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**Winter Issue
2025/2026**

**Inside This Issue:
Outdoor Adventures
In Southwest Montana
+ A Town-By-Town
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**Winter Fun Western Style:
Skijoring in SW Montana**



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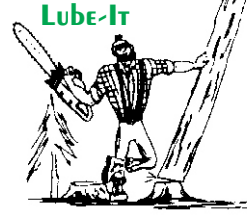
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EXPLORE SOUTHWEST MONTANA by SNOWMOBILE

Marta Varela

What's not to like about thousands of miles of snowmobile-perfect terrain providing access to amazing terrain and wide-open spaces into the backcountry. Whether you choose groomed trails or the thousands of ungroomed acres of National Forest, Southwest Montana is the place to be for unforgettable snowmobiling.

Go where the locals go! One incredible experience is Canyon Adventures in Big Sky, who can set you up for an amazing winter break snowmobiling in the Gallatin Canyon, surrounded by some of Montana's most breathtaking mountains. Its family owned and locally operated, with decades exploring the mountains and trails. Choose one of their guided tours or rent a snowmobile and explore on your own. Miles of groomed trails and meadows of virgin snow provide access to endless hours of enjoyment.

From first-time riders to seasoned adventurers, tours take you deep into the heart of Big Sky Country, beginning with a 15-mile groomed access trail called Buck Ridge, that starts at 6,200 ft and gradually increases



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to 9,000+ ft., affording views of the Spanish Peaks, Taylor Peaks, Lone Peak, and the rugged Sphinx Mountains.

Guides are first aid/CPR certified, with avalanche training. Canyon Adventures offers half and full day guided tours, half-day unguided adventures, and snowmobile and gear rental. Canyon Adventures: 47200 Gallatin Road, Big Sky, 406-995-4450, canyonadventures.com.

Located in Anaconda among beautiful landscapes surrounded by mountains and wildlife, Pintler Adventures represents the spirit of Montana with a focus on creating unforgettable experiences. A huge draw is Pintler's elite rental fleet of snowmobiles – Polaris, Ski-Doo, Arctic Cat, as well as their extensive list of recommended trails to ride and experienced team with helpful information to advise you on a great and memorable adventure.

With their partnered discounts in the Ananconda community, Pintler can plan an inclusive adventure and book your entire trip. Their location at Sugar Loaf Lodge and Cabins provides on-the-spot accommodations - simple, unplugged, with warm hospitality in beautiful surroundings. Ride, explore, stay – a memorable experience. Pintler Adventures: 10984 Mill Creek Road (HWY 569), -continued

406-925-3743, pintleradventures.com.

Equipped with snowmobile and ready to ride, Big Sky serves as a great base camp, providing easy access to Yellowstone National Park and Gallatin Canyon. With deep powder, beautiful views and impressive mountains, Custer Gallatin National Forest is an ideal destination. It offers both groomed sections and backcountry powder-riding with panoramic views of the Spanish Peaks and Lone Mountain, a wonderful destination for novices and experts and everyone in between.

There are a number of snowmobile access points along Gallatin Canyon on Highway 191 – Storm Castle Creek, Portal Creek, Moose Creek, Taylor Fork, Buck Creek, with Taylor Fork and Buck Creek Ridge popular choices.

Another area with a reputation as one of the best locations to snowmobile is West Yellowstone, with an early start to the season, excellent conditions, an average of 153" of dry, powdery snow and more than 400 miles of trails beyond town. It has large play areas, groomed trails and routes among soaring peaks in the backcountry. Known as a "snowmobiling mecca", its terrain contains extensive groomed trails and vast powder fields.

The 40-mile Big Sky Trail has some of Montana's best backcountry snowmobiling. The first part is groomed but quickly becomes un-groomed, the perfect place for a fresh powder experience with scenery that is heart-stoppingly beautiful with deep snow and challenging uphill climbing.

In the Phillipsburg/Anaconda area, the Red Lion Snowmobile Trail System consists of four connected snowmobile routes, totaling 32 miles. The routes go to Fred Burr Pass, Warm Springs Creek and Granite, with a route that goes back to Georgetown Lake, and with some unmarked trails for exploration and a few

play areas. The trails are groomed and maintained by the Anaconda Snowmobile Club in cooperation with the Forest Service and Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Another option, the East Fork Snowmobile Trail System, is made up of 9 connected snowmobile routes, groomed regularly, that total about 57 miles. The routes go to Carp Ridge, Moose Lake, Windy Ridge and Storm Lake. There are also a number of unmarked trails with some play areas along the way.

