

# Fifteen years in the wilderness



The Sanchez kids get out into their wild backyard. Photo by Rebecca Sanchez

Page 4 and 5: Film festival draws crowd for wilderness celebration  
**Celebrate 15 years of work with Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness**  
Page 7: Winter Tracks brings wilderness lessons to regional students



# From the director: Here's to the next 15 years

January 2020 marks the Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness's 15th anniversary. Over this time we have brought together thousands of people from across Idaho, Montana and our nation to save the wild Scotchmans. All year long, we will celebrate the community that you and others have helped build!

This community of supporters, from all walks of life, have one common passion: our wild backyard. We want a place for the kids in our lives to be free. To discover nature. To grow up wild.

Millions of years of wind, water and wildlife have sculpted the wild lands we have today. While it took nature a long time to create this wilderness, it may not always be wild. People who value wilderness need to stand up. Our voices and actions matter. Your support will guarantee the Scotchmans are wild for tomorrow.

As we look into the next 15 years, I see a future with a strong and vibrant community in northern Idaho and northwestern Montana. This community is a web. Everyone cares deeply about the land and how it defines their lives. No individual has only one "label." Most folks have multiple interests. And we all care about each other, as well as the land.

In this future, our public lands provide the greatest good for all people. The Scotchman Peaks are designated as Wilderness. Possibly alongside other lands in North Idaho and northwestern Montana. There are places for responsible motorized-use "play areas." Lands in need of resto-

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ration are actively managed through prescribed burning and timber harvest. Our natural resource economy is diverse and strong through robust and sustainable recreation and timber economies.

Our grown-up children have good, local jobs. Their children have wild places to grow in where they can learn the wonders of nature. Mountain goats are wild. Hikers are safe. They both keep their distance. Quiet trails and motorized trails are designed to be safe and users are respectful. Wildlife is abundant, the hunting and fishing are good.

Wilderness access is kept open by a

crew of dedicated stewards. These volunteers have been trained in Wilderness First Aid, traditional tool use and have the knowledge and passion to keep the Scotchmans wild.

With our community of Friends supporting this future, we will all have a wilderness backyard to roam around in. Your grandchildren will be grateful and proud.

**-Phil Hough**



Top: The Harrison family on Scotchman Peak. Right: Volunteers keep the Scotchman Peaks trails in good shape.





# The wilderness story so far. . .

Support for a Scotchmans Wilderness has been building for decades.

The passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964 created a process for the forest service as well as citizens to recommend wilderness. In the 1970s, the agency began the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation process. This study identified the Scotchmans as deserving of Wilderness designation. The agency collected public comments and the Scotchmans received huge support. Around 6,100 comments were submitted, more than any other proposed roadless area in the region, and 75% of these supported wilderness. The seeds of a Scotchman Peaks campaign were sown. I was a small part of it. It was, led by Mike Comola, an energetic auto mechanic from Noxon, Mont. At this point we thought passing a Scotchmans wilderness bill would be easy!

After RARE, in the early 1980s, more wilderness bills were passed in places around the country. The Scotchman Peaks area was included in a number of bills in both Idaho and Montana but fell short each time. Other places were more well-known and aided by major campaigns. The Scapegoat and the River of No Return became wilderness while the Scotchmans waited.

In 1987, Kootenai and Panhandle Forests finalized forest plans. Conservationists had again organized a lot of public support for the wild Scotchmans. Both Forest Plans recommended wilderness designation for the Scotchmans. These plans also committed managing this area as wild country until passage of a wilderness bill. This was a huge step and was reaffirmed in new plans finalized in 2015.

Hope rose again in 1988 when a

large Montana wilderness bill, including the Scotchmans, passed both houses of Congress. Victory was so close at hand, but the bill was left unsigned by President Reagan. The only wilderness bill ever vetoed. What followed was a very difficult period for wilderness legislation, as the timber industry and conservationists clashed across both states.

The forest service began to revise their management plans in 2003. Drawing on decades of local support, the Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness was founded in 2005. Forest planning needed a new voice for wilderness. We knew that we needed to work with others. To succeed we needed to build allies and recognize diverse community values. We support a prosperous natural resource economy, active timber management, and a variety of recreation opportunities, along with protection for our premier wild places and wildlife habitat.

We have faith that this vision will lead to a more positive spirit in our community. Together we will have more opportunities for all to use and enjoy our public lands. Our community and all our children and grandchil-



Aaron, Joe and Lindsey enjoy a day in the wilderness.

dren will be able to experience wild and rugged places. The Scotchman Peaks will remain wild.

**-Doug Ferrell**



# Celebrating 15 years with films to remember



Top: Festival goers mingle prior to the film screening. Bottom: The festival showcases stories of adventure and personal growth in nature.

You sure make some good friends over 15 years.

