

September, 2009

Edited by Martha Crawley

From the President's Corner

by Bill Hoolan

Greetings from Montana. It's now mid September and this morning I awoke to a ring of ice where the sprinkler was watering the lawn. That's the first sign I have seen so far that a beautiful summer is coming to an end. Throughout summer it rained about once a week, and everything stayed so green. I truly believe all the wild animals on the ranch must feel like they are in some kind of reserve, so much to eat and nobody bothering them, especially the elk. I have kept you all posted for the past 7 or 8 years, from the first 2 cow elk that stayed on the ranch to have their calves, instead of migrating through. Well folks, you have to see it now to believe it, the herd is up to about 75 with no less than 25 calves being born on the ranch this year. It's getting to be common, for those who spend the summer here, to look out and see the entire herd grazing nearby. They are so beautiful with their summer coats and the elk calves playing chase. We also have 2 resident herds of antelope of about 12 each and deer everywhere you look. One doe is especially noteworthy; she seems to have 3 fawns.

Now for a little business: Again this year the homeowner's meeting was well attended. It is encouraging to see so many taking the time to attend. On the whole, the ranch is in great order. One of the biggest changes this year was that we were better able to handle the roads. Each board member has specific areas of responsibility, and for the past 5 years, one of mine is the roads. In previous years, with very limited funds, we were only able to do a basic job of grading the roads. As a result, about halfway through the summer all 13 miles of roads would become like teeth-jarring washboard due to our ever increasing traffic. I can't tell you how much fun it was for me this year to actually have the money to do a first class job. Big graders, water trucks, 20 ton rollers, road rakes, etc., done by a professional company, AM Wells. We brought in over 200 tons of road base for the worst spots. We gave the most travelled road, Flatiron Trail, the most attention, even to the extent of grading out the burrow pits to reclaim the road base that has found its way there over the years. The AM Wells crew estimated they reclaimed about \$15,000 worth of road base that was in the burrow pits. That was a nice plus for us! In the process of grading the pits, we also got an added benefit of removing some of the sage which gives us a wider fire break. The local fire chief asked us to do that the last time we had him on the ranch. The feedback has been extremely positive. The board received several calls from homeowners applauding the quality of the roads this summer. Roads next year and for a few more years to come will be a high priority.

Fencing:

As most of you know, the Feds have asked the ranches in the valley to modify their barbed wire fencing by dropping the top wire down to 40 inches. We were told that over a hundred elk needlessly lose their lives every year getting caught by the top wire in their migrations. After 2 summers of hard work, MRR fences have been lowered to 40 inches.

Ranch Access:

For the new folks on the ranch, let me bring you up to grade. This is a big deal. The county passed an ordinance in 1993 that closed about 20 roads to snow plowing, our county road from the highway being one of them. Since then, most of the affected roads have had the ordinance changed and now are being plowed by the county or the different home owners. Mike Wells and the MRR Winter Parking and Access Committee are hard at work with the never ending details necessary to have the ordinance changed that would allow plowing of the county road. So far

this is the first and the hardest step.

The owners that use the ranch during the winter are finding more and more difficulties getting permission to park on the private land next to the highway. I won't go into all the details, let me just say it's a mess. When our ranch was developed, 20 plus years ago, our developers gave very little thought to where owners would park in the winter before riding their snowmobiles to their homes. In the early days with but a handful of homes and very little parking needed, it worked out. But now with 60 homes and lots of folks coming for winter stays, we find ourselves with one big problem. The state won't let us park next to Hwy 287, the county won't let us plow the county road, and we are having difficulties in getting permission from the private land owner who has the parking lot out at the highway. Now that I have told you this much, read on; it even gets messier. To compound the issue Cliff and Wade Lake are getting much more popular. Ice fishermen from Idaho and the surrounding area have no idea of the parking rules; they simply barge in and park anywhere they want. This of course makes the land owner even less happy and I truly understand. It won't be long before our small parking lot out at the highway will be locked to all comers. We have been told that very clearly. That will leave all MRR Homeowners who wish to visit their homes in the winter with no place to park. The board has alluded to this problem to some degree in our past newsletters and meeting minutes, and understands it is their responsibility to solve this problem. If Mike and the committee are successful in getting the ordinance changed or modified, our thinking now is to get the county road plowed from the highway down to the bridge on the river. That is about a half mile and would afford us a rather large parking area, it is owned by the state and of course that will bring its own problems. We will keep all informed on the progress.

