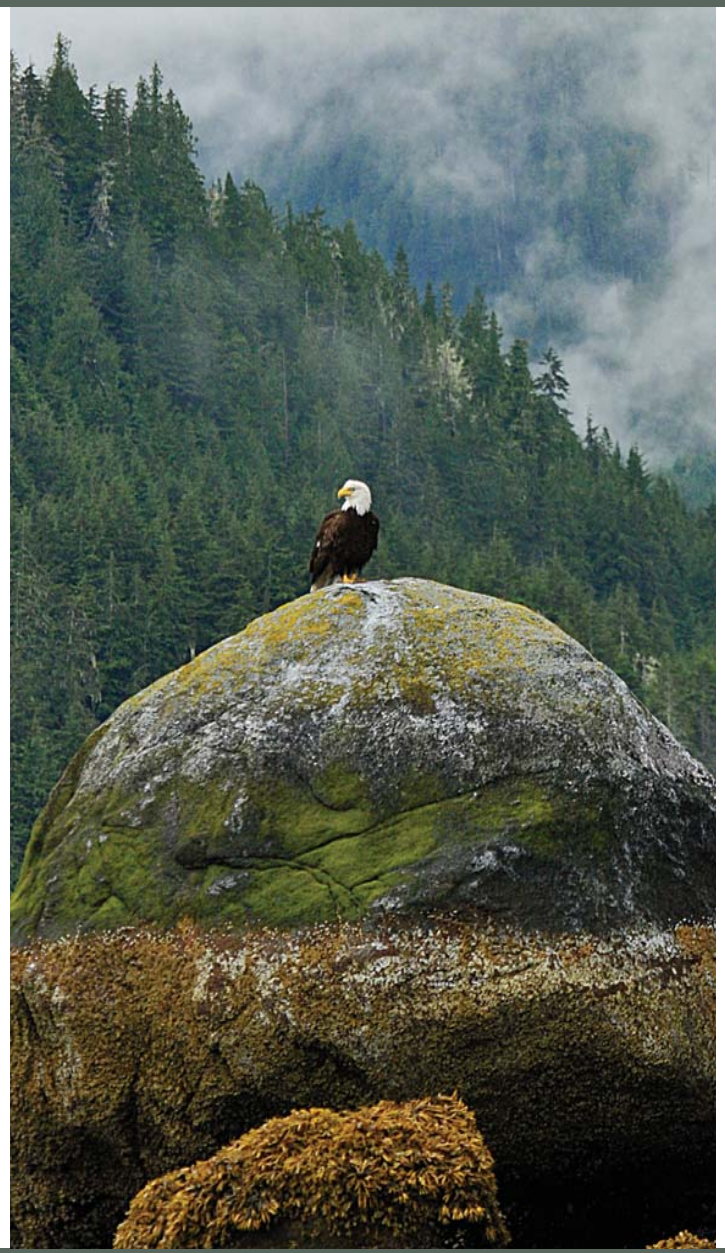
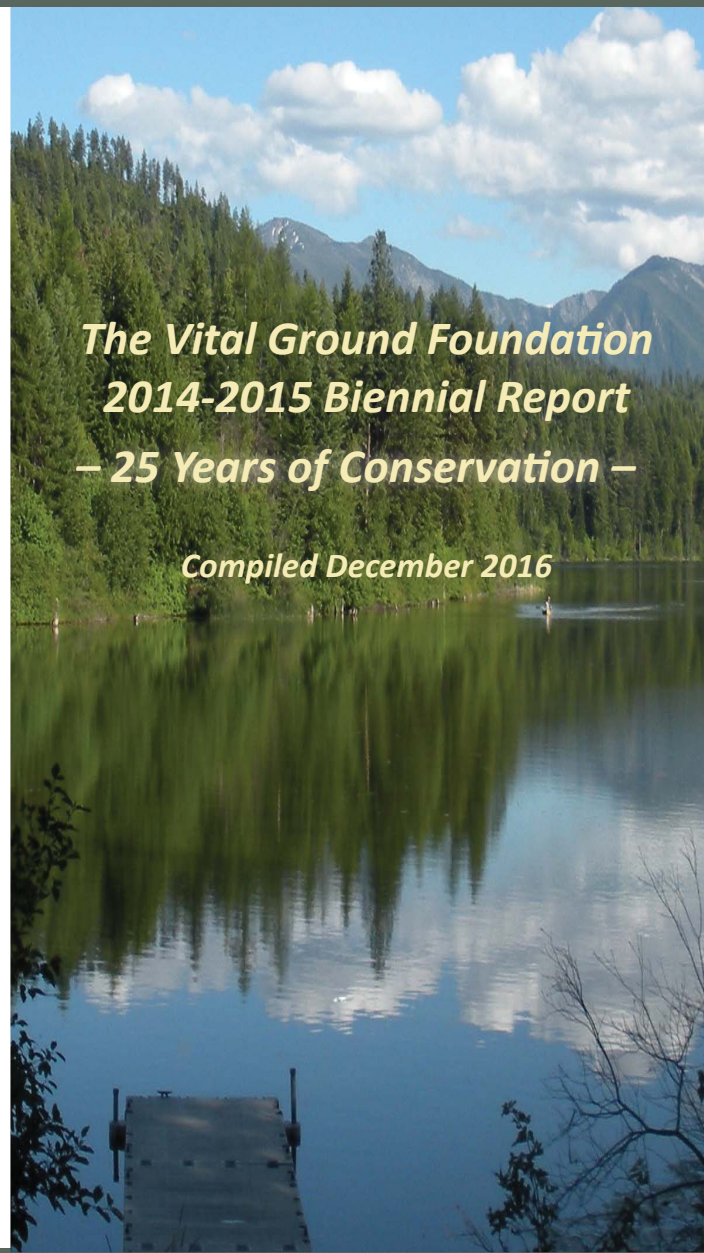
Saving Places for Grizzlies, Wildlife and People





The Vital Ground Foundation
2014-2015 Biennial Report
– 25 Years of Conservation –

Compiled December 2016

Where the Grizzly Can Walk, the Earth is Healthy and Whole

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Bart the Bear™

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Photos by Robert Scriba (left and center), and Matt Hart (right).

