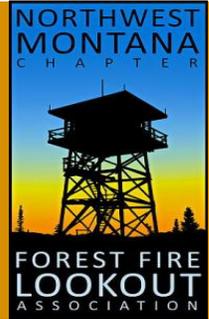


NORTHWEST MONTANA CHAPTER – FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION

*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 have plans for an Appreciation Night get together at the Kalispell Brewing Company soon. 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 above to talk lookouts.

It has been the usual busy season for all of of the Lookout Association crew. With your help we continue 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 & share
some lookout stories. We'll
provide finger food.

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

Thanks to member and volunteer Sue Evans for sharing these awesome photos from this year's Assessment trip to Swiftcurrent Lookout! I'll bet we all wish we had been there with them!



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.



Mount Brown LO 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 of Mt. Brown, 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. Glacier National Park provided pack string support for this project by hauling in personal gear and supplies up the 5 mile, 4200’ elevation gain trail.





Mount Wam Lookout

Mount Wam Lookout is located in the Ten Lakes Wilderness Study Area along the Canadian, US Border. Built in 1930, Wam Lookout was restored 1999 and became part of the Forest Service Rental Program.

Recent restoration efforts on the lookout began in 2017 after the NWMT-FFLA conducted a condition assessment for the Forest Service to document what work needed to be done to maintain the lookout's historical significance and what stabilization efforts needed to be done to mitigate further deterioration.

In 2018 work began to address that long list of deferred maintenance items. The lookout support piers were rebuilt to square up the lookout so structural failings could be repaired/replaced. New shutters were built onsite and installed.

The 2019 restoration work started in June with a recon flight with Two Bear Air Rescue to double check measurements for offsite milling of lumber in advance of the scheduled Forest Service flight to deliver materials. The flight was sequenced to deliver all materials for the July project, before the fire season helicopter use began. During July, the west windows were removed to enable replacement of a new window sill and reinforcement of the window header. New siding was also installed on the west and north walls. In late September all windows were removed and flown off the mountain by the Forest Service helitack support to be restored off site over the winter. The window openings were covered with plywood. In October NWMT-FFLA volunteers hiked back to the lookout to install house wrap under the shutters to shield the lookout's interior from the driving force of winter winds. This will ensure the lookout overwinters well and secure for next year's project to re-install the refurbished windows.

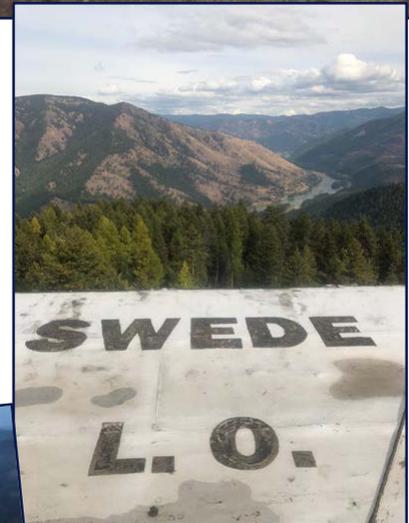
A special thank you to Jim Bob Pierce/Two Bear Air Rescue, NWMT-FFLA volunteers Jeannine Olson, Julie Von Eschen, Chuck Stearns, Peter Kitts, Rick Davis, Mark Beckwith, Montana Conservation Corp, Fortine-Rexford Ranger District personnel, Kootenai and Flathead National Forest helitack support. NWMT-FFLA volunteers donated close to 300 hours over 13 days on this project.



Big Swede Lookout

Big Swede Lookout, built in 1965, is located on the Libby Ranger District and is a staffed lookout from July 1st through September. In early October NWMT-FFLA board member/crew leader Troy Denman along with Roof Works Inc. and Denman Construction of Kalispell, MT replaced the roof which was in bad repair and needed immediate attention. The work had to be done when Big Swede was not being staffed, so dodging the fall rains and snow flurries became a challenge. This project was completed in two days with the exception of replacing the lightning protection, which will be reinstalled next spring. A combined total of almost 130 hours has been invested in this project so far.

