

**March, 2022 Newsletter**

**Flathead Wildlife, Inc.  
P.O. Box 4, Kalispell, Mt 59903**

**Newsletter Editor Chuck Hunt  
President Jim Vashro**

**Membership meeting:**

There was **NO** membership meeting in March. We tried for 4 different speakers, health concerns and schedule conflicts got in the way. We hope to get on track soon. In the meantime, we are lining up some great projects to get us outside as a club, watch for further information on a membership meeting April 13 and our year end barbecue May 11.



**Bluebird Nesting Box Build Day**

Bluebird nesting boxes (BBNB) provide great habitat and are also a primary fund raiser for Flathead Wildlife. Mike Valler heads up the BBNB project. FWI gets the lumber from FH Stoltze Land and Lumber Company at a good price. Jack Jay helps with procuring and storing the lumber. Bill Boehme, Roger Allick, Geo Johnson and Mike Valler precut and drilled parts. Jim Vashro and Kendal Bortisser branded fronts with the FWI logo. A major shout out to FWP Parks and Parks Maintenance Foreman Sean Cox who let us use their Parks Shop and pulled in a flatbed trailer as a work platform.

FWI assembled in the Parks Shop on February 25. The crew consisted of Don Anderson, Roger and Pat Allick, Bill Boehme, Doug Bolender, Kendal and Shelly Bortisser, Arvon Fielding, Jack Jay, Brent Mitchell, Steve Street, Mike Valler, Jon Van Dort and Sandi and Jim Vashro.





In the pictures you can see the assembly line production and a pile of 328 Bluebird Nesting Boxes ready for distribution. By the time you read this BBNBs should be available at Murdoch's Ranch and Home Supply and Sliters Lumber and Building Supply. If you're in any of those stores, be sure to thank them and pick up a high quality BBNB for \$10, they're a bargain at that price and topnotch nesting habitat. We anticipate selling over 400 BBNBs, we'll have another small Build Party to meet demand. Thanks to all who helped.

### **Proposed 2022-23 Mountain Lion Hunting Regulations**

Lions tend to be secretive, primarily nocturnal, generally quiet and move alone or in small family units so they are seldom seen by most recreationists despite estimates of more than 1,000 lions in Region 1. There are as many or more lions as wolves but wolves are vocal and often travel on trails and roads in packs so they are more frequently seen.

Lions are seldom encountered by hunters without hounds although tracks are commonly seen. Even though you don't see them, you can bet lions are watching you. Lions are a highly valued trophy by hound hunters. Over the last 5 years on average 116 lions have been killed in northwest Montana each year, roughly 104 by residents and 12 by nonresidents. Many of the nonresidents and some residents hire outfitters who know the country and can afford to keep hounds. An average outfitted hunt will cost around \$6,500.

Despite the low numbers harvested, lions draw a lot of attention. Twenty years ago up here lion hunting was on a quota system with unlimited licenses. Opening days would find dozens and dozens of hunters from multiple states hunting lions. The opener was a mad scramble, often the quota was met within a day or so. Despite closing the harvest on an emergency basis the quota was often greatly exceeded. Outfitted hunters accounted for 40% to 90% of the harvest. Hunters often chose to shoot the first lion they treed, knowing the season could close before they could hunt up another lion so the harvest included many female and younger lions.

That led FWP to go to a limited entry permit hunt. Hunters not drawing a permit could still chase but not harvest a lion. Hunters, particularly working hunters, could choose to hunt longer and often harvested a more mature lion so the system worked for both hunters and lions. But nonresidents are limited to no more than 10% of the limited entry permits.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission just adopted proposals that would return quotas to Region 1. The hunt could be entirely on a quota or a hybrid system wherein 10% to 30% of the licenses would be a draw, the rest of the harvest would go under a quota. That will likely recreate the

opening day scramble that will not be desirable for hunters or lions. The biggest change going to a quota is opening the hunt to unlimited numbers of nonresidents. The existing limited entry hunt that has served well for the past 20 years was not even adopted as an option. Flathead Wildlife will register an objection to dropping a limited permit system that works well for lions and local hunters.

You can read all about the proposal at the following link and comment online. Comments are due by March 19. <https://fwp.mt.gov/aboutfwp/public-comment-opportunities>

### **Region 1 Elk Harvest**

Elk are the ultimate trophy for the average hunter. It is hard to harvest an elk in most of the state, harder yet in northwest Montana where low numbers of elk and heavy cover are extra challenging. So where and what elk are killed in region 1? That Hunter Harvest Survey you may have been called on yields some estimates. The following estimate is for 2020 since 2021 is just being surveyed now.

