

# A Brief Introduction

As the new acting director of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to *Montana Outdoors* readers.

First, let me say that it is an honor to be part of this great department. Montana is a state blessed with extraordinary fisheries, wildlife populations, landscapes, river systems, and state parks. Providing stewardship for those natural resources is a huge task, and Montana residents and visitors are fortunate that FWP maintains a team of dedicated resource professionals committed to the best possible management and service.

I've been aware of Montana's remarkable people and natural resources for more than three decades, since the late 1970s when I spent summers working on a Montana ranch. I've maintained close friendships with many Montanans, and as a lifelong hunter and angler I have closely watched the issues affecting those activities here and across the West.

After receiving a degree in outdoor recreation from Colorado State University, I worked for the Colorado Division of Parks for 25 years, in positions ranging from park ranger to deputy director. In 2006 I was named administrator of Montana FWP's Parks Division. Since then, I have worked closely with other FWP administrators and staff to learn about issues facing this department.

As acting director, my goal is to build on the department's best traditions and do everything I can to continue its long record of serving Montanans and their fish and wildlife resources. In the months ahead, you can expect FWP to focus on, among other issues:

- Working to delist the grizzly bear and wolf so management reverts to the state.
- Boosting efforts to address the issue of brucellosis transmission to cattle by wild elk and bison.
- Improving public access for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor



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recreation through Habitat Montana, Block Management, and the Access Montana Initiative.

- Enhancing our system of state parks and fishing access sites, especially in and near Montana's growing urban areas.

One of my top priorities will be to hear what people have to say about FWP, both the complimentary and the critical. I know that this department's decisions affect many groups, organizations, and

individuals, and I will take the time to meet with them and learn of their concerns. During my time as the Parks Division administrator, I traveled throughout Montana to better understand the state's people and resources. As FWP's acting director, I will continue that process of listening to and learning from Montanans across the state.

These are times of enormous uncertainty and change—political, economic, social, and climatic. Fortunately, many things in Montana will stay constant. Our trout fishing will continue to be some of the best in the United States, elk populations will stay healthy, Bannack Days will still provide a weekend of family fun, and Lewis and Clark Caverns will still be a place of underground enchantment. Walleye anglers this summer will have another great season on Fort Peck Lake, hunters will continue to enjoy outstanding opportunities this fall, and our wildlife diversity will remain the envy of states across the country.

As I strive to make FWP an even better agency, I also want to acknowledge how fortunate we are to live in a state with such exceptional fish and wildlife populations, hunting and fishing recreation, and state parks.

—JOE MAURIER, *Acting Director, Montana FWP*

## NATURAL WONDERS

ILLUSTRATION BY PETER GROSSHAUSER

**Q. I know fish can detect sound and pressure waves, but do any Montana fish actually generate sound waves to any purpose or advantage?**

**A.** The freshwater drum does. During the spring mating season, males of this close relative to the saltwater redbfish vibrate a unique set of muscles and tendons against their balloonlike swim bladder. This produces a grunting sound thought to attract females from a distance. Anglers have reported hearing the strange sounds while fishing the lower Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, where drum are found. In some states, drum are called croakers or thunder-pumpers for the sound.

**Q. Do birds blink?**

**A.** Yes, says Kristi Dubois, FWP native species coordinator in Missoula, but not quite the same way humans do. Birds have an extra eyelid, a transparent membrane that lets them blink without closing their eyes. This “nictitating” membrane helps keep a bird's eyes moist without blocking vision during flight. Birds usually close their main eyelids only when asleep.

