

Appreciating what we have more than ever

By Victoria Howell

This has been quite a year, and I hope we never have another one like it. This novel coronavirus has really thrown the world for a loop, and even here in our little corner of the Bitterroot we are not immune (literally).

While medical professionals and government officials have tried to figure out the best way to respond, the rest of us try to cope with the changes that have been wrought on our daily lives.

We sheltered in place for weeks while businesses and schools were shut down. We tried to help our kids and grandkids with their online studies. We caught up on reading and perhaps revisited our favorite TV series, and we cleaned out closets and other neglected areas of our homes. We did home repairs. Some of us were lucky enough to be able to work from home but many were laid off. We bought take-out meals, and people started making bread again, and expanding their home gardens. When people did venture out beyond the necessary grocery shopping and curbside pickup, we headed for the river and the mountains because those were safe places.

As the reopening of the state continues, our local businesses are open again. We can go out to restaurants and bars, and all our great local shops. (And have you noticed the proliferation of food trucks in the valley? So many great choices!) Sadly, most of our traditional festivals, summer events, and even the county fair, have been cancelled. Things



Sweet spot to come home to.



Our creek with the new deck built while sheltering in place.

are not the same; we are wearing masks. And that might be for quite some time. But that is something we can easily do, and if it saves someone's life, then it's so worth it. And most of our businesses are still here, and some new ones too, they really need our support, more than ever.

All in all, we are the lucky ones because we live here in the Bitterroot, surrounded by so much natural beauty. It's pretty easy to social distance because we have so much space to do it in! We all probably have our favorite spots that we return to again and again. One of my favorites is the upper Lost Horse drainage and the Twin Lakes at the end of the road. I never get tired of that drive, and the nice kayaking waiting at the top. And of course, all the westside canyons are absolutely spectacular. But I also love the beauty of the open green fields along the valley floor with the river running through.

And for me, there's really no place like home. Just a four-acre piece of ground on Middle Burnt Fork, with some 100+ year-old cottonwoods and a creek running through, and a 144-year-old hand hewn log home that's seen better days but is still solid enough to keep us cool in summer and warm in winter, and a garden that provides awesome bounty. We share our place with all kinds of critters, both domestic and wild, there's plenty for everyone. And we have nice neighbors. Wherever I go, and whatever I have to do, I know that my special place is waiting there for me at the end of the day.

We have all had to figure out how to make it through this pandemic. It hasn't been easy. But we're doing it, and we'll come through it stronger than ever.

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Stay-cations in the Bitterroot Valley

There is something for everyone in the Bitterroot Valley, from art to history, to wildlife to outdoor sports and recreation.

Historic St. Mary's Mission in Stevensville is the oldest church in Montana and Stevensville was the first pioneer settlement in the state. The mission is open to the public and daily tours are available. The gift shop and visitors' center is open until Christmas. For more information call 777-5734.

The Daly Mansion, built by Copper King Marcus Daly, is open through October 15 for tours of the grand old house. In addition, there are a number of special events scheduled at the mansion during the season. For more information call 363-6004 or

visit www.dalymansion.org. The mansion is on Eastside Highway about two miles north of Hamilton.

Also for history buffs, there are outstanding museums in Ravalli County. Ravalli County Museum is at 205 Bedford in Hamilton and the Victor Heritage Museum is on the corner of Main and Blake in Victor. The Stevensville Historic Museum is on South Main in Stevensville and St. Mary's Mission has a museum in its visitors' center. Old Fort Owen is a state park and is open daily for self-conducted tours. The history of the fort is available on-site. Darby's Pioneer Museum is in downtown Darby and Darby also boasts a Forest Service Museum on North Main.

Recreational opportunities range



Lake Como. Liz Cook photo.

Lovin' the Bitterroot

During these times of uncertainty it is good to remember we are all in this together. While no one can predict the outcome of the world right now or when this pandemic will be over, we can, however, decide how we will get through this. The Montana way comes to mind!

The people of Montana have always been strong, friendly, hard working people who aren't stopped by anything. We smile in the face of challenge as we are some of the most head strong and determined people this country has to offer! We have always come together to help one another and make the community better. This is a wonderful strength of the people, one that will not be shaken by these times, but a beautiful strength that will carry us through.

We are asking everyone to remember what your community means to you. We are asking for you to look back at the good memories made. Remember those community members and businesses who helped to make those moments great. We are asking you to keep supporting these businesses, to show them and the Bitterroot some love.

We all understand not everyone is quite ready to come back out into the world fully just yet. The wonderful businesses of the Bitterroot understand and have adjusted the way they do business so they can continue to serve everyone. Most businesses offer call ahead orders with curbside pick-up. Safety protocols have been adjusted, barriers put in place, sanitizing stations added, all to help prevent the spread of the virus and allow people back into businesses.

The Bitterroot is unique in the way we are made up almost entirely of small businesses; you won't find that corporate feel here. These businesses depend on all of us to shop or use their services to stay in business, now more than ever. When you shop at a local business your money stays here. The best part about having a community made up of small businesses is that they want to see the community succeed. They prove this every times they sponsor your kids' soccer team, or help build a new playground, or donate items for a raffle, or show up to help clean the streets.

We all need to follow their lead and be invested in our community, support local first!

The Bitterroot is open for business!

from golfing, fishing, floating, boating, swimming, hiking and camping, biking and picnicking, to wildlife-watching, tennis and horseback riding.

There are two public golf courses in the valley. The Hamilton Golf Course is 18 holes and is east of town on Golf Course Road. The Whitetail Golf Course is northeast of Stevensville and the 9-hole course is accessible off Wildfowl Lane and is adjacent to both the Bitterroot River and the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge.

Painted Rocks Reservoir and Lake Como are known for their boating, swimming and fishing. Lake Como is 17 miles south of Hamilton off of Hwy 93 and Painted Rocks is 23 miles south of Darby on West Fork Road. The full course of the Bitterroot River is popular for fishing, floating, boating, canoeing and swimming. There are a number of public river accesses and raft and other craft rentals are available throughout the valley, as well as river front parks in Hamilton, Darby and Stevensville. For a complete listing, stop by the Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce in Hamilton, just east of the intersection of Hwy 93 and Main.

