

# VITAL NEWS

Fall/Winter  
2002

A publication of The Vital Ground Foundation

## Vital Ground Goes Back to the Front

"We're thrilled to partner with an organization like Vital Ground, whose mission to protect grizzly bear habitat so closely coincides with our own. By combining forces, we've been able to leverage more money toward direct habitat preservation, as this land project demonstrates."



Photo: Derek

Vital Ground recently joined forces with The Nature Conservancy of Montana (TNC) to protect a key piece of property located along the Rocky Mountain Front. The 469-acre property, known as the Parocai parcel, is located approximately 9 miles southwest of Dupuyer, Montana. The parcel is contiguous to two properties that were recently protected through conservation easements, both of which were TNC deals on which Vital

Ground was a key financial partner.

### Connecting the Pieces

The first of those deals involved the purchase of a conservation easement from rancher Karl Rappold on approximately half of his ranch. The second transaction brought over 6,000 acres of a nearby property, the Boone & Crockett Club, under conservation easement. Earlier this fall, the Parocai parcel, which lies between these two protected properties, was put up for sale. Meanwhile, Rappold was busy negotiating the sale of a conservation easement over an additional 2,080 acres of his land to the USFWS. The first phase of the Parocai transaction involves the purchase of this property by TNC and ensuing sale to Rappold who will use proceeds from his easement sale. Vital Ground will assist in the second phase, which requires purchasing an easement from Rappold on his newly acquired tract. By leveraging easement purchase funds from the federal government and working with a pro-conservation rancher, a total of 2,549 acres of prime grizzly habitat will be permanently protected through this project.

### Protecting Vulnerable Ecosystems

The Parocai property lies in the transition zone between the Fescue-Mixed Grass Prairie ecoregion and the Canadian Rockies ecoregion. The western side of the parcel is dominated by limber pine and Douglas fir with a native fescue understory interspersed with large aspen stands. The eastern end of the property includes native grassland communities and shrub fields. The northern border of the property fronts approximately 1 1/2 miles of Scoffin Creek, a very remote and significant riparian corridor, important to grizzly bears for seasonal migrations from mountains to prairies. This tract is also highly important as year-round wildlife habitat for elk, deer, and grassland birds.

### Managing for Wildlife

The Rappold property supports a rich mosaic of fescue grassland, shrub/willow riparian, aspen, limber pine savanna and Douglas fir forest communities. It contains the headwaters for two significant riparian corridors, Sheep and Scoffin Creeks, which are heavily used by wildlife, including grizzlies. The ranch has one of the highest densities of wintering mule deer (500-1,000 head) in the state, and also supports 300-400 elk. This is the only private property on the entire Rocky Mountain Front that directly adjoins the Bob Marshall Wilderness and has over 1 1/2 miles of common boundary with the Lewis and Clark National Forest. Along the Front,



Photo: Derek



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December 2002

Dear Friends of Vital Ground,

*I hope that this newsletter finds you in good health, enjoying the gifts of family and friendship during the holidays. As the year comes to a close, the staff and board of Vital Ground wish to thank each and every one of you for helping us achieve our goals of wildlife habitat preservation. We would not exist without the support of our members and volunteers, and the generosity of our corporate partners and donors. I hope that each of you has the opportunity to go outside and enjoy the winter wonderland that will surround us for the next three months. Best wishes for a happy holiday season and a wonderful New Year!*

*Banu*

*Banu Qureshi  
Chairman of the Board*

## In Memoriam



Courtesy of Mountain Light

Wilderness photographer and writer Galen Rowell and his wife Barbara Cushman Rowell, also a photographer and writer, died on August 11th, 2002 in an airplane crash outside of Bishop, California. Galen had been involved with Vital Ground since its inception as a member of our advisory board. He was a generous and talented friend, always willing to share his gift in wildlife photography with our organization.

## VITAL EVENTS

Saturday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2003, "Fourth Annual Best in the West" fine art auction. Vital Ground invites you and your guests to enjoy dinner, fine art and traditional American Indian ceremonies and dancing, with a special guest appearance by VG Ambassador, Tank the Bear. Hosted by The Inn on the Creek in Midway, Utah.

