



absaroka | beartooth
WILDERNESS FOUNDATION

PO BOX 392
RED LODGE MT 59068



MILKY WAY OVER COOKE CITY AREA BY
2022 ABWF ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE DAVID GAITONDE



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WILDERNESS FOUNDATION

2022

ANNUAL REPORT

June Floods couldn't stop ABWF

DESPITE CANCELLATIONS AND NEARLY 1,000 ATLASES LOST

Looking through last summer's photos, I saw a volunteer I didn't recognize: Man in a cowboy hat and tall rubber boots, straight back but tired face, chucking a water-logged case of our award-winning *Atlases* into a dumpster.

Ben didn't know him either, but the day after the Flood had been hectic in Red Lodge. Like in other flood-ravaged towns around the A-B, this unknown volunteer was just someone who showed up to help.

We had to cancel a trail project set to begin the following week because of road washouts, and later a weed pull and an educational hike. All other projects were put on hold during

the Forest-wide closure, and some volunteers had to back out with the uncertainty. We wondered if we would do *any* projects in the A-B last summer! There was increased stress, workload, and windshield time for staff, plus the



BOXES WITH NEARLY 1,000 HARDCOVER COPIES OF VOICES OF YELLOWSTONE'S CAPSTONE: A NARRATIVE ATLAS OF THE ABSAROKA BEARTOOTH WILDERNESS EMERGE FROM RECEDING FLOOD WATERS IN RED LODGE ON JUNE 14, 2022.

personal impacts on our staff and intern living in Red Lodge and Gardiner. And it will cost \$25,000 to reprint the *Atlas*, which insurance wouldn't cover thanks to a flood exclusion.

So it sure felt great seeing

a full crew of Texas college students heading up the Boulder River the week after the road reopened, their no-longer-refundable airline gamble paying off.

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operations manager — JARRET KOSTRBA — JKOSTRBA@ABWILDERNESS.ORG
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board of directors — RICHARD LYON (PRESIDENT), WILL JONES (TREASURER), BERNIE QUETCHENBACH (SECRETARY), PETER AENGST, CAROL ENDICOTT, BILL HOPKINS, FRANCINE SPANG-WILLIS, GRACE STEPHENS

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The A-B is Public Land, and Indigenous Land of the Bannock, Blackfeet, Crow, Northern Cheyenne, Shoshone, and many other Indigenous People

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2022 annual report

And to meet all the volunteers who made the long drive around closed roads for projects near Cooke City last summer. And to get a late-summer call from the USFS about our Gardiner intern, Baylee Foresman (who got stranded by the Flood just days after arriving from Illinois), asking if they could keep her longer. And *especially* to report our year-end accomplishments to the USFS, which ended up including:

22	projects
92	volunteers
196	miles maintained
1,600	visitor contacts
3,152	hours on-the-ground
\$89,958	in-kind value
\$0	participant fees

These stats, against such odds, are testament to ABWF's dedication to stewardship of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, with support from USFS and other local partners. I am particularly grateful to Ben Daley, who kept last summer's projects on track and will be back in the A-B as a USFS Wilderness Ranger in the Beartooth District, and to all the volunteers who drove the extra miles and worked the extra hours, especially that guy in the cowboy hat and rubber boots.

PATRICK CROSS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



ABOVE PHOTOS BY 2022 ABWF VOLUNTEERS:
R. SCHLAUDERAFF, R. MCCANDLESS, & R. WARD.
OTHERS BY ABWF STAFF UNLESS NOTED

Despite nature's interference ABWF has made impressive progress this past year. We completed our Strategic Plan, began a long term stewardship partnership with Schreiner University, and accomplished a strong (if abridged) program of back-country service. The credit goes to our tireless executive director, Patrick Cross, the staff, and to you, our volunteers and donors. On behalf of the board of directors I extend thanks to all. I hope to see you on the trail this summer.

RICHARD LYON
BOARD PRESIDENT



Weekend Weed Pulls included partners like **Livingston Bike Club, PCEC, & the Great Old Broads for Wilderness**



If we actually mapped all the trails our intern **Baylee Foresman** worked on, you would just see purple...

