

**WILDERNESS SCENES...** Wilderness scenes vary from ridge top panoramas, reflective lakes, wildlife, colorful plants and rushing water. They can be recorded with a camera or brush. Binoculars will enhance landscapes or wildlife that is not approachable. Pack your field guides to help you identify the species!

**FOOD & WASTE...** This area as well as the entire forest is under a food storage and sanitation order. This means that all human, pet and livestock food and refuse must be stored in a bear resistant manner. Camping or sleeping areas shall be established at least 1/2 mile from a known carcass. All carcasses will be stored no less than 1/2 mile from a camping area or within 200 yards of a National Forest System Trail. Burnable attractants (such as food leftovers, or bacon grease) shall not be buried, discarded, or burned in an open fire.

Human waste decomposes rather quickly in the top 6-8 inches of soil, and a small garden trowel can be used to dig an 8-10 inch diameter hole. Construct these latrines at least 200 feet from camp and water sources, and use only unscented toilet paper. Replace the sod when done.

Practice the Leave No Trace Techniques to leave the wilderness as it is today for future generations.

**HAVE A SAFE AND MEMORABLE VISIT!**



**Supervisor's Office**  
31374 US HWY 2  
Libby, MT 59923  
(406) 293-6211

#### **Ranger Districts**

Rexford Ranger District  
949 US HWY 93 North  
Eureka, MT 59917  
(406) 296-2536

Fortine Ranger District  
12797 US HWY 93 South  
P. O. Box 116  
Fortine, MT 59918  
(406) 882-4451

Three Rivers Ranger District  
12858 US HWY 2  
Troy, MT 59935  
(406) 295-4693

Libby Ranger District  
12557 HWY 37  
Libby, MT 59923  
(406) 293-7773

Cabinet Ranger District  
2693 HWY 200  
Trout Creek, MT 59874  
(406) 827-3533

[www.usda.gov/kootenai](http://www.usda.gov/kootenai)  
[www.wilderness.net](http://www.wilderness.net)



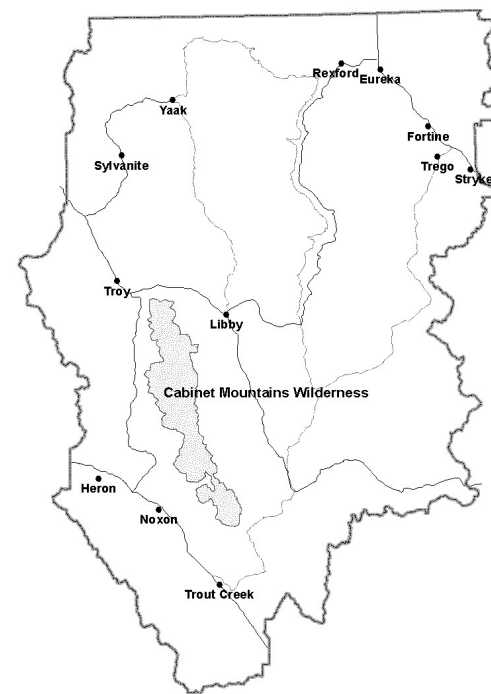
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# **CABINET MOUNTAINS WILDERNESS**

Kootenai National Forest



The Cabinet Mountains Wilderness is a 35 mile long range of glaciated peaks and valleys with two main ridges trending north and south. These two ridges are divided by two streams: Lake creek flowing north to the Kootenai River and Bull River flowing south to the Clark Fork River. Elevations range from a low of 2,880 feet to 8,738 feet atop Snowshoe Peak.

Designated a Primitive Area in 1935, the 94,272 acre area then became part of the National Wilderness Preservation Act of 1964, and is defined as, “*an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain...*”

The Cabinets obtained their name from early French explorers who noted that the rock formations along the Clark Fork river looked like boxes or cabinets. Most of these rock formations are now under the Cabinet Gorge Reservoir but some are still visible.

Variety best describes the Cabinet Mountains Wilderness, ranging from the high, rocky peaks often snowcapped year-round, to groves of huge cedars in the canopied valleys. Hidden in the peaks and ridges are scores of deep blue lakes, feeding clear, cold streams that tumble to moose country below.

This Cabinet Mountains have had use through time. The Kootenai Indians used the area to hunt big game. The mountain goat was prized for its pelt and was a rich food source. Many plants adapted only to high altitudes were gathered for food and medicines. Beginning in the 1880's the area was used by Euro Americans. The earliest and most extensive historic use has been mining activity.

Mineralization was discovered in the southeast part of the wilderness and since has become known as the Snowshoe Fault. Mining at some scale has occurred along this fault sporadically since the early 1900's.

Clean and pure are the simplest and most accurate ways to describe the water that comes out of the wilderness. Past studies have rated this water among the top 5% purest water in the lower 48 states. Bringing your own water or using a water purifier is still recommended.

The remnant of one alpine glacier still exists, Blackwell Glacier resides on the north slope of Snowshoe Peak. Other permanent snow fields can be found near Little Ibex lake and Elephant Peak. Patches of snow sheltered by mountainous ramparts are often found in the high country throughout the summer.

**ACCESS...** Trails preserve the fragile country and provide visitors the best access. There are 94 miles of trails most are marked at major intersections, some form loops, and many offer panoramic views. Others end at lakes in beautiful alpine settings. You may pick your own route to a nearby peak or high basin, but *beware of unstable rock formations that make technical climbing unsafe in most areas*. Limits have been placed on the number of persons and stock when traveling in parties. For a list of all prohibited acts call the forest or visit one of the web pages.

**ON THE TRAIL...** Trail difficulty varies from easy stream bottoms, to the ups and downs of major ridges and steep switchbacks.

The north end offers interconnected trails for convenient loop hikes. The central area is entirely one way, in and out the same way. The south end offers some loop hikes. The primary access into the wilderness is from the Libby area.

Use of the trail registers provides information on the amount of visitors and the areas that they are using, which is helpful in managing the wilderness.

Snowstorms may occur as late as July and as early as September, so *be prepared for the unexpected with extra food and clothing*. Some areas provide opportunities for back-country skiing, but *avalanche danger occurs in winter and spring, and you must exercise extreme care*.

**WILDLIFE...** The list of resident animals is extensive and their homes varied – from the high rocks of the mountain goat, mountain sheep, pika to the canyon bottoms of the beaver, wood rat, and beautiful Western Tanager, other animals include wolverines, deer, elk, moose, wolf, mountain lions, grizzlies and black bears.

Use proper food storage techniques, keep a clean, odorless camp, and *avoid close confrontations*.

Cutthroat, rainbow, and brook trout have been introduced and are now found in many lakes, streams, and beaver ponds.

**STOCK USE...** To avoid tying to trees, use temporary stakes or rope hitch racks and keep stock away from lakes, streams and campsites. Natural forage is scarce and hay may contain weed seed, so use only certified weed-seed free feeds. Remember, leave as little evidence of your visit as possible.

**CAMPING...** Make camps away from lakeshores or from areas where others may also be seeking solitude. Use any existing fire rings and use only dead wood that can be gathered on the ground and broken by hand. Keep fires small and remember to *always use extreme caution with fire*. Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the environment. A better choice would be a light-weight stove and a lantern.