

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



Wildlife Program

Overview

The Centennial Valley is one of the last undeveloped landscapes in Montana, providing a vital migration corridor that connects the Greater Yellowstone to the Salmon-Selway, in Idaho, and the Crown of the Continent ecosystems. The valley contains a mosaic of habitats, ranging from native grasslands, wetlands, sagebrush steppe, and upland forests, which iconic wildlife, such as grizzly bear, wolves, elk, moose, sage grouse, trumpeter swans, and Arctic grayling, call home. The Centennial is also a productive, working landscape that has been ranched by multi-generational families, for over one hundred years, who all share a common goal: to preserve the integrity of the land to benefit the community and wildlife conversely.

In 2014, the Centennial Valley Association began a Range Rider program 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.



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

Goals

- Identifying and documenting key wildlife and their movements in the Valley, special attention to be paid to bears and wolves.
- Minimizing wildlife and livestock conflicts, especially predation.
- Reducing the number of unconfirmed cattle deaths.
- Removing cattle carcasses when and where it is appropriate.

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



Range Rider Program

Why Have a Range Rider?

The 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?

Multiple 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 to reduce the risk of livestock stress and losses due to predation.
- 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.