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Skiing: A Timeless Sport

Shrill adrenaline pulses through your veins as sharp turns send a plethora of powder cascading into the frigid air. Snow falls from the heavens in delicate flakes, blanketing the earth in its icy embrace. Your skis blaze down the same mountain as your father and his father before him. Ecstasy is solidified in the harsh winter. What is it that makes skiing so beautiful and fulfilling? What makes the twenty-minute lift ride worth the five-minute ski run? Perhaps it's the timeless nature of the sport, the omnipresent emotion of a classic pastime.

Many transformations have taken place since Sondre Norheim first truly established skiing as a recreational sport. Shaped skis replaced the old wide style Telemark style. Faster electric chair lifts and gondolas replaced the slow single lift and vigorous hiking.. Despite these small improvements, nothing has truly changed. The principal of skiing has been the same since the day it was invented.

The fact that skiing has such a strong and rich history has elevated the sport to one of the most highly regarded in world history. No matter where you go in the world, if there are mountains, there are skiers. This is a true phenomenon. There is almost no other sport in the world where no matter where you go the rules and styles remain almost exactly the same.



People in Norway and Russia are doing the same things people in Montana or Colorado are doing. Things like the X-Games and especially the Olympics have cultivated this international similarity and stacked skiers from -continued



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around the world against each other.

Ultimately what makes skiing such a wonderful and exhilarating sport is the fact that it becomes a lifestyle. Kids who grow up with skiing live to ski, it's their lifeline. These are the kids who go to college depending on what mountains are nearby, the kids who graduate a semester early so they can spend the rest of the winter on the mountain. Skiing is today, as it was in the past, one of the few sports you can live. I think almost everyone knows a "ski bum" in their life, the guy or girl who begs for snow and rejoices at the crisp wind that signifies the beginning of winter.

There is something to be said for a sport that can unify a nation or even the world. Whether you are a soldier who learned how to ski in the army and brought it back to share with the world, or you are just a normal kid who goes up on weekends, there is something special there. There is something special about seeing a child's face as they first strap into a pair of skis. There is something special about the bond formed between friends as they glide their way

down the mountain together. Skiing is truly something special. When you tell people about something that hasn't changed for decades, they seem to assume it's a bad thing. "Don't they know the world has moved on? Change with the times." Yet, skiing would be impossible to change and its timeless nature is what gives it that special ambiance and feeling of nostalgia. No matter how far along the world moves and what changes, I think as long as there are mountains to ski, skiing will remain the same.
~ Kai Haynes

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Winter Fun Western Style: Skijoring in Southwest Montana

Marta Varela

What do you get when you combine Montana's cowboy culture with winter activity and snow? The answer is rodeo meets skiing, better known as skijoring, a competitive contest where a rider on horseback pulls a skier through a course of obstacles. Where the fastest and best wins!

Could anyone design a more perfect winter Montana activity? The timed course contains obstacles, such as gates, ring grabs, jumps and rollers, with skiers being pulled at speeds from 25mph and jumps that can reach 7 ft. A competitive sport that highlights horsemanship skills of the rider and balance and control of the skier while illustrating the importance of the partnership between rider and horse, and skier.

Skijoring competitions are a great excuse to get out of the cabin and are community affairs, bringing people out to cheer on their favorites.

The sport was well known in Scandinavia when skiers harnessed reindeer and headed across the snow and ended up as a demonstration sport for the 1928 Winter Olympics in St. Moritz. At the end of WWII, soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division, known as Soldiers on Skies, came home to a land with no lifts, no ski resorts, so they attached a long rope to a saddle horn and travelled at high speeds.

Soon the sport took off in cowboy-cultured Montana and Colorado, quickly developing into a popular and fun competitive sport, drawing large crowds. With strong community support, they became a winter fixture in many towns, often part of other community festivities.