Saturday, May 17<sup>th</sup> - Friday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2003, Vital Ground's "2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Wild Bear Adventure" at Knight Inlet Lodge, on British Columbia's stunningly beautiful rainforest coast. Invitations have already been sent out for our unique eco-adventure in an intimate surrounding accompanied by photographers, scientists and Vital Ground supporters. Please contact us immediately for a package if you did not receive one, and would like to. This experience of seeing bears and other wildlife close up

Please call (435) 658-0009 or e-mail Vital Ground at [info@vitalground.org](mailto:info@vitalground.org) for details on these upcoming events.

## *Bart Memorial Appeal Roars Into Life!*

With the holidays upon us, Vital Ground is pleased to announce the launch of the Third Annual Bart the Bear Memorial Appeal. This annual appeal gives us a reason to remember an old friend, Bart the Bear, who succumbed to cancer 2 1/2 years ago. In so doing, we ask those who knew Bart, or who were moved by his story, to renew their pledge to help wild grizzly bears by making a donation to Vital Ground.

### What is it About Bears?

A lot of people who are interested in wildlife conservation wonder why Vital Ground targets grizzly bears as our primary conservation focus. Others ask if Vital Ground is involved in political lobbying to keep grizzlies listed as a threatened species under the protection of the Endangered Species Act. Still others are confused about the relationship between the grizzly bears who have become famous animal movie actors, and the work that Vital Ground does. All of these are great questions, and the launch of our Bart Memorial Appeal gives us the perfect opportunity to address them.

### Inspired by Bart

The founders of Vital Ground were Doug and Lynne Seus, owners of Wasatch Rocky Mountain Wildlife, which trains animals for roles in movies. Somewhere along the road, Doug decided to take on the challenge of training America's largest land animal, the grizzly bear, and the Seuses adopted an unwanted, five-week old Kodiak brown bear cub from a zoo. Little did they know how significantly their lives would change once Bart romped into their hearts.

Lynne Seus recalls the event that led her and her husband to dedicate their lives to protecting wild grizzlies by preserving their habitat. "Vital Ground was conceived in the translucent gold fire of a giant grizzly's eyes. That bear was Bart. He was born in a zoo, but he wasn't destined to stay there and he came to us. Fifteen years and fifteen hundred pounds later, Bart's movie career was at its zenith. But that gold fire always spoke of the wilderness he could never know. Then it happened. We were standing in a place of true wildness, high on the eastern front of the Rockies, watching a grizzly walk effortlessly to a rocky peak. It stopped briefly, and seemed to survey the vast wilderness below. In that moment, we realized what we must do for Bart, as a payback and as a legacy of his life spent in our human world.

We decided to save the wild places that Bart never knew. And so, Vital Ground was born."

That was eleven years ago. Had it not been for the special relationship that the Seuses shared with their Kodiak bear, they may never have found a kinship with wild grizzlies. They certainly would not have invested the time and money required to launch a new non-profit, nor would they have thrust one of their animals into the pivotal educational and fundraising role of Ambassador. And an organization dedicated to the conservation of grizzly bear habitat may never have come about.

### Bears and Our Mission

Although our mission originated with the relationship between one bear and his masters, it is perpetuated by the very nature of the important role that grizzlies occupy in their environment as the keystone species. In fact, our mission statement states, "Vital Ground selects ecosystems that support and sustain grizzly bears... because where the grizzly can walk, the earth is healthy and whole."

### Private Property is Our Priority

Vital Ground's primary focus is to protect critical habitat on private land. We have completed multiple projects in the lower 48 states, as well as Alaska. We continue to seek out conservation opportunities in Canada, especially those that enhance wildlife corridors between our two countries. In addition, we educate the public about the importance of maintaining an intact ecosystem with all of its indigenous species. We do not, however, engage in any type of activism or political lobbying, however noble its purpose. Our job is about setting reasonable limits on the amount of human interference on any given piece of privately owned acreage that is important to wildlife.

