



Turtle Tracks

Official Newsletter of the Maah Daah Hey Trail Association



Volume 17, Issue 4

President's Message

Hello to Trail users:

Welcome to another issue of the Turtle Tracks. Deer season and fall hunting are big activities in this part of the country, and fire season has finally come to an end. Mother Nature is always working at cleaning up the ground at what needs to be done. So hopefully we have a normal winter and can enjoy the outdoors during this season also. Quite a few mountain bikers and hikers have been out on the Trail in October and November and have enjoyed the experience. Hopefully more folks will also get to see the MDH in a winter setting, it is spectacular.

A big **THANK YOU** to our new members and all who renew their memberships, it is you folks that make the organization run and accomplish what we do as an organization. Please check the date on the Turtle tracks for your membership renewal anniversary.

First, I want to thank all who showed up for the Burning Coal Vein project, and the Forest Service for getting all the materials and supplies to the site. Special thanks to **Phil Helfrich, Mark Zimmerman,** and **Pat Ashley** plus our great MDHTA Board members and FS personnel who made the project go smoothly, even if Mark had two flat tires on this day, he did get home safely that evening.

Other activities this summer included ordering benches provided by the **Diane Stoltz Family** and a **Roughrider REC Roundup** to place along the trailheads and various spots on the trail, **Bruce Bishop** was the driving force here and

when the ground thaws we will be placing them along the Trail. And we cannot forget all the work **Nick Ybarra's** group of volunteers did to maintain the Trail.

We are working on installing location marker posts where the trails cross major roads next season. **Bruce Bishop** also will be getting the MDH challenge on board to start January 1, 2018 to walk, ride or bike miles on the MDH trail. Special patches showing the miles you traversed will be offered to successful participants, watch our website and Facebook page for details.

Rod Mitzel, our new treasurer, is keeping tabs on the money and **Roger Ashley** is doing a great job on the website and membership. We have over 150 orders at present for 2017, with the MDH trail map and LMNG map being the big items. We got a notice from the Forest Service the trail maps will be going up in price January 1, 2018, so get your map now to avoid at least a \$5 increase per map. With Christmas right around the corner, MDH trail merchandize is a great idea for that special gift, so get on the website and see what it has to offer and look at the merchandize available from the MDHTA.

Another large trail project is underway, the **Great Plains Trail**, from Texas to Canada, with a large portion of the MDH included in the route, along with high points in 5 states, more to come on this project. Have a great holiday season and get out and enjoy the MDH trail system.

Happy Trails,

Curtis W. Glasoe – President - MDHTA

Inside this issue:

<i>U.S. Forest Service</i>	2
<i>Membership Recognition</i>	3
<i>Ghosts of the Prairies</i>	4
<i>Puncheon Update</i>	6
<i>Membership</i>	7
<i>Dates to remember</i>	8

Special point of interest:

- *The Great Plains Trail will cover 2200 miles from Guadalupe Mountains National Park in Texas to Canada's Grasslands National Park*

U.S Forest Service Season in Review – 2017

by Greg Morel, Trails Manager, US Forest Service, Dakota Prairie Grasslands

Despite numerous challenges, this past field season saw the accomplishment of a number of trail projects. Though there are still numerous maintenance issues to address on the trail, 2017 was a productive year.

We had another excellent year of volunteer support from the MDHTA and other volunteers. Volunteer hours were down slightly compared to last year's record number. This was partially due to the challenges faced with the high fire danger much of the summer. The Magpie fire started on July 8th and caused much disruption to the trail work that both volunteers and the trail crew accomplishes each year. The Dakota Prairie Grasslands trail crew and I spent many days assisting the fire program with suppression and recovery efforts for Magpie fire and other fires in the area. From then until early October the Little Missouri National Grasslands were under fire restrictions. The extreme drought conditions and fire danger put a halt to any trail mowing; a major maintenance task each year that requires many hours of labor. Even with time lost due to fire suppression efforts and fire restrictions on the Little Missouri National Grasslands, volunteers and the trail crew accomplished many miles of trail maintenance and improvements.

The FS was able to increase our seasonal trail crew to four this summer. In addition, we had one seasonal employee work an extended season from March through October. We also had a trail intern assisting the crew throughout the summer. This resulted in the most trail crew hours on the Maah Daah Hey since 2012. We were also able to bring in a Montana Conservation Corps crew with some grant funding from the North Dakota Outdoor Heritage Fund (ND OHF). The crew had two separate hitches on the Little Missouri Grassland. One hitch was spent working on the Maah Daah Hey south of Wannagan campground. The second focused on ever present maintenance needs on the Cottonwood trail.

