

Raptors *of the* Rockies Celebrates the Clearwater



CRC's annual "Celebrate the Clearwater" picnic Sunday, July 15 catered to a record crowd and featured five special guests: Kate Davis of Raptors of the Rockies and four of her raptors. Pictured above is Kate with her golden eagle Nigel. Kate also wowed the crowd with Owen, her saw whet owl, Jillian, a great horned owl and Sibley, her peregrine falcon. Kate founded Raptors of the Rockies in 1988, educating schools and the public about raptors and resource conservation. Kate's birds are rescued and rehabilitated at her Raptor Ranch along the Bitterroot River and have appeared in more than 1700 programs for 133,000 audience members, young and old. Kate said, "It was an honor to present my birds to Seeley Lake – my best audience of the summer!"

CRC's President, Jon Haufler, introduced Dave Batchelder, CRC's new Executive Director. CRC awarded their annual Dragonfly awards to three outstanding volunteers: Clyde and Shirley Sterling for their work in the Adopt-A-Lake monitoring program and David Wallenburn for his help with CRC's aquatic programs.



Inspect Before Launch

The Clearwater Chain-of-Lakes is an ever-present part of daily life in this valley. Even for those who never get a toe wet, who don't fish, water ski, boat, swim or otherwise recreate in the lakes, the quality of their lives in this valley is tied closely to the quality of the lakes. A main source of income for this valley is tourism. Paychecks of all who work in a restaurant, bar, or motel depend on the visitors who are drawn to our valley by our lakes.

Since the positive findings of quagga mussel larvae in Tiber Reservoir in 2016, everyone is stepping up their game to protect their favorite water bodies from a similar fate. In addition to on-going outreach and monitoring, CRC implemented a pilot boat launch monitor

program this summer, stationing monitors at the Placid Lake and Salmon Lake State Park boat launches. Their job was to determine if a boat preparing to launch was or was not required to have an inspection before launching, and, if required, had been inspected.

Our lakes would most likely become infested with invasive mussels by a single boat bypassing all the inspection stations, heavily encrusted with mussels. To colonize, zebra/quagga mussels must successfully spawn but that heavily encrusted boat already has adult mussels of both sexes in close enough proximity to successfully spawn right from the boat. If the boat ties up at a dock, the juveniles will mature close to the spawning location creating an in-lake population

dense enough to be able to spawn. Game over.

New state laws include mandatory inspections before launching when entering Montana or crossing the Continental Divide from east to west, and new this year, when entering the Flathead Basin. CRC is investigating whether the Clearwater Chain-of-Lakes should be considered for this special designation, which could add extra measures of protection such as requiring inspection before launch for all watercraft coming into the area. Local boats which don't leave the valley would not require an inspection. There are existing laws that allow the creation of AIS management areas. This would decrease the chance of a single, heavily mussel-encrusted boat that somehow bypassed all the inspection stations of launching in our lakes, something that CRC is working hard to keep from happening.

Tip Sheet to Save Your Home in a Wildfire

On the heels of the 2017 Rice Ridge fire, Seeley-area homeowners are considering what they can do in the future to protect their homes from wildfire. Jack Cohen, retired physical scientist from the Missoula Fire Sciences Laboratory, has information to help you save your home from wildfire. Jack's research established the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ), the area within 100 feet of a home that determines home ignitions during extreme wildfires. A homeowner along with neighbors can protect their homes by eliminating and reducing ignition factors within the HIZ before extreme wildfire conditions occur.

His principles create ignition resistant 'local conditions' for homes to survive even during extreme wildfires. Burning embers called firebrands, often from a wildfire more than a ½ mile away, ignite most destroyed homes by igniting it or igniting dead forest litter and grasses that spread on the surface to ignite homes. Jack's tips create an ignition resistant home that can survive extreme wildfire conditions.

Jack recommends:

- Eliminate all accumulated debris such as pine needles, bark flakes, pine cones and cone scales from your roof, rain gutters, decks, porches and other surfaces where firebrands can ignite the debris and produce flame contact with the flammable materials of your home. A leaf blower works great.

- Make sure all openings into your home such as attic and crawl space vents have 1/8 inch mesh metal screening. Flammable wood roofing is the most ignition vulnerable material a home can have; asphalt composition shingles are excellent for preventing firebrand ignitions

as well as metal.

- Remove all flammable materials such as firewood, deck furniture with flammable cushions, lumber, bags of briquettes, lighter fluid (especially in plastic bottles), natural bristle brooms, etc. from on and under decks. Remember, extreme wildfire conditions typically have strong winds and low relative humidity. Assume firebrands can enter and accumulate in all corners, nooks and crannies to ignite the dry flammable surfaces of your home.

- Nothing on the ground within 5 feet of your home's flammable materials (wall siding,

decks, porches, boardwalks, etc.) should ignite and burn with flames or smolder in contact with your home flammable materials. This area is typically landscaped and includes flammable mulches, pine needles, dead grass, flower beds and shrubs with dead branches and foliage within the canopy and on the ground. Landscaping vegetation can be within this 5 feet area but should be well-watered, devoid of dead material and over bare ground to prevent firebrand ignitions. Decorative stones, gravel and pavers are a convenient way to maintain this area.

- The area within the HIZ from 5 to 30 feet of your home can have ignitions that do not burn with flames capable of contacting your home, igniting out-buildings within 30 feet and fences within 8 feet, and intense enough to ignite coniferous trees. Grass should be mowed to 2 inches or less and well-watered. Not all coniferous trees within this 30-foot area need to be eliminated but tree canopies should be separated by at least 20 feet. Branches should be pruned to at least 8 feet on mature trees with all branch wood and multi-year needles and leaves removed below the canopy (the 'ladder fuels').

- The HIZ area from 30 to 100 feet should be treated to prevent high intensity fire due to fire spread through coniferous canopy foliage ('crowning' and 'torching'). As with the 5 to 30-foot area, ignitions and fire spread can occur. Individual coniferous trees should have canopy separation of at least 10 feet, or 3 to 5 tree clusters should be separated from other trees and clusters by at least 20 feet. In all cases, branches should be pruned to keep tree foliage at least 6 to 8 feet above the ground.

- Although you cannot fireproof your home, you have greatly increased the effectiveness of firefighters to protect your home from destruction and you have increased the survival of your trees within the HIZ. Wildland fires are inevitable, as are the extreme conditions that create them. But, as Jack Cohen says, it is possible to prevent home destruction without eliminating wildfire. Guidance for making your home ignition resistant to wildfire can be found at the web sites: FireSafe Montana, <https://bit.ly/2Ent6Xd>, and Firewise, www.firewise.org.



2018 Hunt Season

Clearwater Partner Workshop:

2018 Hunt Season Preview
with Scott Eggeman, MT FWP,
Thursday, September 20, 7 pm,
Seeley Lake Historical Barn.