Southwest Montana hosts competitions in Bolder, Big Sky and Wisdom, culminating with the nationals in Red Lodge. Skijoring the Big Rock takes place in Boulder, Sat. Jan. 31 to Sun. Feb. 1. This Fifth Annual Skijoring Event attracts locals, visitors and competitors from all over the world with a unique camaraderie, like spectators visiting and cheering on family while enjoying a beautiful day in Big Sky Country amid beautiful landscapes. Vendors with food and drink add to the festivities. After Saturday's race, join the crowd at Dave's 32oz Bar for the Calcutta auction to bid on teams before Sunday's race. Skijoring the Big Rock: 25 N Whitetail Rd., Boulder, 406-640-1601.

The action moves to Big Sky, Sat. Feb. 7 to Sun.


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Feb. 8 when Big Sky Skijoring Association puts on the 7th Annual The Best in the West Showdown. Be prepared for fast-paced excitement on one of the most challenging skijoring courses, where contestants include legendary locals and well-known teams from North America.

Bid on your favorite teams, enjoy outstanding food and drink. There's fun for the entire family. Proceeds benefit the Big Sky Ski Education Foundation. The Best in the West Showdown: Big Sky Town Center - 33 Lone Peak Dr #105, 406-600-1316.

Wisdom hosts Big Hole Valley Skijoring, Sat., Feb. 21 to Sun., Feb. 22. Competitors of all skill levels are invited to participate in the 900-ft course down Main St. with skiers moving through 8 gates and over three 3.5-foot jumps over snow-covered hay bales.

With food vendors and libations on site, the weekend begins Saturday at noon with a salute to veterans; races begin at 12:30pm and Calcutta Saturday night is at 7pm at Fetty's. Sunday races begin at 11:30pm.

All parking donations support BHVA's Veterans & Horses Event and other community

initiatives. Big Hole Valley Skijoring: 216 Country Rd., 406-925-3573.

On Sat. Mar. 14 and Sun. Mar. 15, the National Finals Skijoring Races take place in Red Lodge on the Home of the Champions Rodeo Grounds. The Red Lodge Ski-Joring Association has been hosting the national finals since 1980 and has been attracting the best teams from Montana, Wyoming, the Dakotas, Idaho, Colorado, Utah and Canada.

Expect more than 100 teams in multiple divisions, including open, sport, novice, junior, snowboard, pee wee and switcharoo, where skier and rider trade places for one round. They'll compete on a 700+ ft. course with 12 gates and 3 jumps, with speeds sometimes exceeding 25 mph. Along with the races, enjoy vendors and nightly live music. National Finals Skijoring Races: Home of Champions Rodeo Grounds, located just west of town on Route 78, 406-578-8605.

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Cross Country Skiing in Southwest Montana

Marta Varela

It would be hard to top Montana's wide-open spaces, stunning mountains, open meadows and rolling hills as backdrop for spending time outdoors. Add to that a winter wonderland of snow-covered landscapes and crisp mountain air, and the scene is set for cross country skiing, both on groomed trails or through forest into the backcountry, a terrain accessible to all ski-levels.

Resorts with ski trails and amenities offer one option for cross country skiing. In Big Sky, Lone Mountain Ranch maintains more than two dozen woodland trails covering 85 km of mountain terrain, satisfying beginners through advanced skiers. It's no surprise the Ranch was rated Number 1 in North America by Cross Country Skier magazine for Nordic skiing. Its team of experienced guides are ready to outfit visitors and direct them to trails suited to their experience and interest. Daily clinics are held for groups; day and season passes and rentals are available. Check out their dining options and cabins to extend the experience. Lone Mountain Ranch: 750 Lone Mountain Ranch Rd, Big Sky, 406-995-4644, lonemountainranch.com

Beneath the Continental Divide, east of Butte, Homestake Lodge maintains and grooms over 35km of trails across rolling terrain surrounded by granite outcrops in a private valley, perfect for close encounters with nature. Most are set with classic track and skate lane, ideal for a variety of skill levels. Some narrower trails allow guests to ski in intimate and natural settings. There's also 15km of dog friendly trails. The lodge offers day and season

passes, lessons, ski equipment rentals, and several on-site lodging options. Homestake Lodge: 530 Upper Rader Creek Rd., Whitehall, 406-284-1725, Homestakelodge.com

In Phillipsburg, The Ranch at Rock Creek is the perfect destination for a full-package skiing holiday. Set among 6,600 acres of wilderness, the Five-star, 19th century ranch offers two daily activities including guides, gear and transportation. Classic Nordic skiing takes you through forests and meadows on Echo Lake trail as part of the all-inclusive activities program, for novice to advanced skiers to enjoy an off-Ranch excursion on groomed trails. Farm to table cuisine and multiple accommodations add to a perfect getaway. The Ranch at Rock Creek: 79 Carriage House Lane, Phillipsburg, 877-594-5955, theranchatrockcreek.com.