The MDHTA assisted with multiple projects on the trail this summer. One of the projects was National Trails Day in June where over forty individuals came out to help surface a section of the Buffalo Gap trail. Last month we were able to come together again and construct a 100 foot long puncheon near Burning Coal

Vein campground. This low-lying area along Second Creek has been a problem for many years. With the new puncheon, trail users will now be able to cross the section without walking or riding through mud. These hours, along with others from the MDHTA, help meet required matching dollars for our grants.

We also had multiple contracted projects completed this year. These projects were funded through two Recreational Trail Program grants and one ND OHF grant. Two of the contracts focused on completing the surfacing on the far southern end of the Maah Daah Hey. In total, almost eight miles of surfacing were completed. We also surfaced an additional two miles on the Buffalo Gap trail north of Highway 10. Our third contract for the year set out to restore 17 miles of trail between Wannagan and Elkhorn campgrounds. This project presented challenges that, once addressed fully, will provide valuable knowledge that will improve future projects. Next year we have three contracts and numerous smaller projects planned. This fall, the trail crew leader took his vacation time to backpack the entire 144 miles of trail. He cataloged any issues he found along the way. This list will serve as a starting point for next summer's trail crew. Hopefully, we will be able to maintain our crew size this next season. We will again have applications for positions available online during the first week of January. Please have anyone interested in spending the summer working on the trail call 701-227-7854, or email gsmorel@fs.fed.us in advance of the application period. I am always available to discuss trail conditions, future projects, or entertain suggestions on how to improve the Maah Daah Hey.



Greg Morel on right. Photo by Roger Ashley

Membership Recognition—Thank You!

Life Members:

Roger & Pat Ashley
Glenn & Jolene Baranko
Tom & Sherri Dickson
Ken Eberts
Curt & Carol Glasoe
Jesse Hanson & Lisa Kudelka
Dale & Jennifer Heglund
Christa Kron in memory of Denton & Paulette
Berntson
Mark Liebig
Ron & Aileen Luethe
Don & Susan Mayer
Medora Convention & Visitors Bureau
Rodney & Carolyn Mitzel
John R. Olson
Mike Parke
Charles & Sandra Peterson
Brian Selland
Diane Stolz Family
Dwight & Loa Tober
Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation
Glennys Ulschak
Nick & Lindsey Ybarra

Trail Boss:

Tim & Tammy Bohn
Heidi Heitkamp & Dwain Lange
McKenzie County Tourism
Stephen & Janet Wieser

Founding:

Curtis Alkire
Bruce & Roberta Bishop
Kim Callahan
Dickinson Convention & Visitors Bureau
Andrew Howick
Bryan Lange
Patrick McBride
The Printers, Inc., John Nelson
Hiram Rogers
Robert Stein
Freida Tebelius
Mark Zimmerman



Volunteers at work on the Puncheon. Photo by Roger Ashley.

Ghost of The Prairies

by Jeremy Guinn, Chair, Tribal Environmental Science Department, United Tribes Technical College

I was more than 20 years old the first time that I saw a coyote. As an avid hunter, hiker, and backpacker, I was outside more of my waking hours than I was inside, yet I had never crossed paths with a coyote. While walking along a seldom-used trail, I crested a hill and saw a small grey animal trotting across the clearing before disappearing into the next drainage. In that brief glimpse what caught my eye, and my imagination, was the loping gait of the coyote: back-end held low with head held high, teeter-totting as it jaunted quickly for cover. My first thought, believe it or not, was that it looked like a hyena! Of course it wasn't a hyena, a jackal, or even a dingo. It was a uniquely American species.

Representatives of *Canidae*, or the dog family, evolved in North America and while some of their relatives spread to other lands (they currently exist on all continents except Antarctica), the coyote remained here. Coyotes first appeared in North America by at least 1 million years ago, before wolves or modern dogs.

That initial personal sighting was in western Illinois in 1999. At that time, Illinois had just gone through a rapid increase in coyote populations and the people were learning to deal with suburban coyotes. For much of the time from European settlement of the region up to about the 1980s, coyote populations remained low in the state, but gradually, and then very rapidly, they increased. Today, the most successful study of large populations of urban coyotes is from downtown Chicago. The study has provided an intriguing look into the adaptability and creativeness of coyotes in a human-changed habitat. With increasing coyote populations and closer associations to people, we are seeing coyote-dog hybrids (coy-dogs) and coyote-wolf hybrids (coy-wolves), particularly in the eastern U.S. The year after my encounter, I moved to North Dakota and soon found myself in a similar situation, with expanding coyote populations and many people coming into contact with them for the first time, especially along the urban-rural interface.