The 50-mile long Bitterroot Trail for bicyclists is complete from Missoula to Hamilton. Bicyclists can take a two-mile detour into historic downtown Stevensville, where they can rest up and also enjoy the amenities of Stevensville's downtown. Stevensville

has two of the Bitterroot Valley's six craft breweries. There are also breweries in Lolo, Hamilton and Darby, as well as a mead winery in Victor and a cidery, two wine tasting rooms and a distillery in Hamilton.

The chamber also has information on where to rent horses and the Bitterroot National Forest office at 1801 North First in Hamilton has hiking and camping information, as well as maps for hikers and campers.

One of the bird and wildlife watching treasures of the Bitterroot is the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge two miles north of Stevensville.

Lost Trail Pass in the south end of the valley boasts both the Lost Trail Powder Mountain Ski Area and a natural hot springs swimming spot at Lost Trail Hot Springs. The hot springs area has lodging and food service, as well. There are also public swimming pools in Hamilton and Stevensville and children's playgrounds in each community with water features at Hamilton and Florence.

The Bitterroot offers an authentic shopping experience as well, with hometown hospitality and personal service, and includes everything from antique shops and art galleries to sports equipment stores to rustic and western clothing and home furnishings. Darby, Hamilton, Corvallis, Victor, Stevensville and Florence all have their own unique shopping areas.

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Big Cat Cafe and 406 Saloon open in Darby

By Jean Schurman

There's a new look mixed in with the old on the east side of Darby Main Street. Where the Valley Bar and Dotson's Saloon once operated, now there is a beautiful dining atrium that is open air in good weather. Dotson's is still open on the south end of the complex but now has a new name, 406 Saloon. The

restaurant is the Big Cat Cafe. This business venture is the brainchild of Bill Brady and his partner, Doug Gannett. The manager is Jason Yorton, who is a fourth generation Bitterrooter.

Brady has been coming to Darby for about four years. His home is in Denver where he has several businesses including a waste management company and a recycling business. He stays with friends when

he is in Darby and has become a part of the community. Last summer, he was selected to be a board member of the Darby Rodeo Association. Brady has also been working to bring more events to Darby.

"Darby reminds me of the Colorado mining towns where community was so important," said Brady. "We want to keep Darby as a place where we can enjoy the local flavor but have an economic impact too."

Gannett is in the real estate business and is originally from Chicago but also claims Arizona and Colorado as stopping places. He and his wife will be building a residence near Bell Crossing soon and will claim the Bitterroot as another stopping place. He, too, is looking to bring more economic energy to the valley and in particular, the Darby area.

The pair purchased the property and began to work on remodeling the building. The Valley Bar was established in 1910 and has had a few additions and renovations done on it over the years. Originally, they were going to remodel the buildings but once they started working on the roof, they discovered it was irreparable and so they tore down the old Valley Bar and began building.

The duo has worked closely with the Ravalli County Health Department, the Town of Darby, and Darby Marshal Larry Rose. Brady said they wanted to make sure they were addressing all of the concerns of the townspeople and the powers that be.

They wanted a large open air area for dining as the center of the new structure. The structure was built with a large stone fireplace in the middle. The roof and walls on the east and west side are heavy clear plastic that will keep the heat in this winter while still being able to enjoy an open view. There are many pieces of memorabilia from Darby and the Valley Bar on the walls. The tin wainscoting is the tin that was from the old roof. The 'new' tables are actually made out of lumber from an old farmhouse



The atrium of the Big Cat Cafe is large enough to offer plenty of room for diners but still have a warm feel. Anything from steaks and burgers to fish and pasta is available for dine in or take out. They also cater. Jean Schurman photo.

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in Colorado that Bradley's company tore down.

A new kitchen was built on the north end of the building and already, plans are being made to expand that kitchen. The plan is to build to the east alongside East Miles Avenue. That way, the kitchen will not intrude on the back patio and yard.

And speaking of the back entertainment area, there's everything you need to have a great time. With two horseshoe pits, the competition is tough, and there's already a league formed for Sunday afternoon horseshoes. The mayor even comes and plays. Yorton and his staff are working on making a volleyball court, too. If you want to just sit outside and socialize, there's an outside bar and a fire pit as well.

The 406 Saloon reopened late last fall and has continued to carry on Darby traditions such as the Cat Hunters' Ball. The Big Cat Café, however, opened just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and quickly transitioned to take-out only. Bradley said that even though it was tough to open up during these trying times, it was easier to make adjustments to the menu and operation in that time. By the time they opened for limited seating on May 1, most of the kinks had been worked out and people were spreading the word about how good the steaks and the burgers or other sandwiches were. Will Chaney is the chef.

All three men agree they want to benefit the local economy. They try to use local products including beer, local distilleries, beef, and bison. But perhaps the greatest economic boost isn't product, it's people. Right now, they employ about 32 people in the bar and the cafe.

"These are new jobs," said Bradley. "The entire experience has exceeded our expectations."

Big Cat Cafe and 406 Saloon owners Bill Bradley and Doug Gannett, along with manager Jasson (Roberts) Yorton, stand outside the Big Cat Cafe. The trio hopes the cafe and saloon will be a gathering place for the Bitterroot. Jean Schurman photo



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Fly Fishing in the Bitterroot - Unmasked

By Chuck Stranahan

“Look at that,” I said to Jan, “Look at where we live. I love it more every day.”

She was driving us south from Hamilton to a place we wanted to fish. On such trips she feels safer behind the wheel, knowing that I will gawk at the scenery. That works out OK for me; she feels more secure, and especially on days like that one, I can gawk without reservation.

For that afternoon, we were free from the personal masks and social shroud that has engulfed even this corner of America since covid has become a dominant part of our lives.

I was watching the patterns of shadow and light over distant stands of timber as a sky dappled with clouds cast their shadows across the tipped-up western face of the Bitterroot Range.

