

Spring 2020

# Adopt a Species

Increasing understanding of Montana's wildlife and habitat

## A time of change

The Adopt-a-Species program has been part of the curriculum in local schools for over 20 years, and was brought to 21 schools in 2020. This program requires the work of several partners. The **Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, Foundation for Animals, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks** and the **Montana Discovery Foundation** bring area schools a different Montana wildlife species to study each year. The season kicks off with a fall assembly featuring a live bird of prey from the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center at Montana WILD. The program culminates with THIS art and writing contest, brought to you in time to celebrate the **50th anniversary of Earth Day.**

This year's art contest theme was "*The Life that Fire Brings.*" Months before the devastating wildfires in Australia, we tasked students with thinking about how fire affects their species and how their animal benefits from wildfire on the Montana landscape. They learned that wildfire can renew and improve wildlife habitat when the fires do not grow to devastating proportions. We hope you can see the learning and effort that went into these incredible works of art.

In addition to recognizing the hard work of our local students, we hope our community can come together (though not physically) in recognition of Earth Day 50. This year the community had to cancelled several large celebration events. Now we have the opportunity to think about the ways we can all celebrate Earth Day 50 without bringing the community together in person. Meanwhile, please enjoy the Adopt-a-Species Art Contest winners, commemorating:

### The Life That Fire Brings.



Abby Davis., 4th Grade, Four Georgians Elementary



Nick.Wirth, 1st Grade, Wolf Creek School



Xavier Clark, 2nd Grade, Prickly Pear Elementary



Furnished home: Hurray for a fire! It has got me many more branches and logs to hide under and clean gravel. I can finally get a break from those crazy ospreys who try to eat me for dinner.

5th Grade, Hawthorne Elementary



Brenna Sullivan, 5th Grade, Montana City School

How Fires Help Wildlife  
By Paxten Wood, Jim Darcy  
Fire can help the forest and the animals. New vegetation will grow and fire burns old undergrowth and downfall. Fire also kills harmful bugs like bark beetles. It also clears new space for habitat and it usually makes a better home for wildlife. Wildfires are not always bad.



Makayla L., 5th Grade, Four Georgians Elementary

# Adopt-a-Species Art Contest 2020

The Life That Fire Brings



Olivia Peterson, 5th Grade, Radley Elementary



Sam Madsen, 3rd Grade, Radley



Brody Davis, 4th Grade, Radley

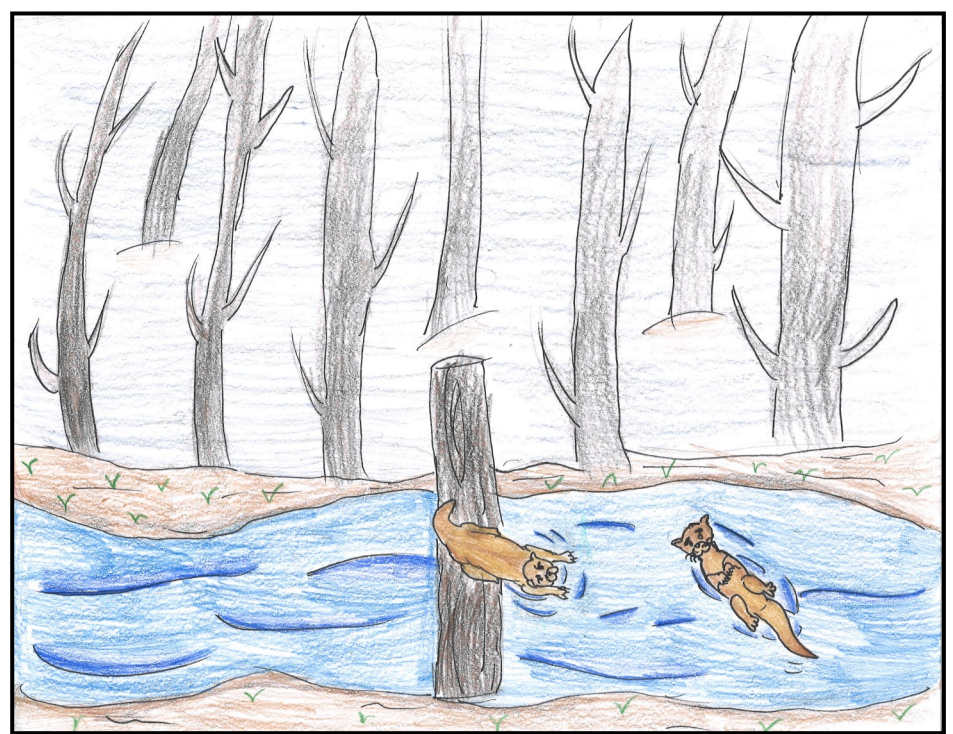


Heather L. 4th Grade, Radley Elem.