At the time of European settlement in North America, the coyote was an animal of the western plains and prairies. It was not at all common in the forested East and so gained

monikers such “ghost of the prairies,” “brush wolf,” or “plains or prairie wolf.” Meriwether Lewis described a coyote as: “the small wolf or burrowing dog of the prairies...very active fleet and delicately formed...the eye of a deep sea green colour small and piercing.” In 1926, coyotes were described as especially common over the western half of the state. In 1913, they were reported as numerous and abundant along the Little Missouri River region. A 19th century coyote headdress from Standing Rock Reservation has been displayed at the National Museum of the American Indian. It was said to protect war-party scouts by

summoning the coyote's trickster skills.

The coyote holds a prominent place in Native American lore, but the meaning of the coyote character varies decidedly among regions and peoples. In the Southwest, the coyote plays the familiar trickster role in many stories and can be funny, greedy, foolish, or cunning. But, the Plains tribes have their own trickster character known as *Iktomi* – the spider. The coyote in Northern Plains stories tends to either be a hero creator character or a reflection of the perils of human nature and poor behavior. He (always male) often faces rather gruesome consequences, yet usually

survives for the next story, a testament to his adaptability and resilience. Some stories verge on the obscene and are not exactly appropriate for family story time.

In the early 1900s, federal and state Predator Control programs sought to eliminate populations of all kinds of predators. In the 1920s, research conducted at the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey's Eradication Methods Laboratory in Albuquerque and Denver sought to find the most efficient methods (including thallium sulphate, which is now banned in the U.S., and strychnine) for dealing with coyotes. In retrospect, the reality of widespread predator control was to (1) fund killing off all predators, then (2) fund killing off the same rodent pests that were naturally controlled by predators. While certainly the image of a calf or sheep being taken by a coyote is enough to tug on both the

(Continued on page 5)



Tagged coyote with satellite transmitter collar, Urban Coyote Movement Study. Photo by Jeremy Guinn

(Continued from page 4)

heartstrings and the purse strings of livestock producers, we know now that widespread predator control practices do little to reduce long-term coyote populations and that selectively taking of specific individuals is preferred. At the same time, humans can benefit from rodent population maintenance by smaller, stable populations of coyotes. And, there may be better alternatives. In fact, studies in North Dakota showed the use of guard dogs reduce sheep depredation by 93%. Predators have been compared to wildfires – once feared and extinguished as soon as possible, now we are understanding that they may be key to healthy natural ecosystems.

In spite of eradication attempts, coyote populations have increased in many regions of the country. An August 2016 article in *National Geographic* titled, “How the Most Hated Animal in America Outwitted Us All,” suggests several considerations for how coyotes have persevered through pressures such as federal aerial gunning, bounties, coyote contests, and nearly unrestricted hunting/trapping seasons. In North Dakota, for example, firearms, traps, archery and pursuit with dogs is open year-round, while the use of cable devices and hunting at night is allowed from the end of the November through mid-March. The state also operates a Coyote Catalog which connects hunters with landowners looking to reduce numbers in their area. These regulations are not inherently improper, and are likely helping to keep coyote populations at more palatable levels, while offering citizens opportunities for outdoor recreation and financial gain such as selling a renewable resource (hides) to fur buyers. In 2015-2016, North Dakota fur buyers paid hunters and trappers nearly \$612,000 for over 14,000 coyote pelts.

Over the past decade or so, the coyote’s new frontier has become the urban jungle of metropolitan areas across the country. The study in Chicago is the largest, but other metropolitan areas have developed urban coyote programs, as well. Studies have popped up in Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York City, Madison, and even Bismarck! In 2013, researchers and students at United Tribes Technical College began tracking coyotes near town using satellite collar transmitters. What we found was that coyotes were using a wide array of habitats, but most often used the more natural corridors through town. This included railroad tracks, small drainages, and golf courses. They showed no avoidance of crossing busy streets or operating in daylight hours and were regularly located in close proximity to houses with greater than 1 acre lots. Abundant food (rabbits, ground squirrels, pheasants, human garbage, etc.) and reduced hunting pressure in the city provide excellent opportunities for coyotes to survive. Studies from other urban areas suggest that coyotes survive longer and have more pups per litter in urban areas. Most of the mortalities observed during our project were hunter-related, but they occurred as the coyotes moved outside of city limits.

