

Minimizing conflicts between livestock and wildlife by using proactive tools and strategies both on the ranch and while managing wildlife.



Wildlife Co-existence and Ecology

Overview

The Centennial Valley is a biologically productive landscape home to a dozen large ranch operations, the Montana based chapter of The Nature Conservancy, Red Rocks Wildlife Refuge, as well as wolves, bears, elk, antelope, moose, trumpeter swans, sage grouse and 240+ bird species. Centennial Valley's 385,000 acres function as one of the last intact corridors connecting wildlife in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. The Valley also serves as summer range for over 12,000 cattle.

Given the diverse and dynamic ways the Valley is shared, in 2014, the Centennial Valley Association began a project that sought to monitor and track multiple species of wildlife across the valley in effort to minimize wildlife/livestock conflicts. Ranchers and other landowners used the information obtained by the program to make decisions that benefited their livestock, land and wildlife while maintaining sustainable ranching business across the landscape.



Goals

- Identify wildlife species in and around the Centennial Valley.
- Monitor wildlife presence and activity in areas commonly or currently used by livestock and humans throughout the grazing season in order to reduce the risk of livestock stress and losses for Centennial area ranchers.
- Frequently communicate and share information on wildlife activity and issues, in the Valley and surrounding landscapes, between all landowners and state or federal agencies that are interested.
- Work with ranchers to implement proactive and preventative tools on the ranch to help deter wildlife from coming in contact with livestock and to help protect livestock when they are encountered by large predators.

Programs

- Range Rider
- Communication Hub
 - Valley Issues
 - Broader Wildlife Issues
 - Fisheries
 - Sage Grouse and Arctic Grayling Listing
 - Bison Migration
 - Hunting Regulations
- Landowner Outreach and Participation

How We Measure Success

- Trusted messenger for residents, providing accurate, up to date information
- Reduced numbers of depredations, overall loss percentages, minimize unconfirmed losses, reduce known deaths
- Residents and landowners better understand predator movements and have access to resources to reduce and avoid conflicts





Types of Predator Deterrents

- Range Riders
- RAG boxes for collared wolves
- Fladry and/or electric fence
- Hazing and/or lethal removal of habituated predators as necessary



Riders' Range



Range Rider Program

Why Have a Range Rider?

Centennial Valley encompasses part of Beaverhead and Madison counties. Being located so close to the Park, depredations on livestock by wolves and bears in and around Centennial Valley remain some of the highest in the state year after year. In 2014, two cows were killed by grizzly bears in the Valley. We also had a number of livestock unaccounted for, one ranch being unable to account for almost 40 calves. In addition, Wildlife Services lethally removed all but two wolf pups in one of the area wolf pack due to depredations on livestock. Range riders help mitigate predator/livestock interactions by increasing human presence, which in turn minimizes cattle vulnerability by creating an association between people and cattle in predator minds.

What a Field Season is like for the Rider?

Two to three range riders are hired to monitor predators and wildlife, as well as remove carcasses from areas commonly or currently used by livestock. The riders' goals are to:

- Identify wildlife species present in the Valley and determine how those animals are moving through and utilizing the landscape through tracking, field cameras and visual observation.
- Monitor wildlife presence and activity in areas used by livestock and humans throughout the grazing season in order to reduce the risk of livestock stress and losses for Centennial area ranchers.
- Frequently communicate and share information on wildlife activity in the Valley between all landowners and state or federal agencies.
- Work with ranchers to implement proactive and preventative tools on the ranch to help deter wildlife from coming in contact with livestock and to help protect livestock when they are encountered by large predators.
 - Increase human presence around livestock.
 - Aid in caring for sick or injured livestock as it would pertain to minimizing conflicts with large predators.
 - Gather cattle to keep calves close to their mothers and reduce vulnerability to predation.
 - Haze wolves found near livestock.
 - Find carcasses of livestock quickly so the cause of death can be accurately determined and ranchers can be compensated given a depredation. The rider assists in removing the carcass to a designated carcass removal site.