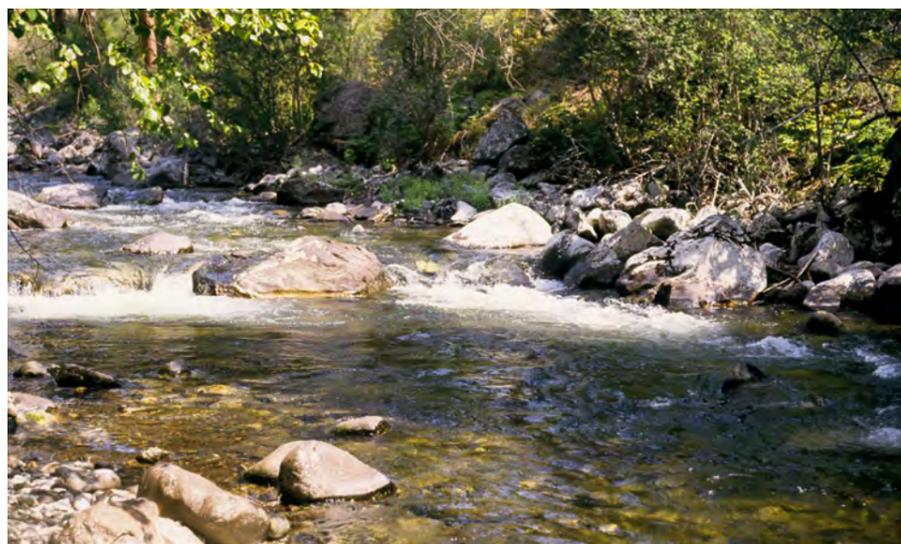
We left our masks and the cares they represented behind.

We were on our way to go fishing – by ourselves, on foot. This was not a float trip where the commotion and brother of a boat would have gotten in the way.

We needed peace, and that certain kind of exhilaration that comes from solitude, and being connected with the natural world in a way that feeds and nourishes the innermost parts of one’s being.

That, ultimately, is at the heart of why we fly fish. Dare I say that it’s ultimately about spiritual renewal?

When I was in my vulnerable early teen years and growing out of a childhood marked by respiratory illnesses, going to school was no fun. I knew, then, what it was like



You can rock-hop along a small stream and be a kid again. Chuck Stranahan photo.



Solitude along the Bitterroot rejuvenates the soul.

to live in a diseased world where I was perpetually at risk. I made it my business to grow stronger, persevere relentlessly, (being of hardscrabble Scots-Irish stock has its advantages,) and to meet adversity head-on with endurance.

At the same time I learned early-on that I needed regular rejuvenation of mind, body, and spirit. When I wasn’t fishing, or postponing homework assignments by tying flies, I daydreamed about fly fishing and getting away from the world.

Certain parts of my everyday world seemed nonsensical. I didn’t need to make sense of it so much as to find a place in time where I could turn that world off and rejuvenate my inner being.

That place, for me, was rock-hopping along the small streams of the southern Sierras, fly rod and a box of flies I had tied myself in hand, sneaking up to the foam-topped plunge pools and pockets flowing between dark boulders beneath the pines, where I could watch dark-backed small native rainbows rise in the water toward a fly I had put above them.

Today, many years later, other parts of my world seem nonsensical. And my fly fishing, once again, gives me a chance to withdraw from the world of things, and issues, and uncertainty, and anxiety, and to go on retreat, if you will, into a world of grandeur, wonderment, humility, growth, learning, peace, and spiritual renewal.

I find myself surrounded with that latter world in the Bitterroot Valley. I can hike into a canyon and be that thirteen-year-old kid again, or I can find a place upstream from the parade of floaters on the river and fish in relative solitude. I can leave my mask and the world it represents behind.

That’s why I fish – here – now. I rock-hop a little more carefully now, and the fish are beautifully-colored native cutthroats. Some of the streams are bigger. But that thirteen-year-old boy within me still returns, every time, with his spirit renewed – regardless the world he leaves or returns to. As I told Jan that day we left our masks behind to go fishing, I love this place we live – this Bitterroot - more each day.

Breakoff

The yawning morning sun,
ascends the sullen Sapphires.
Mist rises from the Bitterroot,
smoke from liquid fires.

Against my chest waders,
woodland grasses softly whisper.
Late summer’s morning air,
courses my lungs - getting crisper.

To my right I’m startled,
by a doe and her spotted fawn,
awoken by me too early,
on this mid-July dawn.

Down to the river’s edge,
stepping around a thistle patch,
I stealthily wade on in,
and loosen my trico hatch.

Slicing the air with my rod,
using a double haul cast,
my fly dead drifts the current,
not too slow and not too fast.

Gently floating the fly,
up to a gnarled weathered stump,
a huge rainbow rose and hit,
leaping with a mighty jump.

Fighting, pulling, twisting, writhing,
the clear water boiled.
Lunging high, he broke the leader.
Alas, I was foiled.

Silence resumed on the river,
resetting calm and peace.
Smiling inside, I thought...
“Oh well, this is catch and release!”

By Dominic “Flominic” Farrenkopf
these poems need homes@live.com
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New owners carry on great tradition at Old West Antiques & Candy Store

By Liz Cook

On June 1st of this year, Mike & Rebekah Swanson took over ownership of Old West Antiques and Candy Store at 202 S. Main Street in Darby. The couple purchased the business from long time owners Gene and Rosie Huckstadt. The Huckstadts sold the business after opening it 27 years ago. At first Mike was brought to assist the Huckstadts with a liquidation sale as the two also own and operate Swanson's Estate Sales. The business had been for sale and the Huckstadts were ready to retire. After a couple of meetings, the Swansons knew this was a great business opportunity and made the choice to purchase the business. Running this business is a family affair. The husband and wife team both put in hard work to make sure the business runs smoothly. Rebekah makes the fudge and handles the books, while Mike takes care of the retail side of things. Additionally, almost all of the Swanson's seven children each play a role of some kind in the day to day at the shop.

If you have not been to Old West Antiques and Candy Store you are missing out on a truly sweet experience. The shop houses nine rooms full of antiques, antique reproductions, souvenirs, jewelry, Native American artifacts, artwork, made-in-Montana items, Montana Huckleberry products and of course CANDY. Their candy room is full of candy from all over the country that can be purchased by the pound, in addition to the in-house homemade fudge and chocolate. You can also cool off with some yummy ice cream, a huckleberry shake or grab some coffee from their

espresso bar. Be sure to try a signature Grizzly Paw, a yummy chocolate treat!

Mike commented that being a part of the Darby community has been an amazing experience.

"Everyone comes in to get information or to see what's new." Being a touristy spot the shop sees all different kinds of people, but Mike says they all seem to have one thing in common, "everyone is happy and excited when they come in. They want that Montana experience, even if they are local."

An important aspect in taking ownership for both Mike and Rebekah was staying true to the integrity of the business that was established by the Huckstadts. Several ways they are doing this is by keeping the same great attention to detail and offering exceptional customer service to every person who walks in the door. They are excited to bring some new twists to the shop but, it is only meant to enhance the customer experience while still keeping the charm that goes with Old West. One new experience is being able to offer Auction Sales and Estate Sales right at Old West.