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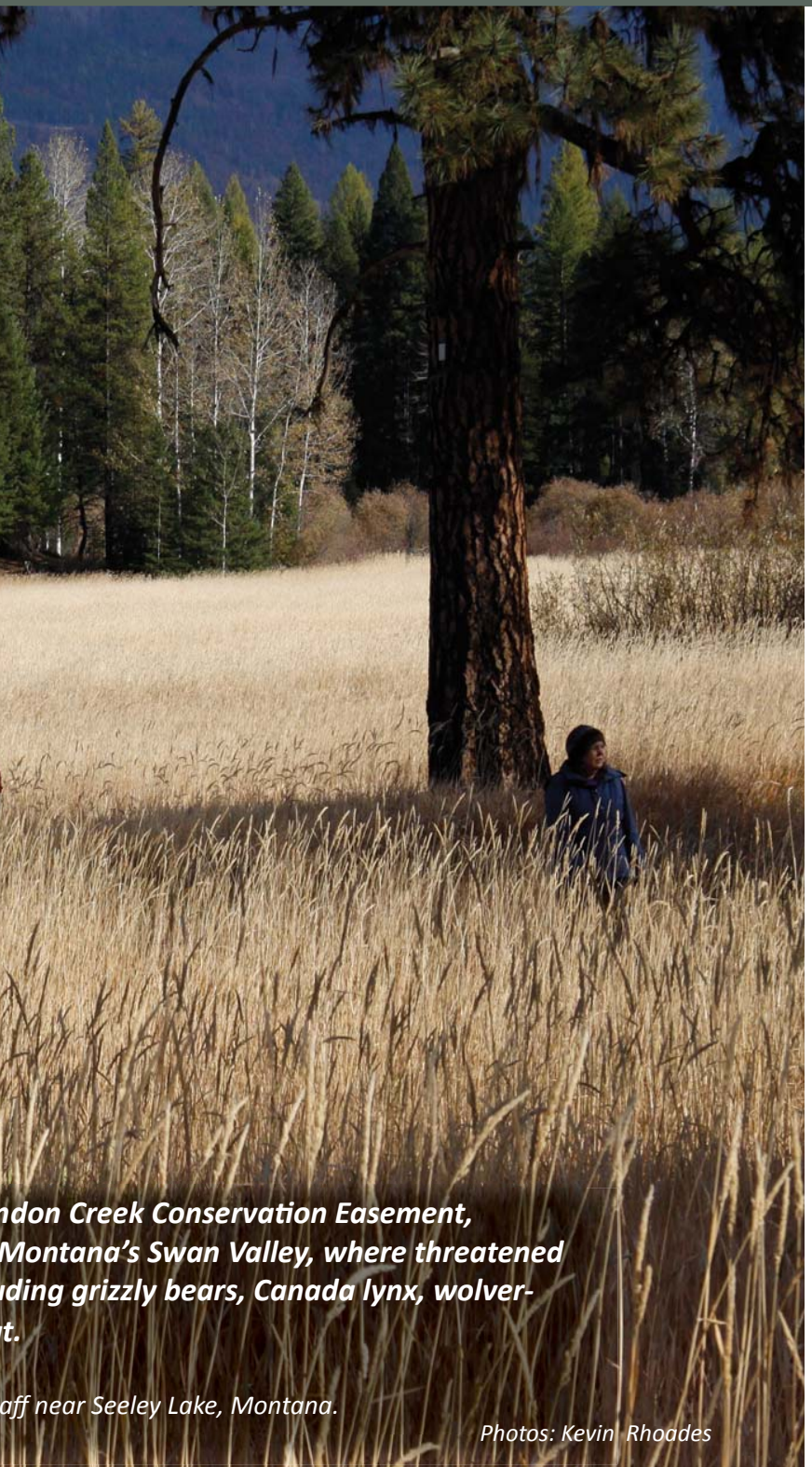
Saving vital spaces ...

Vital Ground's board of trustees hike the Co
160 acres of vital wildlife habitat located in
and endangered wildlife species thrive, inclu
ine, Westslope cutthroat trout, and bull trou

INSET PHOTO: Vital Ground's board of trustees and st



ndon Creek Conservation Easement, Montana's Swan Valley, where threatened ading grizzly bears, Canada lynx, wolver- t.

aff near Seeley Lake, Montana.

Photos: Kevin Rhoades

A quarter century! From a vision sparked by the adoption of a helpless brown bear cub to the preeminent private sector organization ensuring the recovery and long-term survival of grizzly bears and the many native species that share their range – Vital Ground's 25th Anniversary marked the perfect opportunity to honor the passion and dedication of everyone who leaned their shoulder into creating this nationally-based organization with donors from every state and several foreign countries. All visionaries in their own right, Vital Ground supporters have contributed to the permanent protection and enhancement of more than 617,000 acres of wildlife habitat for future generations!

It's fitting that Vital Ground punctuated its quarter-century milestone in 2015 by making its largest single conservation investment to date (see page 7). But far overshadowing the financial commitment it took to secure the Alvord Lake Community Forest was the breadth of partnerships it required. Beginning with a request from the community of Troy, Montana, the project blossomed into a major endorsement of Vital Ground's work by the USDA Forest Service's Community Forest and Open Spaces Program and the nation's Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Since its founding in 1990, Vital Ground has been rooted in these collaborative partnerships to protect the Great Bear's habitat. During the 2014-15 biennium, Vital Ground's board affirmed this tenet by expanding our mission to include a charge to *support programs that reduce conflicts between bears and people.* A seemingly simple addition has resulted in redoubling our efforts to ensure that the social carrying capacity of the land expands at the same time that it is conserved.

The impact you make by supporting Vital Ground ripples far beyond individual projects. It extends throughout an endangered landscape to benefit the many imperiled plants and animals with no refuge beyond that which we set aside today. By protecting and restoring core habitats and landscape linkages and through partnerships encouraging "bear-aware" communities and human behaviors, *your support helps people and nature coexist.*

Thank you!

Stuart Strahl, Ph.D.
Chair, Board of Trustees

Ryan Lutey, J.D.
President and CEO

Photo: Philip DeManczuk

Your Impact

You help us do conservation like nobody else!