Crosscut Mountain Sports Center, north of Bozeman in the heart of the Bridger Range, is a public-access Nordic ski area with 45 km of trails that wind through 500 forested acres, offering great winter recreation for all ages and abilities in both skate and classic skiing, all surrounded by mountain vistas, views of meadows and direct access to the Custer Gallatin National Forest trail system. Rentals and lessons make easy work of cross-country skiing; season passes and ski programs offer an affordable option for families and first-time skiers. Crosscut Mountain Sports Center, 16621 Bridger Canyon Road, Bozeman, 406-586-9690, Crosscutmt.org.

Public access groomed trails are another option. Located near Anaconda on Mill Creek Highway, Mount Haggin Nordic Ski Area offers 25km of trails, groomed weekly by volunteers of the Mile High Nordic Ski Club. Roughly 10km are groomed for both classic and skate skiing while -continued

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the remaining trails are tracked only for classic skiing.
Mount Haggin Nordic Ski Area: Wise River, MT, 406-560-6060, milehighnordic.org/mount-haggin

With easy access from West Yellowstone, Rendezvous Ski Trails has more than 35 km of well-groomed trails, from easiest to most difficult, gently rolling and winding through lodgepole pines and meadows in the Gallatin National Forest. Trails are comfortably wide, groomed for both classic and skate skiing. Daily and seasonal passes available; dogs and snowmobiles not allowed. Rendezvous Ski Trails: 100 S. Geyser St., West Yellowstone, 406-646-7701, www.skirunbikemt.com.

Groomed trails at golf courses are another option. In Butte, Stodden Park at Highland Golf Course has classic tracks over a 4km loop, rolled and maintained by Butte's Nordic Ski Club in conjunction with the Butte-Silver Bow Parks and Recreation. Stodden Park at Highland Golf Course: 3150 S. Utah Ave., 406-497-6578. In Ananconda, The Old Works Golf Course offers lighted, groomed ski trails for cross country skiers to enjoy. There is no fee but first check in at Jack's Grill. The Old Works Golf Course: 1205 Pizzini Way, 406-563-5989.



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Skiing The Slopes in Southwest Montana

Marta Varela

Southwest Montana is home to downhill ski areas in beautiful mountain landscapes with steep, powdery slopes, miles of trails and breathtaking views. These natural snow conditions, uncrowded, with pristine terrain, are ideal for beginners through experts, creating an outdoor winter sports person's dream.

Big Sky Ski Resort, in the heart of spectacular Gallatin Canyon, is one of the largest ski areas in US, with more than 5,800 skiable acres covered in abundant snow. With a two-story observation deck at 11,166', a vertical drop that reaches 4,350', and more than 30 lifts and 30 runs, it's ideal for all skill levels, from beginner-friendly terrain to challenging double-back diamond runs, first-timers and mixed-ability groups. There's a mix of groomed trails, challenging steeps and open bowls. An explorer area and mid-station learning center offer safe, progressive zones for children and adults alike.

The resort offers a choice of lift tickets and passes, lessons and rentals. Aside from skiing, amenities include a wide range of lodging and dining options and shopping. Non-skiers can also enjoy Adventure & Nature Zipline, snowshoe, snowmobile, snow coach tours, Giant Swing & Bungee Trampoline, sleigh rides and dog sledding. Big Sky Ski Resort: 50 Big Sky Resort Rd, Big Sky, 406-995-5001, bigskyresort.com.

