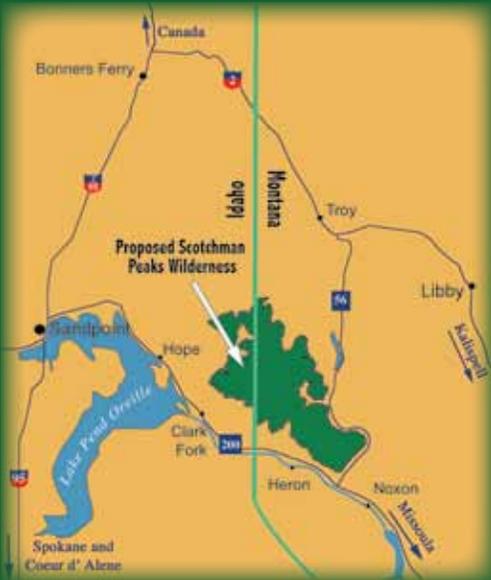


## Mission Statement

"Spanning the Idaho/Montana border, the Scotchmans are one of the last, and largest, wild areas in our region. We conduct education, outreach and stewardship activities to preserve the rugged, scenic and biologically diverse 88,000 acre Scotchman Peaks Roadless Area. We believe the Scotchman Peaks deserve congressional designation as Wilderness for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations."



Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness, Inc. (FSPW) is a non-profit organization. The proceeds from all events and sales benefit our wilderness preservation efforts. Donations are tax deductible.

If you receive this newsletter by mail and have an email address you can help us save postage by sending us your email address.

Acquisitions Editor: Ann Wimberley  
Layout and design: Celeste Boatwright Grace



The second annual Bonner County Employee hike led to this group photo on top of East Fork Peak. Left to Right: Phil Hough, Cary Kelly (holding Tank), Deb Hunsicker, Ron Helm, Todd Sudick, Robin Helm (holding Harley), Robert Bussey, Dershi Bussey.

The Scotchman Peaks Wilderness proposal has achieved awesome support over the past year, from groups as diverse as the Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce, the Bonner County Commissioners and, just this month, The Idaho Forest Group. Executive Director Phil Hough tells the whole story in a new section of *Peak Experience*, FSPW Money Matters, on page 5.

## CHANGE IS IN THE AIR.

Besides the advent of autumn, and the lovely colors it brings, *Peak Experience* has a different look for this issue. Our venerable newsletter has been published six times a year for a decade. This makeover is partly a response to our tenth anniversary of working for wilderness. Also, beginning with this edition, *Peak Experience* will become a quarterly publication. We thought it would be an appropriate time to freshen up the design.

## YOU, TOO, CAN BE AN FSPW INSIDER.

The change of newsletter schedule is in response to an e-newsletter we began last summer, the *FSPW Insider*. The *Insider* is brief, events-based, weekly and delivered exclusively via e-mail. It also has a fresh, new, vital voice, provided by *Insider* editor (and Assistant Program Coordinator) Nathan Mynatt. It's been very well-received by our core cadre of volunteers and donors, providing a nice counterpoint to *Peak Experience*. Learn how to subscribe to the *Insider* on page 4.

## WILDERNESS REPORT: A SUMMER ON FIRE

By Nathan Mynatt

Although many people predicted this would be a record fire year, nobody took an “I told you so” attitude when smoke started filling the sky. The omnipresence of wildland fires dominated most aspects of daily life in the Inland Northwest, with conversations ranging in topic from throat swelling to the impending apocalypse. Our beloved Scotchman Peaks were pretty heavily impacted, with a combined area of all the fires measuring well over 14,000 acres. Now that the smoke has cleared (mostly) and the firefighters have packed up and gone home, we have a chance to look at the immediate results and can start to determine just how much real damage was done.

The Scotchman Peak Fire started on August 13<sup>th</sup>, after lightning struck a large dead tree on the northeast-facing slope below the peak, exploding the tree and instantly starting a ground fire. At its peak, the Scotchman Peak Fire measured 2,876 acres, after which winds started to push the fire back into itself. The fire burned a large portion of the basin holding West Fork of Blue Creek, and briefly crested the ridge between the West Fork and Blue Creek, but was deterred by wind and topography from moving down that face. A fire line/road was constructed from Lightning Creek to Blue Creek along the edge of the wilderness proposal boundary, providing protection to private properties near Clark Fork, but the fire never reached the newly constructed line.

The Scotchman Peak Fire was the smallest of three fires that burned within the perimeter of the Scotchman Peaks Wilderness proposal. The other



Napoleon fire spills over into Blacktail Creek.

Photo by Sandy Compton

two, dubbed the Napoleon Fire and the Sawtooth fire, grew after multiple small fire starts combined. The Napoleon Fire was the most aggressively combated and posed a threat to private properties along the Bull River Highway for almost two weeks. Around the time that Scotchman



Napoleon fire aftermath. Note the tendrils of smoke at the right

Photo by Sandy Compton

Peak Fire started, small fires began in Napoleon Gulch, Hamilton Gulch, Star Gulch, and along Pillick Ridge. Driven by gusting winds along the dry forest floor, the fires grew and combined to cover more than 9,000 acres. The Napoleon Fire forced evacuations along the Bull River Highway (56), where fire

*Continued page 11*

## EYE WITNESS

By Todd Dunnfield

On the night of Thursday August 13<sup>th</sup> I had planned to hike up Trail # 65 to the summit of Scotchman Peak and enjoy a solo bivouac on the summit in hopes to greet the sun at sunrise and still make it back down to the trailhead at 7:00 am to meet FSPW staff and volunteers a work party rerouting the first mile of trail. It has been on my personal bucket list for years to sleep on the summit and watch the sunrise from my favorite peak.

As I loaded up my truck for this adventure rains swept through Spokane with a fair amount of thunder and lightning. The storm was heading to the exact same location I was hoping to go, northeast towards the Scotchman Peaks area. Being a flexible person, I delayed my departure from Spokane and stopped off at Cabela's. When I finally approached the trailhead, my fears were confirmed by smells coming through the open windows of my truck: fresh smoke of a summer fire. Multiple times I stopped the truck and turned off the lights looking to spot which ridgeline was glowing orange, but none could be seen.