Thank you Jim Wehr, Troy Denman, Jared Doolan, Ryan Smith, Quin Clark and Kyle Burns for your efforts in making this project a 2019 priority, and carrying your supplies up 73 steps to your dance floor in the sky.



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, with amazing vistas of both 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...





Ivan O'Neil

A Teenage Lookout at Pioneer Ridge

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.

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 and speakers:

- *February 5 Becky Lomax*
- *March 4 Tim Thier*
- *April 1 Bryce Andrews*

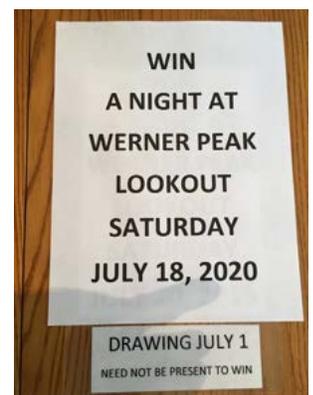
Stay tuned for more information as topics are confirmed

2019 FUNRAISER EVENTS



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!



2019 FUNRAISER EVENTS

Thanks to your support, our community sponsors, and community participants, we raised more than \$3500 this year thru evening fundraisers. Thanks for your support!



Mud Lake Lookout - A Restoration Fundraiser

Backslope Brewing
Community Benefit Night
Tuesday May 7, 2019 5:00-8:00
1107 NW 10th Street, Columbia Falls, MT

NORTHWEST MONTANA FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION

Backslope Brewing will donate \$1 for every pour sold to the NWMT-FFLA for the restoration of Mud Lake Lookout.

Mud Lake Lookout was established in 1913 with the original gabled-roof design (instead of the later hipped roofs.) The Lookout is described as the only remaining "original" lookout left in the wilderness.



SWEET PEAKS
HANDMADE ICE CREAM

PINTS for PRESERVATION
Tuesday Sept 10 5-8 pm

Join us for a beer and help support the preservation of lookouts in Northwest Montana. Many thanks to Kalispell Brewing for donating \$1 to the NWMT-FFLA for every beer sold.

NORTHWEST MONTANA FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION



Sweet Peaks Ice Cream
Sunday, September 22nd - 5-9 PM
419 E 3rd St, Whitefish, MT
- Supporting Our Mission -

Sweet Peaks Ice Cream will donate \$1 from each item sold to the NWMT-FFLA. The Forest Fire Lookout Association, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Federal and State agencies in the restoration and maintenance of fire lookouts and other support structures on public land.



Cabinet Mountain BREWING CO.

BREWS FOR BENEFITS
Join us for a beer! \$1 of every one sold helps support the preservation of fire lookouts in Northwest Montana.

NORTHWEST MONTANA FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION

6:00 - 8:00 PM
EVERY THURSDAY DURING THE MONTH OF JUNE 2019

CABINET MOUNTAIN BREWING CO.
206 MINERAL AVE.
DOWNTOWN LIBBY

PINTS for PRESERVATION
Tuesday Sept 10 5-8 pm

Join us for a beer and help support the preservation of lookouts in Northwest Montana. Many thanks to Kalispell Brewing for donating \$1 to the NWMT-FFLA for every beer sold.

NORTHWEST MONTANA FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION



TAMARACK BREWING COMPANY October COMMUNITY PARTNER

The Northwest Montana Chapter of the Forest Fire Lookout Association (NWMT-FFLA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Federal and State agencies in the restoration and maintenance of fire lookouts and other support structures on public land. The NWMT-FFLA helps facilitate restoration and maintenance efforts, create interpretive and training materials, build partnerships with other organizations supporting public lands, and provides a lending library to help meet these collaborative goals. Lookouts are a precious piece of history. Preserving them is a priority and a passion!

from every beer 25¢ sold goes to our monthly Community Partner.

