Botany Report Caribou-Targhee NF

Meeting National Priorities | FY 2019
Chicago Botanic Garden, Conservation and Land Management Interns

Being good neighbors and providing excellent customer service

This year the botany program on the Caribou-Targhee NF promoted education initiatives across multiple Districts. Interns, Claire Parsons and Olivia Turner, helped teach how to key to Forest Habitat Types on the Teton Basin and Montpelier Districts to fire, fuels, timber, and wildlife crews. Additionally, on the Ashton-Island Park District local elementary school students were taught at Mesa Falls about regional forestry and botany, Caribou-Targhee NF history, pollinators, and resident bird species. In partnership with land trusts, citizen scientists, and master naturalists, multiple educational hikes were led that discussed botanical conservation and native plant species. These relationships extended throughout the season and were greatly beneficial to various projects.

Improving the condition of forests and grasslands

To further improve the condition of the Curlew National Grassland, native wildflowers, sedges and grasses were planted to promote riparian restoration projects and increase monarch breeding habitat. Thanks to tagging and surveying efforts, the Curlew is recognized as an important monarch butterfly breeding site within the Intermountain Region. To contribute to restoration projects across the region, seed and leaf tissue from native plant populations were collected in partnership with Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) following the Seeds of Success methodology. In addition, whitebark pine monitoring plots were completed in conjunction with the Sawtooth NF, Idaho Fish & Game, and botanists to learn supplemental protocols for future whitebark pine research on the Caribou-Targhee NF. The botany program also worked together with soil scientists to collect data for the development of Ecological Site Descriptions contributing to the completion of the Caribou NF soil inventory.

Promoting shared stewardship by increasing partnerships

Interagency partnerships were crucial to the success of the botany program this season in the Intermountain Region. Such partnerships are critical for adaptive and holistic management. For example, the opportunity to assist with the monitoring of Research Natural Areas on BLM and Forest Service managed lands. This work included bee inventories with the Utah ARS Logan Bee Lab and surveys of sensitive plant species. The Caribou-Targhee NF worked with RMRS, NRCS Aberdeen PMC, and the FS Coeur d'Alene Nursery to facilitate a forb planting study that established native wildflowers in upland areas to increase sage grouse and pollinator habitat. Additionally, to determine the presence of invasive gypsy moths throughout SE Idaho, traps were placed and collected by working closely with the Idaho Department of Agriculture and the Forest Health Program. Fortunately, no moths were found. To further understand the status of rare plants throughout Idaho, the interns were able to attend the Idaho Native Plant Society's Rare Plant Working Group fall meeting that updates the statewide list of vulnerable plants. Lastly, one of the interns' most notable experiences was the opportunity to help establish the fourth Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments (GLORIA) site in the Lemhi Mountains. GLORIA is a worldwide initiative dedicated to analyzing the long-term resiliency and diversity of high elevation environments. The experience demonstrated the Forest Service's commitment to advance ecosystem conservation.

Uplifting and empowering our employees through a respectful, safe working environment

The Caribou-Targhee NF botany program would not have been successful this season without the training and guidance received from multiple colleagues and mentors. Establishing these working relationships were imperative to overall safety and well-being. Regardless of location, the interagency community provided support, resources, and a network that will be relevant for the continuation of this program.