It was after 11:00 pm when I headed up the trail. I was shocked to find another car at the trailhead, and assumed I would find

others sleeping on the summit. The hike up included wisps of smoke in the wind and an unseasonably warm night wind.

Just before 2:00 am I reached the summit and could look down onto the burgeoning fire. It was due east of the summit and burning in 4-5 acre amoeba shape. My estimate was that the fire was

*Continued page 11*

## WHAT'S UP WITH THE GOATS?

By Sandy Compton

When the Forest Service, with the blessing of Idaho Department of Fish and Game — and Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness — closed Scotchman Peak Trail #65 in early September, it got a lot of press attention. In many ways, this is good. Attention needs to be paid to the “mountain goat problem.” But focus of the attention is misleading.

Story leads and headlines have consistently used the term “aggressive goats.” A good — or bad, rather — example is “Aggressive goats force trail closure.” The headline might better read, “Humans who feed goats force trail closure.” It is much closer to the truth. The goats are not so much being aggressive as they are being insistent. And, it’s people who have taught them to be that way.

So, it’s really not a mountain goat problem as much as it is a human problem. In the overall scheme of things, the news stories are pretty well balanced. Most of them point out that the problem is caused by mountain visitors who give goats handouts, many for photo opportunities or the questionable thrill of viewing them “up close and personal.” This has made goats willing to get personal, to the point of licking human appendages for the salt contained in sweat.

To say this is somewhat dangerous is an understatement. Mountain goats, even those living on a mountain as well-visited as Scotchman Peak, are unpredictable wild animals. They have a logic dictated by their needs to survive in a place where rarity is an everyday fact of life. That means goats — especially



A Scotchman goat displays bad habits developed through habituation.

Photo by Sandy Compton

habituated goats — sometimes don’t play well with humans.

An incident in late July proved this true — again. A man who allowed a Scotchman goat to lick his legs for the salt decided he was done with that

*Continued page 10*

## ONE 47TH OF A LIFE

By Nathan Mynatt

Six months doesn’t seem like a very long time. It’s half a year, two sports seasons, or six bill cycles. It’s one forty-sixth of my life. Well, now one forty-seventh. It doesn’t seem like a lot can happen in that time period, but somehow, it has. Quite a lot has happened. Trail days, hikes, fundraisers, community events — none of them waited for me to catch my breath. That’s ok though, because now I know how to keep up. I’ll tell you all a little bit about why.

One of the things that most stands out to me when looking back over these first six months, is how astonishingly much I have learned in such a brief amount of time. Much of this development has involved learning how to do things — supporter database management, website development, volunteer recruitment, social media-ing, event organization, etc. I’m much more effective at *getting*

*stuff done* than I was a short time ago. Some of the more significant developments, however, come from the things that I have learned to fix before they become an issue, which can be best explained, I think, with an analogy. A few weeks ago, I ran the Sandpoint Scenic Half Marathon, which was my first long distance race. The event, as a whole, was great, but my race was pretty horrible. The entire week

before, I had been at a leadership training seminar just outside Yellowstone, where I didn’t really have a chance to run at all. It wasn’t the incimate weather or lack of time that deterred me so much as the two-dozen grizzly bears living on the ranch trying to fatten up before fast-approaching winter. Soft and lazy, back in Sandpoint, at dinner the night



Nathan Mynatt on a recent Scotchmans bushwhack.

Photo by Brita Olson

before the race, and feeling generally apathetic about each and every one of the thirteen miles I would have to run the next morning, I decided that buffalo meatloaf was an appropriate meal choice. It was not. The race the next day was a full-out suffer-fest. I hit a wall about a third of the way in and never broke through or found a way around. I finished, and the results were not quite as bad as I expected (second in my age group), but nonetheless, I would not exactly consider the race a resounding success.

This analogy is pretty bad in the sense that none of the events that I helped plan and pull off were as painful as the race. They were all, in fact, pretty fantastic (mainly because Sandy and Phil were there, smoothing things over

*Continued page 10*

## THE CALENDAR

### ALONG THE TRAIL

**July 4:** FSPW volunteers and staff marched in parades in Sandpoint, Clark Fork, Heron and Noxon. The FSPW/Cougar Creek Band Float took first place in the Clark Fork parade; FSPW had a booth at the July Fourth celebration in Troy.

**July 10:** A Field Day Friday workday in Dry Creek/Star Gulch with the Cabinet Ranger District. Staff and volunteers realigned intersection of Dry Creek Trail #1020 and Star Gulch Trail # 1016

**July 17:** Fifteen volunteers and 3 staff established 1000 feet of new tread on Scotchman Peak Trail #65 reroute, including a massive effort by the FSPW crosscut crew removing multiple blowdowns.

**July 24:** Take-A-Kid-Hiking Day in Regal Creek

**July 28 – 29:** FSPW volunteers and USFS staff gathered willow and cottonwood slips in the Lightning Creek Treasured Landscape to be rooted and replanted later.

**August 2 – 8:** Wilderness Volunteers rerouted around a reoccurring slide on Morris Creek Trail #132.

**August 7:** Take-A-Kid-Hiking Day in Ross Creek Cedars

**August 8:** FSPW volunteer Eric Ridgway signed up a record 205 new Friends at Veg-Fest in Spokane.

**August 11 – 15:** FSPW volunteers and staff signed up dozens of new friends at the booth at the Bonner County Fair.

**August 13:** A lightning storm started myriad fires in the Scotchman Peaks, including the West Fork of Blue Creek; Pilik Ridge; Hamilton, Star and Napoleon Gulches; and Sawtooth Mountain.

**August 14:** Workday on Scotchman Peak Trail #65 reroute. The lower half of the reroute was connected to the old trail, a half mile of new tread being finished.