A goal the Swansons hope to accomplish by December is to have all their products for sale online. They understand times right now are a little different and uncertain and wanted to make sure people still had a great option to support local business or to be able to continue to shop the store if they live out of town. Follow their website for updates on new items to be purchased online, oldwestcandy.com.

The couple has fallen in love with the charm of the Darby community and want to share that with everyone else. So, if you



Mike and Rebekah are the new owners of Old West Antiques & Candy Store in Darby. Liz Cook photo.

haven't been to Darby or even if it's just been a while, the Swansons invite you to

take a trip down the Bitterroot, stop in say hi, see what's new and to enjoy Darby.

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Trapper Peak towers over the valley just south of Darby. One of the Bitterroot's most impressive sights, and an excellent day hike for the hardy.



Beauty everywhere, and plenty of space. Victoria Howell photo.

No place like home

By Liz Cook

When I think of life in the Bitterroot a lot of things come to mind. Life is not always easy here, but it's always worth it. We have some of the greatest people you'll find on this earth. The best sunsets, some of the biggest sky you'll see and places you just can't find anywhere else.

The best part is we have so many great places that are tucked away so close to where we all live. Some of my favorites worth mentioning are hiking to Bear Creek. If you have never done it put it on your list. It's a fairly easy hike and you are sure to enjoy taking a rest by the creek. You also can't beat a day of kayaking on Lake Como! The water is nice and the views amazing.

Drinks at the Tin Can in Stevensville while playing pool is also a favorite pass time for me. Nick and his staff always treat you right and try to make your time there worthwhile. If you haven't been to the bowling alley at Ravalli Fun Center in a while you might find yourself surprised! I know I did. They have a new shuffle board and great bar with such friendly staff.

This girl is a foodie and the Valley is home to some really great places. You can't beat a Montana Burger! Any true local already knows my fav, Naps! I am also excited to say we have a great place for sushi right in the Valley at Second Street Sushi. It's a favorite of mine for date night, if you haven't tried the Mercury Roll, you don't know what you are missing! For a fancier date night option, I love the Catered Table in Stevensville. They have great, friendly staff, the most delicious creamy garlic chicken and my favorite Riesling!

Honestly, I don't have enough space to write about all the great places we have in the Valley. I have so many more favorites. One I didn't list is my own home. While I love getting out, having dinner at a local spot, seeing a movie or going for a hike, you just can't beat a night at home on your front porch watching the sunset. I consider myself truly lucky to be a Montanan.

I want to encourage everyone to think about your favorite spot in the valley and show that place some extra love in these strange times. While you are at it show your neighbor some extra kindness too. Times are tough on us all.



Liz just chillin' with the family at Lake Como. James Pickford photo.



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Pandemic is affecting local real estate market

By Max Coleman, EXIT Realty

Way back in 1995, I was a newly minted realtor sitting in a sales meeting at Coldwell Banker in Hamilton. Tom and Larry Lund, Broker/Owners, had just made a major announcement. We were getting a computer for the office. Steve Johnson, a broker in the office, raised his hand in the back of the room and asked, "What are we going to do with that?" You see, up until that point the only computer to access the MLS was located at the local board office. An agent would typically go to the board office and enter their data. This data was then printed in a confidential guide that was controlled by the agents and brokers. None of this information was available to the general public. We were the gate keepers. Marketing properties consisted of making a bunch of black and white flyers and driving around to each office and placing the flyers in each agent's slot in the copy room. In addition, you could place an ad in the newspaper or in the Bitterroot Valley Properties Directory.

Fast forward 25 years and we have made quantum strides in both the listing and marketing of properties and the way buyers access and view those properties. The technology has moved at an incredible pace.

Buyers are now armed with all of the information on properties accessed from any device anywhere in the world. This has changed the real estate dynamic dramatically. Sellers now have access to updated statistics from their agents, allowing more competitive list prices and the ability to realize their goals.

Brokers and agents have never had more capability in marketing a property. Professional photography, drone video footage and video walkthroughs of properties are common place.

Never would I have imagined that a buyer would enter into a contract agreement for a house, never step foot in that house and buy it sight unseen. That very situation has been taking place across our great valley during the COVID crisis. Without technology, those scenarios would not have been possible.

The Bitterroot Valley has always been a great place to live, work, recreate and safely raise a family. More and more people are seeking what we wake up to every morning. Home values are up across the board in every community. Mortgage rates are historically low. In addition, most markets that clients are moving from have strong markets allowing sellers to capture their equity and move it here. Like it or not, our little valley has been discovered. That growth has already manifested in more traffic on our roads, increased enrollments in schools

and all of the regulatory implications that increased population brings. Specifically, preservation of remaining open space, protecting groundwater and updating infrastructure throughout the valley. We are in the midst of a 'Seller's Market'. That is defined as less than four months of inventory on the market. In other words, if we did not take another listing it would take four months to sell the existing inventory. When inventory rises above the seven-month mark, it turns into a 'Buyer's Market'.

A seller's market results in more competition for houses and higher prices. Now is a great time to list your home or property. When there is more product on the market it results in less competition and lower prices. This market is putting the squeeze on families that can't bridge the gap between renting and buying. It is a double-edged sword because rents are at an all-time high as well. A full 52% of the population in Missoula are renters. Most have been priced out of buying there. We are seeing a shift in buyers headed south due to a lower price point in Ravalli County.

Real estate has always been about developing relationships. Long term relationships. Technology has enhanced our ability to do that. This is, and I believe will always be, a face to face business. A trusted advisor guiding a client through all of the proper steps to ensure a smooth transaction. After all, we are entrusted with what is usually a client's most important financial asset. Their home or property. That responsibility is taken very seriously. Always seek representation. Have a great summer!



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We're happy to share the road with elk and other wildlife. Jean Schurman photo.



The Bitterroot Valley has some resident bison, albeit on ranches that raise these iconic animals for meat. If you're lucky you might spot the Bitterroot Bison food truck for a delicious burger or other bison specialties.



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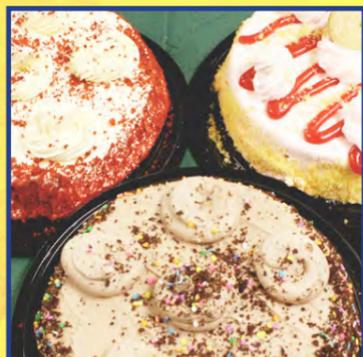
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County Fairgrounds - always happening

The Ravalli County Fair was cancelled this year due to COVID-19, but the Ravalli County Fairgrounds is not just a one-event location. Throughout the year, there are activities going on around the grounds, and even just on the grounds.