**Sara Dearing** – 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Radley River Otters have a streamlined body, short legs with webbed feet, dense fur that keeps them warm, a trapped tail and small ears. An adult North American river otter can weigh between 5.0 and 14 Kilograms. Did you know that otters are dangerous? River otters are cute and soft but are dangerous. These animals have strong teeth. They can bite very hard. Do not go near them. River otters can hold their breath for 8 minutes. River otters live to be about 8 to 9 years old.



Ayla Batey, 3rd Grade, Radley Elementary



Dempsey R. Hadley, 5th Grade, Radley Elementary



Lucia, 3rd Grade, Kessler Elementary



Zoey Stevens, 3rd Grade, Kessler Elementary



Evie Mayernik, 3rd Grade, Kessler Elementary

## Earth Day at Home

Even as you stay home and maintain social distancing, you can still exercise your responsibility to act for the environment. No matter where you are, you can make a difference!

### For Plastic Pollution:

- Do a plastic audit of your home and count how many plastic items you purchase for your kitchen and bathroom—how can you reduce those on your next shopping trip?
- Ask restaurants to skip the plastic utensils when ordering take out

Source: [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org)

## Today in History

On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans — 10% of the U.S. population at the time — took to the streets, college campuses and hundreds of cities to protest environmental ignorance and demand a new way forward for our planet.

The first Earth Day is credited with launching the modern environmental movement, and is now recognized as the planet's largest civic event.

## Celebrate Earth Day 50

Source: [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org)

## Protect our Species

Learn about the impacts of biodiversity loss and how to help local species from home.

- Tune into a virtual teach-in from a zoo or aquarium to learn about animals and their habitats—check out Montana Wild on Facebook.
- Research what pollinators are native to your area and what plants they rely on. Design a pollinator garden for your yard or community!

Source: [www.earthday.org](http://www.earthday.org)



**FURNISHED HOME FOR SALE:** Nice cool pool that's good for laying eggs. The recent fire made the pool deeper and the gravel cleaner. There are many hiding places from birds and bigger fish. The only down side is that people like to fish here ... A lot.

5th Grade, Hawthorne Elementary



**Help wanted!** I am moving into a new home and I want my new home to be a furnished home with clean, cold water and with good gravel to lay my eggs in. The best fish homes come from fire! The fire makes our pools deeper and fallen trees help us be safe from our predators!

5th Grade, Hawthorne Elementary



Jacob Golie, 5th Grade, Wolf Creek



Brydger Golie, 4th Grade, Wolf Creek

**Jocee Allen, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
*Four Georgians*  
 I am going to tell you all about Bison, our school's adopt-a-species. They are awesome animals. Bison can get up to 20-25 years old! The females weigh up to 350 lbs. and the males weigh up to 425! They get up to 990 pounds to 2,200 pounds. What they like to eat is mostly grass. Herds of 3 or 5 eat till they are full or till they need rest. Buffalo mostly eat up to 24 pounds. Sometimes they eat weeds and woody plants. Where do buffalo live? Well they live in mostly plains, but one of the types of buffalo live in Africa. That type is called African buffalo. Bison look like lumbering lumps but they're quite agile. Also, they can run 35-40 mph and jump up to 6 ft in the air. A buffalo's coat is so thick that snow can cover it and the snow doesn't melt at all! And I can't forget that a buffalo's tail can grow up to 3 feet long! Indians used buffalo skin for tipis and coats and their shoes. There are many more awesome facts about buffalo. Like I said in the beginning, they're awesome! And if you read about them a lot, you can find out why they are so awesome!



Harper Hamper, 4th Grade, Four Georgians Elem.



Emma, 4th Grade, Four Georgians Elem.



Eden Guthrie, 4th Grade, Jim Darcy Elem.