**August 15 – 16:** FSPW had a booth at the Huckelberry Festival in Trout Creek.

**August 15:** Most of the trails in the Scotchmans were closed by USFS for fire (see fire report on page 2)

**August 21 and 22:** A work weekend with Three Rivers District on Spar Peak Trail #324 was cancelled because of fire.

**August 28:** Take-A-Kid-Hiking Day on Star Peak.

**September 4:** Brian Baxter taught a map and compass class at Heron Community Center and in the field. September

**September 11:** Scotchman Peak Trail #65 fire closure was lifted.

**September 11 and 12:** The lower half of the Scotchman Peak Trail reroute opened for traffic as volunteers and staff decommissioned and rehabilitated the lower quarter mile of the old trail.

**September 14:** Scotchman Peak Trail #65 was closed because of habituated mountain goats. (See story on page 3)

**September 18:** Brian Baxter led a Wetlands Wanderings class

**September 19:** A wilderness celebration held in Libby at Riverfront Park in conjunction with Montana Wilderness Association attracted 150 celebrants; Author Fred Swanson did a presentation on his book *Where Roads Will Never Reach: Wilderness and Its Visionaries in the*

*Northern Rockies* at the Cabinet Mountains Brewery in Libby; FSPW, Kaniksu Land Trust and Larson's Good Clothing teamed up to clean up Highway 200.

**September 23:** Baxter's On Cedar hosted FSPW for a fundraiser.

**September 25 – 26:** Volunteers and FSPW staff celebrated National Public Lands Day with two days of trail work on Morris Creek Trail.

**October 10:** The Annual Plein Air Paintout featured three well-attended workshops at the Outskirts Gallery in the Hope Marketplace next to the Post Office in Hope. Paintings made during that day will hang at the Outskirts through November

### THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT

**October 16-18:** FSPW volunteer wilderness first aid class.

**October 25:** FSPW Volunteer appreciation picnic will be held at Round Lake State Park beginning at 2 pm. Please RSVP at bit.ly/2015VolunteerBash

**October 27 – 31:** FSPW staff and volunteers will attend the NWSA conference in Missoula

**November 7:** FSPW is a co-sponsor of the American Long Distance Hiking Association Fall Hiker Fest at the Bonner County Administrative Building (the former Federal Building) at the corner of Division and Highway 2.) All day. Doors open at 8:30. Sign up at bit.ly/ALD-HAWestFallFest

**November 19:** Another keg of McDuff's Goat Hop Ale will be tapped at McDuff's Beer Hall on Cedar. 5:00. Raffle prizes, silent auction and lots of fun.

### ON THE HORIZON

**Late November:** Attend a show of the Plein Air art from several seasons at the Outskirts Gallery. Date TBA.

**January 1:** Winter hike season opens. Submit your winter hike at <http://www.scotchmanpeaks.org/hiking/leading-hikes/>

**January:** The FSPW Winter Tracks program begins. If you wish to help introduce kids to the wonders of outdoor winter, contact [nathan@scotchmanpeaks.org](mailto:nathan@scotchmanpeaks.org)



**WANT TO BE AN FSPW INSIDER?**

GET THE WEEKLY INSIDER NEWSLETTER VIA E-MAIL BY  
WRITING TO [INSIDER@SCOTCHMANPEAKS.ORG](mailto:INSIDER@SCOTCHMANPEAKS.ORG)



FSPW Money Matters is a new section of *Peak Experience* in which we will detail how we steward the grants and individual donations of both time and money that are the life blood of our organization. Thanks to all of you who give of yourselves to keep us working for wilderness!

## GAINING CRITICAL MOMENTUM

By Phil Hough, Executive Director

After our many years of building community consensus, we are seeing a critical mass of support developing for the congressional designation of Wilderness for the Scotchman Peaks! We could not do this without the contributions from many of our “friends”.

Financial contributions provide us with the resources needed to build a strong organization, but volunteers are vital to our success. Contributions of time to help with education, outreach, stewardship and advocacy are important. From the design of trails to the design of this newsletter we are fortunate to have both skilled volunteers as well as those willing to do the more mundane tasks. The impact of taking the time to contact elected officials cannot be underestimated. And, simply sharing our message with your neighbor or friends helps us to build a large, broad, diverse group of supporters. For all of you, we launch this new feature “Money Matters”. Really it is your contributions, on all levels, that matter. Thank you one and all!

This has been an exciting year for the Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness! With strong support from the Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce and many other in business and community leaders and a stunning resolution of support from the three conservative Republican Bonner County Commissioners we have garnered

many endorsements from local and regional press. Support has come from other important folks as well, including Montana Gov Bullock and former Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth. Jim Risch

developments I want to share with you. On Oct 3, we had our second annual “Bonner County Wellness Hike” into the rugged Scotchman Peaks area - with two of the County Commissioners and

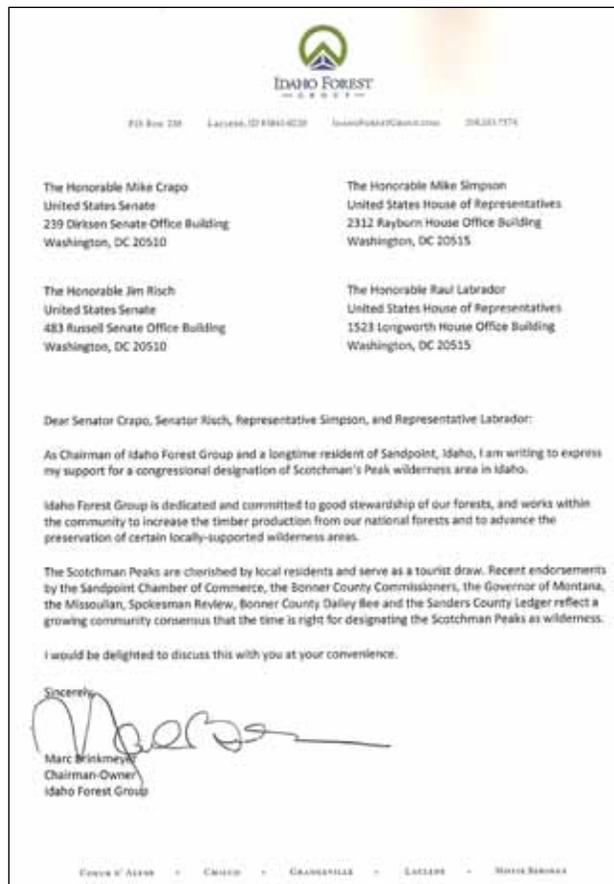
several friends of theirs and county employees. All three commissioners have climbed a Scotchman peak, seen the lake and the surrounding peaks and have come back energized. Pics from this hike are on a Facebook album set to public view at <http://on.fb.me/1Vy99PJ>

As unique as it is to have two commissioners sitting on a Scotchman summit, we have another update of great significance. We have an official endorsement from Idaho Forest Group! Marc Brinkmeyer hand-delivered a letter to the Idaho delegation in September to warm receptions. This is an important step forward.

