

CONSERVATION

ON THE TRM RANCH

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I have climbed to the top of the ridge overlooking Dupuyer Creek on the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch (TRM). The short grass prairie reaches out of sight to the east. To the north and south, limber pine studded ridges undulate as if carved by the great winds that come screaming off the sheer mountains to the west. The limestone reefs, peaks, and ridges are a breathtaking backdrop to the ever present grasslands, ranch lands and big sky of this far reaching country.

I begin looking closer and deeper into this awesome landscape. I notice hay meadows, aspen groves, cottonwood and willow lined creek banks, evergreen forests, rock outcrops, mule deer, elk, cattle, ranch houses, barns, corrals, and birds. The list goes on the longer I look. This picturesque landscape and its components can appear sketchy or very detailed. It depends on how each person perceives it. We have

all learned, or are learning, to appreciate and understand this setting in our own way. Our personal appreciation and understanding are often based around interactions we have with the "teachers" in our lives. Teachers come from many walks of life, are not any particular age and do not have to reside inside a school-house.

From my ridge top location it is evident when I look at the surrounding landscape, that for generations these lands have been well cared for by the people who have settled here. I am on this ridge today because I feel it is very important to continue to practice and understand methods of conservation that will sustain this healthy landscape.

Dr. Hal Salvasser and the Boone and Crockett Club have made it possible for me to finish a graduate degree in science teaching and initiate a conservation education program at the

TRM Ranch. The conservation education units developed for my graduate project are the beginning of a conservation education program for local schools, one that can be integrated into their science curriculum. The goal of my program is to increase students awareness and understanding of wildlife, the ecosystems we all live in and our influences on the natural and cultural resources of these ecosystems.

Four modules were developed for this project: 1) Land Forms and Geological History of the Rocky Mountain Front (RMF), 2) Vegetative Studies of TRM Ranch Wildlife Habitats, 3) Grizzly Bear Ecology Along the RMF, and 4) The RMF Ecosystem, Its Components, Management and Future. The geology and botany modules were field tested with two local schools in May and were very successful. When asked whether this type of learning experience was one that other students would

EDUCATION



TOP: STUDENTS IDENTIFY SOME OF THE VARIOUS PLANT LIFE FROM THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT.
RIGHT: B&C RESEARCH ASSISTANT, ANDY WHITTAKER, SHOWING THE COLLECTION NET FOR MOVING SEDIMENT TO STUDENTS.
BOTTOM: THE BYNUM SCHOOL GROUP WITH THEIR INSTRUCTORS, MOVING ON TO THE NEXT STUDY SITE.





B&C RESEARCH ASSISTANT, LISA FLOWERS, TALKS TO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN ABOUT CONSERVATION OF OUR NATURAL RESOURCES ON THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT.

like, one student said, "Well, it mostly depends on the student. If they were all like me they would love it. If we could do all of our studies like this it would be a lot easier to learn."

The TRM Ranch was the site for a summer workshop (July 11-13) and will be the site for a fall short course (September 10-16). The summer workshop was titled, "Wilderness and Land Ethics Awareness" and has 25 teachers from throughout Montana enrolled. This is a two day workshop for teachers to provide a broad based understanding of the fundamental importance of wilderness areas and to promote a land ethic to help maintain our valuable natural resources. The Wilderness and Land Ethic Box curriculum is developed for grades kindergarten through eighth grade. The Boone and Crockett Club is co-sponsoring this event with the Montana Environmental Education Association, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP), and the U.S. Forest Service. The fall short course is called, "Crown of the Continent an Ecosystem in Transition. Is Sustainability Possible?" This course will provide the basis for understanding the extent, components, and functioning of the Crown of the Continent Ecosystem,

THESE BLACKFEET TEPEES PROVIDE UNIQUE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR VISITORS TO THE TRM RANCH.

some of the issues being addressed, and initiatives that have been developed to resolve issues and provide a basis for long-term sustainability. The Boone and Crockett Club is co-sponsoring this short course with The Glacier Institute and The Nature Conservancy of Montana. Participants will have the unique opportunity to camp out, listen to presentations and relax in three beautiful Blackfeet tepees that have been setup at the ranch this year.

Development of the TRM Ranch Watchable Wildlife Trail (Fair Chase, Spring 1995, Back at the Ranch) is progressing at a steady pace. We are hoping to have the trail cleared with the help of local youth groups, trail stakes with the B&C emblem marking the trail, interpretive signs designed and erected, and benches in place by the time the snow flies this coming fall. The final completion date will be August 1996. A special thanks to Bob Peebles and his son, Chad, for sharing their secret spot with the rest of us.

Falcon Press Publishing in Helena, Montana, publishes a bimonthly magazine for young conservationists call Falcon Magazine. The Montana edition is sold on the newsstand, but most importantly the magazine is sent out to 445 fourth grade classes in the state free of charge to be used as an educational tool and resource. The Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department was given authority by the 1993 legislature to use license dollars to participate in this effort. Each issue has a center 16-page section that is cooperatively published with different agencies and organizations. The Boone and Crockett Club and the Montana

Fish, Wildlife and Parks have joined to publish the next special section about grizzly bears in Montana. This section will be added to the Fall issue of Fair Chase as a special supplement. The September/October issue will feature the Peebles family describing what it is like to live in grizzly country, Mike Madel, MDFWP Bear Management Specialist compiled 15 years of journal entries about a female grizzly bear whose home range is along the Rocky Mountain Front. A special pullout poster of a female grizzly bear done by a Montana artist and events from the Historical Timeline of Montana Grizzlies that I have compiled during the last year are also included.

This year the Boone and Crockett Club has played a major role in developing new and innovative educational teaching units and supported educational efforts in Montana that coincide with the mission of the Club. My work and involvement with education efforts throughout Montana has been very exciting as well as satisfying but would not have been a possibility without the support of Dr. Salwasser, his wife, Linda, the Members and Associates of the Boone and Crockett Club and the Bob Peebles family. It is my hope that this conservation education program will be an avenue through which people can learn to recognize, appreciate, understand, and care for the components of life that are all part of the big picture.

As I get ready to leave my spot on the ridge, the colors of the sky dance as the sun sinks behind Walling Reef, another day has come and gone. Each day adds new light to the preceding day.

