

TRACKS

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

We partnered in three field projects this year: one near Helena, Montana in which we tested livestock herding techniques against rangeland impacts; one in Paradise Valley using range riders to prevent conflicts in a high grizzly bear and wolf density area; and one near Dubois, Wyoming with two ranches working to combine herds for reduced impact and conflicts with wolves and grizzly bears. What follows is more information about the projects along with some neat photos from the field and trail cameras.

Wyoming

Keystone Conservation, progressive ranchers, and agency personnel are collaborating to improve the ability of livestock grazing to coexist with grizzly bears and gray wolves at the symbolic center of the American West, atop the Wind River Range where the three great watersheds divide: the Missouri-Mississippi, the Snake-Co-



A wolf caught by our trail camera.

lumbia, and the Green-Colorado. Project partners generally agreed that if we could use low-stress livestock handling to train the cattle on a National Forest grazing allotment to stay together, it would become possible to implement a rotational grazing plan, without cross-fencing, to maintain the range in excellent health, and to reduce livestock-carnivore conflict in a place where recolonizing grizzly bears and gray wolves have killed cattle in recent years.

our field director returned to ride and herd cattle a few times over the summer. Both ranches and both herds have made progress in rekindling the herd instinct, and one of the herds now consistently stays together. There were no known losses to grizzlies or wolves, and thus no losses of wildlife.

We invested in the permittees' knowledge and skills. Our field director and a low-stress livestock handling consultant held a workshop with the ranchers at the beginning of the 2014 grazing season, enabling the permittees to build on their stockmanship skills, emphasizing methods to rekindle herd instinct. Both herds became easier to handle.

There was one documented interaction between one herd and a wolf pack. The herd stayed together, did not run more than a short distance, and all cattle survived the encounter. This is what we want to see. A rider was present and chased the wolves away. This interaction shows the ben-

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At least one of the permittees rode on the allotment most days, and



From a trail camera: Coyote? Cat? Deer?



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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters –

Another busy year chock full of interesting developments!

We expanded our work into Wyoming with two ranches near Dubois, WY, and we are currently launching a pilot program networking conservation-focused ranchers and practitioners in the Northern Rockies. Field Director Matt Barnes traveled much of the year to work on field projects and present our science paper at conferences and other events. We also held and supported workshops teaching techniques ranchers and riders can use to herd and bunch cattle in a way that promotes livestock-wildlife conflict prevention. We continued field research and range rider projects near Helena and Yellowstone National Park. Lastly, we gave several bear coexistence and bear spray talks at REI and to several university classes.

Last year, wolf and grizzly bear conflicts went down in Montana and Greater Yellowstone, respectively. Our work is having an impact, so thank you for all your generous support!

Lisa.
Lisa Upson



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enefit of the combination of a single cohesive herd at high stock density, demonstrating herd instinct, likely due to low-stress handling; and the human presence of a rider who was able to witness and respond to the interaction, largely because the herd was all together in a relatively small area.

Dog Creek, MT

Keystone Conservation partnered again with rancher and stockmanship guru Whit Hibbard at Dog Creek near Helena, Montana, building on last year's herding project, developing methods for grazing livestock with optimal rangeland impacts in carnivore country.

The ranch is already very well managed. It has resident coyotes, black bears, and cougars, and has had transient wolves. There have been no confirmed livestock lost to predators, but a wolf may have killed one yearling a few years ago. The ranch's relative lack of conflict may be due in part to Hibbard's rotational grazing management and low-stress livestock handling.

This year we focused on rekindling the herd instinct, keeping animals concentrated, and testing the effect of concentrated animal impact. We spent the first couple of weeks of the summer using low-stress livestock handling to increase the herd instinct of the 380 steers. Matt and Whit herded them all day, and night-penned them in small temporary paddocks designed to generate animal impact (grazing and trampling, combined with urine and manure deposition) in areas where plant growth was less than the site potential. After the two-

week grazing period in the pasture, the pasture was allowed to recover for the remainder of the season. The herd instinct we created lasted all season long, and the pasture where we worked has great re-



Keystone Conservation Field Director Matt Barnes watching over herded cattle in carnivore country.

growth. There is more grass than when the project began. We'll be revisiting it next year to see how the range responds in the next growing season.

