



OUT IN THE WILD Endangered Species Broadwalk



by Susan Kearns

The only wolf we actually saw...this "wild" hat was a surprise auction offering that sparked a lot of laughter and competitive bidding. Bob Anderson was the lucky winner.

It's safe to say that everyone who traveled up the narrow dirt track to our campsite gasped at the first glimpse of

the Boulder and White Cloud Mountains towering over Silver Creek Meadow in the Sawtooth National Recreation Area. The sight sent a surge of joy through us, energizing us with excitement for the coming event.

That first night, after we'd snuggled into our beds, a lone howl of a wolf broke the night's starry, cool silence. We shivered with delight, knowing that in just a few hours, the first small group of Broads and Bros would depart at dawn to howl from a ridge top, hoping to garner return howls to reveal the number of pups born over the winter. Though our teams never got a reply to their howls, they saw moose, fox, pronghorn, elk—and spectacular sunrises and sunsets.

As for the next day's stewardship projects, we exceeded all expectations. One group removed three times the expected amount of barbed wire fencing, delighting the Forest Service crew with Broads' kickass work.

We worked hard and played harder the next two days, tackling hikes of varying difficulties or simply staying in

camp to enjoy—some through plein air painting—the lovely meadow, nearby trails, creek, and scenic views.

By night, we learned of the calculated attacks on the Endangered Species Act (ESA)—despite its success in saving 99% of listed species from extinction. Our speakers gave us sobering insight into the obstacles facing threatened and endangered species in the region: wolves, sage grouse, wolverines, salmon, and more.

Many of us were shocked to learn the dwindling population of Chinook salmon in the Salmon River's Middle Fork is critically impacted by four dams on the lower Snake River. Less than 5% of the fish are able to return to spawn each year in this uniquely high elevation site. Without dam removal, it is likely these populations of wild, indigenous fish—which have never been genetically altered by hatchery fish—will not survive.

We poured out our love for this place and its creatures through our pens, writing our senators and representatives to uphold the protections of the ESA, and reject bills with poison pill riders and legislation that threaten the Act's integrity.

As we said our farewells to old and new friends, we were newly inspired to advocate for the integrity of bedrock laws and protections like the ESA that protect habitat for plants and animals struggling to survive in a changing world and a changing climate.



At last year's Let's Mother Earth Broadwalk, Susie Kincade (left) and Karen Ryman (right) spoke with the now deceased Senator John McCain.

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for Mother Earth.**

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