Join us every WEDNESDAY 5-8 PM

TAMARACKBREWING.COM
105 Blacktail Rd., Lakeside, MT

PINT NITE
Wednesday JUNE 12, 2019 3:00 - 8:00

NORTHWEST MONTANA FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION

H.A. Brewing Co. will donate \$1 for every pint sold* to the NWMT-FFLA.

Mount Wam Lookout

*Join the Northwest Montana Forest Fire Lookout Association at the H.A. Brewing Company to help raise funds for the restoration and maintenance of Mount Wam Lookout located on the Kootenai National Forest in the Two Lakes State Area.

•Built in 1933, Mount Wam Lookout sits atop its namesake mountain at an elevation of 2,203 feet. The lookout was used regularly as an observation point for spotting forest fires between 1937 and 1951. It was last repaired in 1959 and current restoration efforts were initiated in 2017.

THE NORTHWEST MONTANA CHAPTER of the Forest Fire Lookout Association, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Federal and State agencies in the restoration, maintenance and staffing of fire lookouts and other historic support structures on public lands.

Writer's Corner

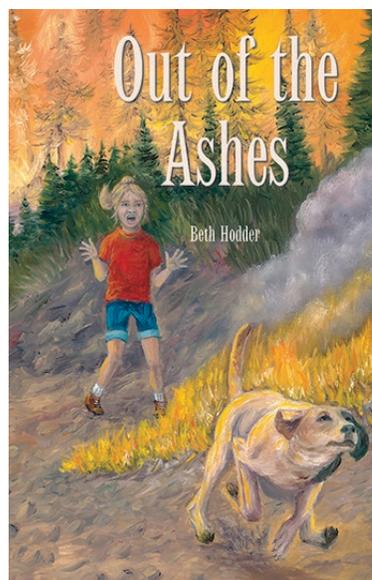
Out of the Ashes

Bronze, Best Pre-Teen Fiction: Mystery
by Beth Hodder

Plans for Jessie Scott's thirteenth birthday party are shattered when her parents make her leave her home in Montana's Great Bear Wilderness because of threatening forest fires. Jessie is furious. But she gets more than she bargained for when she, her mother, and her dog Oriole get caught in a wildfire and separated. Was it a careless camper or arson? As Jessie searches for her mother, Oriole, and answers about the fire, she discovers what is most important to her.

Out of the Ashes joins Hodder's other award-winning books, about Jessie and Oriole: *The Ghost of Schafer Meadows* and *Stealing the Wild*. Available at <http://www.grizzlyridgepublishing.com/> local book and gift shops and on Amazon

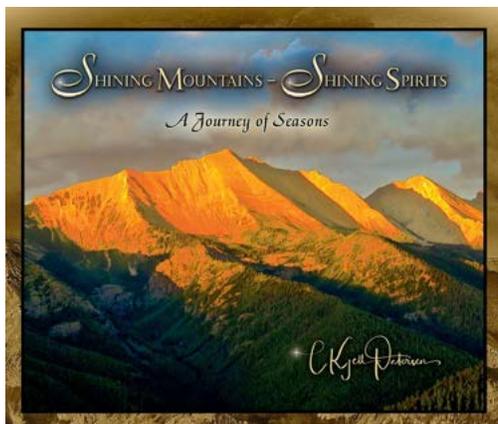
Our members have many talents and wide ranging interests. Here we are taking a bit of space to brag on just a few of the accomplishments of our tribe!