**How Fire Improves Wildlife**  
 By *Qwynn O'leary, Jim Darcy*  
 Fire improves conditions for wildlife. One way is that new vegetation can grow. Seeds are released and new flowers grow. It clears undergrowth, and harmful bugs are removed. Another way is that it clears spaces for habitat. It burns structures and the deer can move in. It also gets rid of downfall. Last, it creates shelter for new species to move in. That is how fire improves wildlife.



Russell Baker, 5th Grade, Jim Darcy Elem.



Ander Helseth, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, Jim Darcy



Jocelyn Pritchard, 4th Grade, Trinity School



Tinzin Hylton, 3rd Grade, Trinity School



Allie Muffick, 5th Grade, Montana City School

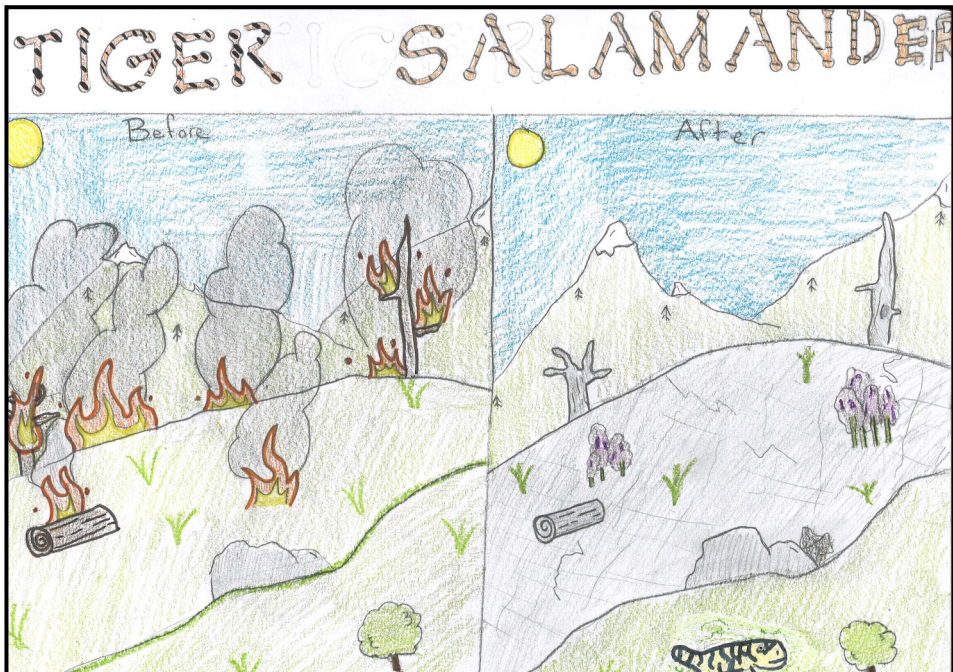
"Did you know that the boreal chorus frog is the most common frog in central and eastern Montana but is the rarest frog to be seen?" - *Livi Logan, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Montana City*

"After the fire, the soil would become richer and more trees can grow for the salamanders to hide in. Trees are knocked over and create hiding places for the salamander to hide." - *Steele Hansing, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Montana City*



Malachi, 3rd Grade, Montana City School

**Lily Oelkers, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
*Montana City*  
 One of the amphibians in Montana is the Woodhouse Toad. Woodhouse Toad is found throughout much of the central and western United States. A Woodhouse toad is nocturnal, and eats a variety of insects, spiders, ants, bees and scorpions. Woodhouse Toads like to be near water, streams, ponds and wetlands. Woodhouse Toads have rough, warty skin and large glands that produce poison, which makes them bad to eat. A controlled fire benefits the woodhouse toad by burning aggressive vegetation. This then brings more sunlight and warmth to shallow water. On the other hand, fires could destroy large sections of forest, kill wildlife, alter the water cycle and soil. So, fire can affect the habitat of a Woodhouse Toad in many different ways.



Kash Walker, 5th Grade, Montana City School

**Kash Walker, 5<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
*Montana City*  
 The Tiger Salamander is my amphibian. Tiger salamanders live in forests, grasslands, and marshes under rocks and in burrows. It eats grubs, earthworms, minnows, insects, small amphibians, and small mice. Fire is good and bad for salamanders, so here are some of the good effects of fire on tiger salamanders. First off, fire makes a lot of changes to the environment which is good for my salamander. Wildfires also attract more insects, and more insects equals more food. So now that I have talked about the positive effects of fire on my salamander, I will talk about the negative effects. For one, it burns down their homes and it sometimes burns and kills them! Fire also sometimes makes them change their habitat. In conclusion, fire effects the tiger salamander negatively and positively.

