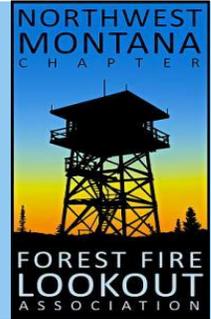


# NORTHWEST MONTANA CHAPTER – FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION

*Dedicated to the preservation of forest fire lookouts  
in Northwest Montana*



Fall 2019



## ***NOTES FROM THE BOARD***

The larch have given the mountains their beautiful fall foliage, and the lowering snowline is keeping us away from the lookouts lately, so I guess it is time to sit down and catch up.

We are making plans for an Appreciation Night get together at the Kalispell Brewing Company in November. I hope many of you will stop by and visit with us then. We love the chance to touch base with our volunteers, members, supporters, partners, and perhaps future any of the aforementioned to talk lookouts.

It has been the usual busy season for me and the rest of the Lookout Association crew. With your help we have continued to do good work up in the mountains on a variety of lookout projects. Sit back and let us tell you about it. Thanks from the bottom of our hearts for your continuing support to make all of this possible.

***Chuck Manning***  
***Board Chair***



## **LOOKOUT**

### **APPRECIATION NIGHT**

NOVEMBER 20 5-7 PM

KALISPELL BREWING  
COMPANY

Join us for a free beer (finger food provided), & to share some lookout stories.

Volunteers, members, partners, and supporters are all welcome!





# 2019 Projects

## GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

### 2019 Assessments

Swiftcurrent Lookout built in 1936 is perched along the Continental Divide at an elevation of 8436' and is the highest point accessible by trail in the park. Crew leader Greg Evans his wife Sue and Kim Lindstrom teamed up to perform the 2019 condition assessment. They started at the loop on the Going-to-the-Sun road and hiked to the Granite Park Backcountry Campground where they camped overnight before hiking to the lookout to conduct the assessment and returning to the loop the next day.

Built in 1934 Numa Ridge Lookout is located on the ridge west of Numa Peak just north of Bowman Lake and overlooks the North Fork of the Flathead River drainage. Greg Evans and Kathy Butterfield performed this year's condition assessment. The out and back distance to the lookout is about 11.5 miles with an elevation gain of just over 3000'.

Jeff Clark, Greg Evans, Rick & Marli Davis and Chuck Manning hiked to Apgar Lookout overlooking McDonald Lake to the north to conduct the 2019 condition assessment. In 2016 the NWMT-FFLA painted the exterior of the lookout under the guidance of NWMT-FFLA crew leader Scott Murphy and it is still in very excellent condition. This lookout is in close proximity to Apgar Village and is a popular hiking destination for many park visitors.

Mount Brown Lookout was constructed in 1928 and to this day remains historically unaltered. Greg Evans, Jeff Clark, Ben Cavin and Chuck Manning conducted the 2019 condition assessment in advance of a work project slated for later in the summer.

All four lookouts assessed this year are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Other lookouts listed in Glacier are Huckleberry, Loneman, Scalplock, Heavens Peak and Mount Brown. Swiftcurrent and Numa Ridge lookouts are staffed every year during the summer and early fall, the others being Huckleberry and Scalplock.









## Mt. Brown Lookout Project

After conducting the condition assessment earlier this summer and receiving input from park staff and Hawk Watch Program volunteers, NWMT-FFLA volunteers scraped and painted much of the interior in addition to addressing safety issues on the stairs leading up to the catwalk around the lookout cab. The NWMT-FFLA volunteers donated close to 200 hours during the 12 days they “lived” in the lookout along with the two Mountain Goats that frequented the lookout’s surroundings monitoring progress.