On another note, if one would have driven around the ranch 20 years ago, you would have seen lots of animals, open space and no houses. One might have also wondered if it would be possible for 129 of us to move on to these 3000 acres, with some semblance of harmony. Let me answer that question: Yes, kinda. There are about 60 homes now, and things have gone generally very well. We will always have issues such as where your neighbors build their house, how close to the line, etc. Those things seem to work themselves out, especially if neighbors communicate with each other. What seems to be getting more and not less troublesome, is light pollution. In the past the phone calls to the board were cows, cows, cows. Now they are light, lights, lights. The CCR's are very loose when it comes to this issue, we are going to have to rely on each others' consideration of our neighbors to help mitigate the concerns. I guess it's just normal for a ranch our size to have growing pains to overcome.

You'll find it interesting that the realtors are valuing the ranch at over \$40 million. They are referring to us in their advertisements as the "prestigious upper valley Madison River Ranch." I feel their positive comments are a reflection on the general quality of the place; roads, fences, gates, underground power and good CCR's. I am told by realtor's that once we solve the winter access problems, the ranch will be second to none in the valley.

We all owe our editor, Martha Crawley gratitude for her hard work.

Regards, Bill

Memo from Martha:

Thanks to Bill, and also to the many kind people who have expressed appreciation for the newsletter.

We spent most of the summer at the ranch, and a lovely one it was! It was green all summer, which we've never seen, with wildflowers continuing to bloom at least until we left in late August. We'll be back in October for a few weeks and look forward to the gorgeous Ranch Autumn, with its golden aspen, bright blue skies, and crisp, clear days. Of course, that could be

blinding blizzards and freezing cold days, but we'll think positive!

At the meeting this year, as you've no doubt noticed from reading your minutes (if you weren't there), we had two women from the Forest Service who talked about bear awareness and how we all have to be careful about leaving anything outside that could be a food source that would attract bears. One thing they said was that bird feeders attract bears and should be avoided. For those of us who like to attract birds, but not bears, John Legler had an excellent suggestion. Bird baths! I know the birds love them, because any time we have any little shallow puddle, the birds are drawn to it and flutter around in the cool water, dipping their heads and stretching their wings. Thanks, John, for a great idea!

Thought for the day:

"A smile of encouragement at the right moment may act like sunlight on a closed-up flower; it may be the turning point for a struggling life." Author unknown

Ranch Recipes

This time the recipe is an oldie – I'm sure many of you have it in your recipe boxes. This is my mother-in-law's version which she shared with me many years ago. She was a great cook, and a great mother-in-law. I miss her.

Bernadine Crawley's Lemon Bars

CRUST:

½ cup butter
1 cup flour
¼ cup powdered sugar

FILLING:

2 eggs
1 cup sugar
½ teaspoon baking powder
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Cut together butter, flour, and powdered sugar until mixture resembles coarse meal. Pat into a 9X9 pan. Bake at 325 for about 25 minutes.

Beat eggs; add sugar slowly. Stir in baking powder and lemon juice. Bake on top of crust for 15 minutes, or until delicately browned.

Cut into squares* and garnish each square with ¼ maraschino cherry.

*The recipe says cut while warm, but I've never figured out how to make them cut cleanly, warm or cold. If anyone knows a trick, let me know!