The First Interstate Building is a year-round facility that can accommodate up to 980 people. There is a commercial kitchen, nice restrooms, a sound system and a stage for bands, style shows or even boxing matches. In normal years, this venue is rented out almost every weekend with large

dinners like the Bitterroot Chamber of Commerce, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and Friends of the NRA. Even in these times of COVID-19, pickle ball is still happening almost every day. There are also smaller events still going on.

The Commercial Building and the old Arts Building are three-season venues and are large enough to hold estate sales or meetings. There are heaters for when it's chilly and again, plenty of room to social distance.

The barns around the fairgrounds are also available for rental. During the



The Prairie Sisters Flea Market took over the south lawn for an even in June.



Students of Hamilton Tae Kwon Do have used the lawn as their practice gym this summer.

winter, one covered arena and some of the barns house campers and such for a nominal fee. But when spring comes, they are cleared out and ready to be rented. This spring, a goat show took place one weekend.

The arena, Murdoch's arena, and the horse stalls on the east side of the Fairgrounds are available for rent as well. The gymkhana club puts on events in the arena throughout late spring and early summer. There have been barrel races, drill team practices, along with open riding. It's only \$25 for an individual or \$50 for a family for

the entire season!

This year, in the time of COVID-19, the lawns have seen a lot more activity. There have been several events such as the Prairie Sisters market where the vendors spread out over the lawns to sell their wares. The lawns also are a great place for a family reunion or a picnic.

For more information on how to rent one of these buildings or have an event on the grass, call the Fairgrounds and speak with Melissa Saville or Beth Perkins at 363-3411.

To the wonderful community of Stevensville,

On behalf of our residents and staff members we would like to thank you for the tremendous support for our facility during this difficult time. We recognize that this has been terribly hard on our residents and their loved ones but are inspired on a daily basis at the tremendous fighting spirit that we have all shown. While we are not out of the woods yet, please know that we are doing everything we can to keep your loved ones safe. We ask that you think of and pray for us throughout your day, both for our residents and our amazing staff. This is an important time for the Town of Stevensville to bind together as people and support one another as it has always been known for. There's a lot of trouble going on around us, so let's set an example and shine bright!

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Playing in the Bitterroot's parks



Florence and Hamilton both offer water features at their parks, a favorite with the younger set. Jean Schurman photo.

“Mom, I’m bored. There’s nothing to do.”

We’ve all heard that at one time or another, whether we are at home or on vacation. So what is there to do for a few hours that the kids will enjoy, and so will the adults?

From the north end of the valley to the south, there are parks in every town. Each park is unique, some quite developed and others a bit more rustic, but still just as enjoyable. Let’s take a trip to see what each town has to offer.

The Florence Park is located west of Highway 93. Turn west at the Town Pump onto Holloway Lane and go to the stop sign where you’ll take a right turn onto Florence Carlton Loop. The park is located about half a mile north. This is a large park that includes the Bitterroot Bucs American Legion Baseball field as well as four other baseball fields of varying sizes; some are just perfect for a family reunion softball game. There is a lot of open green space for kids to run in. The crown jewel of the park is Hideout Mountain, a playground for all ages. With slides and tunnels, swings and sand, there is something for all to play on. When they tire of that and get too hot, there is the splash deck to go cool off on. The water features include small geysers, spigots and lots of ways to splash around. Even the smallest can enjoy this area without any troubles. The Florence Park also has a covered picnic area which are perfect for family or school reunions.

Out in the Three Mile area, north-east of Stevensville off of Ambrose Road is another spacious park. This is a work in progress with the community making improvements every year. The park also features baseball field but also has a couple of soccer fields and some tennis courts. It’s a good place to let the kids and the dogs run wild for a while.

There is something for everyone in Stevensville, from a small pocket park to a 20-acre park on the Bitterroot River. The Creamery Park is a small pocket park located in the 200 block of Main Street.

With shade trees, shrubs, and picnic tables, it is the perfect place to take a break, sip a milkshake or coffee and learn about the creamery that was once a vital part of the town’s economy. Father Ravalli park is a small park located off College Street on the south end of town. There is a small soccer field, basketball court, and some playground equipment. The Veterans Park or Legion Park is located at the corner of Main Street and Eastside Highway at the north end of Stevensville. This is a Blue Star Memorial park.

The Lewis and Clark Park is located at the west end of West 2nd Street. There are softball fields, soccer fields, a basketball court and then the really cool stuff. First, there is the playground, Bear Mountain. This state of the art park was completed in the fall of 2015. There are tunnels, swings, slides, and even a rock wall. In the same area is the Stevensville City Pool. The pool is open from 1pm to 4pm Monday through Saturday. Cost is minimal and there are lifeguards on duty. In addition there are night swims Monday through Thursday, and there are also adult swims in the evenings. A little bit farther west in the park is the Stevensville Skate Park. This state of the art skate park features bowls and turns that even the professionals rave about. There are a couple of pavilions with charcoal grills for group picnics too.

The River Park is located off of the Stevensville Cut Off Road between Highway 93 and the town of Stevensville. The 20 acres offers a multitude of bird watching and wildlife viewing opportunities. There is a small pavilion and restrooms. You can even stick your feet in the river to cool off.

Crossing back to Victor on Highway 93, there are a couple of parks to enjoy. The Victor Park is located right in the center of the town, just to the west of the highway. There are two pavilions, newly constructed restrooms, and it is the perfect spot for a gathering. About a mile south of town on

continued on page 16

Ravalli County Fairgrounds . . .

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Metcalfe Refuge is birdwatcher's dream

By Dorinda Troutman

The Lee Metcalfe National Wildlife Refuge is an absolutely wonderful place to identify and watch birds, as well as other wildlife. The relatively tiny (2,000 plus acres) refuge is just north of Stevensville off the Eastside Highway, on the valley floor along the Bitterroot River.