In November, I will travel to Washington DC for further discussions with our delegation and see if we can put together a roadmap to move the Scotchman Peaks forward as a Wilderness. Idaho Forest Group’s support will be at the center of the discussion

and will help to bring about a more concrete path forward.

We want to thank Marc Brinkmeyer as well as all the management at Idaho Forest Group for their leadership and for their contribution of support for the Scotchman Peaks!



Marc Brinkmeyer hand-delivered this letter to the Idaho delegation in Washington, DC

is listening and in May, at the Senate Hearing on the Boulder White Clouds, he took the opportunity to tell the committee and audience that he thought the Scotchman Peaks would be the next bill he brings before the Senate!

This October, we had two exciting

## BARTENDING, BOOTHS AND TRAIL TREAD

By Brita Olson

Brita Olson was our 2015 Summer intern, funded by grants and individual donations. Brita also consistently volunteered personal time to FSPW. Thank you Brita, grantors and donors!

On one of my first days of work this summer, I learned how to bartend. (To those who received my first overly foamy beer pours, I sincerely apologize). This was not exactly what I expected out of my job as the FSPW Backcountry Ranger Intern, but it was one of many things that I learned this summer, and surely not the last time my scope of duty was unexpected.

I got a lot of time carrying out traditional backcountry ranger duties. I cleared trail, working a crosscut saw and making it sing or being blown away by how much one can accomplish with a folding handsaw. I dug trail tread, swinging a Pulaski into the rocky soil of the Scotchman Peaks more times than I could count. On wilderness patrol, I hiked trails armed with maps, goats safety advice, and words of encouragement for folks who'd only made it a half mile up the trail to Scotchman Peak (the view really is worth it). But straightforward trail stewardship was by no means the limits of my job description.

Working for a nonprofit dedicated to the protection of a proposed wilderness nestled on the border of two states, three counties, two time zones, two national forests, and three ranger districts is, at times, logistically complicated. Indeed, some days I did just as described above. Other days, I reported to the Cabinet Ranger District in Trout Creek, MT. They trained me up as a quasi-wilderness ranger, took me out with their trail crew, blessed me with new trail skills and sent me out into the Scotchman Peaks. I also spent hours in outreach booths for Troy's 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Bonner County Fair, and Trout Creek's Huckleberry Festival.



Brita Olson in her FS uniform in the smoky Bull River valley.

Photo by Phil Hough

While talking to people about the proposed Scotchman Peaks Wilderness and our efforts to conserve it, I was constantly reminded of how awesome my job is. Additionally, I had the privilege of joining our amazing FSPW volunteers on trail days. This is a group of people who spend their vacation, weekends and retirement swinging tools, and digging tread – which in my opinion is quite impressive.

On August 13<sup>th</sup>, a lightning storm lit the Scotchman Peaks on fire. With all the trails closed, I couldn't perform duties as a backcountry ranger, so the Forest Service commandeered me as a supply driver on the Clark Fork Complex. I posted information on sign boards, hauled a truckload of hose up Highway 56 to the fire line, delivered fuel for water pumps, made sure the night crew got meals, and drove a firefighter who worked 22 hours straight home from the line. I also got pulled into an assortment of other tasks while sitting at the station waiting for my next run, like answering the phones or operating dispatch.

It was an interesting detail with the forest service and I learned a lot about fire and the logistics of firefighting in my two weeks there. However, when the

cool weather came, the fire simmered down, and I returned to the FSPW, it was good to be back and spend four more trail days out with volunteers before the season ended.

Just over four years ago, I left my home in Sandpoint for college, eager to adventure in new places: a thanksgiving in the Utah desert, a Christmas in Germany, a spring break in Chicago, a summer in Ecuador. . . But after graduating this May, I'm glad I had the opportunity to work in one of my favorite places in the world. My "office" this summer, a beautiful pocket of the West Cabinets, featured views of the Clark Fork and Lake Pend Oreille from the top of Scotchman Peak or Star Peak, the reflection of wildness in the calm waters of Little Spar Lake, giant spring-fed majestic cedars, and a panorama of Star Peak, Billiard Table and the "gulches" as seen from the top of Berray Mountain Lookout (which I visited with the Cabinet trail crew). Undeniably, the time I spent out in my "office" and all of the beautiful country I got to help steward this summer was great, along with all of the many things, expected and unexpected, that I learned. But my favorite thing by far about moving home is that I became a part of an awesome group of "Friends" whose dedication to conservation and enthusiasm for hard work never ceases to inspire me.

### STEWARDSHIP & OUTREACH BY THE NUMBERS

**Led hikes: 10 (3 cancelled for fire)**

**Kid hikes: 5 (1 cancelled for fire)**

**Work days: 9 (2 cancelled for fire)**

**Volunteer stewardship days: 76**

**Staff stewardship days: 34**

**Education classes : 6**

**Outreach booth days: 9**

**New Friends signed up: 400-plus**

**Recent individual donors: 70**

**Miles of trail built or maintained: 3**

## COTTONWOODS PROVIDE MAJESTY, MEDICINE

By Valle Novak

Several years ago the University of Idaho owned and maintained a satellite facility in the woods behind Clark Fork. It was staffed by UI professors who provided professional workshop/classes featuring hands-on experts in gardening, wild gardens, wildcrafting, nature, and much more in a beautiful environment.