- *As both an accredited land trust and a wildlife nonprofit focused on the grizzly bear, Vital Ground offers the unique marriage of long-term vision and an effective boots-on-the-ground approach.*
- *Our mission is to protect and restore North America's grizzly bear populations for future generations by conserving wildlife habitat and supporting programs that reduce conflicts between bears and humans.*
- *Partnerships are the bedrock of our work. Using the best available science, we locate private lands that hold the potential to connect core grizzly habitat. Then we partner with willing landowners to protect these crucial linkages through conservation agreements or outright purchases.*

The Umbrella Effect

Your dedication to protecting grizzlies serves so much more than just bears. Thanks to the Great Bear's position as an ecological umbrella species, conserving grizzly habitat benefits entire plant and animal communities — everything from fungi and wildflowers to woodpeckers and mule deer. As co-founder Lynne Seus says, "Where the grizzly can walk, the earth is healthy and whole."

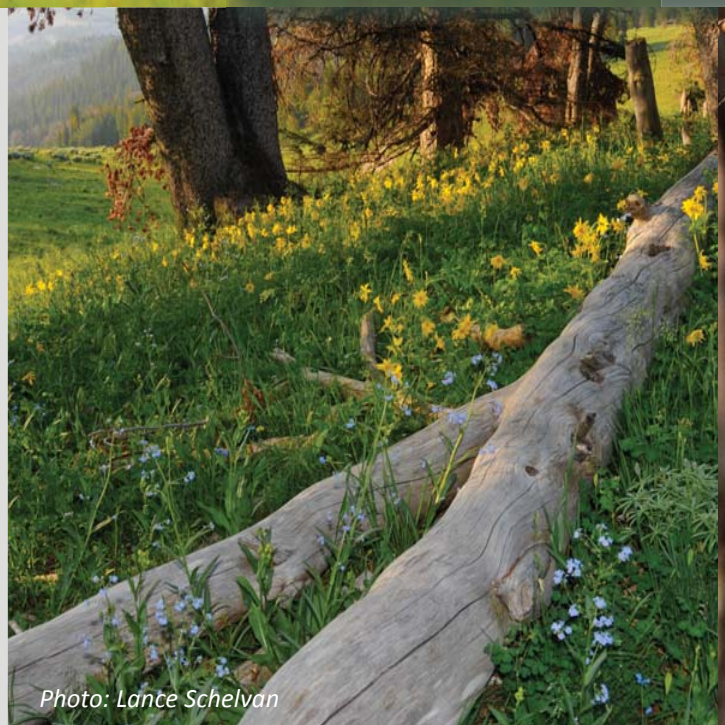


Photo: Lance Schelvan

Photo: Philip DeManczuk

Photo: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

GROUNDED BY SCIENCE

To honor your commitment to wild places, we make sure our collaborative work begins with the latest research and science.

- We partner with leading wildlife biologists and consult cutting-edge grizzly population studies to identify the right places for habitat protection.
- We focus primarily on the Lower 48 of the United States, where development confines grizzlies to less than 4 percent of their historic range and the species' population has dropped from an estimated 50,000 bears to less than 2,000.
- Biologist and Vital Ground board member Doug Chadwick says it best: "We don't need to protect thousands and thousands of acres, but hundreds of acres in exactly the right place."

An Historic Collar: *Biologists Tyler Vent, left, and Alex Welander fit a young male grizzly with a GPS collar near Sullivan Lake in the Selkirk Mountains of northeast Washington. The event, which occurred in late June 2016, marked Washington's first grizzly capture in more than 30 years, and it happened just 30 miles from Bennett Meadows, a Vital Ground partner project.*

A Great Bear's Legacy

Vital Ground began with one couple, one bear, and a unique relationship. In 1977, Doug and Lynne Seus, professional animal trainers, adopted a Kodiak brown bear cub born in captivity. They named him Bart, raised him from a six-pound fuzzball into a 1,500-pound behemoth, and trained him for work in the film industry. Over a 23-year career, his credits included *Legends of the Fall, White Fang* and more than 30 other titles. Bart lit the fire of conservation in the Seuses. Inspired to act on behalf of other grizzlies, the couple founded Vital Ground in 1990 when they purchased 240 acres of bear habitat along Montana's Rocky Mountain Front. Doug and Lynne worked from their home in Utah, primarily raising funds for their work on behalf of the Great Bear. By 2014, we had moved to Missoula and you helped us achieve qualification as one of 254 accredited land trusts nationwide by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. By our 24th year, you helped enhance, restore and conserve more than 617,000 acres of homelands for the big, silvertipped bears and other wildlife.

Photo: John Freeman

How You Helped: 2014-15 Conservation Projects

Two new easements, seven partnerships, and the most collaborative acquisition in our history: You've helped grizzlies from south of Yellowstone to Alaska's Bristol Bay!