Cooke City Area Trail Clearing is becoming a fun tradition with ABWF volunteers and the USFS crews, while we also had an **Educational Hike** out of Cooke last summer led by geologists from USFS and Stillwater Mine



2022 | ABWF accomplishments

-  VOLUNTEER TRAIL WORK
-  VOLUNTEER WEED PULL
-  INTERN TRAIL WORK
-  VOLUNTEER-LED HIKE
-  TRAIL AMBASSADOR
-  FLOOD-CANCELED

THANK YOU!

2022

Volunteers & Supporters!

Our early season project on the **Line Creek Trail** out of **Clark WY** included seasoned volunteers and an AmeriCorps crew for a week of cold rain, long hikes, and hard work!



Wounded Man trail project

Fire Ecology hike

East Rosebud weedpull

Red Lodge

Lake abundance



Eagle Mount

Silver Run



Lady of the Lake

Aero Lakes

Fox Lake



Lake Fork



Line Creek



Vernon Lake

Crazy Creek

Clay Butte Geology

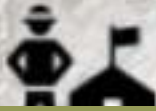


Ethnobotany Creek



Quick-thinking **Trail Ambassadors** adapted to Flood closures near Red Lodge by shifting to new trails as Livingston vols kept up Pine Creek

Livingston Livingston Peak



We have one Educational Hike scheduled with **Marian Lyman Kirst** from the **Montana Moth Project** in June, visit our website as we add more



K. SCHLENKER PH

Volunteers needed for **long-term recurring** trail maintenance, weed pulls, and trail ambassadors
Sigh Up Today!



Pine Creek

Yellowstone RD



We couldn't do it without our partners — horse, mule, and human — at **Beartooth Back Country Horsemen**

Meatrack Meadows

Repairing **Flood-damaged trail** near Gardiner



Bassett Creek

Specimen Creek

Gardiner RD



Gardiner



RECRUITING CAMP COOKS!
Join a trail crew and contribute tasty backcountry meals
NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED!





OTO

2023 | ABWF upcoming projects



VOLUNTEER TRAIL WORK



VOLUNTEER-LED HIKE



VOLUNTEER WEED PULL



TRAIL AMBASSADOR



INTERN LOCATION



Already looking forward to more Wilderness skills, stewardship, and fun with **Eagle Mount Billings!**



Stillwater River



Beartooth RD

Ecology hike



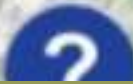
Eagle Mount



Red Lod

Cooke City Trails

Lake Fork



Schreiner University is coming back for more trail brushing, weed pulling, & mountain-top chess



3 ABWF Interns this summer: 1 with the USFS Gardiner crew, 1 with the USFS Beartooth crew, and 1 dedicated to ABWF projects across the A-B!

wilderness medicine

NORTHERN CHEYENNE EDUCATORS SHARE ETHNOBOTANY

Before teaching us how to identify plants, Lynwood Tall Bull taught us how to approach them.

You need good intentions and a tranquil spirit, the Northern Cheyenne elder advised. Coming agitated makes finding the medicine harder. When harvesting, gently pinch just what you need, speaking to the plant, explaining your need, taking care so it will continue to grow. It will lose its medicine if you rip it out of the ground. And don't just go for the lush plants: there's strength in the scraggly survivors.

Finally, we got to the plants themselves.

Lynwood and his son Gus –himself a teacher as well as traditional artisan –joined 12 of us at the Parkside National Recreation Trail near Red Lodge last July to lead a hike discussing Northern Cheyenne ethnobotany and lifeways. Like most others, I came hoping to take away new old remedies, recipes for energizing brews, and knowledge of nutritious treats hiding in plain sight. What's more, with my own ecology background, I wanted to better under-

stand plants I already knew, even hypothesize on the mechanisms behind the traditional medicine, my scientific training seeking the chemical compounds and physical properties to *explain* this Indigenous knowledge. And like everyone else there, I just

liked plants and being outside!

The “hike” ended up being less than a mile. Indeed it was difficult leaving the trailhead there was so much to see and discuss.

Lynwood immediately spotted June Grass – a solitary purple stem, less than a foot tall, with a short dense tuft like a pipe cleaner tip – which he met with the pleasant surprise of running into an old friend in an un-

expected place. I probably trampled right over it while looking for plants to show him when I was scouting the hike.