Moving west through North Dakota, most people will say

that coyote numbers are smaller, having seen less of an increase than in the central and eastern parts of the state over the years. Estimates by the ND Game & Fish Department show a great increase in coyote numbers in the Drift Prairie region – the large swath of the state between the Red River Valley and the Missouri Coteau east of the Missouri River. In Drift Prairie, coyotes increased from an average of 4.3 coyote families per 100 mi² in the 1990s, to 6.8 in the 2000s, to 13.5 so far in the 2010s. However, stable coyote populations are the general rule among most of the state since 1990 (excluding the Drift Prairie). In the Missouri Slope region – the area west of the Missouri River and including the Badlands, the coyote population has been much more stable with estimates at 7.5 (1990s), 8.1 (2000s) and 7.6 (2010s). Peaks were seen in 1999, 2009, and 2013, only to return to more moderate levels within a year or so.

We do not have a great understanding of coyote populations or ecology in the badlands habitats. From a 1987 issue of *Field & Stream*, ND Game & Fish Biologist Steven Allen suggested hunting opportunities were good and advised hunters to concentrate on areas west of U.S. Highways 52 and 281 and recommended contacting the Little Missouri National Grasslands office. In South Dakota badlands, research projects studied coyote movement in relations to swift fox restoration attempts. Foxes tend to avoid coyotes and there are often reductions in fox populations as coyote populations increase. In Badlands National Park, coyote core area of use was about 1.4 km², which did not differ from areas adjacent to the park. A study in badlands habitat in north-central Montana in the late 1970s found that coyotes were major sources of mortality in summer mule fawns, but that fawn predation was lowest when rodent populations were highest. Counter-intuitively, fawn mortality was also lowest when coyote populations were highest. “Summer fawn survival increased to 96% without coyote control or a natural decline in coyote numbers, indicating that alternate prey populations levels have at least as much impact on coyote predation rates as do coyote population levels.” More research is needed to understand the complex ecology of this highly-adaptable opportunistic omnivore.

Haunting and strange, the high-pitched call of the coyote still perks the ear and raises the hairs on the back of the neck. Out of nowhere, it suddenly seems to come from all directions at once and you realize that you are not alone on the prairie. Teddy Roosevelt described it as the “wild, mournful wailing of the coyotes.” Although not nearly as soulful as a wolf’s howl, there is still something wild about the yips, barks, and howls of a coyote on the open plains. While opportunities to feel immersed in wilderness are vanishing, the badlands provide occasions to see pure ecosystem interactions between plants and animals, the physical and biological, and the prey and predator. Next time you are camped in the badlands or just out for a twilight drive, stop, listen, and be thankful for a piece of the wild.

.

Puncheon Update

by Roger Ashley

Within the first half mile of the Burning Coal Vein Campground/Trailhead the Maah Daah Hey Trail snakes through a low wet area that can't be avoided. The trail from the trailhead parking lot to the access road is routed across the hillside above some springs before it descends and crosses the campground access road. At that point trail users must cross a low area to a self-closing gate to continue on the trail. Even during this summer's drought this part of the trail was wet so trail users opened and closed the gate in the middle of a mud hole. The Forest Service designed a puncheon and found some grant money to buy materials. The Maah Daah Hey Trail Association joined forces with the US Forest Service and the Save the MDH to provide volunteer labor to construct the boardwalk and puncheon from the edge of the wet area to the 2nd Creek Bridge on October 11. The weather was perfect for getting the work done at the site with sun, little wind, temperatures in the 50's and no rain the previous two weeks! Greg Morel, Trails Manager, and Will Horneman, Trails Crew Leader, both with the US Forest Service, provided safety training to the volunteers prior to commencing that day's work activity.

The group broke for lunch at 1:30 and had a meeting to discuss trail maintenance issues and how the MDHTA and Save the MDH can work together. Box lunches were provided by MDHTA. By 4 pm the construction was nearly complete –



Volunteers at work. Photo by Roger Ashley

we were just short of two support pieces that came up missing. Greg and Will completed the job two days later.

Mark Zimmerman discovered his pickup had a flat tire after lunch and worked a good part of the afternoon along with some help from Phil and a lot of "supervisors" to change it. Fortunately Mark's spare had plenty of air. I'll let Mark finish his story with the following email he sent me:



Finished Puncheon. Photo by Greg Morel.

Roger,

Thank you for including me in this project. Truly enjoyed the opportunity to get out on the trail—even for work.