Key

Vital Ground Project Locations

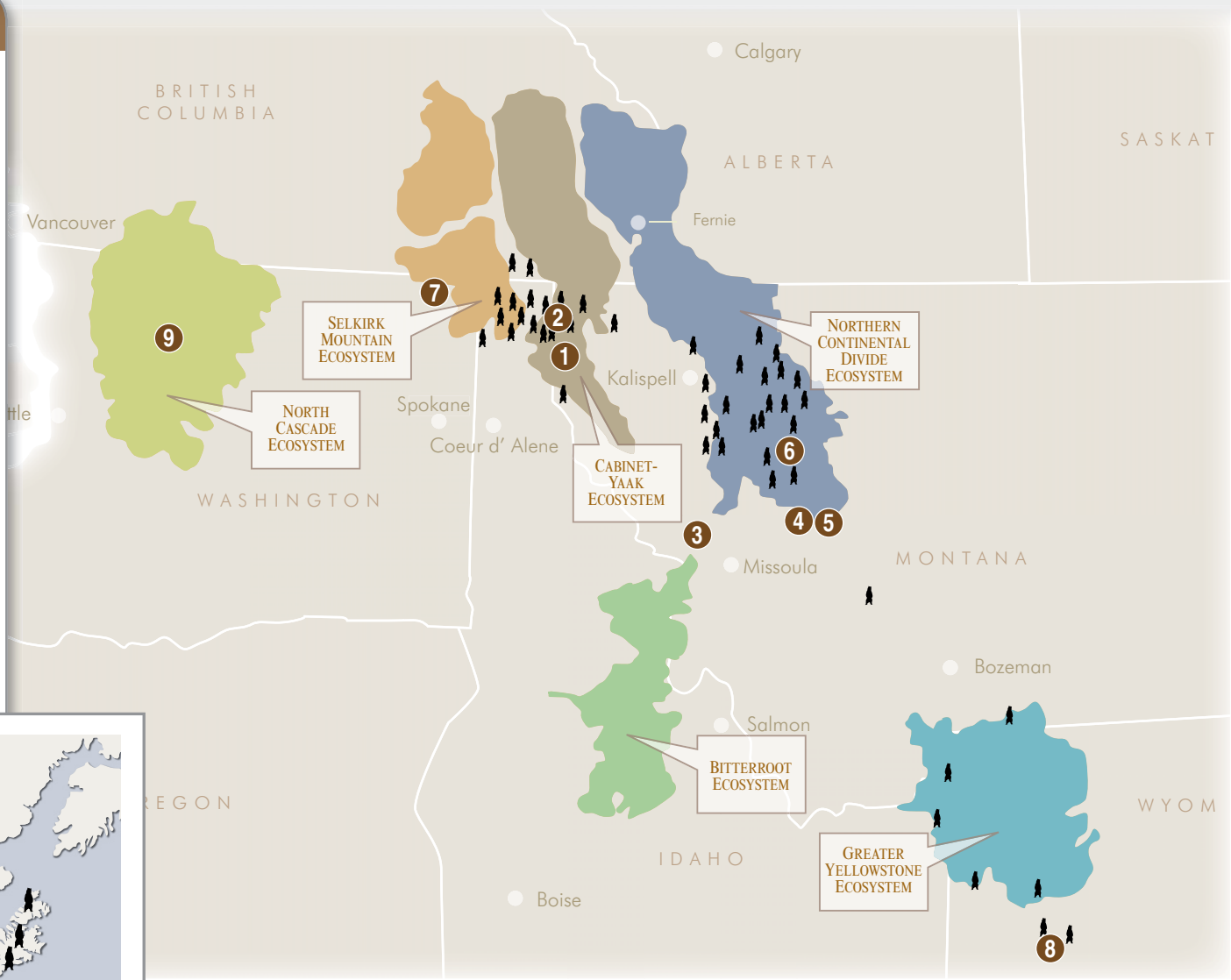
- Previous Projects
- # 2014–2015 Projects

Projects

1. Alvord Lake Acquisition
2. Meadow Creek Conservation Easement
3. Ellis Mountain Conservation Easement
4. Blackfoot Valley Grizzly Bear Study
5. Blackfoot Challenge Range Rider Partnership
6. Swan Valley Bear Resources Partnership
7. Bennett Meadows Partnership
8. Grazing Allotment Retirement Partnership
9. Education and Information Partnership
10. Bristol Bay Partnership

Grizzly Bear Ecosystems

- Selkirk Mountain
- Cabinet-Yaak
- Northern Continental Divide
- Bitterroot
- Greater Yellowstone
- North Cascade



Alvord Lake – A Community Triumph

Photo: Adrienne Ingram

Alvord Lake Community Forest

Troy, Montana; Kootenai N.F. Inholding

Project Type: Acquisition
Ecosystem: Cabinet-Yaak
Size: 142 acres
Story: Thirteen years after Troy residents Gary and Kathy Jones bought the lakeshore property from a developer who planned to subdivide it, the couple's vision for its conservation has finally been achieved. With Vital Ground as steward, the land now serves as a demonstration forest, where local school and community groups learn about sustainable forest management. The lakeshore provides loon habitat and winter range for deer and elk while serving as crucial linkage between the Purcell Mountains and the Kootenai River Valley. With the Forest Service maintaining an outdoor classroom and a three-mile trail around the lake, it's also a favorite community recreation spot. This $1.15 million project succeeded because of your generosity as well as the U.S. Forest Service Community Forest Program and the following:

- Montana Fish & Wildlife Conservation Trust
- Montana Dept. of Natural Rescources and Conservation
- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
- Montana Loon Society
- Society of American Foresters, Libby Chapter
- Yaak Valley Forest Council
- Troy Public Schools
- Cinnabar Foundation
- Donner Canadian Foundation
- First Interstate Bank
- First Security Bank
- Flathead Audubon Society
- Flathead Wildlife, Inc.
- Oberweiler Foundation
- William H. Donner Foundation
- Yellowstone to Yukon Initiative

Meadow Creek
Yaak Valley, Montana

Project Type: Conservation Easement
Ecosystem: Cabinet-Yaak
Size: 40 acres
Story: Many have called northwest Montana's Yaak Valley the wildest place left in the Lower 48. Douglas and Marcia Lee Berg, and their grandson Karl, know it to be true from observing the many species—grizzlies, Canada lynx, wolverines—on or near their family property at the confluence of the Yaak River and Meadow Creek. It was this appreciation of the region's precious habitat that prompted the Bergs to generously donate a conservation easement on the property to Vital Ground in March 2015. Filled with aspen groves and mature western red cedars, the now-protected land provides prime forest and riparian habitat and promises a stable link between large surrounding tracts of national forest within the Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone.

Photo: Kevin Rhoades

Photo: Christina Petrig

Ellis Mountain
Ninemile Valley, Montana

Project Type: Conservation Easement
Ecosystem: Northern Continental Divide
Size: 240 acres
Story: The son of Swiss immigrants, Dave Petrig grew up in Seattle but always wanted to own land in the Rockies. In 1995, he bought property high on Ellis Mountain overlooking the confluence of the Ninemile and Clark Fork valleys. Before Dave passed away, his daughter, Tina, permanently protected the land as wildlife habitat through a fully-donated conservation easement. Sitting close to developed areas, the property marks an important wildlife corridor linking the Northern Continental Divide, Cabinet-Yaak, and Selway-Bitterroot grizzly bear recovery areas.

