

## Glenda Wiles

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**From:** Johnhamtana@aol.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 15, 2013 10:58 PM  
**To:** Ravalli County Commissioners  
**Subject:** Website Email -  
**Attachments:** Feb2013Update.docx; Valley.Elk.Pop.Trend.Calf.Recuit.2012.doc

This comment is primarily for Commissioner Foss who has twice mentioned in public, at meetings I've attended, that there is only one outfitter left in the Valley and then implied the sole reason was the presence of wolves and a sharply declining elk population.

It didn't seem likely to me that only one outfitter remained in business in the Valley, so I looked at the Department of Labor and Industry website to look for Licensed Outfitters as listed by the Montana Board of Outfitters. They list active Montana Licensed Outfitters as of March 15, 2013. I found the following outfitters with addresses in Ravalli County. Some of them provide a broad range of outfitting services across the state, but all advertised elk hunts on their website.

Flying W Outfitters  
Lone Tree Outfitters and Guide Service  
Montana Hunting and Fishing Outfitters  
Painted Rocks Outfitters  
Rick Wemple Outfitting  
Rocking W Outfitters  
Skalkaho Lodge/John Rose Outfitting  
White Mountain Outfitters  
Accurate Outfitters  
Circle KBLOutfitters (Scott Boulanger, outfits primarily in Idaho, but is based in Ravalli County)  
Continental Divide Outfitters  
East Fork Outfitters

I've also enclosed a graph of elk populations in the Bitterroot Hunting units from 1965 through 2012. You'll notice the good old days of elk hunting really occurred in about 2007 when the population peaked at over twice the population in 1965. A lot of the rapid increase between 2000 and 2007 can be attributed to the tremendous flush of nutrients in forbs and grasses growing as a result of the fires of 2000. The recent decline can be attributed to a number of factors, one of them being wolves, but, I think, more importantly to the decline of nutritious forbs and grasses, an inevitable consequence of vegetation succession. I do not have documentation of the 2013 trend counts, but I do know the elk population, and calf production was up from 2012, an encouraging sign.

I've also included an elk calf study update document that clearly shows wolves do eat elk, but other predator mortality is higher than wolf mortality in the large sample of radio collared calves.

I guess my bottom line request is, please check your sources of information before repeating mis-information in a public forum.

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# Bitterroot Elk Project Update – January 28, 2013

## 2012 Neonatal Calf Survival Summary

	HD 250	HD 270	HD 321/334
<b>Total newborns captured</b>	37	20	15
<b>FATE (as of Nov 15, 2012)</b>			
Unknown Fate/Tag Loss	11	6	10
Dead	18	11	1
Alive	8	3	4
<b>MORTALITY CAUSE</b>			
Natural, nonpredation	1	1	0
Lion predation	7	3	0
Bear predation	2	3	0
Wolf predation	1	0	0
Coyote predation	0	1	0
Unknown predator	6	1	0
Unknown cause	1	2	1