Near Ananconda, Discovery Basin is a good example of what Montana skiing is all about, an

uncrowded alpine ski area known for natural snow and varied terrain to suit beginners and pros. It offers 614 skiable acres and 70 trails with a wide variety of beginner and intermediate runs on the Ananconda and north-facing Granite. The Limelight lift facing north leads to some of the steepest lift-accessed terrain in the area. Beautiful views with tree skiing, mogul runs, powder bowls and groomed trails spells out something for everyone.

When it's time for a ski break check out the Café, Ski & Go Window and Tap'er Lite Bar. Discovery Basin has ski rentals, lessons, daily lift tickets and season passes. Discovery Basin: 180 Discovery Basin Road, Phillipsburg, 406-563-2184, 888-678-7669, skidiscovery.com.

Maverick Mountain, in Beaverhead National Forest, is another alpine ski area, providing a more traditional skiing experience. Its uncrowded slopes have exciting skiing for all levels of experience and it's a great place for kids or beginners to learn how to ski. On 255 acres with 24 runs and a vertical drop of more than 2,000' with views of the Pioneer Mountain Wilderness Area, it's a well-kept Montana secret. There are rentals, lessons, daily tickets and season passes, as well as a cafeteria and a beer and wine room. Maverick Mountain: 1600 Maverick Mountain Road, Polaris, 406-834-3454, skimaverick.com.

A unique experience awaits skiers at Bridger Bowl, a non-profit, locally-owned ski area near Bozeman. Known for its signature fluffy "cold smoke" snow, Bridger Bowl offers challenging runs on 2,000 acres of diverse big mountain terrain with a variety of slopes perfect for beginners and novices through advanced and expert. Its 2,700' vertical rise, 8 chairlifts, 75 named trails and great snow make - continued

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this worth a visit. Bridger Bowl combines the amenities of a large resort with the charm of small-town skiing and a friendly local feel. Ski shops are available to purchase or rent ski equipment. Lift tickets and passes, lessons and several food choices, including a cafeteria, bar, restaurant, and grab and go food, increase the fun. It all adds up to great skiing that won't break the bank. Bridger Bowl: 15795 Bridger Canyon Road, 406-587-2111, 800-223-9609, bridgerbowl.com.

Family-owned Great Divide, northwest of Helena near the Continental Divide, is known for its friendly atmosphere and affordable prices. There are 127 trails over 3 mountain peaks and three valleys, served by 5 chairlifts and one rope tow that cover 1,500 acres with a 1,200' vertical drop. Something for everyone in the entire family, from wide-open bowls to glades, from beginners to advanced. Committed to maintaining excellent trail conditions, all levels are welcome with lessons, rentals, lift ticket choices and food and beverage options.

This other well-kept secret also offers special events such as Friday nights under lights with music, torchlight parades, and Spring Deck Days. Great Divide: 7385 Belmont Dr., Marysville, 406-449-3746, skigd.com.



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Hunting Past to Present

The practice of hunting has spanned from the very beginning of the history of man. What was a necessity and a way of life has since become a well-known sport governed by ever-changing laws and practices. Whether hunting has been used to attain food, money or control, the history of hunting is full of people trying to merge the ideals between unrestricted hunters and conservationists looking to implement laws and regulations.

In the earliest hunting practices, there were no laws or regulations imparted on hunters. They had free reign of their surroundings as their goal was to survive by hunting. Their weapons would often consist of rocks, spears and bow and arrow.

In the culture of early humans every part of the animal was needed and used. Not just the food was consumed but bone, fur, sinew and the leather would be used for clothing.

The dire need for hunting subsided in more modern history, but unrestricted way of hunting didn't change, even as the population grew and expansion into unknown territory increased.

In the 1800's, America was becoming more and more populated in places that had, in the not so distant past, only been inhabited by wildlife, opening access to large numbers of hunters and poachers.

As it was being introduced to the world as the very first national park in 1872, Yellowstone became of high interest for the Northern Pacific Railroad. Problems started to arise when the company running the park had full access to all animals and timber. Herds of the Yellowstone's most abundant animals,

elk and bison, began to dwindle leaving conservationists fearful.

The parks leading activists, George Bird Grinnell and General Philip Sheridan, made propositions to Congress to make the park bigger, so to accommodate the elk and bison's migration patterns, but they were denied.