One of the workshops was on obtaining valuable natural “usables” from wild plants: from Arnica salve, soap from Saponaria (“soap bush”), and healing balm from the Cottonwood – generally in our area, *Populus trichocarpa* or Black Cottonwood). For the latter the instructor showed us how to use a simple canner to distil the fragrant pitch from cottonwood sprigs using those pitchy tips that drop in profusion each spring (all over your car and walkways) for the resulting “Balm of Gilead” which protects, heals and is pretty much an all-encompassing topical medication. During these sessions I fell in love with these big, handsome trees.

Since my surroundings hold a sizeable cottonwood population, like-minded friends from the classes joined me each spring in harvesting branch tips for making the balm. It was then that I read Jeff Hart’s classic “Montana: Native Plants and Early Peoples,” who reported that the Plains Indians along with Flathead, Kutenai and Blackfeet, revered the cottonwood, relishing the sweet inner bark and sap. They fed twigs to their stock, rubbed themselves with the sap to conceal their human scent during war parties, and obtained colors and dyes from the buds as well.

Some tribes applied whole leaves as a poultice for bruises, boils and sores on themselves as well as their horses, saying that it drew the pus from infec-

tions. Others drank tea from the bark for tuberculosis, syphilis and whooping cough, and believed it good for colds. It also made (and makes) good firewood, burning cleanly and leaving only a fine ash. Women made good use of the “cotton” that bursts from the falling seed pods in summertime for diaper lining and or baby-bedding warmth/softness.

So it would seem that our modern-day “discovery” of the healing properties of cottonwood was intimately known and used long before, which actually gives it more credence.

But with all of cottonwood’s beauty and benefits, many malign it, with some large companies cutting it down in great numbers for grinding into wood chips. This is a real shame, since it has been categorized as a “keystone” species, which recognizes its usefulness to the area in which it grows.

Our common Black cottonwood is the largest of the *Populus* species and impossible to mistake. Its unique clean, sweet fragrance, thick leathery heart-shaped (lanceolate) leaves, finely toothed marginally, are 3- to 7-inches long and 3-4 inches wide, dark green above and lighter beneath (a beautiful picture looking up from below when the sun is shining through them). The early-years trunks start out smoothly grey-green with deep furrows grooved in the aged giants, which can grow to 120 feet tall.

On “my” small natural acreage, the cottonwoods co-exist with red and white fir, Ponderosa pine, a variety of smaller trees/shrubs – Cascara, Rocky-Mountain maple, Mountain and Green ash, Serviceberry, Elderberry and Sumac – just as one finds them growing in moister areas of the forest.



The ubiquitous cottonwood inhabits all drainages in the Scotchman Peaks.

**Sandy Compton photo**

And that last sentence points out the main necessity of the cottonwood – nearby moisture. Here, Sand Creek is only an acre away.

I recall a many years-ago experience, when hiking in the hills with my then eight year-old son, he suddenly exclaimed “I smell water!” Over the next knoll we came upon a beautiful grove of fragrant cottonwoods - the “water” he had smelled. Though there was no stream or pond in sight, I knew it was close by, for the water-loving cottonwoods exuded its scent from their very trunks and leaves.

Upcoming columns will explore more water-lovers in our forests and meadows.

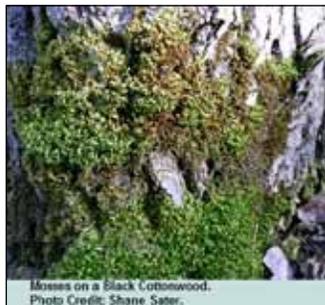
## SATER'S SEASONS

By Shane Sater

This series outlines the seasons in the Scotchman Peaks as seen through the eyes of FSPW volunteer Shane Sater. For the complete series, plus a list of references, visit [scotchmanpeaks.org/about-the-friends/seasons/](http://scotchmanpeaks.org/about-the-friends/seasons/)

By the middle of October, the Western Larches are turning golden at the higher elevations, and those in the valleys are not far behind. The mountains look as if they are molting; the Larches, Cottonwoods, Aspens, and Birches are golden-yellow against the dark blue-green of the conifers. Periods of cloudy, rainy weather are no surprise at this time of year. Clear, cool fall days are magnificent, but it seems that the Larches glow most brightly when clouds hide the sun. American Robins and Varied Thrushes are not making themselves conspicuous, but an occasional burst of calls from the tree-tops, or a seemingly out-of-place song, may tell you that some of these birds are still around.

As the nights continue to grow longer, Snowshoe Hares are starting to molt into their white winter coats, shedding the brown fur they wore since spring. This seasonal change is probably triggered by photoperiod, and remains fairly constant for a location regardless of weather conditions. If all goes well, there will be snow on the ground by the time the Hares have turned mostly white, and their new coats will hide them from predators. However, as the climate continues to warm, the average duration of snow cover is decreasing. Unless this important prey animal is able to adapt quickly, climate models predict that Hares will stand out from the brown forest floor like "Eat Me" signs for increasing periods in spring and fall, with as yet unknown effects for the survival of the species.



Mosses on a Black Cottonwood.  
Photo Credit: Shane Sater.



Western Larch in Fall. Photo Credit: FSPW.

By early November, the rain of one of the cold fall storms may have turned to snow, even at the low elevations. In a wind, golden needles float gently down from the Larches. The Aspens and Cottonwoods appear as dead skeletons, though they are very much alive. Their buds, already formed in late summer, are dormant, waiting for increasing photoperiod and warmth in the spring to burst forth. The small, spatula-shaped leaves of Scouler's Willow, our principal upland



Northern Pygmy-owl.  
Photo Credit: USAFWS, Dave Menke.

willow species, may still be hanging on the bushes, flaming yellow. The wind has scattered most of the fluffy white seed tufts of Fireweed; Smooth Aster still retains some of its parachute-like achenes. Snowberry, in low, shrubby thickets, has dropped most of its opposite leaves, but the fleshy white fruits remain. The prickly stems of Baldhip Rose are gray-brown, but the bean-sized red hips, bare of sepals, provide colorful contrast. If you look closely, you may find signs of gnawing on one of these fruits - possibly the work of a hungry Red Squirrel or American Deer Mouse?

