



The Wildlife Society

University of Idaho Student Chapter

Idaho Cooperative Wildlife Unit

Moscow, Idaho 83843

*Revised Ed.
for Storm Swans
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Position Statement of the Executive Board, University of Idaho Student Chapter, The Wildlife Society on Reclassification of the Idaho Primitive Area, Salmon River Breaks Primitive Area and contiguous lands.

Wildlands in the Idaho batholith are characterized by a canyon ecologically unique to the intermountain region and possess flora and fauna of tremendous diversity in a dynamic equilibrium. This equilibrium would quickly and easily be disrupted by man if his activities were not limited.

There are approximately 190 species of resident wildlife and an uncounted number of seasonal migrants living in the area. These populations are essentially in equilibrium, however there is little else known about any but the few big game species which are currently of economic importance.

Human history abounds with incidents of man-induced biological catastrophe which have often severely affected the lives of men and nations, and have caused many wildlife species to become extinct. Man is now learning some of the reasons behind these catastrophies, but to obtain a fuller understanding, the process of biological investigation requires sufficient gene pools and natural ecosystems.

It is therefore important to maintain large contiguous blocks of wild untrammled country, wherever possible, so that future generations will be permitted the investigation of ecological processes and have a base-line index to those

factors which either adversely or beneficially affect their lives and communities.

In the meantime the flora and fauna of such wild lands will be a continuing source of economic, educational, aesthetic, cultural and scientific well being to those people living nearby and also to those people living all across the nation, all of whom are the legal stewards of this land.

By contrasting the ecological history of the wild central portion of the Idaho batholith with those areas surrounding it, which have been populated and dominated by man, it can easily be shown that if the wild and untrammled character of this land is not retained, we may lose not only many of the wildlife populations themselves, but also the stability and nature of the ecosystem as a whole.

Upon the initiation of any developmental or exploitive activities, especially mining or logging, the pristine condition of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River will quickly go the way of its sister stream, the South Fork. As happened on the South Fork, the salmon, steelhead, cutthroat trout, and many other forms of aquatic life will be severely affected by extreme siltation and other forms of aquatic pollution.

Bighorn sheep, being the most sensitive to habitat changes induced by man, will probably be the first species of big game to be seriously diminished or have their lives drastically altered. This has happened in similar areas such as the Lost River and lower Salmon River country upon the advent of man's influence.

Although elk populations can be enhanced by certain logging practices, human intervention and activities associated with logging such as roads and four-wheel-drive vehicles, alter the behavior of the animals, a

factor relevant in biological investigations. It is important that some populations be available for study that have not been influenced by man's activities. Herein lies one of the greatest values of elk populations in wilderness areas.

Mountain lions are benefited by wilderness and do best in the least accessible country. They are very vulnerable to hunting, especially in winter and especially where snow machines are used. There has been a very significant drop in the cougar population on the South Fork on the Salmon River since roads, allowing snowmobile access, were built.

Significant reduction of populations or alteration of their natural behavior patterns, especially of the larger ecological dominants, inevitably affects other forms of life, both plant and animal, to the extent that the ecosystem's usefulness for gauging man's influence upon other areas is diminished.

Therefore it is the feeling of the Executive Board of the University of Idaho Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society that: (1) a contiguous block of approximately 2.3 million acres, including the Idaho Primitive Area, the Salmon River Breaks Primitive Area and all contiguous wild lands should be legally maintained in the most natural and wild state possible, and that (2) human interference with the terrestrial and aquatic environments of these areas should be constrained to proper wilderness practices.