## Firefighter Lookout

x

## Mud Lake Lookout

x



# KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST

## Meadow Peak Lookout



Target Dates: July 9-13

Commitment Days: 1 or more days

Number of Volunteers: 4-6 at a time

Access: Drive to lookout from lodging at Historic Raven Ridge Ranger Station

Work outline: Continuing last year's work, volunteers will complete replacement/repair of structural material on the tower, and reinstall the shutters, rebuild the stairs and handrail to the catwalk, and replace or repair failed catwalk and handrails.



## Northwest Peak Lookout

Target Dates: July 19 - 24

Commitment Days: 2 or more days

Number of Volunteers: 3 - 4 at a time

Access: 2.5 mile hike from trailhead in the Yaak

Work outline: Volunteers will do a variety of carpentry tasks including replacing/repairing window shutter headers, replacing the shutters, and replacing/repairing window sills.

## Mount Wam Lookout

*Wam Lookout is located in the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area. Fifteen days were spent at this site doing major restoration work in the end was boarded up in late September after all the windows were removed and flown to an onsite location to be completely restored. Volunteer crew members that helped at various stages this summer's work were Jeannine Olson, Julie Von Eschen, Chu Stearns, Peter Kitts, Rick Davis, Mark Beckwith, and Chuck Manning. The Montana Conservation Corp also provided support for this project.*



## OCTOBER FIELD TRIP

The highlight of our October Board Meeting was definitely the setting. We were hosted by Bick Smith at his wonderful lookout tower atop Lion Mountain overlooking Whitefish Lake and the Flathead Valley. With some good food and the sublime view, it was hard to keep our mind on our work, and even harder to go home! Thanks to Bick, and our other guests Mike Frost and Bill Swope for their input and continuing support. And look, Bick even got a photo of our ace photographer in action! Kjell is usually the guy behind the lens for all the great photos we share with you...





## A Teenage Lookout at Pioneer Ridge

Ivan O'Neil

Perhaps Ivan O'Neil was destined to spend time on high peaks, having been raised by his grandmother, Frieda O'Neil, the first woman in a women's group to scale Grinnell Peak in 1903. Ivan always loved the outdoors, and when his freshman year at Flathead High School in Kalispell ended in 1944, he and 10 friends lied about their age (he was 15) to get hired on a brush crew at the Coram Ranger Station. That summer he also fought fires and did trail work.

In 1945, Ivan became the lookout at Pioneer Ridge, above the South Fork River, supervised by Jim Root. He worked that year for six weeks.

Pioneer Ridge was a wood structure that had two stories, but it wasn't a tower. Living quarters were on the second floor, and above that was a small cupola. Most of the other lookouts in the area were on metal towers.

Ivan said he was on duty 24 hours a day. "That's not like they have them now. They figure eight hours a day is enough now, I guess." He stayed up there the entire time except once. "It rained before V-J Day," he said, "and so then they gave us the day off and the weekend. Came down and celebrated with the rest of the people."

The hardest part of his job was getting water. "When I first got there, it was about a half mile down the ridge, but as it dried up high, I had to go down lower to pick it up. I think the furthest away was probably a mile." He had a five-gallon fabric container to haul water, but it always leaked, and water would run down his back and his butt. He lost about a quarter of it on the way up before he finally got it into a metal container.

Communication with the Forest Service was through a telephone connected to Coram. For entertainment, Ivan brought his own broadcast band radio to listen to Kalispell stations.

Like other LOs, many of his meals included Spam. "There was a certain brand of corned beef that I really liked," Ivan recalled. "It was pretty good. It came from Argentina, as a matter of fact. El Fido or something. "

He cooked "everything," including making a not-very-successful thimbleberry pie. "I have a lot of Norwegian in me, and I tried to make lefse one time. That wasn't very successful, either. About a quarter inch thick."

His most frightening experience took place during a lightning storm in the little cupola. A lightning strike hit the (telephone) wire about a mile away. "It jolted me so bad my back was sore for the rest of the season, I think. It knocked me into the windowsill."