<u>Hunting District</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Cows</u>	<u>Bulls</u>	<u>Bulls &lt;6 pts</u>	<u>Bulls &gt;6 pts</u>	<u>Permits</u>
100	No. Kootenai	16	49	30	10	30 AE* Permits
101	Eureka	24	40	33	7	30 AE Permits
102	Tally Lake	10	11	7	4	5 PTHV* Permits
103	Pleasant Valley	13	44	44	0	30 AE Permits
104	Cabinets	15	69	49	20	30 AE Permits
109	Ten Lakes	11	21	18	4	50 Shoulder Season Permits
110	North Fork	6	25	14	11	5 AE Permits
120	Blacktail	0	14	14	0	5 AE Permits
121	W. Clark Fork	122	149	111	37	180 AE Permits
122	Thompson River	30	72	42	30	30 AE Permits
123	Clark Mtn.	26	31	28	3	55 AE Permits
124	Plains	6	7	3	4	30 AE Permits
130	Swan	5	21	11	11	5 AE Permits
140	L. So. Fk	11	27	18	6	
141	L. Mid. Fk.	0	4	0	4	
150	Up. So. Fk.	4	46	9	37	Bob Marshall Wilderness Hunt
170	Flathead Valley	28	24	10	14	either-sex elk

\*The numbers don't always add up due to survey quirks. In the table, AE Permits refer to antlerless elk permits. Those will all be changed to B tags in 2022. Districts with only 5 permits will be dropped. PTHV Permits are Permit to Hunt From a Vehicle Permits for hunters who must hunt from a vehicle. Starting in 2022, hunters with a PTHV permit can shoot antlerless elk in most districts. Northwest Montana cannot compare to southwest Montana where hunters may shoot thousands of elk each year. But the table reveals some surprises. How does the area you hunt stack up?

### **Boating News**

More than 10 years ago Flathead Wildlife fought to preserve boating access on Church Slough, resulting in Flathead County being deeded just under 2 acres and building a boat ramp and

parking. At the time, Flathead Wildlife petitioned to close Church Slough to boating from March 1 to April 10 to protect migrating waterfowl. Several thousand ducks and geese will drop in on Church Slough to rest on their journey north. The County boat access makes a great spot to watch this spectacle. At the same time Flathead Wildlife petitioned to make the slough no wake the rest of the year due to bank erosion. That proposal was resisted by landowners and was dropped. Now some of those same landowners recently petitioned for no wake. The proposal was resisted by boat anglers, the FW Commission opted to create an advisory council to chart a path forward, FWI has asked to be on that committee.

Boating use has increased all over Flathead County and the Flathead River is no exception. Flathead Lake backs up the river 20 miles almost to the Stillwater River, making for scenic and easy boating and good fishing. But the sandy/silty banks are highly erosive. Prompted by landowners, agencies are trying to initiate a study to determine how much bank erosion is due to current, wind waves and boat wakes. FWI will stay tuned.

<https://dailyinterlake.com/news/2022/mar/06/0306-flathead-erosion/>

### **President's Message**

**Jim Vashro, March, 2022**

I once worked for a fish hatchery manager who grew up on a ranch in the 1920s near Bluewater, south of Laurel. He said one day his Dad came home and said "You'll never guess what I saw". The kids guessed everything from elephants to hot air balloons. But when his Dad said "I saw a deer", they were all dumbfounded, they had never seen a deer there. If you know that country it now has abundant deer, as does most of Montana.

The recovery of wildlife in the American West is one of the world's great conservation stories. Unlimited market and subsistence hunting in the late 1800s decimated the seemingly limitless wildlife populations in Montana, by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century wildlife was just a memory in major parts of Montana. Starting as early as the 1860s in territorial Montana hunters started asking for controls on harvest and protection of habitat. Rod and gun clubs sprang up in most major Montana communities to press for current and future conservation of wildlife. Early conservationists Teddy Roosevelt and George Bird Grinnell came to their calling due to their experiences as hunters. They were followed by other visionaries such as Aldo Leopold and in more recent times Valerius Geist, Shane Mahoney and Montana's own Jim Posewitz who helped develop the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

