croaker, halibut, striped bass and shark are some of the possible playmates. What I'm really trying to hook is the essence of Mike Wells. Last

month, on one such excursion, I arrived at the beach in the pre-dawn fog to find myself the only person within view. Facing the open ocean with my back to civilization it was easy to ignore the fog muffled hum of the omnipresent traffic on Pacific Coast Highway and the fog shrouded lights of the seaside community. As the sun rose and warmed the fog rending it into slender, silver wisps above the water, I laid out line and rejoiced in the pelican squadrons flying overhead, the myriad shore birds chattering and the dolphins gracefully arcing in and out of waves just beyond the shore break. The repetitive casting motion, the undulating waves breaking gently around my legs and the visual panorama of sea life was mesmerizing. As the surfers arrived I had attained a fairly deep meditative state. Watching them meld seamlessly into the panorama I became increasingly aware of the words 'soul surfer' imposing themselves on my thoughtless reverie. Contemplating the meaning of 'soul surfer' and subsequently researching the term, I found that I could easily substitute the word 'fisher' for 'surfer' and describe what kind of fisherman I would like to think I am or more accurately the kind of fisherman I aspire to be.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia:

A term coined in the 1970's and used to describe a talented surfer (fisher) who surfs (fishes) for the sheer pleasure of surfing (fishing)...since they scorn the commercialization of surfing (fishing). The term denotes a spirituality of surfing (fishing) or "... to pursue surfing (fishing) not just as an athletic endeavor or as a sunny day diversion, but to try to glean whatever lessons you can from the practice. It means being aware of your surroundings, and respectful of the people and places you interact with. It means being patient, mindful, kind, compassionate, understanding, active, thoughtful, faithful, hopeful, gracious, disciplined and...good.

### **Madison River Notes - Fall 2008**

Due to snowfall not seen in these parts for either 10 or 20 years (depending on who you talked to) spring runoff was high and long. Hebgen filled early and the river was running @ 3000-4000 cubic feet per second (cfs) into mid July. Hatches and fishing/catching were good (sometimes stellar) even with the high flows. With lots of fish pushed out of the heavier flows mid-river and seeking the shelter of lower flows by the banks, wading or swimming (in the case of some Michael Phelps inspired dentists...you know who you are) was unnecessary.

Mid July to August 31 flows returned to normal levels and the fishing/catching remained good. Our stretch of river sees the most intense pressure during this time of year from not only Madison River Ranch folks but also people abusing the TU handicapped parking/access right outside

our Common Area/Fishing Access gate, folks who walk down from the \$3 Bridge or up from Sundance Bench and guides with groups of 'sports'. Over the past few years the conscious and unconscious transgressions (breaking laws, littering, being discourteous, creating overcrowded conditions, etc.) of some of these people has become a major problem. Many Madison River Ranch owners complained that it was becoming increasingly unpleasant to fish under these conditions so in early August we 'posted' the fences that border our Common Area/Fishing Access with small 'No Trespassing' signs and erected larger 'No Trespassing' signs that also state the Montana river fishing access law at the walking path at both ends of our property. Hopefully this will help. Any feedback is welcome.

On August 31 Hebgen Dam partially broke sending the flows back to 3500-4000 cfs for the next three weeks while Pacific Power and Light Company (PPL) who operate the dam tried various procedures to stem the flow and repair the dam. The initial breach of the dam had residents downstream as far as Ennis worried about a potential flood and everyone who knows the Madison Valley was concerned about the ramifications of the flows on the reserves/water level in Hebgen Reservoir, the Madison River fishery and the Madison Valley ecosystem. At what seemed like the last possible minute and apparently out of ideas PPL pulled off a successful stopgap procedure that stemmed the flow. The repair that was done is temporary and they will install a more long-term solution in the near future. During those three weeks the fishing was OK. Whether or not this unplanned second runoff/flood of the river will be beneficial remains to be seen.

After the flow was stemmed PPL dropped the flow approximately 600 cfs per day so as not to completely disorient the fish and leave them high and dry. A buddy from Ennis relayed a story of some folks rescuing 800 trout from an irrigation ditch and putting them back in the river. Among the 800 was a 30"-32" Brown! The river is at 750 cfs now and seems a bit low. Weather recently turned from 80-degree days/50-degree nights to 55-degree days/30-degree nights.

I can't state without any reservations that the fluctuations in flow and weather are why the recent fishing has been good but catching has been slow. I can state that what is happening provides an opportunity to try to glean more from these lessons in the practice of an aspiring Soul Fisher.

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### **From Our Neighbors:**

Berit Kuykendall contributed this helpful hint. She learned this from the distressing experience of their inquisitive little white dog!

*If your dog gets skunked:*

Veterinarians recommend: Mix 1 Qt. of 3% hydrogen peroxide with a quarter cup baking soda and 1 teaspoon of mild dishwashing detergent (check to make sure it does not contain bleach or ammonia). Rub this solution into your dog's coat. Don't let any get into the eyes or ears. Then bathe with a mild pet shampoo and rinse well. If this doesn't remove all the skunky odor, repeat process. Berit says it works!

Roger Stommel is a Notary Public. He will be happy to perform that duty for any homeowners who need it. He charges 1 dozen cookies, homemade please! He can be found at 64 Gravelly Trail.

*Thanks to Bill Hoolan and Mike Wells for their always excellent contributions. As always, please send or email me any questions, or anything you think would be of interest to your neighbors, whether it's family news, recipes, reports from the ranch, stuff for sale, letters to the editor, etc. I really enjoy hearing from you!*

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