Keep an eye out for a Northern Pygmy-owl perched near the top of a tree, singing a clear, whistled "toot, toot, toot." Smaller than American Robins, these diminutive owls are fierce predators, sometimes attacking birds larger

than themselves. Rarely seen during the nesting season, Northern Pygmy-owls descend to lower altitudes at this time of year, and may stay around the lowlands for the winter.

Cool temperatures slow the movements of Western Thatching Ants, whose dome-shaped nests are conspicuous in somewhat dry, open areas. You may see a conical hole in one of these nests, very possibly the result of a Northern Flicker taking advantage of the slow-moving food. Overhead, you might watch a large, chattering flock of Pine Siskins swoop down into a Western Redcedar, feeding on the seeds, only to take off again in an undulating, shifting cloud. The cones of the Redcedar are starting to open, and a strong wind may scatter the winged seeds several hundred feet from the parent tree. Bohemian Waxwings, crested birds with beautiful, silky plumage in pastel shades of chestnut and gray, may be flocking to concentrations of fruits like Mountain-ash. These birds nest in the boreal forest, migrating south in an unpredictable pattern, looking for abundant fruit. The changes in habitat wrought by human lifestyles have probably altered the winter ecology of this species significantly - certainly, the ubiquitous European Mountain-ash planted in human neighborhoods is heavily fed upon by the Waxwings. Unlike our two native species of Mountain-ash, this one is a tree, rather than a shrub.

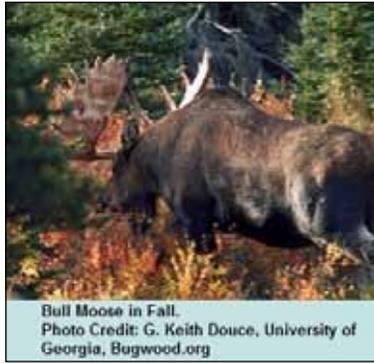
By mid November, Bohemian Waxwings, House Finches, Starlings, or others may be finishing up the last few fruits hanging on the smooth, bare, red-tinted branches of Blue Elderberry. If you look up at the crown of a mature Grand Fir, you'll probably see little brown spikes protruding above the uppermost branches. Grand Fir cones disintegrate on the tree, each leaving a thin, central core. Near the bases of many of these spikes, some seed bracts

still remain, like a little cup. Chestnut-backed Chickadees and Pine Grosbeaks are among the birds that can be seen feeding up here, pecking at these yet-to-fall bracts.

If there is snow on the ground, the tracks and behaviors of many forest mammals become readily observable by anyone with patience and persistence. It can be rewarding to do more than simply identify species from tracks. Spending a few minutes or hours following the trail of one particular animal through the snow, asking questions about its speed, gait, and behavior, can give you amazing insights into an animal's ecology. In paying attention to the trails of White-tailed Deer, I have noticed browsing on some conifer seedlings, especially Lodgepole Pine and Douglas-fir. However, I've never seen any browsing on Grand Fir seedlings - perhaps the compounds that make the boughs smell so good are unpalatable to Deer? Following trails through the snow, getting into the mindset of the animal that left them, you will learn surprising things and feel a greater connection with that creature.

By early December, the snow under a Paper Birch may be littered with tiny, winged seeds and whole catkins, although many still remain on the trees. Common Redpolls, small finches with a red cap and yellow beak, feed largely on Birch seeds at this time of year. These birds breed in open boreal forest and in forested pockets of the Arctic tundra; they are known to be quite nomadic in winter. In our area in some years, Redpolls may be very numerous during the cold months, even staying around beyond the spring equinox. This is correlated with a scarcity of seeds farther north; in other years, few or no Redpolls may winter here.

I tend to think of December in north Idaho as being a cold, snowy time of year, but the instances of periods of



Bull Moose in Fall.  
Photo Credit: G. Keith Douce, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org

warming have been increasing. And so it may be that, after a storm covers the trees with snow and bends the branches with its weight, the snow turns to rain and grows heavier and heavier. Although our conifers have evolved to bend under this weight, the cumulative power of solid water becomes apparent when branches snap under the strain. Or perhaps, nudged by a strong gust, a mature Lodgepole Pine crashes to the ground. This small-scale disaster, the end of this particular tree's life, also creates life for many other species. Within a week or two of the tree's death, Snowshoe Hare tracks may crisscross the snow. If you were to look closely, you might notice needles clipped by sharp incisors near the ground, or a clean, diagonal cut where a Hare nipped a twig.



Snowshoe Hare. Photo Credit: Alfred Viola, Northeastern University, Bugwood.org.

True to their name, Snowshoe Hares are well-adapted for northern winters. Not only did they change their coat earlier from brown to a snowy white; they really do have snowshoes, too - in the form of copious fur between the toes of their large back feet. Many predators eat these lagomorphs, including Lynx, Bobcats, Great Horned Owls, and Coyotes. Winter adaptations give an individual Hare a chance to survive the winter in spite of its status as an important food source, and thus allow the species to carry on.

As we approach December 21, the winter solstice, the day length continues to decrease. Day by day, the sun's path across the sky becomes lower, closer to the horizon. As the sun drops behind the western mountains in the afternoon, it illuminates the snowy

heights and shows the contours of the landscape. These contours affect microclimates in the mountains. After a fresh snowfall followed by warming temperatures, you may notice that the snow stays on the trees longer in high-elevation creek drainages, melting sooner at a comparable elevation on the intervening ridges. Cold, dense air tends to pool in the mountain valleys; solar heating warms the ridges faster, melting the snow.

