

## REESTABLISHMENT OF CARNIVORE HABITAT CONNECTIVITY IN THE NORTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAINS<sup>TWS</sup>

William Ruediger, James, J. Claar, and James F. Gore  
USDA Forest Service, Missoula, MT 59801

Habitat fragmentation is a major conservation issue facing large and mid-sized carnivores (grizzly bear, *Ursus arctos*; gray wolf, *Canis lupus*; wolverine, *Gulo gulo*; lynx, *Lynx canadensis*; fisher, *Martes pennanti*) in the Northern Rockies. Habitat Fragmentation has caused: 1. The isolation of carnivore populations; 2. The necessity for reintroduction and augmentation programs; and, 3. Highly restrictive land management practices. This has lead to both expensive and controversial management practices to conserve carnivore populations. Two primary factors have created habitat fragmentation. These are highway and railroad right-of-ways and development of narrow parcels of private lands. The authors have reviewed habitat fragmentation in the Northern Rockies and developed a proposal to reestablish or improve habitat connectivity. This proposal would also benefit other wildlife species, reduce wildlife mortality on highways and railroads and make highway travel safer for motorists by reducing vehicle collisions with wildlife.