Never was that truer than Saturday night at the SYRCL Wild and Scenic Film Festival. A celebration of Friends

all pitched in to ensure the community of Friends enjoyed an anniversary to remember. And it was. From the no-host bar by Eichardt's to the appetizers sponsored by Eichardt's and Williams, Schiller and Styer, the night was primed for celebration.

It was the Friends themselves, the folks who support saving the wild Scotchmans, who brought the good cheer, though. Excitement carried the evening as attendees chatted, bid on the amazing auction items and bought raffle tickets from a couple stellar volunteers.

The films shown brought chuckles and inspiration. They capture the universal value of wild places, telling stories of natural beauty, personal healing and inspirational achievement.

The healing power of wilderness, for instance, was highlighted in "Return From Desolation," which tells the story of Garrett Eaton. A war veteran who struggled with trauma and addiction after returning from combat, he was heading down a dark path. Then he found Desolation Canyon, Utah, and the Green River. Introduced to the region through a river guiding program for veterans, Eaton found peace floating down the scenic waterway.

"This place saved my life in a lot of ways," Eaton said. "In fact, it really did save my life."

As the Friends know well, wilderness can also bring unlikely characters together. "Mothered By Mountains" finds two unlikely partners — a punk rock icon from America named Sareena Rai and Pasang Lhamu Sherpa Akita, Nepal's leading female

of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness' 15th anniversary, the night was a packed house with tickets selling out far quicker than expected. It's all thanks to the supporters, sponsors and volunteers who worked to make the night a success.

The night came together through support from its sponsors. Idaho Forest Group; Williams, Schiller and Styer; Pend Oreille Veterinary Service; Eichardt's; Kochava; Trout Unlimited; Selkirk Press; Sandpoint Equine; Blue Creek Press; Keokee; Dr. Mark Cochran and Cricket Windsong; the Sandpoint Reader and All Seasons Garden and Floral

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## SYRCL Wild and Scenic Film Festival

Running for 18 years, the SYRCL Wild and Scenic Film Festival celebrates inspiring activism through film and art. While the main event takes place in Nevada City and Grass Valley, Calif., the festival also goes on tour nationwide. Learn more at [www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org](http://www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org).

mountain guide — teaming up for a Kathmandu adventure.

The women begin their journey with a motorcycle trip to the mountains. Then they begin the slow, methodical process of climbing toward Rai's first ascent. Akita, an experienced guide, is familiar with the process. But more unexpected is the depth of friendship that forms between the women over issues like motherhood, family and the pressures of society on women. It's a bond that only deepens as things begin to go wrong.

"So this was supposed to be a film about, like, empowering women, about bringing two of my friends on this adventure," said director Ben Ayers. "But it all kinda went horribly wrong."

And as "Sky Migrations" demonstrates, even a small element of an ecosystem, like raptor migratory patterns, can be a sign of wilderness health. Because every element of an ecosystem is interconnected, wilderness stewards work to ensure that delicate chain isn't disrupted.

"In order for conservation to succeed, there's got to be a global undercurrent of stewardship," said ecologist Charles Post. "Seeing [those birds] flying across your sky is just an indication that there still is wilderness."

Post and his team of conservationists track and protect the migration patterns of birds of prey. The movie is both poetic and energetic, highlighting a reverence for the majestic birds the team follows while having fun along the way.

"It takes a network of stewards to make sure those hawks will be around in a couple hundred years,"



said Post.

It's that kind of message that highlights the importance of stewardship in our own wild backyard. Remembering those important values is reason enough to celebrate 15 years. But the film festival was an amazing night in other ways, too. It's a reminder that when many people have passion and commitment to a cause, they can achieve amazing things.

The FSPW staff cannot thank SYRCL Wild and Scenic Film Festival sponsors, volunteers and attendees enough. They brought enough ener-



Jenny Curto, top, and FSPW director Phil Hough, bottom, take the stage at the Wild and Scenic Film Festival.

gy, commitment and enthusiasm to last another 15 years.

Keep an eye on [www.scotchmanpeaks.org](http://www.scotchmanpeaks.org) for more great events and chances to volunteer.

## Cottonwoods play key role in environment

Decades have passed since the University of Idaho owned and maintained a satellite facility in the woods behind Clark Fork. One of the classes offered there was about obtaining valuable natural “usables” from wild plants.

Covered in the class was the cotton-



wood. The instructor showed us how to use a simple canner to distill the fragrant pitch from cottonwood sprigs using those pitchy tips that drop in profusion early each spring (all over your car and walk-

w a y s ) . The result is “Balm of Gilead”

which protects, heals and is pretty much an all-encompassing topical medication. During those sessions I fell in love with the big, handsome trees, since my own surroundings hold a sizeable cottonwood population. It was then that I read Jeff Hart’s classic paperback book “Montana: Native Plants and Early Peoples,” which reported that the Plains Indians along with Flathead, Kutenai and Blackfeet, revered the cottonwood, relishing the sweet inner bark and sap.