Further Afield: New Habitat Protection Partnerships

Photo: Dave Jensen, Western Rivers Conservancy

Bennett Meadows

Colville National Forest, Washington

Conservation Partner: Western Rivers Conservancy
Ecosystem: Selkirk
Size: 2,400 acres
Story: We couldn't have picked a more gorgeous location for our first habitat-protection partnership in Washington. Pictured at left, Bennett Meadows provides lush habitat in the Monashee Mountains of the state's northeast corner. Just five miles south of Canada, the area serves as a prime travel corridor for grizzlies, moose, elk, mountain goats and bighorn sheep. Big Sheep Creek runs through the property, supporting rare redband and bull trout while carving a wide valley of mixed forest, wetlands and meadows. Vital Ground was honored to team-up with Portland-based Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) on the project. With your help, we provided a $25,000 partner grant assisting WRC's purchase of the land. This habitat buffers the western edge of the Selkirk Ecosystem and could prove key in linking grizzlies with the North Cascades, less than 100 miles to the west.

Photo: Jamie Scarrow

Harris Creek

Bristol Bay, Alaska

Conservation Partner: Bristol Bay Heritage Land Trust
Size: 530 acres
Story: While focusing on the Lower 48, it's easy to forget that Alaskan brown bears need protected habitat, too. We were eager to reach north and assist the Bristol Bay Heritage Land Trust in completing a key conservation easement at the confluence of Harris Creek and the Nushagak River in Southwest Alaska. It's a prime salmon feeding site for coastal bears that continue to inspire our ongoing work southward.

Photo: Robert Scriba

Collaborating for Coexistence

2014-15 Bear Aware Partnerships

Photo: Patti Sowka

Range Riders

*From removal of carcasses that draw bears near livestock to horseback monitoring of wildlife in remote drainages, range riders employed by the **Blackfoot Challenge** personify hard, tangible work on behalf of bear-human conflict reduction. You have helped support the longest-running range rider program in the U.S. and the coexistence of Montana's ranching heritage and its iconic, native species.*

Blackfoot Valley Grizzly Study

*Over the last decade, Montana's Blackfoot Valley has welcomed back a small resident grizzly population, but conflict has followed them. Your support helped us fund a collaborative study by **Montana State University** and **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks** to develop fencing that allows grizzly movement and passage, but hinders unwanted movement and private property damage.*

Photo: Kevin Rhoades

Swan Valley Bear Education

*As the site of our first conservation easements, Montana's Swan Valley is near and dear to Vital Ground. So we're thrilled that you've helped us support **Swan Valley Bear Resources**, a collaborative effort that educates area landowners about bear-resistant garbage containers, bear-proof fencing for livestock and fruit trees, and many other key grizzly coexistence strategies.*

Gros Ventre Grazing Lease Retirement

South of Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming's Gros Ventre range (pictured right), the ***National Wildlife Federation*** *is hard at work partnering with willing ranchers to retire the most conflict-prone grazing leases on public land. Thank YOU for helping us support their crucial work.*

Photo: Lisa Robertson

North Cascades Bear Film

As Canadian grizzlies venture south into the North Cascades, ***Washington's National Park Fund*** *produced a film to educate the public on bear coexistence; your contributions helped Vital Ground support this important project.*

The Silvertip Legacy Circle

Leave a Legacy for Grizzly Bears

Donors make lasting impacts for grizzly bear habitat conservation by including Vital Ground in their planned giving. For us, there is no greater compliment than being deemed worthy enough to be included in your conservation legacy through wills, trusts and other planned gifts. For grizzly bears and other wide-ranging wildlife, these gifts result in land conservation – in perpetuity.

Carolyn Dobbs' Conservation Legacy

Carolyn Dobbs cared deeply about bears and wild places. Her passions resulted in the breaking of many traditional boundaries and the leaving of many memories and legacies. Carolyn grew up in Arkansas exploring the natural world on horseback. She was the first woman to earn a doctorate from the University of Washington's Urban Planning program and taught for 40 years at Evergreen State College. She also served on Vital Ground's board of trustees, continuing to advocate for land protection and bears even while battling brain cancer.

Photo: Russell Fox

Our wildlands – and the wildlife they lost – were Carolyn's church. Mt. Rainier was her cathedral. For decades, Carolyn hiked, climbed, skied and volunteered in Washington's wild places. She conducted field research, studied grizzlies and wolverines, and advocated passionately for their habitat.

Carolyn died as she lived, putting her passions, dreams and ideas into on-the-ground protection and furthering wildlife conservation. Her bequest to Vital Ground's work on behalf of grizzlies in Washington returned the many gifts she experienced in the mountains and landscapes that inspired her.

Silvertip Legacy Circle

The Silvertip Legacy Circle recognizes those donors who make a lasting commitment to Vital Ground by pledging their support through wills, trusts, charitable gift annuities, or other planned gifts. By doing so, Circle members ensure future income to Vital Ground for projects that will enhance the survival of North America's grizzly populations and biodiversity for generations to come.

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Melissa and Stuart Strahl
Debi Strong
Shari and Steve Sutherland
Cheryl L. Taleff*
Steve Thompson
Joseph Venus
Gary J. and Rita Wolfe

*Deceased

For more information, visit: vitalground.org/how-you-can-help/planned-giving/silvertip-legacy-circle/

Donors and Partners 2014-2015

Vital Ground gratefully acknowledges the many donors, partners, and members who supported our work to protect and restore North America's grizzly bear populations for future generations by conserving wildlife habitat, and by supporting programs that reduce conflicts between bears and humans. The following contributors gave $200 and above over the biennium.