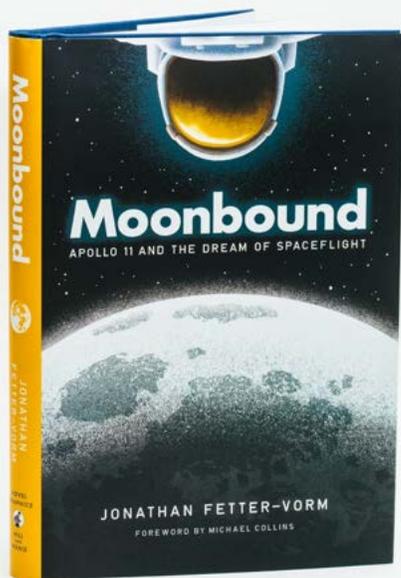
Shining Mountains-Shining Spirits *A Journey of Seasons* by C. Kjell Petersen

Kjell grew up on a dairy farm in Iowa, but after his family took their first official vacation where he saw mountains and forests, he was smitten with the West. After a forestry/ horticulture degree, 30 years in fire management with the U.S. Forest Service, 35 years teaching skiing in the Northwest, plus a dozen years as a hiking and rafting guide in Glacier National Park, Kjell says he has been exposed to the most incredible scenery and wildlife on earth. This beautiful book of photography and inspiration lets you imagine what his eyes have seen and what is stored in his soul!

Kjell's book can soon be found at Bookworks in Kalispell, Mountain House in Apgar and on his website KjelliLama406.com. Kjell has generously offered a \$5 donation to NWMT/FFLA for any book ordered thru his website if the newsletter is mentioned.



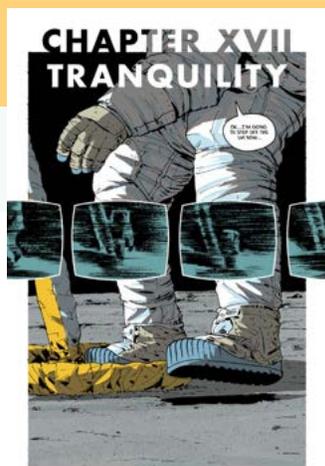
Writer's Corner (continued)



Moonbound: Apollo 11 and the Dream of Spaceflight

by Jonathan Fetter-Vorn

Moonbound: Apollo 11 and the Dream of Spaceflight tells – with words and pictures— the monumental story of the moon and the men who went there first. With vibrant images and meticulous attention to detail, Jonathan Fetter-Vorn conjures the long history of the visionaries, stargazers, builders, and adventurers who sent Apollo 11 on its legendary voyage. Available on Amazon.com, Indiebound.com or wherever books are sold. This is the latest of Johnathan's varied graphic novels.