Laws concerning hunting and poaching were beginning to be seen as a requirement because in the extreme eagerness of people to develop the new, untouched land entire species were being destroyed. Soldiers protecting the park from poachers had no real authority and were only allowed to issue warnings or, in extreme cases, expel people from the park. -continued



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Herds of buffalo that used to exist in uncountable numbers now remained in the hundreds.

In 1894, President Cleveland signed a bill that gave authority to park officials and made regulations to protect the wildlife within the park.

Herds of wild game in Yellowstone were not the only animals being hunted without regulations. In 1900, the biggest fashions among women included hats decorated with extravagant feathers or even whole stuffed birds. These feathers were coming from the 95 percent of Florida's birds that were being killed to meet the demands of these fashions.

This influenced John F. Lacey to write the Lacey Bird and Game Act of 1900, a bill that made transportation of illegally killed birds a federal crime. Although the act was not immediately successful, it was another step in the attempt to form one ideal between unrestricted hunters and conservationists.

President Theodore Roosevelt became an example of a hunter who also held the interests of wildlife conservation at heart. In a visit to Yellowstone in 1903, he was happy to see first hand the direct effect of the hard work of Grinnell and Lacey, increased numbers in the once decreasing wildlife. And while Roosevelt also wanted to help park rangers with their task of killing predators, his advisors persuaded him not to.

Examples like Roosevelt showed that it was possible to appease hunters and wildlife conservationists as in most cases they were one in the same. However, even today with many acts and tools to help with hunting regulations and wildlife conservation, controversy still arises.

A tool that is very widely used today to protect those species close to extinction is the endangered species list. Animals are held on this list, prohibited from being hunted, until their numbers grow.

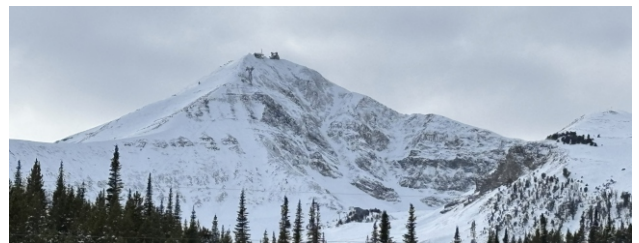
The gray wolf is one such animal that proves that controversy is still alive and well when deciding on the well being of animals. It has been protected since 1974 and was released from the endangered species list in 2009. However, after much debate and controversy they are back on the list. Many can see the parallels between this disagreement and the one in the late 1800's about whether bison and elk should be hunted.

In modern hunting licenses are required and

organizations such as the National Wildlife Federation and U.S. Fish and Wildlife, post regulations for hunting and have specific seasons for hunting certain animals. Regulations include limits on shooting game and in some cases hunters are only allowed to hunt in specific areas.

Hunting has been a part of everyday life for many centuries and throughout that time the aspects of it have gone through many changes. People have seen animals come and go as well as the land the species have lived on. Many changes in wildlife can be expected in the future and those changes will be forever morphing the habits of the hunter.

- Elizabeth Ogle



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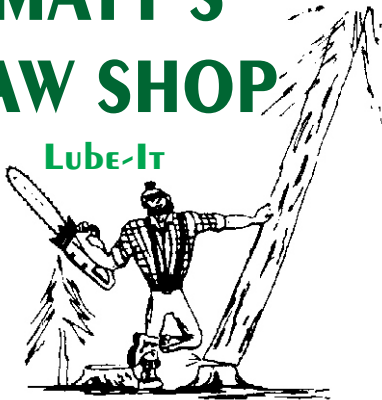
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The Spotlight: Ian Burgess

Marta Varela

This winter's athlete in the spotlight is Ian Burgess, a 19-year-old biathlete raised in Bozeman. Ian has been competing since he was 9 years old in biathlon, a winter sport that combines cross-country skiing and rifle shooting.

Biathlon involves a variety of types of races, having in common that contestants ski through a cross-country trail divided into shooting rounds called bouts. While the shooting rounds have no time limit, for a contestant, depending on the competition, missed shots can result in extra distance or time added to their total.

Ian was encouraged into the sport by his parents and soon came to enjoy competing, finding it more interesting than Nordic skiing because of its complexity. Ian also enjoys skiing and shooting on their own, as well as mountain biking and road biking.