$100,000 and above

Doug, Marcia Lee, and Karl Berg
Russ Fox and Carolyn Dobbs
David Cutler and Deb Girdler
Gary and Kathy Jones
Missoula County
USDA Forest Service
Montana Fish & Wildlife Conservation Trust

$50,000 - $99,000

Sally O. Smyth and Tom DeMarco
Jim and Norma Fosgate
Montana Coffee Traders
Oberweiler Foundation

$25,000 - $49,999

Sou and John Barrett
Chicago Zoological Society
The William H. Donner Foundation
Michael Downs Estate
Johnson Family Foundation
Kelly and Keith Johnson
Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

$10,000 - $24,999

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John Maddocks
Karen Magill
Les and Rita Marcum
Glenn and Patricia Martin
Chip Miller
Normandie Mindheim
Kevin Mitchell
James and Shelly Moloney
Jimmy Mount
James and Peggy Muhn
Harlan L. Mumma
Mark J. Mutz
David and Lenora Nash
Javiel Nazario
Laurie Neils
Judith L. Nielsen and Hector Giron Nielsen
Robert Nixon
Terry and Ronda O'Brien
James Olmes
Linda Otermat
John Owen
Ed and Mary Parks
Pamula Parks
Paul Pawenski
Kimberly Payne
Debbie Pengryn
Patrick Percy
Ken Perske
David Piacquad
Beth Piburn
Karen W. Pinyoun
Nancy and Robert E. Pizzurro
Susan L. Powell
Edwin and Sherry Prator
Dave Prinz
William Muraoka and Patricia Quinn
Mary Ann Radley

Photo: Robert Scriba

There are few places in the world where so much magnificent wildlife, scenery and native culture can be experienced in one location. Knight Inlet Lodge is such a place. Learn more at: VitalGround.org/Knight-Inlet.

Knight Inlet photo by Lisa Densmore Ballard

Tim Raines
Kenneth B. Ray
John and Sharon Reiter
Kevin and Andrea Rhoades
Trina Riggle
Davida Rochlin
Grant R. Rose
Matt and Amy Rudolf
Susan M. Sabala-Foreman
Dolores Sapiro-Swanson
Kirsten Schaefer
Deborah Schaeffer
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Geralyn A. Schiffler
John R. Schleppegrell, Jr.
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Charles Seymour
Susan and Roger Sherman
Alexandra Shuford
Diane Clark Siburt
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Judith Smith
Donna Snow
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Derek Solomon
Susan Spindler
Clark Spoden
Roxanne Roehl and Randall W. Stekly
Sarah B. Stewart
Glenn Stewart
David Stewart
Robyn and Stephen Stoddard
Harold and Laura Stover
Robin Sundeen
Mr. John R. Swanson
John Taylor
Ivan C. and Laurie K. Taylor
Kelley M. Tees
Cynthia A. Thompson
James L. Thompson
The Timken Fund Matching Gift Program
Janine Tokarczyk
Tom Tomlinson
Towne Mailer
Connie and Bob Travis
Dawn Trecartin
Albert Tschanett
Dona Upson
Cigdem Usekes
Dolores Varga
Philippe N. Vezina
Patricia Wagner
Michelle Walker
Andrew Weigel
Louis Weinbeck
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Paul and Bonnie Weiss
Stefanie E. Welch
Dan R. Welcheck
Kristin Westwood
Eddy White
Kenneth H. Wilcox
Christine Williams
Cecil B. Wilson, M.D., and Betty Jane Wilson
Bonnie Winsor
Shirley Wodtke
Theresa Young
Kol Zarember

Business Partners

Americana Studies Collectors Showroom and Design
Baer Bronze, LLC
Bare Essentials
Brookfield Chapter of American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK)
First Interstate Bank
Galusha, Higgins and Galusha
Google, Inc.
Jamie Scarrow Photography
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Knight Inlet Lodge
Lamar Advertising
Lance Schelvan Photography
Montana Coffee Traders
Monte Dolack Gallery
PartnersCreative
Robert Scriba, Photographer
Ten Spoon Vineyard+Winery
Treasure Mountain Inn
Wasatch Rocky Mountain Wildlife
Young Living Essential Oils
Zöoprax Productions

Conservation Partners

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Center for Large Landscape Conservation
Crown of the Continent Roundatable
Donner Canadian Foundation
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Flathead Audubon Society
Flathead Wildlife, Inc.
Friends of Alvord Lake, LLC
Gobi Bear Fund
Heart of the Rockies Initiative
Idaho Coalition of Land Trusts
Idaho Department of Lands
Idaho Fish and Game
Kootenai National Forest
Land and Water Conservation Fund
Land Trust Alliance
Montana Association of Land Trusts
Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation
Montana Fish and Wildlife Conservation Trust
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Montana Loon Society
Montana Outdoors Legacy Foundation
Montana State University
National Wildlife Federation
Northwest Connections
Oberweiler Foundation
Society of American Foresters (Libby Chapter)
Swan Valley Bear Resources
Swan Valley Connections
The Cinnabar Foundation
The William H. Donner Foundation
Trans-border Grizzly Bear Project
Troy School District
U.S. Forest Service-Three Rivers Ranger District
U.S. Forest Service Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Washington National Parks Fund
Western Rivers Conservancy
Western Wildlife Outreach
Yaak Valley Forest Council
Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

Photo: Larry Aumiller

Sou Barrett:

Grizzly Council: *Delivering Dramatic Change on the Land*

Members of Vital Ground's Grizzly Council share a deep commitment to grizzly bear recovery and make a profound impact conserving thousands of acres of habitat. This extraordinary group of donors has made amazing changes on the land – directly supporting wildlife habitat by providing the funding or land donation for critical conservation easements and acquisitions. Grizzly Council members give philanthropic contributions of $25,000 or more, or donate land or conservation easements valued at over $100,000.

Giving heroically to grizzly bear conservation

Sou Barrett loves grizzly bears. Since Sou was young, she has felt a calling to act on her love for bears, to protect the natural world and its wildlife. At age 10, she started selling chocolates to raise money for wildlife and conservation and has turned her passion into a lifelong commitment. Sou serves on Vital Ground's board of trustees and advises our strategic direction; she and her husband, John, belong to Vital Ground's Grizzly Council, which Sou also chairs. Vital Ground's mission isn't only important to Sou; she believes it is essential to her daughter's future. Sou's commitment and passion are bolstered by a deep belief that the world can be made a better place. She has demonstrated, through her extraordinary giving of time, talent, passion and funding, that one person can make a difference and accomplish significant on-the-ground wildlife conservation.