#### Scientific Names of Species Mentioned

Paper Birch - *Betula papyrifera*  
 Black Cottonwood - *Populus trichocarpa*  
 Rocky Mountain Maple - *Acer glabrum*  
 False-azalea - *Menziesia ferruginea*  
 Subalpine Fir - *Abies lasiocarpa*  
 Black Huckleberry - *Vaccinium membranaceum*  
 Black Bear - *Ursus americanus*  
 Grizzly Bear - *Ursus arctos horribilis*  
 Chipmunk - *Tamias ruficaudus*, *T. amoenus*  
 Yellow-rumped Warbler - *Setophaga coronata*  
 Ruby-crowned Kinglet - *Regulus calendula*  
 Golden-crowned Kinglet - *Regulus satrapa*  
 Hermit Thrush - *Catharus guttatus*  
 Western Larch - *Larix occidentalis*  
 Mountain-ash - *Sorbus scopulina*, *S. sitchensis*  
 Moose - *Alces alces*  
 Elk - *Cervus elaphus*  
 Blue Elderberry - *Sambucus nigra* ssp. *cerulea*  
 American Robin - *Turdus migratorius*  
 House Finch - *Carpodacus mexicanus*  
 Northern Flicker - *Colaptes auratus*  
 Aspen - *Populus tremuloides*  
 Varied Thrush - *Ixoreus naevius*  
 Snowshoe Hare - *Lepus americanus*  
 Scouler's Willow - *Salix scouleriana*  
 Fireweed - *Chamerion angustifolium*  
 Smooth Aster - *Symphyotrichum laeve*  
 Snowberry - *Symphoricarpos albus*  
 Baldhip Rose - *Rosa gymnocarpa*  
 Red Squirrel - *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*  
 American Deer Mouse - *Peromyscus maniculatus*  
 Northern Pygmy-owl - *Glaucidium gnoma*  
 Western Thatching Ant - *Formica obscuripes*  
 Pine Siskin - *Carduelis pinus*  
 Western Redcedar - *Thuja plicata*  
 Bohemian Waxwing - *Bombycilla garrulus*  
 European Mountain-ash - *Sorbus aucuparia*  
 Starling - *Sturnus vulgaris*  
 Grand Fir - *Abies grandis*  
 Chestnut-backed Chickadee - *Poecile rufescens*  
 Pine Grosbeak - *Pinicola enucleator*  
 White-tailed Deer - *Odocoileus virginianus*  
 Lodgepole Pine - *Pinus contorta*  
 Douglas-fir - *Pseudotsuga menziesii*  
 Common Redpoll - *Carduelis flammula*  
 Lynx - *Lynx canadensis*  
 Bobcat - *Lynx rufus*  
 Great Horned Owl - *Bubo virginianus*  
 Coyote - *Canis latrans*

**Goats, from page 3**

experience and backed away. The goat wasn't done, and proved it by biting the man's shin, a wound that required stitches. This is not a common occurrence, but it did occur, and will likely occur again if people don't learn to stay away from the goats.

In 2010, a man died in Olympic National Park after a goat that wanted the man's lunch began tossing its horns around and punctured the man's femoral artery. The man bled to death. The goat was nearly immediately put down. The ironic and sad part of this story is that the goat was acting insistent because the man was unwilling to give the goat something to eat. He was doing the right thing. The actions of people who hadn't done the right thing caused his death.

When humans aren't providing trans fats and sodium for them, goats subsist on lichens and forbs found growing in their neighborhood. They travel great distances for water and get their sodi-

um from "licks" and the plants they eat. Without humans to provide the salt that every creature needs to survive, they find it in natural sources that may be few and far between, but find it they do. And have for hundreds of thousands of years.

In other words, mountain goats don't need humans to survive. Humans are not doing them a favor by feeding them, but a disservice.

The July biting incident is actually the cause of the September closure. Trail #65 was slated to be closed August 17, but fires that started August 13 usurped the goat closure, and it wasn't until the fire closure was lifted that the goat closure was put in place.

There is a sign — a very visible sign — where the Scotchman Peak trail comes into the rock field that the last half mile of trail traverses to the top. The sign says, "Please do not approach, feed or harass the goats." There are other signs at the base of the trail that say similar things. The literacy rate of

Scotchman Peak visitors is likely at least as high as the national average, which is 99 percent. So, one person in 100 might have the excuse that they couldn't read the sign. It appears the failure rate is higher than that.

It doesn't have to be a lot higher, though. Behavioral scientist B. F. Skinner noted that the best way to train anything to do anything is by random reinforcement. If one person in 20 — five percent — feeds mountain goats, the goats will likely become expectant of being fed by humans. And act accordingly.

Can goats be "untrained?" That's unknown. But the closure is at least giving them some breathing room and a reprieve from human presence. IDFG will conduct some research, hopefully, that will tell us if the closure helped. The real question, though, is if humans can be trained not to feed the goats. That addresses the core problem, and should be our major objective in the human-goat conflict.

**One 47th, from page 3**

and reminding me not to eat the meatloaf). However, the lines pull parallel when I consider my preparation, and simply knowing *how to* prepare. The same basic lessons apply universally. Although I consider the summer to be pretty successful, there are things that I know I could have done better if I had the proper foresight. As I begin to organize our winter projects, I think I have a greater concept of how I want the end products to look, and also an idea of how to get there. We have a lot of exciting things happening in the near future, and I'm thrilled to not only be a part of them, but to be a primary agent in directing their trajectories.

All of this thought is within the context of a much grander objective. We have the opportunity to achieve something very real and significant. Knowing myself, I will probably sign up for another half marathon, not prepare for it, and maybe

even eat meatloaf (or maybe steak) the night before. That's ok, because it's just a race. I'm running an arbitrary distance in, honestly, a meaningless amount of time. Nothing about what I'm doing with the Friends of Scotchman Peaks is meaningless or arbitrary. I truly believe that we are working to make this world, or at least a very small portion of it, a better place. I could cite to you a plethora of statistics and well-reasoned arguments, but the simple fact is that all you need to understand why we do what we do is a walk in the woods.