Ian is part of a small Bozeman group of biathletes called the Shift Biathlon Project. He has competed in the Salt Lake City at Soldier Hollow, which was the home of the 2002 winter Olympic biathlon and Nordic skiing; the Canmore Nordic Center in Canmore, Alberta, Canada; and the Spam Cup in West Yellowstone, Montana. In 2024 he competed in the World University games in Torino, Italy and in March 2025, the US Biathlon Nationals in Bozeman at Crosscut Mountain Sports Center.

Not surprisingly, biathlon has its military roots in Scandinavian countries, dating back to the 18th

century, having developed from military skiing and rifle exercises. The first recorded competition took place between Swedish and Norwegian border patrols in 1767. The Winter Olympics saw the sport introduced in 1924 as a demonstration "military patrol" event and was added as an official sport for men in 1960 and for women in 1992.

Biathlon has a growing popularity in certain areas of Southwest Montana, especially around Bozeman and West Yellowstone. This growth is encouraged by a number of factors. One is strong local clubs, including Crosscut Mountain Sports Center near Bozeman, with its state-of-the-art biathlon range with 30 targets and 12 biathlon targets. West Yellowstone contains the largest accessible biathlon course in western United States. Community clubs are a second encouragement, with Crosscut's



biathlon programs being an excellent example.

Significant competitions in the area, such as the US Biathlon Senior Nationals and Collegiate Championships, which draws athletes from across the US, also factor into the growing popularity. And Montana's already strong cross-country skiing and "firearms-friendly" culture make biathlon a natural fit, emphasizing physical endurance with marksmanship.

A further factor is the ease with which newcomers to the sport can participate, as clubs and centers such as Crosscut promote biathlon by offering "Try-it" days and novice programs, making it easy for people of all ages and abilities to get involved.

Like in any other sport, biathlon competitions follow specific requirements. Competition consists of a race where contestants ski a series of loops on a cross-country trail system. This system includes either two or four shooting rounds called bouts, half in the prone position, the other half in the standing position.

Extra distance or time can be added to the contestant's total skiing distance and time, depending on the shooting performance. The winner, depending on the competition, is the contestant with the shortest time or the first to cross the finish line.

For each shooting bout, the biathlete must hit the five targets or receive a penalty for each missed target, which varies according to the competition rules. These rules include: skiing around a 150m or 75m penalty loop; adding a 1 minute or 45 second penalty to the skier's total time; the use of an extra cartridge (held on a spare round holder on an athlete's rifle) to hit the target (only three such

"spare rounds" are available for each bout), and a penalty loop must be done for each target remaining. These rounds are only available in the relay race.

Split, or intermediate, times are taken at several points along the ski track and at the finish of each shooting bout, this in order to keep precise track of each contestant's relative standing throughout the race. A list of the split time of the fastest contestant at each intermediate point and the times and time differences to the closest runners-up are shown on large display screens commonly set up at biathlon arenas, as well as the information graphics shown as part of the TV picture.