I was disappointed he didn't recognize one of those plants, a ground-hugging Buckwheat with an umbrella of sulfur-yellow flowers I knew just *had* to have some medicine. But I beamed when, at Lynwood's request, I guided the group



LYNWOOD TALL BULL, A NORTHERN CHEYENNE ELDER AND ETHNOBOTANIST WITH CHIEF DULL KNIFE COLLEGE, NEAR RED LODGE LAST JULY

to some Horsetail—those segmented stalks with black-and-white collars down in the river rocks we called Puzzle Plants when we were little. And I was humbled by Lynwood and Gus’s frank disappointment when I led them to Buffalo Berries that turned out to be Honeysuckles. Hearing each plant’s story, I began recognizing the many flaws in my earlier hypotheses, and how my professional training and experience hadn’t fully prepared me for the knowledge Lynwood and Gus were sharing.

June Grass, for example, is in fact used for its energizing medicine in Sun Dance ceremonies. But the medicine isn’t in some

enzyme extracted from the plant. Rather, its essence is gently blown while heroic tales from brave days of old are freshly sown, helping fatigued dancers find the stamina of the legends. It’s as if the medicine is already inside them, and the plants and their stories help guide them to it, so long as they listen and follow. Taking advice from a foot-high blade of grass takes humility.

I found myself making the same mistakes later, when Lynwood commented on the variety of plants around his home near Lame Deer compared to other Indigenous lands, and someone asked him why this was so. My inner ecologist jumped to my own answer: this *biodiversity* is clearly the result of diverse *habitats* – from river bottom to

upland desert, and from mountain foothills to boundless prairies – found in Northern Cheyenne country. So again I was surprised with Lynwood’s considered, concise, and sure response: “Use.”

The plants are there because people are aware of them and use them, he said, and because they take care to sustain them, making sure the plants remain on the land and in the culture. Physical roots may well die off when cultural roots are severed.

I did end up learning more about plants I was already familiar with, like Common Mullein, which is sometimes classified as a

noxious weed in the A-B. Sure, it came here with people, Lynwood said, but they were Indigenous people themselves a natural part of the landscape. Something to consider while planning next summer’s Weekend Weed Pulls. I asked about Wild Rose, expecting all sorts of uses for its Vitamin C-packed rose hips, but both Lynwood and Gus’s brows darkened as they instead spoke of rose hips as a famine food, poking out of snowdrifts to provide a desperate meal for orphans adrift in the forced removal from—then self-reliant return to—their homeland in not so distant memory. Gus told us how Bee Balm is also called Elk Mint because its musky cologne is sought after by amorous bulls, elk and human alike. That traditional name gratified the scientist in me



GUS TALL BULL SHARED TECHNIQUES AND STORIES BEHIND NORTHERN CHEYENNE LIFEWAYS

as *Monarda fistulosa* is classified in the Lamiaceae – or mint – family.

And yes, we did learn some traditional remedies: you must first chew on Yarrow to get its medicine for stopping bleeding, as the oils need to be squeezed from the leaves and mixed with chemicals in saliva to activate their hemostatic properties.

Moving into the shade of a Limber Pine for lunch, Lynwood thumbed through a travel-worn tome of parchment and pressed plant specimens, like Gandalf researching ancient legends. Gus passed around items he made like a stone axe and a beautifully intimidating gorget of ‘grizzly claws’ (they were actually carved antelope hooves, but they looked real enough to convince any casual observer or oncoming enemy) that he graciously invited each of us to try on (and believe me, you felt intimidatingly beautiful

wearing it). And many, many more stories were told.

Walking back to our cars, cresting a



boulder-strewn hill dwarfed by the Beartooth Mountains above, there was a lot from the day to try and remember. But I won't forget Lynwood pointing to the mountains and saying, “the rocks have long memories, the stones remember.” Even if the people lose track of the stories, the Land is still here to re-teach them. So long as they will listen.

I'm grateful for everything that Lynwood and Gus shared with us, and think they appreciated spending time with the plants, the stories, and good people as well. When we got back to the trailhead, Lynwood had a pinch of the unidentified

Buckwheat for his plant press.