Two areas have walking paths. The first is a series of paths (one is handicapped accessible) that lead from Wildfowl Lane west to the Bitterroot River, picnic tables and resting benches. Dogs are permitted, on leads, and folks can fish in the river. Warm-water sloughs are near the road, and the paths. Watch for wood ducks,

mallards, cinnamon teal, pileated woodpeckers, magpies, northern flickers, nuthatches and chickadees along these paths through open, mixed black poplar (cottonwood) and ponderosa pine forest. Water birch, snowberry and serviceberry grow in thickets that attract yellow warblers and yellowthroat warblers. Look for nesting holes in dead cottonwoods and pines. These holes are mostly created by flickers, and used by a large number of cavity-nesting species of birds.

The second walking area is from the visitor's center north across a small creek and to a large pond. It is handicap-accessible. No dogs are allowed. Watch for sandhill cranes, tree swallows, Canada geese, killdeer,



Bald Eagle. Cathy Scholtens photo.



Osprey. Cathy Scholtens photo.

Northern harriers, red-tailed hawks and bald eagles.

Columbian ground squirrels, marmots, white-tailed deer and coyotes can also be seen in this area. Nearly all of the different color variants of red-tailed hawks can be seen in the refuge, and, more rarely, peregrine and prairie falcons and sharp-shinned, northern goshawks and Cooper's hawks. Many more species such as trumpeter and tundra swans and snow geese can be seen during migration times in spring and fall.

The most perfect time at the refuge is early in the morning. Pack a picnic breakfast and a thick blanket. Park your car and spread the blanket out on the slope of grass above the pond.

Screaming osprey will put on a show of diving, emerging and shaking like dogs as they fish right in front of you. Western pond turtles and muskrats will emerge as the sun warms the day. Blackbirds, warblers, sparrows and wrens will be singing all about, and the calls of coots, geese and ducks from across the water add to the symphony. Silently, rough-winged, tree and violet-green swallows will swoop low over the water, grabbing up flying insects. If you are lucky, Vaux and white-throated swifts will be twittering a little higher in the sky.

Dorinda's weekly birdwatching column appeared for many years in the Bitterroot Star.

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Red-tailed Hawk. Cathy Scholtens photo.



Western Tanager. Cathy Scholtens photo.



Pileated Woodpecker. Cathy Scholtens photo.

*The Bitterroot Star wishes to thank
 photographer Cathy Scholtens for her beautiful
 photos of our local wild birds.
 We really appreciate her efforts.*

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Parks continued

the highway is the Victor Baseball Park. With batting cages and three fields, it's a perfect spot to play a pickup game. If baseball isn't your thing, there's a great creek to play in under the pines.

Corvallis has a great recreational facility just north of the town. The park includes two baseball fields, two rugby fields, a football field, soccer fields and an all-weather running track with a rubberized top. The property belongs to the Corvallis school and is always busy. The track is a great place for locals and visitors to get their miles completed.

Hamilton has several parks to enjoy. Most of the parks are open from dawn to dusk. The American Legion Park is located on South Second. There is a playground and a splash park for the kids. Restrooms are available as well. Kiwanis Park and River Park & Trail are located at 375 S. 9th and borders the Bitterroot River. The trail follows the river and winds in and

out of the trees. It is handicapped accessible. There is a gazebo on the bottom and up near the parking lot there is a small playground, a pavilion, and restrooms. Leashed dogs are allowed but please pick up after them. Hieronymus Park & Trail is at the north end of Hamilton behind Dairy Queen. There is a pond for fishing as well as the river. It's pretty natural there and be sure and include bug spray and watch for moose. Claudia Driscoll Park is located at 200 N 10th St. It is the home of Canyon Hideaway playground and the newly opened Circle 13 Skatepark. The Bandshell is also located there. Just a bit farther west off of Main Street is Steve Powell Park which is a 22-acre plot that follows the Bitterroot River, as well as Skalkaho Bend Park just to the south.

The Bitterroot Aquatic Center is located at 59 Kurtz Lane. There is a large outdoor pool with a water feature that has two slides and another chute. There is also an outside splash park. Inside, there is a heated pool for the cooler weather. The facility features dressing rooms, showers and restrooms.



Hamilton's Circle 13 Skatepark.



One of the fun structures at Bear Mountain Playground at Lewis & Clark Park in Stevensville.

Heading south to Darby, you'll find something for skaters or ropers. Just turn at the bucking bull and bucking horse and head to the Darby Arena if you have a horse you want to exercise. This facility is one of the best in the state and is open for riding whenever there isn't an event going

on in the arena. Just north of the arena is the Darby Skatepark. Although not very big, it does offer challenges. Hike the trail into town and wind up at the Darby Park right downtown on Main Street. There's a playground and lots of shade to rest up in for your next adventure.

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My Bitterroot favs

By Jean Schurman

We all have some special place here in the Bitterroot that brings us peace and soothes our souls. For some, it's the mountains, and for others, it's the river. I've thought about where it is I go when I want peace and quiet. I came up with two different places and unfortunately, they are not open for the public, but you can create your own space.

My favorite place is my backyard. With the wood shed on one side and the cellar on the other, it creates a perfect little oasis. I have several pots of flowers scattered around the area and three hanging from the cellar eave. But this area isn't a pristine garden. It's ragged with lots of currant bushes on one side, a dirt track through it from where the dog races around the house, and quack grass that has gotten away from me. This was the gathering place in the summer when I was growing up and I can vividly remember my dad, covered in hay dust, wearily sitting on the bench and drinking an ice tea, talking about his day.

But at night, when the stars are out, you can see them without any light pollution. The buildings and the bushes block out any street lights and so, the Milky Way sparkles. We watch the space station fly over, and the Starlink satellites. (The recent NEOWISE comet was only visible from the front yard.) There's nothing better than laying out in the lawn chair with a cozy blanket and watching

the stars.

My second go-to place is my car. I love to drive the backroads of the valley from Lolo to up the East Fork and the West Fork. Each side of the valley offers many different views depending upon the season. Although there are more and more houses, there are still some sights, and sites, that are truly beautiful.

The East Side offers many glimpses of ranching, cattle, and crops. If you truly want to see how grand the Bitterroot Mountain Range is, go up on the east side of the valley and watch the sunset.

The West Side also has many bucolic scenes with cattle, sheep, horses, and even alpacas grazing in green pastures, or, following a feed wagon in winter. The trees are closer and there's more creeks (cricks) for many different photo opportunities and places to enjoy. I just turn up the music and drive.

I also love being at any arena or sale ring in the valley. I love being around the barrel racers at the 5C or the Rockin' RC rodeo arena, and love watching the broncs buck their hearts out at the Darby Arena. It's not just the animals though, it's the people. They are always smiling, friendly and ready to help each other at the drop of a hat.

