



Letter: Pryors' unique habitat deserves protection

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Several years ago, I helped to write a brief naturalist's guide to the Pryors. In one compact area, one can find more species than almost any place else in Montana. Just counting vascular plants, in our booklet we listed more than 260 species. A number of these have very restricted ranges and are found in only a few places in the world except in the Pryors. At least one species, as far as we know, is unique to the Pryors.

While the great majority of the individual species themselves are not unique to the Pryors, it is their association with one another in such a compact area that is truly amazing. The reason there are so many species present in the Pryors has to do with the extreme range of habitats. In a short distance, we can go from dry desert to lush, damp meadows, from steppes to forests, and from plains to mountain tops. Geologic materials that support life there range from nearly the sterile Chugwater to exceptionally rich limestone outcrops. The habitats there are unusual and irreplaceable.

We need a travel plan that does all it can to protect the Pryors. The unique heritage of the Pryors is threatened by a few people riding their motorized vehicles off the legal roads, crushing the vegetation and opening scars in the soil. The damage done by a few motorized recreationists may be disproportionate to their numbers, but it is widespread and permanent. See the evidence at www.pryormountains.org.

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Billings