1. Wildlife resources are conserved and held in trust for all citizens by the government. This was a radical change from Europe where wildlife is owned by royalty. In America wildlife is owned by all of us (public) for common benefit.
2. Wildlife cannot be slaughtered for commercial purposes. While some parts such as furs can be sold, sale of wildlife meat is prohibited.
3. Wildlife is allocated by law. Regulations determine how wildlife is managed, hunting seasons and bag limits protect from overharvest and fairly apportion harvest between hunters

4. Wildlife may only be killed for legitimate, non-frivolous purposes. Wildlife shall be taken by legal and ethical means (fair chase) and for legitimate purposes such as food and fur, self defense or protection of property.
5. Wildlife is an international resource. Wildlife does not recognize political boundaries so it will be managed cooperatively.
6. Hunting, fishing, and trapping shall be democratic. Every citizen, regardless of wealth, social standing, or land ownership, is allowed to participate in the harvest of fish and wildlife within legal limits.
7. Science plays a key role in managing wildlife. Wildlife populations are sustained and managed by agency professionals.

This Model has served us well. Along with laws, hunters agreed to pay for wildlife management through license fees and excise taxes on sporting goods. Hunting is conservation. But special interest groups continually try to claim wildlife for their own special benefit and gain such as through Ranching For Wildlife or regulations that will benefit a select few. Hunters must remain vigilant to protect the Public Trust now and for future generations.

*The preceding comments are mine alone and don't necessarily reflect the policies of Flathead Wildlife, Inc. Jim Vashro*

**Back From the Brink: Montana's Wildlife Legacy, Decimation to Restoration** is a great story of the early decimation of Montana's wildlife and the sustained surveys, trapping and transplanting and scientific management to develop Montana's current outstanding wildlife resources. The book is no longer in print but you can watch on Montana PBS in two one hour videos that will give you new appreciation for all the hunters, game wardens and biologists who worked tirelessly to protect and enhance Montana's wildlife heritage. The videos let you hear the story from some of the men and women who forged the path. <https://www.montanapbs.org/programs/back-from-the-brink-montanas-wildlife-legacy/>

### **Last Ice**

This late blast of winter will prolong ice fishing for a few more weeks. Last ice is often some of the best fishing as thinning ice seems to put fish on a feeding spree. But last ice isn't always safe or easy to read, no fish are worth getting injured or drowning. Follow some simple rules.

- Let people know where you're going, follow your plan
- Go with a partner but stay apart walking out
- Test ice thickness frequently
- Carry simple safety measures such as a throw rope, cleats and ice picks.
- Wear a life preserver if in real doubt. Staying alive isn't sissy. Or, just store your ice fishing gear and get ready for open water

**Remember to get your 2022 hunting and fishing licenses** 2022 Hunting regulations are available online, printed copies available soon. Check for major changes in hunting regulations! Printed 2022 Fishing Regulations available now.

### **Upcoming Events**

- April 1 – Deer and elk (Bucks and Bulls) permit applications due
- April 13 – Flathead Wildlife membership meeting, 7 PM, Kalispell FWP
- May 1 – Moose, sheep, goat, bison applications due
- May 11 – Flathead Wildlife Barbecue, Lone Pine State Park, 5 PM
- May 21 – Brooke Hanson Memorial Fishing Day, Pine Grove Pond, details to follow
- May 21 – General Fishing Season Opens
- June 1 – deer and elk B tag and antelope applications due

### **Flathead Wildlife, Inc. Memberships**

FWI memberships run on the calendar year. Please renew your membership for 2022 so we can continue to represent your interests in the outdoors. Thank You!

**Do you believe in Preserving our Hunting and Fishing Heritage, Promoting Public Access and Youth in the Outdoors? Join Flathead Wildlife, Inc. Today! Thank You For Your Continued Support.**

**\_\_ Single \$20 \_\_ Family \$25 \_\_ Sustaining / Business \$35 \_\_ Habitat \$50 \_\_ Conservation \$100**  
Mail to PO Box 4, Kalispell, Montana 59903 or use PayPal on our website.

**Flathead Wildlife Inc. Website Address:** <http://flatheadwildlife.org/>

**Flathead Wildlife Inc. Facebook Address:** <https://www.facebook.com/ProtectingMontanasAccess/>

**E-Mail for sending photos to be posted on Website / Facebook:** [flatheadwildlife.inc@gmail.com](mailto:flatheadwildlife.inc@gmail.com)

**RENEW YOUR FLATHEAD WILDLIFE, INC. MEMBERSHIP TODAY!** EIN: 81-0443404 501(c)(3)

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