### Bart's Legacy

Having founded Vital Ground, the Seuses are still very active in its governance as members of the board of trustees. In addition, they donate the involvement of the next generation of their trained animals, both grizzlies and wolves, as wildlife Ambassadors for our educational programs. It is the Seuses' way of making sure that their legacy of giving back their time and resources to help our native American wildlife,

Photo: Galen

## Vital Ground and Its Ambassadors Send Bear Hugs to ...



Coffee Traders, our very first Corporate Partner in Conservation (CPC). With a strong corporate ethic of environmental responsibility, Coffee Traders pioneered Vital Ground's CPC program by donating money from every sale of their Grizzly Blend Coffee. With Vital Ground applying these generous corporate donations exclusively towards land protection projects, Coffee Traders is truly helping to preserve grizzly habitat.



Photographer Thomas D. Mangelsen's Images of Nature, this year's remarkable success story in non-profit/corporate partnership projects. A recently enrolled sponsor, Images of Nature has seen tremendous growth in their partnership program with Vital Ground. They donate a large portion of sales from three grizzly bear photographic prints to Vital Ground. Mangelsen's dedication to photographing wildlife in their natural environment is evident from his generous donations to Vital Ground's habitat preservation projects.



The Fieldstone Foundation, based in Newport Beach, California, for their generous support of Utah nonprofits, including Vital Ground. Vital Ground is a participant in their Nonprofit Executive Learning Group that uses nonprofit management consultants to teach state-of-the-art management models. Fieldstone's commitment to developing nonprofit leaders in the community is manifested through this unique grant to improve our operations.



The Land Trust Alliance (LTA), based in Washington, D.C., for their \$1,500 grant to Vital Ground to help fund board development during 2002. The LTA fosters land conservation across America by creating a powerful national network from its 800 member land trusts. Their programs include development grants that cover the expenses of management consultants and training, enabling us to spend more of the money donated by individuals directly on land conservation projects and educational programs.



Mervyn's, part of The Target Corporation Family of Giving Programs based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for a \$1,500 community grant to support land acquisition for the preservation of grizzly bear habitat. Thanks to employee Susan Rogers, Mervyn's can now consider grizzly bears as part of the community that they have helped.



## "Ask the Experts"

Dear Tank,

I've heard that you take baths in a bathtub. Is this true?

Bear Lover, Washington

D.C.

Dear Bear Lover,

See the photo below. Then please call my agent. I'm always ready to accept quality movie assignments.



Photo: Cynthia Mar-

Dear Chad,

I read that grizzlies are classified as carnivores. I thought they ate other kinds of food. Is that true, or do they mainly just hunt for meat?

Confused, New York, NY

Dear Confused,

The answer begins with the fact that, while their origins and anatomy place them firmly within the carnivore order, grizzlies are consummate omnivores. With a remarkable knack for finagling, hitched to their pile-driver strength, they come primed to take advantage of the most nourishing food available at any given time, be it moose, musk ox, marmot, lily bulb, crab, clam, snail, fish, mushroom, mountaintop moth aggregation, underground hornet nest, rotten carcass, fragrant herb, or freshly sprouted grass, which they will graze the live long day in spring, with all the spine-tingling drama of cows. Grizzlies own one of the longest intestinal tracts of any carnivore to help process plant roughage, and quite a few of these bears are chiefly vegetarian. As far as I know, the only large mammal able to pick from a broader menu is the primate called *Homo sapiens* - humans. Some people eat grizzlies, for that matter. But then once in a great while, a grizzly eats a person, more or less evening things out.

# VITAL GROUND

## ...Getting the Bear Facts Out

As an environmental land trust, most of Vital Ground's work centers on identifying and protecting critical private parcels of wildlife habitat. However, sometimes Vital Ground has the opportunity to educate the public about the plight of much of our native wildlife, including grizzly bears, and the consequent importance of land conservation. During 2002, Vital Ground took the opportunity to educate many people about the co-survival issues faced

### Winter Olympics Herald the New Year

When the February 2002 Winter Olympic Games came to Utah, Vital Ground was inundated with American and foreign visitors. At the request of the Norwegian government, Vital Ground founders, Doug and Lynne Seus, hosted the Norwegian Nordic Ski Team at their home for a wildlife education session. Because the European brown bear is severely threatened in Norway, most of the ski team had little experience with bears and were amazed to view them first hand.