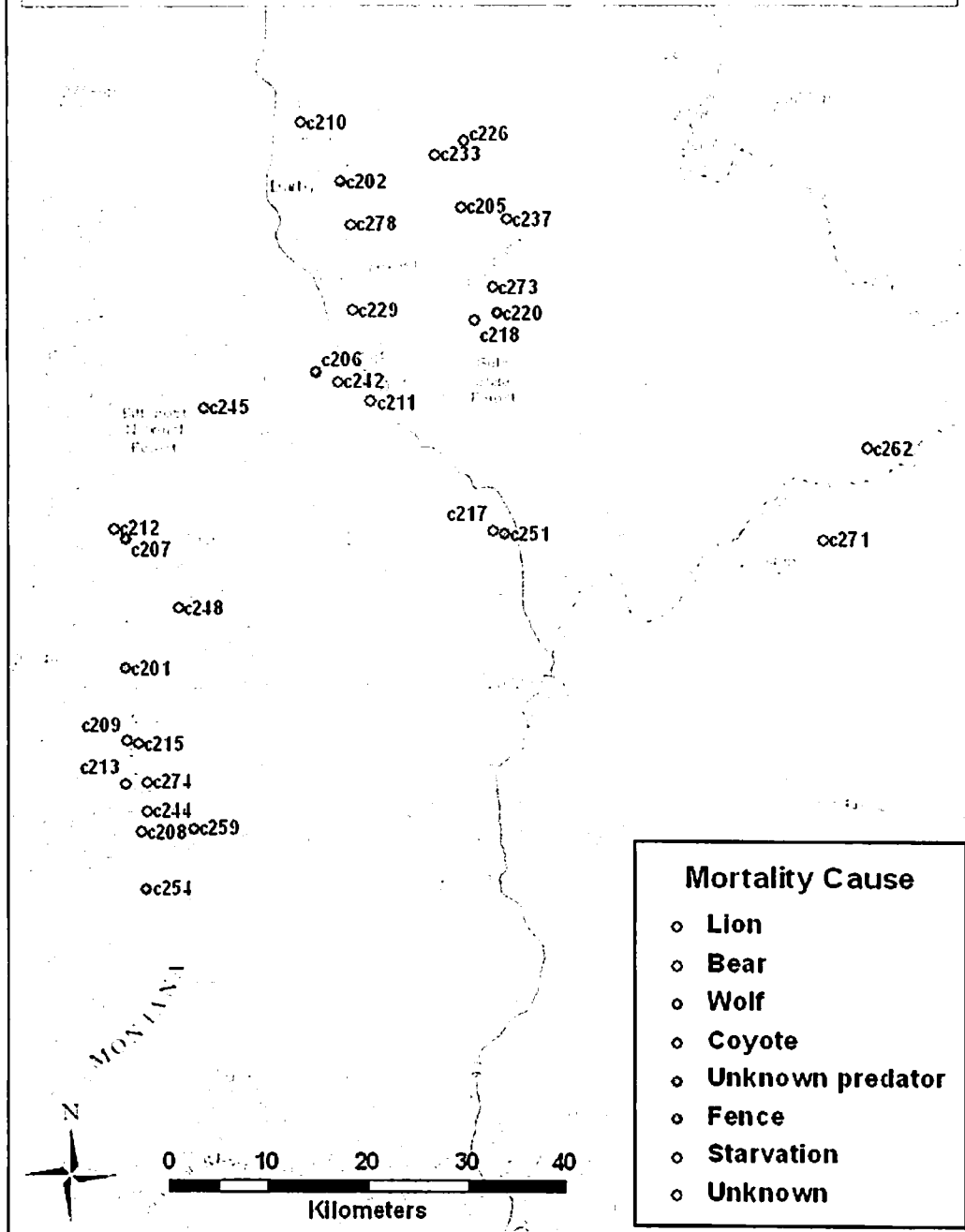
## 2012-2013 Overwinter Calf Survival Summary

	HD 250	HD 270
<b>Total On-air at start of winter</b>	24	23
<b>FATE</b>		
Unknown Fate/Tag Loss	2	0
Dead	1	2
Alive	21	21
<b>MORTALITY CAUSE</b>		
Capture related	1	0
Lion predation	0	1
Unknown predator	0	1