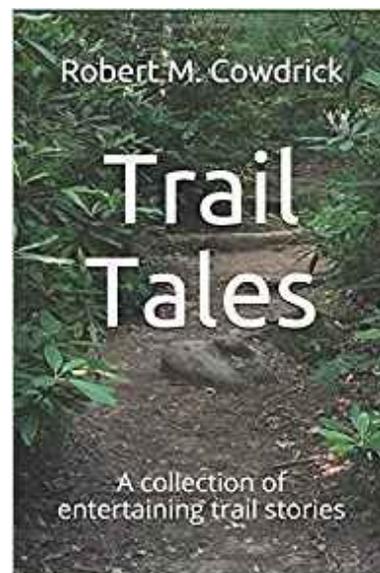


Trail Tales

by Robert M. Cowdrick

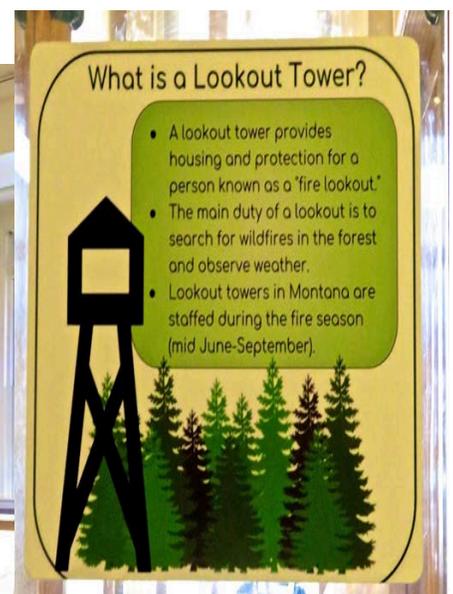
Imagine meeting memorable hikers, mulepackers, and protectors of the wilderness. Trail Tales lets you experience them in person and provides life lessons from the intriguing stories about them. Trail Tales is a composition of entertaining stories experienced while traveling backcountry pathways. Cowdrick documents unique encounters with trail hikers, backcountry equestrians, mountain climbers, and fire tower lookouts. These short stories extend from Alaska to Peru and along many of the long distance hiking trails in the United States.

Robert's tales include stories from his hikes in the Bob Marshall Wilderness, including a chapter about Prairie Reef. Available on Amazon.

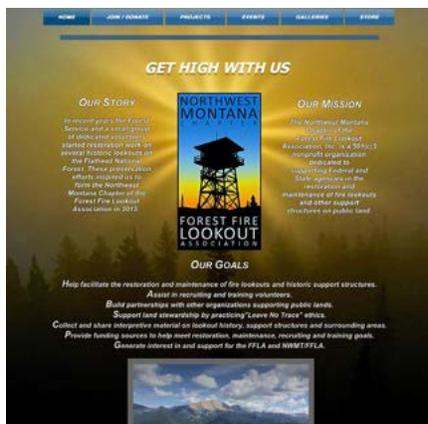


Lookout! Our Forest, Our Home

This spring we had the opportunity to team up with the Glacier Children's Museum to help create this exhibit, which was at the Northwest Montana History Museum in Kalispell this summer. Thanks to NWMT/FFLA members Terry & Jane Richmond, along with Jonathan Fetter-Vorm, Rick Davis and Chuck Manning for all the volunteer work to create the lookout exhibit. As you can see, the kids had a lot of fun, playing the role of lookout!



SOCIAL MEDIA



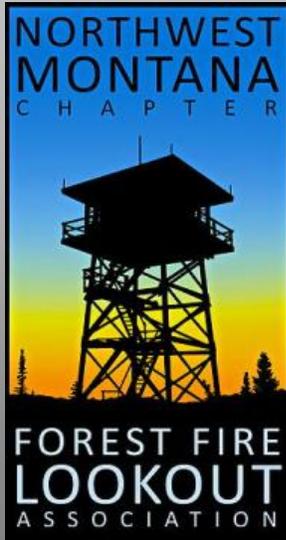
Our Facebook page continues to be popular with lookout enthusiasts across the globe. We have people following our page all across Montana and Northern Idaho, as well as further afield in the northwest, from Salt Lake City to Portland to Las Vegas to Anchorage. We even have several New Yorkers who are followers of the NWMT-FFLA page. While small in numbers, we have a mighty international following, dominated by Canada, Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, with 28 other countries represented from Argentina to Palestine, Taiwan to Serbia, Norway to Morocco. It is really fascinating that all of these people are interested in fire lookout towers.

Last year's viral post was the winter picture above, of Black Mountain Lookout on the Clearwater National Forest in Idaho. It was the most viewed of the year, reaching 63,696 people! That post was shared 1783 times! Our thanks to Jerry Branning, the pilot and Peggy Polito, the photographer for sharing their amazing views into the harsh winter weather above 7000 feet.

Our web master Kjell Petersen does a great job of keeping fresh content on the site, about lookouts in general, as well as the latest information about activities of NWMT-FFLA. If you haven't been there, you may want to check us out on [Facebook](#).

Our website NWMT-FFLA.org is the place to visit for membership info, merchandise, the latest info on project sign up in the spring, and photo archive of past projects.

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 Aseessments on Kootenai NF and Glacier NP LOs

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



NWMT-FFLA
P. O. Box 2704
Kalispell, MT 59903