### Bear Facts at Best in the West

Vital Ground's annual fine art auction, "The Best in the West," drew 150 attendees to an educational evening last March at The Inn on the Creek in Midway, Utah. After perusing the art exhibit, participants were treated to a discussion on bear learning capabilities, with a demonstration by Vital Ground Ambassador, Tank the Bear.

### GE Capitalizes on Environmental Awareness

In honor of Earth Day, GE Capital invited Vital Ground and other environmental organizations to attend their customer conference last April. Vital Ground presented alternative methods of private land conservation. Other exhibitors

included Hawkwatch International, which engages in conservation and protection of raptors, and Hogle Zoo, which provides public education about wildlife behavior and conservation. The highlight of the conference was the dinner-time appearance of Vital Ground Ambassador, Tank the Bear.

### Doctors Check Health of Ecosystem

In April, approximately 500 surgeons attended a slide show lecture by Vital Ground board member, biologist Dou-

glas Chadwick, at the Conference of Pediatric Orthopaedic Society of North America, held in Salt Lake City, Utah. Chadwick's speech, "What Good is a Grizzly?" discussed the role of keystone species in biological diversity.

### American Wildlife Festival Premieres in Park City

Vital Ground held its first annual American Wildlife Festival and Members' Rally last July in Park City, Utah. The event, which was free to current members, was open to the community. Five hundred people came to learn about social behavior in wolves, raptor conservation, mustang training techniques, grizzly home range requirements, and wildlife protection efforts. Wasatch Rocky Mountain Wildlife's wolf pack and grizzly bears, Hawkwatch International's hawks, and several privately-owned mustangs provided the public with live behavioral demonstrations, including a segment on "horse whispering."

### Strawberry Fields and Val- leys Forever

In September, Vital Ground spent three days at the 2nd Annual Friends of Strawberry Valley Wildlife Festival. The "Friends of Strawberry Valley" is a nonprofit consortium of individuals, organizations and agencies focused on watershed health and balanced resource usage in Strawberry Valley,



Photo: Tom Mur-

## A MODERN GRIZZLY TALE

The grizzly is the North American version of the brown bear, *Ursus arctos*, the long-clawed, hump-shouldered species also found across Eurasia from the French Pyrenees to the Japanese island of Hokkaido. Some of the trained "grizzlies" that chase after pioneer kids or buddy up with mountain men on television shows are actually Syrian brown bears, which also tend to have markedly silver tipped - "grizzled" - fur. During Native American times, as many as 100,000 grizzlies may have roamed the contiguous states west of the Mississippi River. In 1975, the animals were listed as threatened south of Canada because 99 percent had been eliminated. Standing shoulder to shoulder, the remainder would scarcely have filled a used car lot.

Keystone predators, scavengers, earth-movers (those four-inch claws are mainly for digging roots and rodents), recyclers of nutrients, and distributors of seeds (from as many as 70,000 berries a day in good times), grizzlies play an outsize role in the natural communities of which they remain part. They commandeer a similarly exaggerated niche in the human imagination. A majority of the public wants these ecological heavyweights and spawners of sagas, these megamammals, hauled back from the brink. The Endangered Species Act compels federal authorities to try to make that happen. Under the direction of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, they have been at it for more than a quarter of a century now, starting with around 750 to 1,000 surviving grizzlies in the Lower 48. The current esti-

mate is 1,100 or 1,200 - marginally improved, yet far from secure - and those figures are shaky.

A great deal hinges on the grizzly numbers game. Restrictions in road building and other disturbances in habitats deemed critical to the recovery of these creatures have been among the strongest, most reliable safeguards of wild lands available for many years now. In fact, the great bears have probably done more to change traditional patterns of natural resource development across much of the mountain West than any other factor except the global economy.



All kinds of industry representatives and politicians want grizzlies declared sufficiently abundant to be taken off the imperiled list so that loggers, miners, oil wildcatters, grazers, motorized recreationists, and so on will have more leeway on national forests and other public domain. State officials generally favor optimistic counts too, since they promise a shorter wait until the feds relinquish control over the bears and Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming can manage them as big game ani-

mals again. By contrast, environmentalists are in no rush to see the grizzlies lose their shield of federal protection, especially since many in the conservation community feel that the key problem of shrinking wild land has grown worse, not better. They are therefore inclined to view cheery projections of the bears' numbers with skepticism while embracing the more conservative estimates.