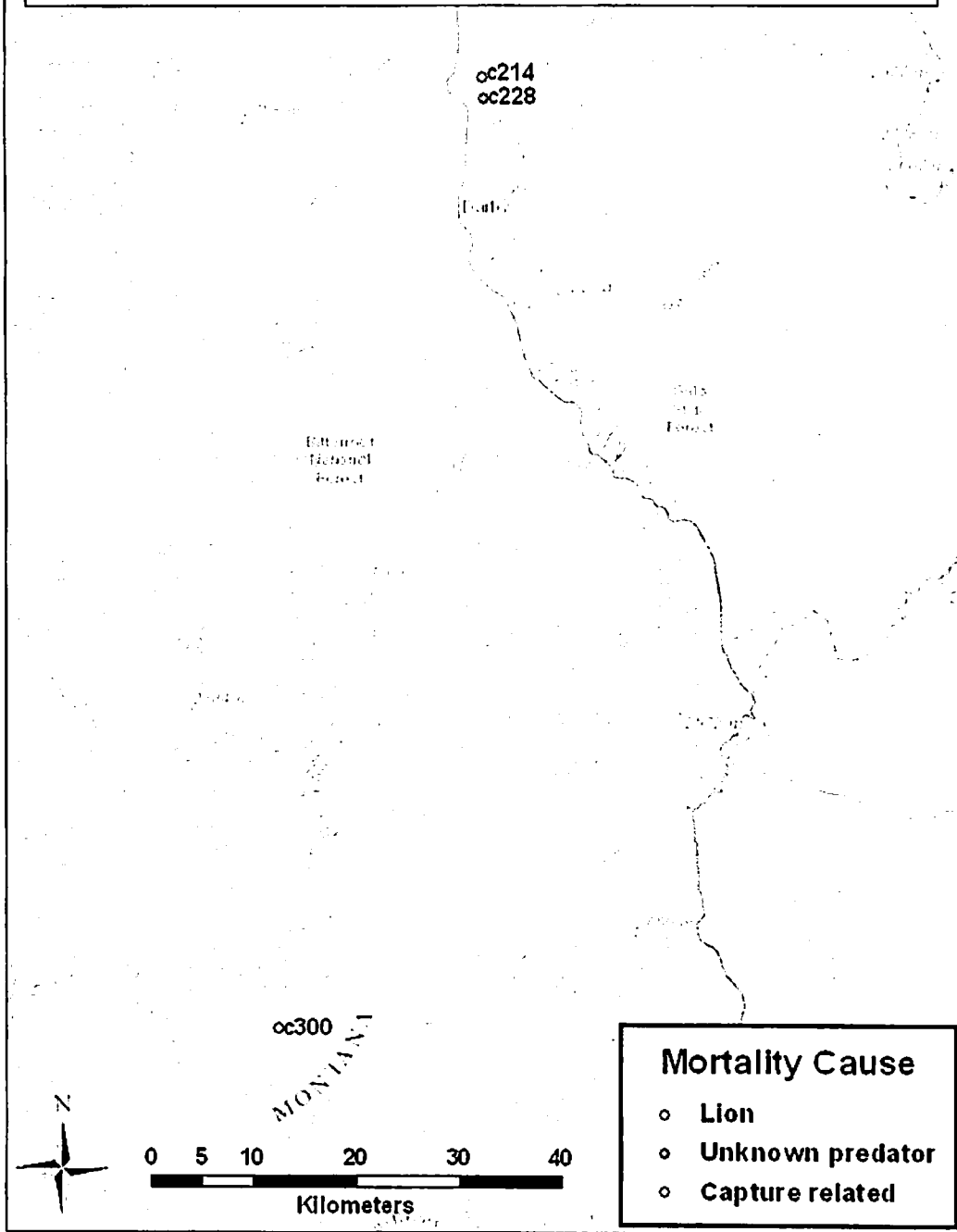
**Adult Elk Update:** During winter 2011-2012, we collared 40 adult female elk. Three died of capture related causes. Of the 37 adult elk monitored throughout last year, 35 survived the monitoring period. In April 2012, 1 elk was killed by wolves in the West Fork and 1 elk was killed by a lion in the East Fork. GPS collars are currently being collected and location data is being downloaded.

**Lion population estimate:** The mountain lion fieldwork is underway. The houndsmen and field teams have been very successful, and our sampling effort is on or ahead of schedule. We have treed and biopsy darted 31 mountain lions in the study area. Additionally, we have collected 1 blood sample, 10 scat samples, and 9 hair samples from within the study area. Spatially, effort has been well dispersed throughout the study area, as designed. We have collected 10 muscle and hair samples from mountain lions harvested within the study area, and in adjacent districts. We sent a first set of DNA samples to the lab for DNA extraction on January 14, but have not received any results back from the lab.

# Bitterroot Elk Neonate Mortality Summer-Fall 2012



# Bitterroot Elk Calf Overwinter Mortality 2012-2013



Bitterroot Elk Pop Trends vs Calf Recruitment 1965-2012