There are a couple of stores in the valley that I really like. One, an established fixture in Downtown Hamilton. The other, a new store north of Stevensville. Both offer great customer service

as well as unique items not often found in other stores.

The Heritage Market is north of Stevensville on Eastside Highway. This store is owned by Joe Mast and his family. This is an Amish market and features many grocery items from Iowa and Pennsylvania. The deli is filled with favorites such as ham and turkey but there are also meats like Dutch Loaf and braunschweiger. There is a wide variety of cheeses from Baby Swiss to real American cheese to my favorite, Farmers Cheese. Bulk candy, dried fruit, nuts, and tons of canned fruits and vegetables

line the shelves along with bulk baking items and hard to find old fashioned ingredients for those old family recipes. Handmade quilts line the walls with splashes of color. Take time to test the handmade clocks and watch in wonder as the music plays and the face of the clocks come apart and then go back together again. Before you leave, make sure to order a sandwich at the deli. They are made on fresh baked bread with fresh tomatoes, lettuce and of course, the meat from the deli and you will find yourself back at Grandma's table.

Fords Department Store has been the cornerstone of retail in Hamilton for at least as long as I've been alive. This store has

literally something for everyone from shoes and cowboy hats to tablecloths and towels. There are Levis, Wranglers, Cinch jeans for the men. Snap front western shirts or tee shirts with sarcastic sayings on them, you can find it all. The women's department is as fashionable as they come as is the boys and girls departments. But the best thing about Fords is the staff. Alan and Julie Ford are second generation proprietors of the store and have carried on in their father, Tom's, footsteps. Customer service is key to their success. Located at the corner of Main Street and North Second in Hamilton, I highly recommend stopping in to check it out.



The flowers really like my backyard and sometimes even the gnome comes to hang out. Jean Schurman photo.

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Summer Home Cooking

Baked Halibut

Ingredients

- 2 5oz boneless, skin-on halibut fillets
- 1 tsp olive oil
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- 2 tsp lemon zest
- Juice 1/2 lemon, divided
- 1 tbsp chopped flat leaf parsley
- Pinch each sea salt and fresh ground black pepper, or to taste

Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. In a large nonstick baking dish, add halibut skin side down and drizzle with oil.
3. Top with garlic, parsley, lemon zest and 2 tbsp lemon juice, dividing evenly. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, until halibut flakes easily when tested with a fork. Drizzle with remaining lemon juice and serve.

Cashew Ginger Chicken Stir-Fry with Mango

Savory soy sauce, sweet honey and fiery ginger give this stir-fry personality, but the chunks of juicy mango are really what take this dish up a notch. Serve with brown rice or quinoa to round out the meal.

Ingredients

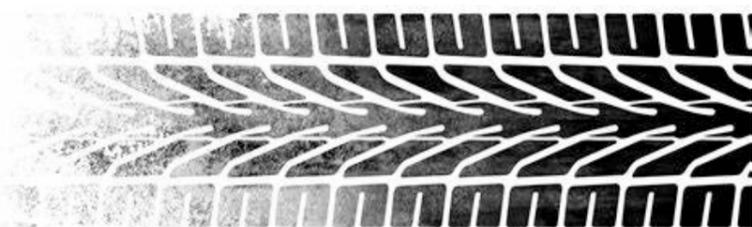
- 1 3-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated
- 6 cloves garlic, finely grated or crushed
- 3 tbsp reduced-sodium soy sauce or tamari
- 2 tbsp rice vinegar
- 3 tsp raw honey
- 1/4 tsp ground cayenne powder
- 12 oz boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 12 oz broccoli (with stems)
- 1/2 daikon radish, peeled and cut into 1-inch-long x 1/4-inch-wide matchsticks (Tip: Substitute with 3 standard Cherry Belle red radishes if you can't find daikon.)
- 4 green onions (light and dark green parts separated), cut into 1-inch lengths, divided
- 3 carrots, cut into 1-inch-long x 1/4-inch-wide matchsticks
- 1/2 cup raw unsalted cashews
- 1/2 tsp sea salt, divided
- 1 firm mango, peeled, pitted and cut into 1/2-inch chunks
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tbsp tapioca starch

Preparation

1. In a small bowl, stir together ginger, garlic, soy sauce, vinegar, honey and cayenne. Transfer 3 tbsp to a large bowl; add chicken to large bowl and toss to coat. Let marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes. Reserve remaining ginger mixture.

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2. Meanwhile, cut broccoli into 2-inch florets, reserving stems. Halve florets lengthwise. Peel stems; cut into 1-inch-long x ¼-inch-wide matchsticks to yield about ¾ cup.

3. Mist a large nonstick skillet or wok with cooking spray; heat on medium. Add broccoli florets and stir-fry until tender and bright green, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a large plate.

4. Mist same skillet with cooking spray; heat on medium-high. Add broccoli stems, radish, light parts of green onions, carrots, cashews and ¼ tsp salt and stir-fry just until vegetables are tender and lightly browned, 5 to 6 minutes. Transfer to plate with broccoli florets.

5. Mist same skillet with cooking spray; heat on medium. Add chicken and remaining ¼ tsp salt and stir-fry until browned, 4 to 5 minutes. Add mango, dark green parts of green onions and reserved ginger mixture and stir-fry for 1 minute. Whisk together broth and tapioca; add mixture to pan. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until chicken is no longer pink inside and sauce is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon, 4 to 5 minutes. Add broccoli mixture; toss to coat.

Summer Pasta Salad with Grilled Zucchini and Corn, and Cilantro Pesto

Ingredients

- 6 ounces rice noodles
- 2 medium zucchini, cut in half lengthwise
- 1 red bell pepper, cut in half, seeded
- ½ an onion, cut into ½ inch wedges
- 1–2 ears of fresh corn (or use frozen, roasted corn), shucked
- oil, salt and pepper for veggies
- Garnish with cherry tomatoes, lime wedges, pumpkin seeds cilantro leaves

Vegan Cilantro Pesto:

- 1 large bunch cilantro and thin stems
- 2 fat garlic cloves
- 1–2 tablespoons chopped jalapeno (optional)
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1/3 cup pumpkin seeds (raw)
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- ½ teaspoon coriander (optional)
- ½ teaspoon smoked paprika (optional - only if you like smoky flavor)
- 1 tablespoon lime zest
- 2 tablespoons lime juice

Preparation

Preheat the grill to medium high, and boil water for the rice noodles. Prep the veggies – brush or spray with olive oil, and sprinkle with salt and pepper.