Ivan enjoyed his experience at Pioneer. He relished being out in the wild and being entirely free and his own boss. Also, his best friend George Ostrom was on Battery Mountain Lookout. They talked daily. George was a trumpet player. "He'd play his trumpet, and I'd listen to his trumpet playing. I think I could probably hear some of it without the radio, I don't know, without the telephone."



Pioneer Ridge LO 1988

Ivan hasn't been back to Pioneer Lookout for 25 years. He thinks his lookout was replaced in the early '50s by a newer lookout. It was there when he visited last. It, too, is no longer on the ridge. Photos of the later lookout exist, but he has searched for many years trying to find a photo of his lookout. The Northwest Montana Forest Fire Lookout Association hopes to help Ivan locate a photo. If you have any knowledge of a photo taken of the Pioneer Ridge Lookout between 1939 and 1950, please contact the association ,406-253-8661,or [nwmtc-ffla@gmail.com](mailto:nwmtc-ffla@gmail.com).

*This article by Beth Hodder is based on an interview that is part of the NWMT-FFLA Oral History Project to preserve the stories associated with the lookouts (people and places) of Northwest Montana. This and other interviews will be archived at the University of Montana Library, and can be found online at <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/nwmt-ffla/>*

## SAVE THE DATES!



## WILDERNESS SPEAKER SERIES

We will again be a co-sponsor of the popular Wilderness Speaker Series this winter. Planning is still in the works. For now we can confirm the upcoming dates:

- February 5
- March 4
- April 1

Stay tuned for more information as speakers are confirmed

**2019 FUNRAISER EVENTS**



**WERNER LOOKOUT FUNDRAISER  
GENERATED \$665 FOR FUTURE  
LOOKOUT RESTORATION PROJECTS**



If there was any wonder whether Sarah Williams enjoyed her night on Werner Peak Lookout, her photo clears that up.

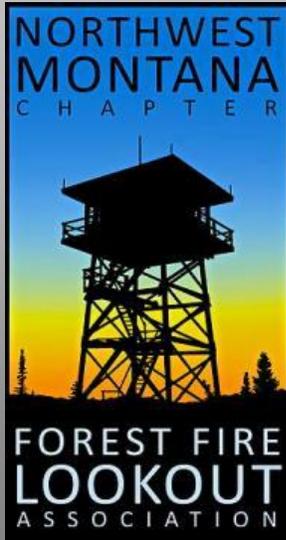
"When I put in \$5 for a raffle ticket, I had no idea how much I would get in return from a night at Werner Peak Lookout. The facility was well maintained, the drive was beautiful (and steep), and the views were simply amazing! I'd like to thank NWMT Forest Fire Lookout Association for this great opportunity and I look forward to planning another trip to Werner Peak!" S.Williams  
Thank you again to the Stillwater Unit, Department Natural Resources and Conservation, for offering this treat to our fans.

**We are currently selling raffle tickets for another night at Werner LO July 18, 2020. Look for a Board Member at events during the winter and spring to get your tickets for a chance to be next year's lookout guest!**

This spring we had the opportunity to team up with the Glacier Children's Museum to help create the "**Lookout! Our Forest, Our Home**" exhibit which was at the Northwest Montana History Museum in Kalispell this summer. Thanks to NWMT/FFLA members Terry & Jane Richmond, along with Johnathan Fetter-Vorm, Rick Davis and Chuck Manning for all the volunteer work to create the lookout exhibit.



## 2020 PROJECTS



We are working with are partners to firm up plans for next summer's projects. Potential lookouts slated for work include:

- Mud Lake LO on Spotted Bear RD, Flathead NF
- Mount Wam LO on Fortine RD, Kootenai NF
- Mount Brown LO, Glacier NP
- Porcupine Ridge LO, Glacier NP
- Maintenance projects at Apgar and Loneman LOs, Glacier NP
- Condition Asestsments on Kootenai and Glacier LOs

Stay tuned for more info this spring on our 2020 projects on or our website: <http://www.nwmt-ffla.org>



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