The truth is that no one knows how many grizzlies are scattered through the rugged boondocks they call home on this side of the Canadian line, and it is extremely difficult and expensive to try to find out. Population totals have to be fashioned from collected hair samples, which provide DNA, plus smaller numbers of actual sightings subjected to large amounts of statistical massage.

Grizzlies may live 30 years or more, criss-crossing home ranges that typically encompass several hundred square miles and occasionally more than a thousand. Even the relative homebodies among them make lengthy forays as sub-adults dispersing from their mothers' domains. They also make strong shifts in altitude from one season to the next, rambling between thickly forested valley floors and sun swept tundra meadows just off the peaks. And they may move to entirely new tracts as drought, wildfires, cyclical eruptions of insects, plant disease epidemics, and normal forest succession alter the habitat mix.

It has been a long time since Americans were able to homestead in vast, untamed tracts of land out West. Grizzlies no longer

# Vital Ground Launches 1% Partners

Photo: Kodiak Brown Bear

"We're thrilled that Vital Ground is again coming through as a key partner for Kodiak bear conservation. Being the first group to commit to 1% of the remaining funding shortfall to protect Afognak Island is an act of conservation leadership sure to set a trend in the non-profit community."

Tim Richard-

## The Perenosa Bay Project

Vital Ground is pleased to announce our participation in an important land conservation project in Alaska. During the second half of 2002, we joined with a consortium of non-profit groups led by The Kodiak Brown Bear Trust, The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and The American Land Conservancy to protect a key 20,000 acre parcel in Perenosa Bay on Afognak Island, part of the Kodiak Island Archipelago. The acquisition of this privately held, vulnerable land will secure an area with over 100 miles of coastline. Kodiak bears, salmon, waterfowl, Roosevelt elk, bald eagles, marine mammals and other wildlife are abundant throughout the bay and its coastal rainforest.



Photo:

The State of Alaska will receive fee title for this parcel, which will be merged into the existing Afognak Island State Park. The transaction also provides a strict permanent federal conservation easement preventing development. The protected areas in Afognak Island State Park, Shuyak Island State Park and the Red Peak unit of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge will total

200,000 contiguous acres with the near-shore islands and islets as part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The area is nearly ten percent of the size of Yellowstone National Park and has a high brown bear density.

## Critical but Vulnerable Habitat

The Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS) restoration plan has invested \$155 million in surrounding land acquisitions for habitat conservation purposes. But the 20,000 acres at Perenosa Bay were not protected. This acreage was at risk of being clearcut, followed by subdivision into small parcels and commercial/residential development. The threat of future roads and incompatible human presence to Kodiak bears and other species injured by the oil spill will be eliminated once the transaction is completed.

## The 1% Partners Club

Vital Ground's grant toward this project will be matched by the EVOS Trustee Council, giving us double leverage for our funds. Vital Ground's contribution is the first commitment to the newly created 1% Partners Club, with 50% of our grant drawn at signing, and the balance paid out over the term of the acquisition project. The total cost of the Perenosa Bay Project is just over \$21 million, with \$7 million yet to raise by the consortium of conservation partners over the next 24 months.

Vital Ground's  
Holiday Wish List  
(Park City, UT)

Do you know an individual or business that could donate one of the following items or services to Vital Ground as a tax-deductible contribution?

- Color Printer
- Photocopier Machine
- Digital Still Camera
- Digital Mini DV Camera
- Printing Services



Photo: Tom Mur-

"Come visit and try to find me at Knight Inlet in Canada, during Vital Ground's second annual Wild Bear Adventure in May of 2003. I'll be one



## Holiday Cheer

During the months of December and January, any new member who joins Vital Ground at a level of \$100 or above will receive a free Grizzly Bear Ornament designed by Eric Thorsen. Please join Vital Ground today and help

### VITAL NEWS

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Photo: Galen

*DON'T MISS our Wild Bear Adventure at Knight Inlet Lodge in May!*