All of us try to find medicine in Wilderness. We seek its solitude and

untrammelled nature as a balm for modern day cares. But how often do we approach it with those cares weighing us down heavier than our packs? Or find ourselves agitated by a tossed candy wrapper, a lakeside fire ring, a trailside dog poop bag, or some other egregious violation of etiquette? And the more we get into Wilderness work, the more we find ourselves embroiled in user conflicts, so that the capital “W” itself becomes a battle flag. How will we ever find the medicine we need when we come to Wilderness with such heavy spirits? And as much as Wilderness users, whether seeking solitude, adventure, or medicine, are at the root of today’s ‘user conflicts’, use and appreciation are needed for users to grow into the stewards who will make sure Wilderness remains on the land and in the culture. We have a lot to learn how to best live with this land, including reclaiming ancient knowl-

PHOTOS OTHER PAGE: HIKE PARTICIPANTS LOOKING FOR PLANTS; PUFFBALL MUSHROOMS, WITH MEDICINE FROM THE NORTHERN CHEYENNE’S VERY ORIGINS; LYNWOOD’S PRESSED SPECIMENS.

edge that has been taken. But the stones remember the stories, the plants are here to guide us, and there are people like Gus and Lynwood willing to teach us how to appreciate them. So long as we listen.

The next day, I took some visiting friends with little kids back to the same spot – there was a great ‘splash park’ on the closed campground road nearby, where runoff from a Flood-damaged culvert skimmed over a smooth bed of new asphalt – and excitedly pointed out plants along the way. All the while their 3-year-old chattered cheerful nonsense to herself and imaginary animal friends while prancing through the wildflowers, deep in her own 3-year-old world. But walking back to the car, she worried her baby brother (carried in his shaded bassinet) was getting fatigued. So she dashed across the meadow, stooping to gently pinch a solitary blade of June Grass.

PATRICK CROSS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

COMING FALL 2023: ABWF HOSTS NATIVE LANDSCAPE RESTORATION PROFESSIONAL WORKSHOP NEAR GARDINER

In September, ABWF is honored that Lynwood and Gus will be joining us again, along with teachers, students, and other native landscape practitioners from **Little Bighorn College, Rocky Mountain College, MSU-Extension, Montana Native Plant Society, Park County Environmental Council, U.S. National Park Service and U.S. Forest Service**, for a skills- and relationship-building workshop, which ABWF is hosting with support from AMB West. With lodging and local meals at The Common Ground Project in Tom Miner Basin, the weekend workshop will see a tour of the Yellowstone National Park herbarium in Gardiner and a visit to a USFS restoration site in Yankee Jim Canyon, with plenty of questions and contributions, problem-solving, and success stories from all participants throughout. The “summit breakfast” will feature a discussion of new ideas, potential collaborations, and the next steps needed to keep developing these new partnerships and potentials. We hope to continue reporting success stories with Lynwood, Gus, and new partners from this upcoming workshop.



THE OLD FOREST SERVICE GUARD STATION WHERE VOLUNTEERS STAY DURING OUR ANNUAL COOKE CITY AREA TRAIL CLEARING PROJECT WITH THE USFS GARDINER RANGER DISTRICT. DAVID GAITONDE PHOTO.

ABWF welcomes new staff

JARRET KOSTRBA JOINS OUR RED LODGE OFFICE;
LAUREN SWETT LEADS PROGRAMS FROM GARDINER



Jarret joins ABWF after more than a decade with Montana State Parks, most recently managing Pictograph Caves. As our Operations Manager (a NEW full time position!), his job is both front – and backcountry: running the office, communicating with volunteers and donors, and pitching in as needed.



Lauren has lead volunteer trail crews for the Bob Marshall Wilderness Foundation, and educational programs for Yellowstone Forever. Now she will be leading projects and helping develop ABWF's Wilderness stewardship and appreciation efforts as our new Programs Manager.



artist-in-residence sees astronomical results

Our program looked a little different last year: we didn't have the housing, or the stipend, available in previous years, so instead we invited an artist to join one of our Trail Crews, pitching in with camp chores but working on their art instead of the trail. Astrophotographer **David Gaitonde** from Billings took us up on it, joining our crew in Cooke City with an interest in capturing the Milky Way over the A-B. He even picked up a Pulaski and joined the crew by day, despite the late nights. Thanks and great job, David!



we beat our 1st License Plate goal!