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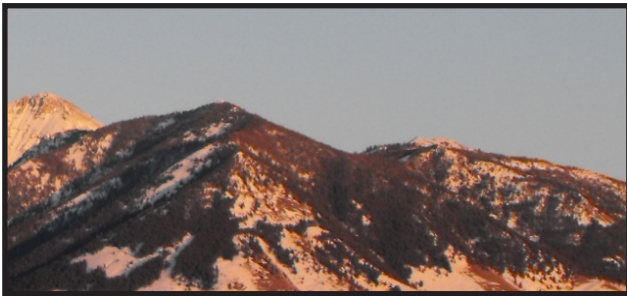
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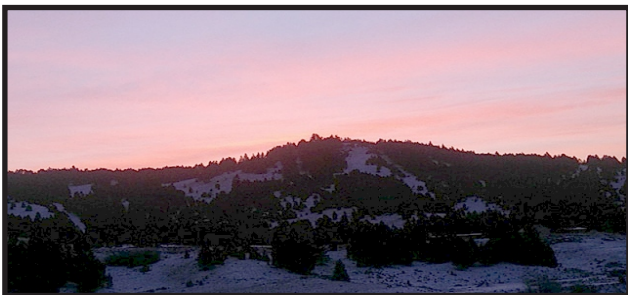
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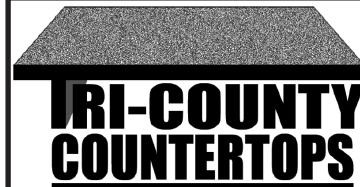
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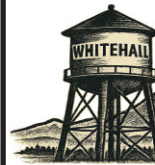
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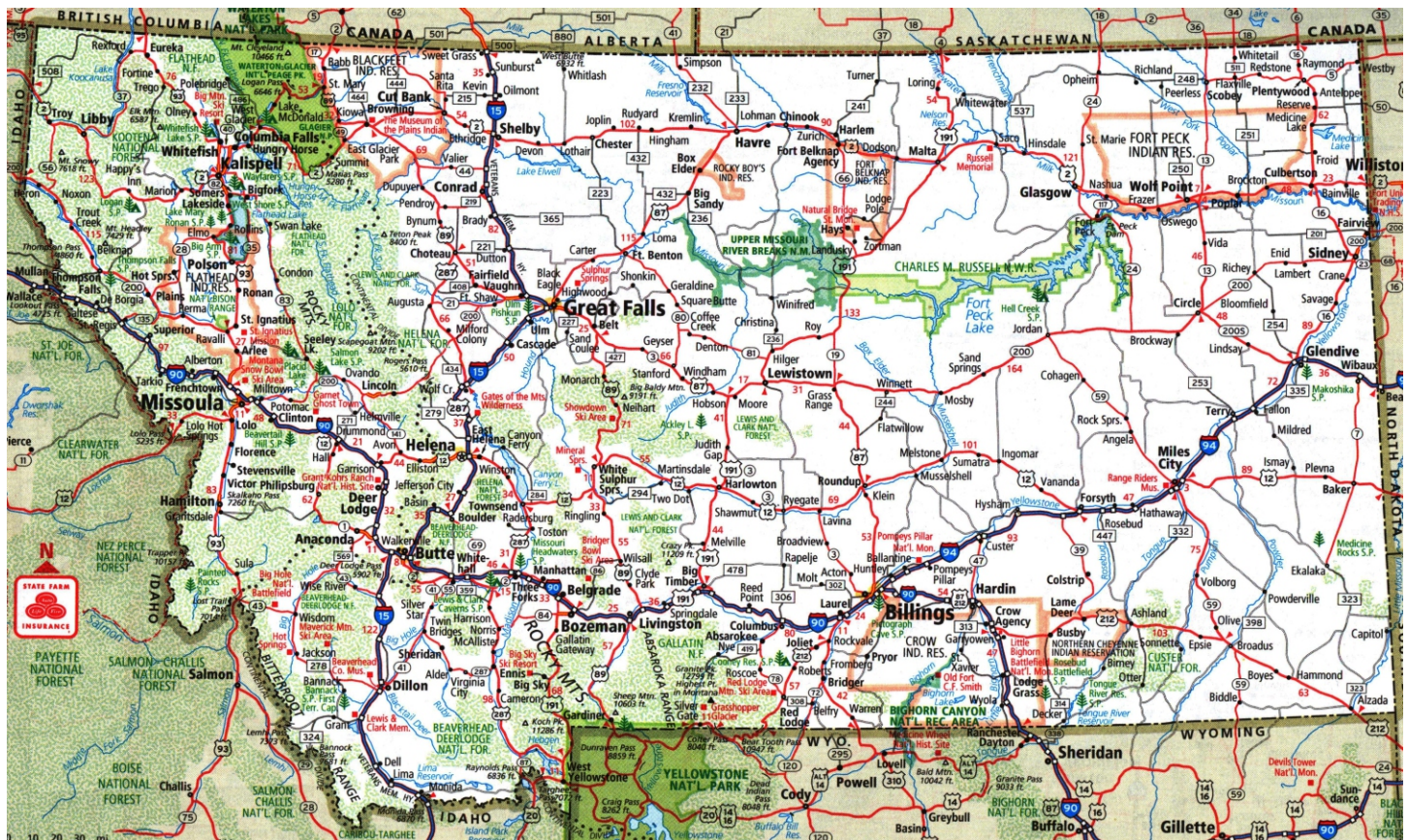
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