Fishing With Mike Wells

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Fishing for Conservationists

Having spent my first two days back on the Ranch mowing lawn, pulling weeds & supervising my wife's house cleaning & window washing (much to her chagrin) I was eager to get on the river & toss hoppers to tempt the evasive monsters lurking in the

shadows of rocks down deep in runs where I really don't want to know what goes on. The invasion of the mother-in-law was on the horizon & I needed a little serenity.

I wheeled around the corner at the old town of Cliff Lake heading to the Ranch Common Area & stood on the brakes...there in the middle of the road, during daylight, at 7 PM on Friday, August 28, 2009 stood two cow elk with five calves seemingly ready for a stare down! I've had a lot of 'firsts' with wildlife on this Ranch, but this was the first time I'd seen elk on the road ten feet from my truck in the summertime that appeared to think I should be the one to turn tail & head over the hill. Eventually, when they allowed me to pass, I got on the river & won the evening's challenge against the wily but gluttonous trout (much to their chagrin).

Over the last couple of weeks here I've caught & released trout. I've been within ten feet of elk in my truck, five feet of sage grouse & fifteen feet of mule deer on my ATV. From a bit more distance I've seen wandering groups of pronghorns, soaring eagles, fishing osprey & stealthy hawks. I've had owls catapult into the beam of my headlights while they patrol the roads at night stalking rabbits & other delicacies. As evening turns to night I've heard the coyotes calling back & forth across the valley. I love this stuff. I try not to analyze it much further than that for fear that I might lose the pure joy I get from these wonderful experiences in nature.

Fortunately, there were those that came before me that saw value in the natural world & wild things. In their wisdom they endeavored to preserve wilderness, wildlife habitat & natural resources for the generations to come. The American conservation movement began as a way for sportsmen, outdoor enthusiasts & wildlife lovers to insure that they could enjoy these recreational pursuits throughout their lifetime. The farsighted American conservationists pass that ethic on to their children.

September 2009 is an auspicious month for American conservationists. President Barack Obama proclaimed September as National Wilderness Month & stated:

"The American wilderness has inspired wonder and imagination for centuries and is an irreplaceable part of our Nation's heritage. Even before the birth of the United States, visitors from near and far were struck by its splendor and purity. The unaltered American landscape stood apart from any other in the world. During the years of westward expansion, the wilderness frontier became synonymous with pioneer values of steadfastness and rugged independence. This month, we celebrate this history and renew our commitment to preserving the American wilderness for future generations.

Forty-five years ago, the United States achieved a landmark success in protecting these magnificent wild spaces. The Congress passed and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act, which sought to secure "for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness." The Act has been widely recognized as one of our Nation's most important conservation laws. This law and the National Wilderness Preservation System it established have served as a model for wilderness protection laws in many of our States and in countries around the world. "

National Hunting & Fishing Day coincides with National Public Lands Day on September 26. Congress formalized these respective annual events to reinforce the importance of

hunters & anglers in conservation & of volunteerism in public land management.

2009 also marks the 50th anniversary of Trout Unlimited & the 25th anniversary of Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. I am proud to be a member of both of these organizations because they have exemplary track records in preserving & restoring coldwater fisheries & wildlife habitat.

There are many fine conservation organizations that deserve your support. Become a member & donate what you can. I urge you to find the ones that appeal to you & discover the pleasure of preserving what you love.

From Our Neighbors:

Mixed Bag

By **John Clark**

For those of you who were lucky enough to spend time on the Ranch this summer I don't have to tell you how beautiful it was. My family and I were there all of June and it rained part of every day and even snowed the first weekend! The grass was still green the first week of September and the wildlife is more abundant than I have ever seen it in the 20 years I have been coming to the Ranch.

The first annual Association work day was held the day after the annual meeting and it was a huge success. There were weed eaters, chain saws, wire clippers and just plain old people power at work for over four hours. In that time a good portion of the old common area corral which was totally rotted in places was demolished, the common area was mowed and over one half mile of old interior barbed wire fence was removed. I was going to try and individually thank those who came to help but for the sake of missing someone and making this article too long I will just say "Thank you" to all who were there. I think those who were there would agree this is much more fun than the annual meeting and a great way to get to know your neighbors while enhancing the appearance of the Ranch. I look forward to getting to know more of you next year. Plan on staying for a cookout afterwards.