# Earth Day



*Kourtney Beattie, 3rd Grade, Rossiter Elem.*



*Bridger Webster, 3rd Grade, Rossiter Elem.*



*Tom Cook, 3rd Grade, Rossiter Elem.*

**Wildfire**  
*By Ethan Fuller, Jim Darcy*

Wildfires can be deadly, but also can be good for animals. More food can come. The seeds from the old plants grow to new ones. The bad thing is it burns their habitat. So they have to find a new habitat. Fires improve the wildlife.



*HB Johnson, 1st Grade, Prickly Pear Elem.*

## Celebrate a Socially Distant Earth Day!

Stay safe and protect the earth during these unusual times. Take part in an earth MONTH challenge! Over the next 30 days, try some of these activities:

**Plan an Earth Action!**

- ◊ Clean up litter
- ◊ (use protective gloves)
- ◊ Start a composting project!
- ◊ Buy or grow local food
- ◊ Tune into Earth Day LIVE

[www.earthday.org/earth-day-live/](http://www.earthday.org/earth-day-live/)

**Learn to use a field guide to identify local plants and animals!**

-  Merlin or Audubon bird apps
-  Montana Wildflowers app
-  Montana Grasses app

**Try out Citizen Science!**

-  eBird app or website
-  GLOBE Observer app
-  iNaturalist app

On April 22nd, make a window or yard sign for your neighbors and help our community celebrate earth day!  
Visit [HelenaEarthDay.org](http://HelenaEarthDay.org) for more ideas!



*Maggie Wisdom, 1st Grade, Prickly Pear Elem.*



*Brylie Harris, 2nd Grade, Prickly Pear Elem.*



*Adyson Wak, 2nd Grade, Prickly Pear Elem.*



*Colton Fryer, 1st Grade, Townsend Elem.*



*Caleb Crusch, 1st Grade, Townsend Elem.*



*David Sattler, 1st Grade, Townsend Elem.*

## The Partners

### **Foundation for Animals**

The Foundation for Animals is a unique nonprofit foundation dedicated to addressing the critical needs of animals, both domestic and wild. The Foundation provides assistance to well-managed projects that promote animal welfare, prevent animal suffering, and provide improvements for animals.

The Adopt-a-Species program encourages K-5 school children to learn about Montana's wild animals and habitat needs. The Foundation for Animals has been involved with the program since inception, and has been instrumental in bringing educational films and eco-entertainers to local students, highlighting the importance of Montana habitat conservation for wildlife. Find more information about Foundation for Animals at our website: [www.foundationforanimals.org](http://www.foundationforanimals.org).

### **Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest**

Straddling the Continental Divide, the HLCNF is rich in natural and cultural resources. Its diverse topography and geology provides majestic scenery where recreational opportunities abound.

The Forest's mountain ranges contain a wide array of plant and animal life. Native cutthroat trout and other fish species populate clear mountain lakes and streams where wildlife is abundant.

HLCNF is committed to providing quality visitor information, education, and outreach to the community. As part of these efforts, HLCNF has been involved with the Adopt-a-Species program since inception and appreciates how current partnerships have revitalized a great education program focusing on habitat. For more information, visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/hlcnf>

### **Montana Discovery Foundation**

The Montana Discovery Foundation is a nonprofit that provides hands-on experiences in nature, improves wildlife habitat and watershed health, promotes responsible recreation, and interprets nature for students of all ages.

MDF provides free environmental education to diverse audiences. Providing a multitude of programs in over twenty area schools, guided hikes

and events year-round, MDF hopes to lead people to value and promote Montana's natural resources. Keep up with Montana Discovery Foundation opportunities at: [www.montanadiscoveryfoundation.org](http://www.montanadiscoveryfoundation.org)

### **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, through its employees and citizen commission, provides for the stewardship of the fish, wildlife, parks and recreational resources of Montana, while contributing to the quality of life for present and future generations.

It is the belief of FWP that safe, knowledgeable, involved, and responsible participants are essential for effective management and conservation of Montana's natural resources, and that active participation leads people to develop an interest to conserve and manage those same resources. For more information visit [www.fwp.mt.gov](http://www.fwp.mt.gov).