It was almost an unimaginable situation as I exited I-94 at Dickinson and headed north to the Goodyear shop. I parked at the shop and went in to inquire about possible tire repair. I was informed the shop was closing in less than half-hour and the shop was booked up with prior service work. So I thought I would chance driving to Bismarck without a spare. However when I walked back to the pickup I noticed the spare tire we had placed on the pickup was now flat!!

Goodyear staff was so kind to fix one of the tires and I returned to Bismarck safely. Just a very odd occurrence to have two flat tires on the same location on the same day and to have the last one go flat just as I pulled into the Goodyear lot!

All is good, but I am not sure I want to be involved in another MDHTA work project anytime soon!

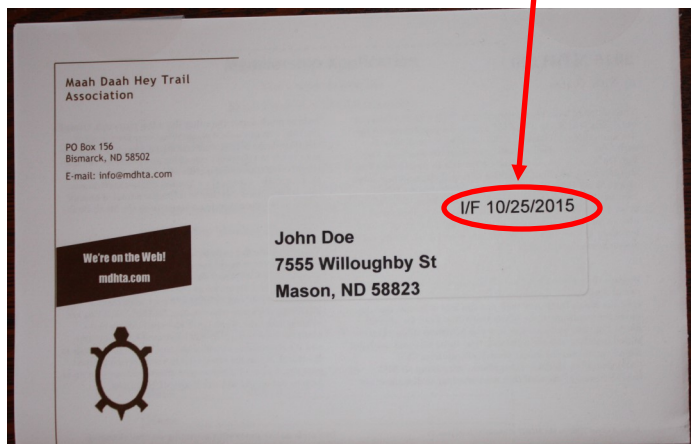
Again my thanks for the invitation to help on the project—I had a fun day.

Mark Zimmerman

Mark as well as the other volunteers had a fun and satisfying day helping construct the boardwalk/puncheon near Burning Coal Vein. This reminds me of a saying I have heard from many folks that enjoy trails, "A bad day on the trail is better than the best day in the office." This should be a good reminder to those of you who travel the gravel roads in the North Dakota Badlands. Many of these roads are surfaced with scoria (clinker) that when broken produces very sharp angular pieces that can puncture a tire. Be sure you have good tires when driving in the badlands!

Membership Renewal – It May be Time!

“When do I renew my membership?” All memberships are one year in length except the three year Individual/Family Memberships and Life Memberships. To determine when your membership is up for renewal check the upper right corner of the mailing label on your newsletter.



Your current membership level (I/F = Individual or Family; F = Founding; T = Trail Boss; M = Mile Marker; and Life) as well as your membership expiration date is given. If your membership has expired please complete the membership application form found in this newsletter or go to mdhta.com/membership to complete the requested information. Include a check made out to MDHTA or if you wish to use a credit card go to mdhta.com/membership.

Moving? Changing your Email address?

Don't forget to contact us with your new postal address or email address. Stay connected.

Thanks to all those that have renewed to date!

Membership Application

Yes! I want to join the Maah Daah Hey Trail Association

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Individual/Family Member - turtle pin | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Post Marker Member - wood sign on post or for home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$70 Individual/Family Member for 3 years - turtle pin | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Life Member - turtle sign & name on kiosk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Founding Member <input type="checkbox"/> Cap or <input type="checkbox"/> T-shirt S M L XL | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$200 Trail Boss Member - Denim shirt S M L XL | |

Make checks payable to: MDHTA, P. O., Box 156, Bismarck, ND 58502

PLEASE PRINT

Date: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____ Email newsletter: Yes No

**Maah Daah Hey Trail
Association**

PO Box 156
Bismarck, ND 58502
E-mail: hello@mdhta.com

We're on the Web!
mdhta.com



**MAAH DAAH HEY TRAIL ASSOCIATION
Officers and Board of Directors**

President—Curt Glasoe
Vice President—Roger Ashley
Second Vice President—Nick Ybarra
Secretary—Bruce Bishop
Treasurer—Rodney Mitzel

The Maah Daah Hey Trail Association is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing and maintaining a linear, non-motorized, sustainable, recreational trail system in southwest North Dakota, through voluntary and public involvement, and in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service.

Dates to Remember

December 16, 2017	Bold St. Nick Fat Bike Race (experienceland.org)
May 27, 2018	Badlands Gravel Battle (experienceland.org)
June 2, 2018	National Trails Day
July 28, 2018	MDH Trail Run (experienceland.org)
August 4, 2018	MDH 100 (experienceland.org)
September 21-26, 2018	MDH 150 (experienceland.org)

Find us on 