Special Thanks to Our Grizzly Council Members

Eligible philanthropic contributions include gifts of cash, securities, the charitable portion of planned gifts, and irrevocable pledges.

Jennifer Aniston
Anonymous
The Augustyn Foundation Trust
Jeff and Debi Augustyn
Sou and John Barrett
George and Emily Beck
Wally and Sandy Becky
Andy Beerman and Thea Leonard
Doug and Marcia Lee Berg
Jeff and Susan Bridges
George and Brenda Brimhall
Brookfield AAZK Chapter
Sabina and Nazario* C'de Baca
Yvon Chouinard
The Cinnabar Foundation
Colleen Coghlan
Cutler Family Foundation
Catherine Deans-Barrett
Sally O. Smyth and Tom DeMarco
The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
Douglas A. Cluff*
Jack Maertzweiler*
Tom and Lynn Fey
Jim and Norma Fosgate
The William H. Donner Foundation
Carolyn Dobbs* and Russ Fox
Peter C. and Caroline C. Guynn
Barbara L. Harris-West
John Herklotz
David and Tami Hirschfeld
Ken and Julie Jenkins
Russ Jenkins/ Jenkins Family LLC
Johnson Family Foundation
Kelly and Keith Johnson
Gary and Kathy Jones
Lori B. Kirk
Gary and Kellie Landers
Elizabeth A. Lendrum
Ed and Theresa Levert
Liberty Godshall
Tom Mangelsen
Joe Matza
Maureen and Thom Mayer
Lon and Donna Merrifield
Michael Downs*
Montana Coffee Traders
Bill and Jean Moore
Bud Moore
Andrea Nasi and Ellen Downey
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
The Nature Conservancy of Canada
Oberweiler Foundation
Owens Foundation for Wildlife Conservation, Inc.
Christina Petrig
Brad Pitt
Michael and Susan Powell
Banu Qureshi and Mike Jansa
Moeen Qureshi
Larry* and Helen Rasmussen
Robert Reinke*
John and Nancy Rudolf
Steven Segal
Doug and Lynne Seus
Amy and Israel Shapira
Andy Sponseller and Connie Poten
The Steele-Reese Foundation
Chicago Zoological Society
Melissa and Stuart Strahl
Clayton A. and Donna Struve
Metabolic Studio
John Swallow and Lori Wolford-Swallow
Sam Testa
Texas Coffee Traders
Gene and Patty Tingle
Sig and Anne L. Weiler
Wiancko Charitable Foundation
Wilburforce Foundation via Heart of the Rockies Initiative
Wildlife Conservation Society
Wildlife Land Trust/HSUS
Meggen and Brian Wilson
Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

*Deceased

Financial Overview 2014-2015

The Vital Ground Foundation's public support and revenues totaled $3,373,253 during the 2014–2015 biennium.

During this period, 70.44% of all expenditures was spent on Vital Ground's conservation and education programs. Additionally, Vital Ground acquired conservation land valued at $1.15 million. The purchase price of this land is not included in the program expenses reported above nor in the "Use of Funds" pie chart, but is recorded as an asset (conservation land) on the Statement of Financial Position.

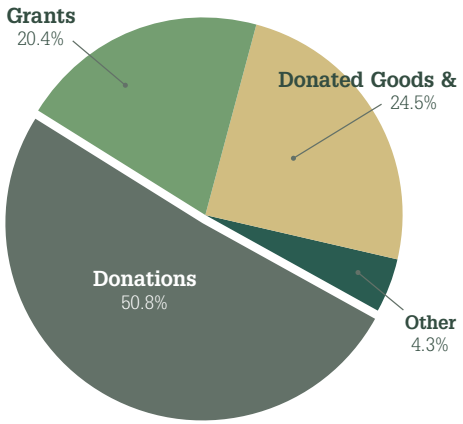
The organization's total net assets on Dec. 31, 2015, were $4,947,919, representing a 38% increase from the end of the last biennium (Dec. 31, 2013).

Vital Ground's 70.44% program expense ratio exceeds the Better Business Bureau's* Wise Giving Alliance Standards for Charity Accountability, which suggests that charitable organizations should spend at least 65% of total expenses on program activities.

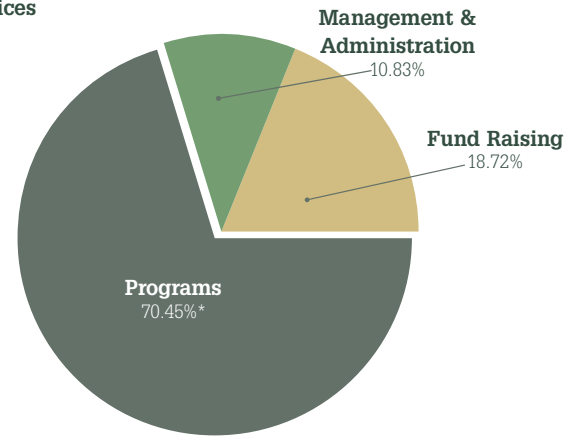
Vital Ground depends on private contributions to finance our wildlife habitat conservation work. As a charitable nonprofit organization, our success depends upon the generous support of our many individual donors, foundations, and business partners. Donations to Vital Ground qualify as charitable contributions and may be tax-deductible.

Note: The transaction cycle in land conservation can take several years to complete. Consequently, program expense ratios vary significantly from year to year depending on how many transactions are actually finalized during the fiscal year, and the value of donated real estate and conservation easements. Additionally, in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), the purchase price of land, which is a significant mission delivery expense for many land trusts, is not included in program expenses, but is recorded as an asset on the organization's balance sheet. Due to these unpredictable factors and accounting practices, Charity Navigator no longer evaluates land trusts.[1]

SOURCE OF FUNDS



USE OF FUNDS



** The Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance Standards for Charity Accountability suggest that a charity should spend at least 65% of its total expenses on program activities.*

Assets	(As of Dec. 31, 2015)	
	Cash	873,991
	Stewardship/Legal Defense Fund	270,047
	Investments	404,344
	Inventories	16,733
	Receivables	136,256
	Prepaid Expenses	3,986
	Property, Plant and Equipment	15,661
	Conservation Land	3,268,808
TOTAL ASSETS		**$4,989,826**
Liabilities		
	Current	29,331
	Long-term	7,330
TOTAL LIABILITIES		**$36,661**
Net Assets		
	Unrestricted	2,180,142
	Temporarily Restricted	1,462,507
	Permanently Restricted	1,305,270
TOTAL NET ASSETS		**$4,947,919**

There are many ways to support our mission. A few of these are:

Individuals

- Cash Contributions
- Gifts of Securities or Real Estate
- Donated Conservation Easements
- Bequests
- Charitable Remainder Trusts
- Charitable Gift Annuities

Businesses

- Business Partnerships
- Sponsorships
- Employer Matching Gifts

Foundations

- General Operations and Project Grants
- Matching Gift Support
- Endowment Funding

Vital Ground is audited annually. To receive a copy of our most recent audited financial statement or IRS Form 990, please visit our website or contact our office.