Paradise Valley, MT

North of Yellowstone National Park we are supporting a range rider project involving ranchers, range riders, and other conservation organizations aiming to develop and practice ranching methods that minimize conflicts between livestock and large predators while improving rangeland health and wildlife habitat and supporting sus-

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A wolf, seemingly posing, in a great shot by one of the trail cameras.



A grizzly bear from a trail camera. While there were plenty of wolves present in the project area, frequenting grizzlies proved to be the primary challenge.

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tainable ranching businesses. The partnership is seeking long-lasting and sustainable solutions involving a diverse set of tools and practices, including fladry, carcass removal, electric fencing, and range riders. The goal of the range riders is to (1) Increase human presence around cattle in effort to minimize deprecations and (2) Handle cattle according to Bud Williams' low stress stockmanship techniques, in an effort to rekindle the herd instinct and encourage mother cattle to be attentive to their calves. This helps cattle to better defend themselves when encountered by a predator. This methodology is based on studies that show wolves are not only triggered to chase but also more successful at hunting when their prey runs. When cattle are gathered together they are more likely to stand their ground and not run when encountered by a predator and thus less likely to become a target for predation. The use of electric fence is to keep cattle gathered together in areas the rider cannot access as often. The use of carcass removal is to remove attractants that may lure predators into close proximity of livestock.

This overall approach reduces the vulnerability of the livestock (and therefore conflicts), and enhances wildlife habitat. We are in the sec-

ond year of the project and, while it's too early to draw conclusions, emerging patterns suggest that managing livestock proactively in herds may reduce losses, of both cattle and predators. We also hope

for other results; namely, stronger relationships in the community and between all of the participants, and increased tolerance of landowners and ranchers trying coexistence methods and of predators as well.



Three wolves were in this calving pasture early in the season, so riders set up the fladry fencing (with the red flags) and watched the wolves pace up and down the top line of flags for a couple days. The wolves never got into the pasture once the fladry was put up.



CAKE FOR COEXISTENCE

One of Keystone's long-time and obviously creative supporters Elaine Broadhead was kind enough to have us to her Virginia home for a fundraising event in May. Elaine had this cake made for the event – thank you Elaine!

If you are interested in contributing to Keystone by hosting an event for area members and friends, let us know, we'd love to visit.

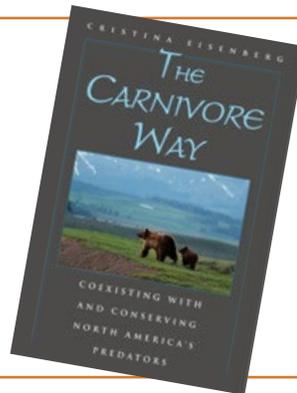


SUGGESTED READING

“Science and environmental law can help us learn to share landscapes with fierce creatures, but ultimately, coexistence has to do with our human hearts.”

- Cristina Eisenberg

For those of you who enjoy the weaving of personal stories and ecology, check out Cristina Eisenberg's new book, *The Carnivore Way*. Eisenberg, author of *The Wolf's Tooth*, shares with readers new personal stories of her own encounters and experiences with large carnivores as she presents the case for a continental wildlife corridor to ensure a future with wolves, bears, lynx, wolverines, and big cats.



Find the *Carnivore Way* online at Island Press: www.islandpress.com



Keystone's 2014 Annual Drawing

There's still time to get in on the 2014 annual drawing! See our website for the flier showing all the great prizes available this year. The suggested donation is just a minimum of \$10/ticket. Win a weekend at a luxury cabin in the mountains near Bozeman!



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