The Association website is receiving great reviews (www.madisonriverranch.org) and if you have not visited it take a look. Marv Gibbs did a great job developing the site and is still improving on it. Please sign in on the "Contact us" page to update your email address, and consider answering "yes" to the option to receive the newsletter by email. Your email address will not be shared or published. This will save the Association a significant amount of postage. Any suggestions are appreciated and you can contact any Board member directly from the page.

In June I met with the Conservation Director of Montana Trout Unlimited on the Ranch common area to assess the condition of the spring creek and discuss stream access law. He was very impressed with the condition of the creek and the amount of fish and habitat it is supporting. All the past work has definitely paid off and the spawning environment is truly helping the Madison trout population. He was also supportive of the efforts the Ranch has made in protecting its private property rights by posting the common area and educating landowners and fishermen in Montana's stream access law. If you are interested in educating yourself in the law there is a great link on the website's home page.

Finally, I would like to wish the Madison River Ranch a Happy 20th Anniversary! I will never forget that day in November 1989 when I first set foot on the Ranch and found my part of the "Last Best Place" and have since been fortunate to spend many memorable days there with family and friends.

Wildlife Sightings

By **Paul Schirmer**

The animal kingdom at the Ranch appears to be very healthy. One of the obvious improvements in the last several years has been the elk population. This summer my family and I have seen in the vicinity of our cabin over a hundred elk including calves. There appears to be two separate herds but they do join up occasionally. Elk tend to be skittish but they have become so complacent from feeling safe that they tolerate our being around them. Unfortunately, that makes them an easier target for hunters. The deer, both mule and white tails, also in numbers, are even more docile in the presence of people. And the antelope are returning. We definitely have our own nature preserve, which enhances the experience of being on the ranch, and the value of the Ranch.

Many of us have heard of, or experienced, bear sightings. And wolves have been seen. I heard one near our cabin last summer; their call is very different from a coyote. My wife, Susan, and I have seen a mountain lion in our front yard, fifty feet from me. That really puts a wild edge to the Ranch. Every summer we have sightings of a red fox. There are marmots on the Ranch, along with weasels, raccoons, and coyotes. Even though two Ranch jack rabbits (and a deer) have been recently hit by vehicles, my son and I saw four the other night.

And let us not forget about the winged ones. We have seen over 70 different birds, either around our cabin or in the vicinity (for us this includes down to Wade/Cliff Lake and the River). The hawk and owl populations have been returning as the rodent (ground squirrels) population appears to be rebounding from previous years. On the night of the sighting of jack rabbits, we counted five owls. One, the boreal owl, is very tame, as are the burrowing owls. We recently heard the boreal owl, and it has an unusual call, sort of duck like with a "choo" at the end. Approaching our cabin at night, we saw a Great Horned owl sitting on a gate, and it didn't move when we stopped to observe it. It seems every critter likes the comfort of our Ranch.

Our children, who are now teenagers, have spent every summer on the Ranch. They have become naturalists through experiential encounters in the environs of the Ranch, from hanging out on the surrounding lakes to our front yard. Their educators are always impressed by their wealth of natural science knowledge.

What are the readers' experiences of wildlife on the Ranch?

A Reminder: *If you would like to receive your newsletter by email and are not currently doing so, please email me with your request and I'll add you to the roster of email newsletter recipients (well, technically my handsome assistant will do that...),*

or choose that option on the website as mentioned in John Clarke's contribution above.

Thanks to Bill Hoolan and Mike Wells for their always appreciated contributions, as well as our other fine contributors this month. A special thanks to my husband, Dave, who has been doing all the "technical" stuff for the newsletter – maintaining the roster particularly, and printing the labels which are a headache every time. 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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