Vital Ground is a 501(c)(3) organization.
Our federal tax ID number is 87-0483446.

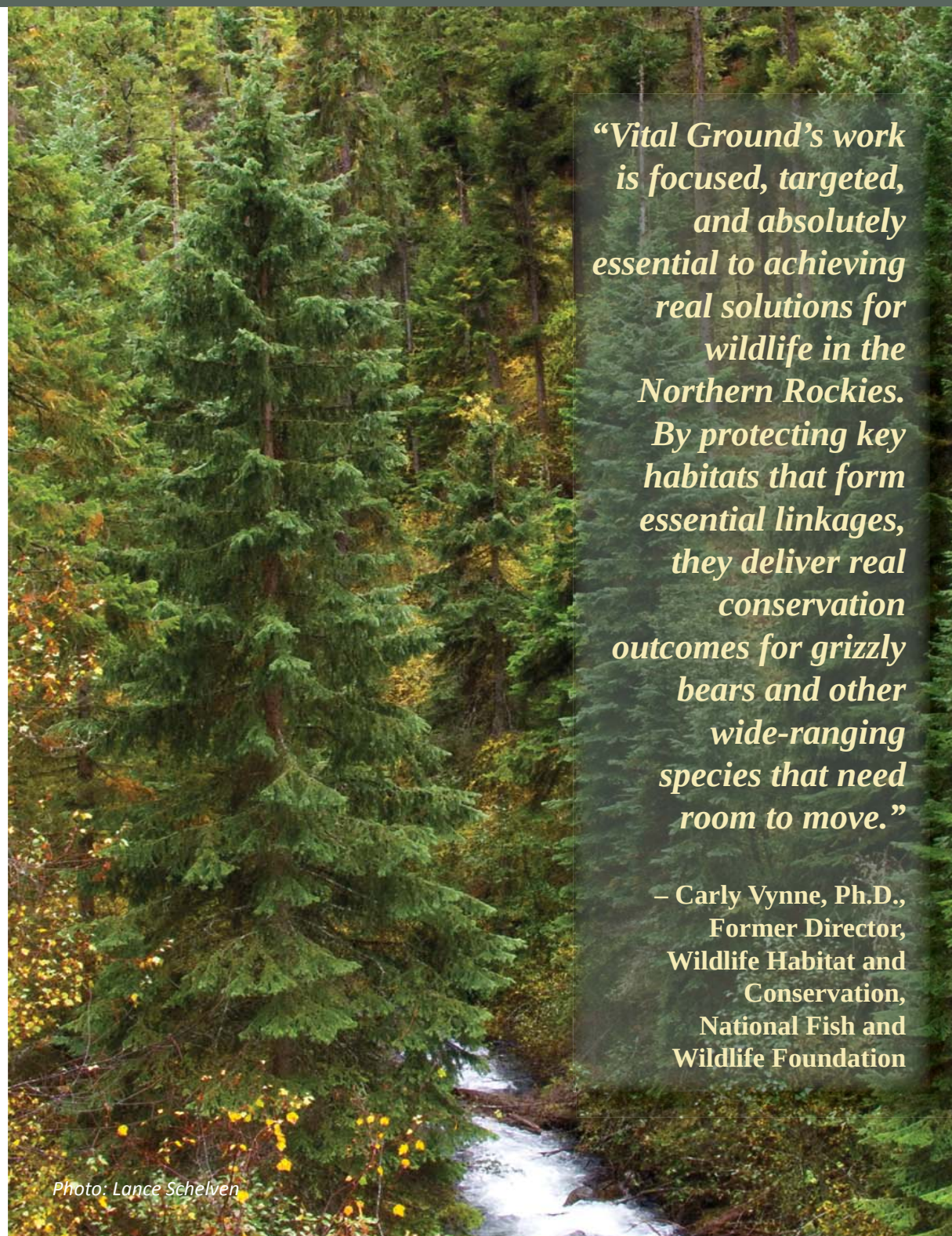


Photo: Lance Schelven

"Vital Ground's work is focused, targeted, and absolutely essential to achieving real solutions for wildlife in the Northern Rockies. By protecting key habitats that form essential linkages, they deliver real conservation outcomes for grizzly bears and other wide-ranging species that need room to move."

– Carly Vynne, Ph.D., Former Director, Wildlife Habitat and Conservation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

VITAL GROUND

The Vital Ground Foundation's mission is to protect and restore North America's grizzly bear populations for future generations by conserving wildlife habitat, and by supporting programs that reduce conflicts between bears and humans. To accomplish this, Vital Ground:

- Protects lands that grizzlies need to survive, not only for bears but for all other species that share their world;
- Works where human impacts encroach on some of the wildest places left on the continent;
- Targets projects that sustain habitat connections and conserve critical lands;
- Grounds its projects on current science and strong partnerships.

Please join us! As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, our success depends on you!

The Vital Ground Foundation, Inc.
20 Fort Missoula Rd.
Missoula, MT 59804-7202
406-549-8650
info@vitalground.org
www.VitalGround.org

Photo by Robert Scriba

"If a countryside can still support grizzlies, it will be good and whole and rich and wild and free enough to support all the other creatures struggling to hold on to a place in this world."

– Doug Chadwick, Wildlife Biologist, Author, and Vital Ground Board Member

ACCREDITED LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

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