

DEVELOPING A 4-H WILDLIFE PROGRAM IN MONTANA^{TWS}

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There is no existing wildlife habitat educational program offered to Montana youth. Montana 4-H'ers excel in livestock raising and judging, sewing, foods, demonstrations, and even skateboarding. Unfortunately, the state with the greatest wildlife diversity in the lower 48 has a very under-developed wildlife program. Nationally, 30 states have participated in the 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program (WHEP), a program currently unavailable to Montana youth. The MSU Extension Wildlife Program has received a number of e-mails and telephone calls indicating a need for a well-developed wildlife program offered through the framework of Montana 4-H. In June 2004, a state committee was formed to address this concern, and the result is the Montana 4-H Wildlife and Habitat Education Program. Montana 4-H WHEP will help youth strengthen self-concepts and character through interaction with other young people. It will teach essential life skills such as oral and written communication, critical thinking, teamwork and decision-making. Montana 4-H WHEP will foster relationships between professional wildlife and fisheries biologists, volunteers, parents, youth, teachers, farmers and ranchers. The mission of Montana 4-H WHEP is *...to foster critical thinking and development of life skills through exposure of various concepts of wildlife management, including: wildlife biology, population management and habitat requirements and enhancement.*