This summer, I had the opportunity to go on a few walks in (or above) the woods. So far, I've been on top of Goat Mountain, Scotchman Peak, Scotchman 2, and Clayton Peak. I've swam in the crystal clear waters of Little Spar Lake, travelled the whole length of Vertigo Ridge, and traversed between Scotchman Peak and Scotchman 2. I've bushwhacked up the East Fork of Blue Creek, seen the

brehtaking Ross Creek Cedars, and hiked up Morris Creek, Regal Creek, and Napoleon Gulch. Every bit of it was absolutely beautiful. In the course of these trips, I saw three bears, a mountain lion, a giant white wolf, a bull elk, and, of course, a few goats. The value of the Scotchman Peaks speaks for itself — all I had to do was go listen. Even with all this exploring, I feel like I've barely scratched the surface of what the Scotchmans has to offer. Every time I'm on top of a peak, I find myself looking around and going "I want to go there, and there, and there, and there." I'm sure that someday I will go to all of those places, and discover so much along the way. I also want to make sure that adventurous young people generations from now have the opportunity to do the same.

So, here's a little bit about my first six months with FSPW — It was a good beginning, and I'm excited to accomplish so much more.

**Summer on Fire, from page 2**

crews worked ceaselessly to protect private properties by creating fire breaks, setting up sprinklers, and burning out a “black line” between the fire front and outbuildings.

The Sawtooth Fire peaked at just under 3,000 acres and burned good portions Upper Ross Creek and South Fork of Ross Creek, on the east-, north- and west-facing slopes of Sawtooth Mountain. Because this area is so remote, no effort was made to combat it. Fire managers kept an eye on this fire, however, as it slowly moving towards the Ross Creek Cedars.

Fires in the Scotchman Peaks did not completely desecrate the areas within the “burn perimeters.” Instead, these fires burned in what fire specialists call a “mosaic pattern,” meaning that they ran along in fingers that continually split and merged, driven by



The results of the Scotchman Peak fire, viewed from near the summit.

Photo by Kevin Davis, USFS

**Eye Witness, from page 2**

almost perfectly on the Idaho/Montana state line and at the very top of the Blue Creek drainage. I followed my first instinct, got out my “brand-X” iPhone and tried three times to call 911. All attempts failed.

I was mesmerized standing safely above a forest fire only hours after it began with a single lightning strike. What a powerful experience; one I will probably never replicate in my lifetime.

I had been on the summit a few minutes when the thought occurred to me that maybe I retreat as fast as possible. I hadn’t been able to reach the 911 operator and I was disturbed that no one knew about this fire yet. But, for some reason staying put also seemed like an option. I assessed the winds and fire behavior before deciding that my personal danger was minimal. I layered up and inflated

wind gusts, leaving unburned islands in the midst of burned stretches of mixed severity and under-burned groves.

As of the 15th of October, there are fires burning, and one can observe smoke plumes kicking up on a regular basis (especially on the Sawtooth Fire).

Over time, the mosaic burn pattern should demonstrate how fire can be a natural and restorative force in our local ecosystems. In upcoming “fire area monitoring” project, we will look for the burned areas to develop into a beautiful landscape, featuring glades of trees separated by stretches of bear grass and underbrush such as alder and huckleber-

my thermo-rest right on the summit and watched.

What a sight to behold. Trees below would kindle into one supreme fireball at a time, the roar of which could be heard on the summit where I sat. Small spot fires would leap ahead and take root, but the overall progress of the smoky orange glow in the darkness was much slower than what I imagined it would be.

The bewitching hour of 5:00 am came quickly. I packed and began my descent. Just below the summit, on a nice flat rock 10 feet in diameter I found two others sleeping. As bad as I felt doing it, I woke them and told them of the fire, and that I was headed out to drive in towards

ry. We have, however, one minor tragedy resulting from the Scotchman Peak Fire. Many of the White Bark Pines that were found in the survey done by FSPW a few years ago burned pretty badly. We are waiting for an opportunity to go see just how bad this damage is.

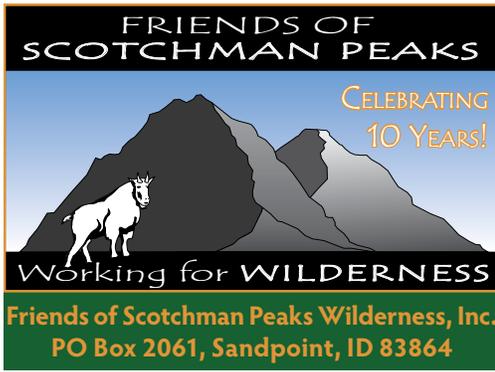
This year’s fire season made marks in the history books, but will mainly be remembered for the impression of imminent doom that hung over the region. For weeks, people seemed to be sure that they would have to pack up and leave at any moment, and return to burnt crisps. In retrospect, it seems that we got pretty lucky around here. The fires in

the Scotchman Peaks didn’t force any towns to evacuate, they didn’t destroy any large chunks of private property, and, most importantly, they didn’t take any lives. Regeneration will take some time, but now, my friends, we get to just sit back, and watch the forest grow.

Sandpoint and report the fire. The young lady of the duo revealed she had reported it late the night before with her Verizon cell phone. I thanked them for phoning it in and hiked out without haste. I was

glad to hear the fire had been called in, but I still had a tight timetable to make if I was going to meet the FSPW trail crew and swing a pick-mattock for 6 hours on the Trail 65 reroute.

As we all know now that 5-acre fire grew to be a much more impressive and troublesome fire throughout the rest of the month of August. I feel blessed to have experienced firsthand the wild country of the Scotchman’s during one of its more climactic and regenerative processes. I stopped off into the woods thinking I was accomplishing a buck list item when really I was gifted with an experience not on the list, but very special all the same.



## How You Can Help

### SUPPORT FRIENDS OF SCOTCHMAN PEAKS WILDERNESS

As concerned citizens, we support protecting and preserving the Scotchman Peaks area for ourselves and future generations. Highway 56, Highway 200, Lightning Creek Road, and Rattle Creek/Keeler Creek divide surround this 88,000 acre scenic area which straddles the Idaho and Montana border. Wilderness Designation for the Scotchmans will protect plants and wildlife, including the endangered grizzly bears, mountain goat, and bull trout; it will protect water quality; and it will preserve a special place for future generations. In addition, local communities will benefit from the unparalleled recreational and economic opportunities such wilderness provides.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Donation enclosed (optional). Donations are tax deductible. Please make checks payable to the Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness, Inc. Detach & Mail to the address above.

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