At last report, **1,484** ABWF license plates with artwork by Livingston's Parks Reece were issued to cars, trucks, and trailers across Montana, raising as much as \$37,000/year for ABWF! How long until we double that? Have you gotten yours? Available at county motor vehicle registration offices across the state. Not an MT driver? You can order a replica plate on our online store at abwildernes.org



2022 financials

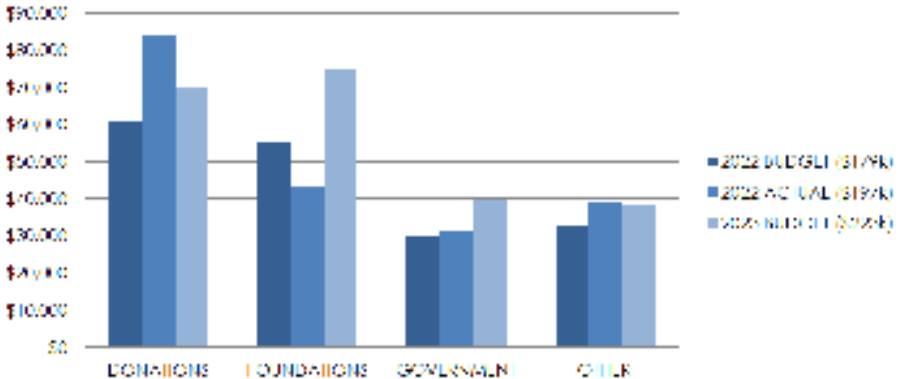
balance sheet (12/31/22)

total assets: \$181,565
 total liabilities: \$3,393
 total equity: \$177,621
**total liabilities & equity:
 \$181,565**

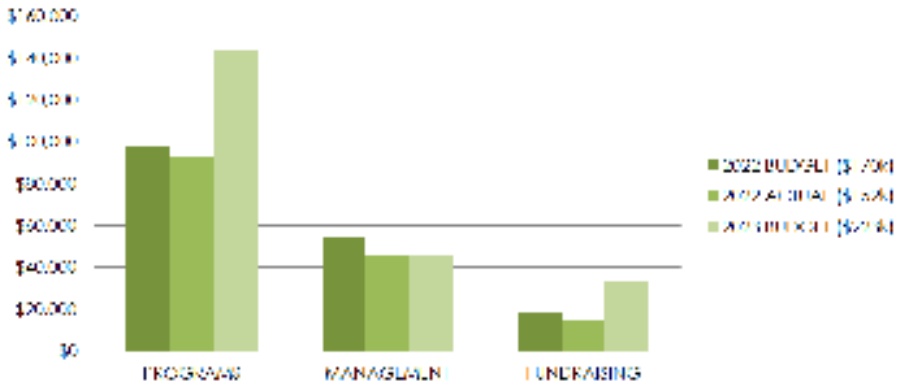
profit-loss (12/31/22)

total income: \$196,831
 total expense: \$152,165
net income: \$44,666

ABWF income



ABWF expenses



2023 fundraising goals

- Maximize community giving events like **Red Lodge Fun Run, Give Big Gallatin Valley, Yellowstone Valley Gives, & Give A Hoot**
- Improve and grow **Sustaining Member** program
- Maximize existing and develop new **Foundation** support
- Improve bookkeeping, customer service, and marketing with a **Fundraising IT Upgrade**
- Increase **board** engagement in fundraising efforts



C. MCKOY PHOTO

How much does Wilderness stewardship really cost?

Our volunteers help us get a lot of work done on a tight budget. And with proper care, our tools last summer after summer. But like all small businesses, our day-to-day costs are rising. So help us take care of the bills so we can take care of the A-B:

\$50	\$100	\$250	\$500	\$1000
ONE WEEK	TWO WEEKS	ONE MONTH	ONE YEAR	ONE YEAR
AVERAGE	WORKERS	INTERNET,	BOOKKEEPING	LIABILITY
WORK TRUCK	COMP	PHONE &	SOFTWARE	INSURANCE
EXPENSES	LIABILITY	WEBSITE BILLS	LICENSE	PREMIUM

Please mail a check to **PO Box 392, Red Lodge MT 59068** or donate online at **abwilderness.org**