Pour boiling water over the rice noodles, let stand for 3 minutes, then drain and rinse with cold water. Set aside. Place the veggies on the grill, lower heat to medium, cover, then make the cilantro pesto. Check the veggies every 5 minutes or so... turning. Place all the cilantro, garlic and jalapeño in food processor and pulse repeatedly until finely chopped. Add the remaining ingredients, pulse until combined but not too smooth. You should have a fairly loose (runny) pesto - perfect for tossing the salad. Once the veggies are done, cut into bite-sized pieces. Give the pasta a final cool water rinse, loosening it up. Drain and place in a bowl. Add the Cilantro Pesto and the veggies and an

additional ½ teaspoon salt, and possibly more to taste. Adjust lime, salt and heat according to your taste preference. I'll sometimes add a pinch of chipotle pepper, or chili flakes, or even more finely chopped jalapeño to bump up the heat. Place on a serving platter or in a bowl, top with halved cherry tomatoes, sprinkle cilantro leaves and serve with lime wedges.

Thanks to Rainbow's End Natural Foods for sharing these delicious summer recipes with us.

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Art in the Time of Coronavirus

**By Barbara Liss, Sculptor
Montana Bliss Gallery and
Studio**

Concrete is a very organic medium; its texture is the characteristic I value most.

The color palette is influenced by stone statues native to the concrete jungle of my childhood.

Sculptures vary from the sole medium of concrete to adding elements of found objects that are often the inspiration of the piece. My love of feathers has also found their way into many of my pieces, combining the lightest and heaviest of elements.

Subjects are primarily faces of our world and occasionally creatures from another. Concrete sculptures are at home in

the inside and outside environment, placed wherever they inspire.

My sculptures speak to me as we become friends in the sculpting process telling me who they are or what they are thinking. When they're done, my brother, Dan Liss writes about what each piece is expressing. I create the visual story while he creates the written one.

Series continue to evolve as a means of conveying messages on a subject.

Ringling in 2020 Series

This series is all about the antique bells I have been collecting. When January 2020 arrived. I knew it was time to ring in the new year.

"Belle: Ringing in the New Year"- the sculpture features 3 bells with that time



Pandemic Series by Barbara Liss

worn patina that I love. The wonderful curve of a bolt head adds a perfect complement to her bell jewelry.

"Ringing in the Decade" - The bell was created by Swiss bell maker Chiantel Fodeur and reproduced in America up until the second World War. The numbered nails in the chain are railroad tie nails first used in 1897 to monitor various treatment process of the railroad ties. I'm fascinated with the variety of styles of the linkage of chains and incorporate them in my sculpture for their own artistic value.

"Ringing in the Century" features an antique cow bell, a spiral torsion spring, and a bolt head all highlighting the patina of time.

The bells were incorporated in the sculpture so they could be rung. Enjoy their varied ringtones.

Pandemic Series

Isolation represents having time for detail.

Corona represents what the virus looks like under a microscope in the pattern created.

Covid represents the tyrant strain with steam punk details and the 19 pattern identifying the strain.

Protection represents what is needed to stay healthy, hand-washing, the hands holding soap.. The mask represents the handmade masks being made by people across the country for medical personnel with patterned fabrics. The spring earrings represent how when this is over we will spring back.

These pieces are 3 foot tall and are meant to be placed standing with a bar support on the back side.



Ringling in 2020 Series by Barbara Liss

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Elk in the Winter



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Residential subdivisions in big game winter range and in elk migration corridors destroy one of the things we value highly.

Once homes and their people and vehicles and dogs are in big game habitat, it's lost forever.

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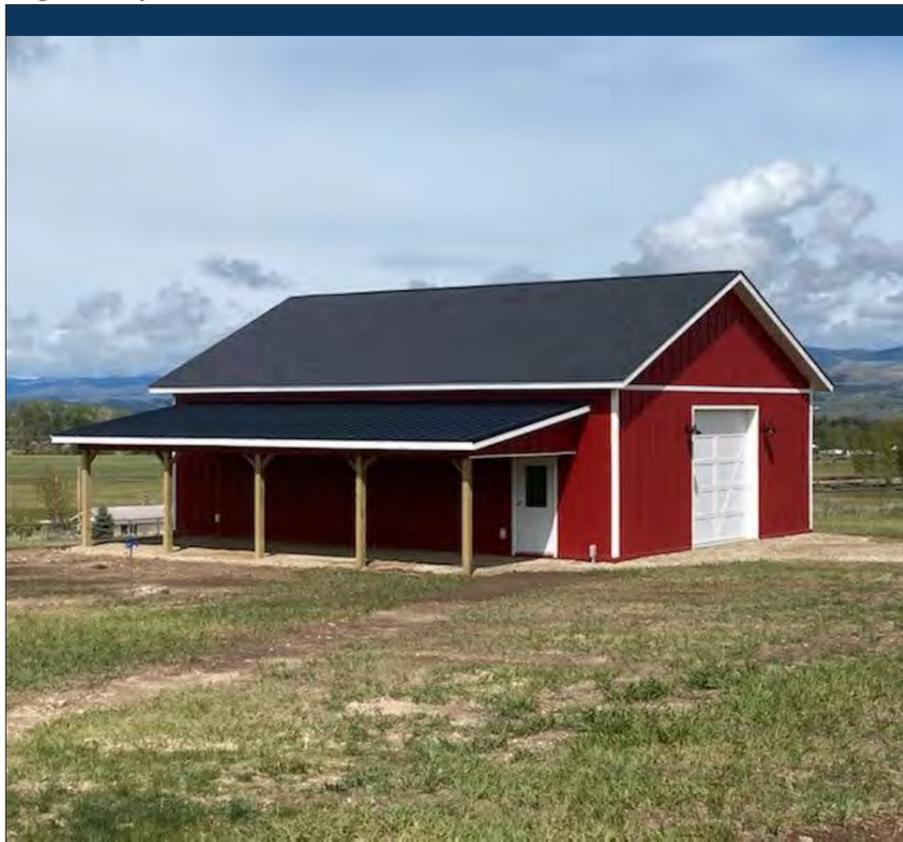
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A cascade along the Lost Horse corridor. Victoria Howell photo.

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