

# THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN FRONT

## MONTANANS' PLACE FOR HUNTING AND HIKING

### *Nation's "top one percent" habitat for big game and other wildlife*

The stunning landscape where the Great Plains fold into the Rocky Mountains in northcentral Montana represents a biological treasure of unparalleled diversity—from charismatic animals, such as grizzly bear and bighorn sheep, to Arctic grayling and other disappearing native Montana fish, to rare flowering plants, such as the corralroot orchid and several varieties of primrose. Montana wildlife officials say the Rocky Mountain Front ranks among the “top one percent” of wildlife habitat left in the lower 48 states. The Front is open to all Montanans for hunting and fishing; it is possible to stalk no less than 10 big game species here, including seven prized ungulates: mule deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, mountain goat, pronghorn antelope and white-tail deer.

The Front is home to the nation's most significant concentrations of elk outside Yellowstone and one of the largest herds of bighorn sheep, pegged at more than 1,000 head. It is the last place where grizzly bears roam onto the Plains. Biologists have recorded 290 species of wildlife on the Front: 72 mammals; 190 birds; seven reptiles; eight amphibians; and 13 fish. The Front has retained nearly all its native plant and animals over the two centuries since Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery blazed a trail through Montana. But it's not simply the Front's biological diversity that is celebrated, but the *integrity* of its underlying ecosystems.

**Native Fish and Migrant Birds:** Some of the 13 fish species found on the Front are represented in remnant populations of vanishing native species, such as the once plentiful cutthroat trout. State fisheries biologists hope to re-establish the fluvial or river-dwelling variety of grayling in the Sun's north and south forks. “Relic” populations of westslope cutthroat persist in 27 stream systems on the Front, such as Alice Creek and the tops of the Two Medicine, Teton, Sun and Dearborn river drainages. These isolated groups represent a gene bank from which fisheries officials hope to repopulate Montana waters with the Intermountain West's signature fish. Among the 190 bird species found on the Front are at least 21 species of raptors, including nine species of owl and some of the densest concentrations of golden eagles. Fourteen species of duck and six species of grebe are known to breed here. Sandhill cranes, “a living fossil,” migrate along the front with small numbers staying to breed. Vast flocks of snow geese migrate through, including half the 40,000-strong Wrangle Island population. More than 700 species of plants, representing 71 families, have been found on the Front—fully one-third of all species in Montana.

**Access, Access, Access:** Hunting forms the core of the Front's recreational traditions and provides crucial support to local economies. For people who enjoy wild animals in a wild setting, the Rocky Mountain Front qualifies as a must-go landscape. Few places offer as many opportunities to watch and stalk wildlife, and no one can stop you from visiting. This is the place where you can witness supreme spectacles of nature: thousands of waterfowl lifting off Freezeout Lake all at once; bighorn sheep negotiating ridgelines; stunted, ancient limber pines growing on wind-scoured rock; and massive gatherings of elk. Isn't it our duty to preserve such experiences—the kind that make our state Montana—for future generations?

**For more information:** see [www.savethefront.org](http://www.savethefront.org), or contact:

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