LEWIS AND CLARK SIGHTED BY THE ASSINIBOINE INDIANS

May 26, 1805

Missoula Breaks

“. . . from this point . . . when I reflected on the difficulties with which we must now throw in my way to the Pacific, and the sufferings and hardships of myself and party in them, it in some measure counterbalanced the joy I had felt in the first moments in which I gazed on them . . .”

Meriwether Lewis

May 26, 1805 — Traveling through what is now the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, Lewis and Clark glimpsed their first views of the outlying mountain ranges of the Rockies. Since early May the party had seen evidence of the native people who lived in the Missouri Breaks. Some of the signs likely belonged to the Assiniboines, and Lewis recorded in his journal “We do not wish to see those gentlemen just now as we presume they would most probably be the Assiniboines and might be troublesome to us.” The Missouri Breaks form steep, dry, rugged cliffs along the river and vegetation is sparse except along the river bottom.

Native Plant Species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foxtail barley</th>
<th>Primrose</th>
<th>Buffaloberry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>height: 1 to 2 feet</td>
<td>habitat: wide range, prefers moist areas</td>
<td>height: 6 to 15 feet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When foxtail barley grows, its purplish-brown nodding seedhead resembles a fox’s bushy tail. It grows in blue-green clumps.

Invasive Plant Species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knapweed</th>
<th>Saltcedar</th>
<th>Whitetop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>height: 1.5 to 3 feet</td>
<td>habitat: prefers moist areas</td>
<td>Russian knapweed prefers shallow water such as floodplains and river bottoms, and can survive in dry, range, and salinities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saltcedar is a woody shrub with thick, yellowish, reddish-brown stems, and pink flowers at branch tips.</td>
<td>One plant can consume large amounts of water.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Today — As you relieve your nature at Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge you will observe non-native plant species like Russian knapweed and whitecept that were not present when Lewis and Clark towed their dugouts up through the bluffs of the river. Invasive plant species we find today on the refuge were brought by unsuspecting travelers along waterways, roads, and trails. Wildlife, livestock, people, and pets transport seeds on their coats, clothing, shoe treads, vehicles, and boats.

Once introduced, invading species thrive in Montana’s climate. Russian knapweed forms dense colonies, crowding out native plants and reducing forage for wildlife. Saltcedar takes up salt from deep in the soil profile, drops its foliage, and increases salinity on the soil surface. Whitetop easily invades where natural and man-made disturbances occur.

You can help protect pristine areas from invasive species by not walking or driving through infestations and by washing your clothing, gear, and vehicles between site visits.

Montana artist Don Greytak artistically interprets three Assiniboine braves watching from high bluffs above the river as the explorers paddle, pole, row, and tow dugouts and two pirogues up the Missouri.

Hordem jubatum | Corethra canescens | Shepherdia argentea

www.dongreytak.com | www.mitsite.org | www.wildcenter.org