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 infections. 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.

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 in its growing area by providing food, shelter, and/or enhancing other facets of the surroundings.

Our common black cottonwood is the largest of the Populus species and impossible to mistake. Its unique clean, sweet fragrance, thick leathery heart-shaped leaves, finely toothed marginally, are dark green above and lighter beneath. The early-years trunks start out smoothly grey-green, thickening to deep-furrowed bark 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.

-Valle Novak

## Get your hike on!

Sign up online to reserve a spot.

### Gourmet Hike # 4 Spar Lake Revisited

Feb 22

### Snowshoe Hike Through Ross Creek Cedars

Feb 23

### Ross Creek Cedars Snowshoe/Hike

March 6

### 14th Annual Goat Mountain Hop

March 28

## Upcoming events

### Ice Age Presentation

March 12, Thompson Falls: Join Tony Lewis from the Ice Age Floods Institute to discover the distant past.

### Wilderness and Remote First Aid Course

March 14-15, Sandpoint: Get certified for a fraction of the normal cost.

### Wild Night for Wilderness at Matchwood

April, Sandpoint: Details to be announced

### Idaho Pour Authority Tap Takeover

April 22, Sandpoint: Idaho Pour Authority taps a keg or two to benefit FSPW.

### Idaho Gives

May 7: Support FSPW on the biggest giving day of the year.

For more information, visit [scotchmanpeaks.org](http://scotchmanpeaks.org).



# Winter Tracks brings students winter joys

The 2020 FSPW Winter Tracks season kicked off this year with the Libby 5th grade at Timberlane Campground on January 10. Over 40 students braved the cold winter day to shuffle through a series of outdoor education stations. Students trotted across freshly fallen snow while learning about a variety of outdoor topics from volunteer instructors.

Will Gilbert with the Forest Service spoke about the importance of Leave No Trace ethics when recreating, ensuring a clean event for all. Ben Bernall, also from the Forest Service, taught 5th graders about avalanche rescue and safety. Flora and fauna were tackled by Celesta Collacchi and Gene Reckin. Celesta led students on a Tree ID nature walk, and Gene showed off his expansive knowledge of animal winter adaptations.

As the final station ended, snow began to fall, and Timberlane Campground became a true winter wonderland. The kids lined up for photos while cheering “Winter Tracks!” before hopping onto the bright yellow school bus and heading back home.

As always, our wonderful FSPW volunteers made the day a success by serving hot chocolate, stoking the fire, and leading the lessons.

Events like this would not be possible without your help. We also want to extend a big thank you to Rosauer’s for providing hot coffee and donuts, Pizza Hut for lunch, and Libby Schools for helping Lincoln County students find their wild place.

We can’t wait for the rest of our Winter Tracks season. FSPW will be hosting events for school children in Lincoln, Sanders, and Bonner counties over the course of the next several months. Keep an eye out for kids in the wild!

**-Henry Jorden**



Top: Celesta Collacchi talks to students about regional trees. Bottom: Students enjoy a hot cocoa break.



# The memories we made along the way

It's been an amazing 15 years at Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness. The work of wilderness lovers and supporters has resonated over a decade and a half. And we all managed to have a little fun, too!



Top: Friends enjoying the view on a 2018 Star Peak hike. Photo by Jim Mellen.

Bottom left to right: Jeff Pennick finds out just how steep the Goat Mountain trail is in 2019. Hint: Volunteers are helping to decrease that grade! Photo courtesy FSPW.

Emily Cleveland enjoys some wilderness sun.

Carol Jenkins' grandson, Kurt Schimkowitz, has fun with grandma and Friends.

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# 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sponsors

Thank you to the local sponsors of our 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration! See the recap on pages 4-5.



Uniting thousands of Montanans and Idahoans to save the wild Scotchmans for our children and grandchildren.



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- All Seasons Floral & Garden
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### Leave a legacy of Wilderness

Support advocacy and stewardship for decades to come with a gift to FSPW's endowment.

Learn how by contacting [legacy@scotchmanpeaks.org](mailto:legacy@scotchmanpeaks.org)





Friends of Scotchman Peaks Wilderness, Inc.  
PO Box 2061, Sandpoint, ID 83864

## YOU CAN SAVE THE WILD SCOTCHMANS!

- **Donate to FSPW** to save the incredibly wild Scotchman Peaks for our children and grandchildren. **To donate, visit our website or mail in the form below.**
- **Volunteer** your time whether it's breaking a sweat on the trail, talking to folks at an outreach table, or helping with office work.
- **Save us a stamp** and printing costs by receiving Peak Experience by email.

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