

LEWIS AND CLARK AT GATES OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS

July 17, 1805

Gates of the Rocky Mountains

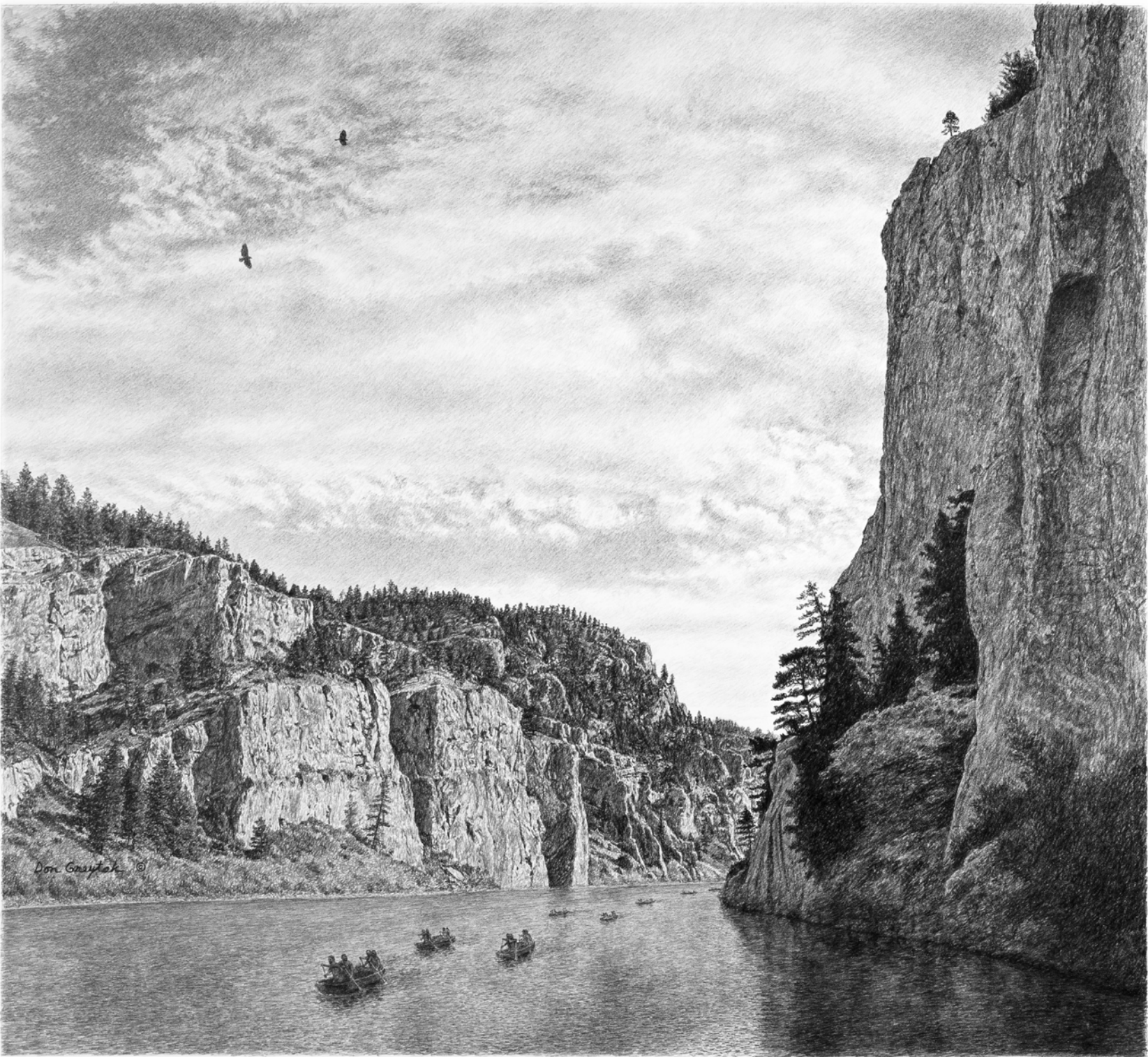
"The sunflower is in bloom and abundant in the river bottoms. The Indians of the Missouri particularly those who do not cultivate maize make great use of the seed of this plant for bread, or use it in thickening their soope."

MERIWETHER LEWIS

July 17, 1805—Meriwether Lewis observed a species of flax growing in the river bottoms as he traveled along the Missouri River near the Gates of the Rocky Mountains. Lewis noted that the specimen resembles the common flax cultivated in the "U States". William Clark walked on an old "Indian road" in search of Shoshone Indians who he hoped could supply the group with horses to cross the Rocky Mountains. Clark encountered abandoned Indian camps with shelters built of willow brush. He observed pine trees that had been peeled of their bark by native Americans, according to Sacajawea, for sap and the soft part of the wood and bark for food.

Native Plant Species

Gayfeather	Blue flax	Coneflower
height: 2 to 10 inches habitat: sandy soil	height: 8 to 24 inches habitat: well-drained prairie soil up to alpine ridges	height: 1 to 4 feet habitat: prairie, waste-area, and roadside
Dotted Gayfeather is also known as blazing star. A member of the aster family, this Great Plains species has roots that can extend many feet into the soil. These deep roots allow Dotted Gayfeather to withstand drought conditions.	This perennial member of the flax family is named in honor of Meriwether Lewis who collected the plant in July 1806 near Great Falls.	Prairie Coneflower is also known as Mexican Hat. Usually bright yellow flowers surround a column-shaped, dark disk in the center.
		
<i>Liatris punctata</i>	<i>Linum Lewisii</i>	<i>Ratibida columnifera</i>



Montana artist Don Greytak captures the "most remarkable cliffs" where according to the journals "every object here wears a dark and gloomy aspect." Members of the expedition talked about prickly pear and Meriwether Lewis wrote of his delight with the abundance of currants he found growing along the river.

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Statewide Noxious Weed Awareness and Education Campaign
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The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail weed education project was initiated and developed in 1997 by Montana's Statewide Noxious Weed Awareness and Education Campaign Task Force. The project grew to eleven locations by 2003 with the addition of Tower Creek Pyramids site cooperating with Idaho's Weed Awareness Campaign. By 2008 collaboration increased to the diverse entities shown on the reverse side of this sheet.

Today — As you stop along the Missouri River at the Gates of the Rocky Mountains, you will observe invading plant species like leafy spurge, spotted and diffuse knapweeds, and Dalmatian toadflax. Unsuspecting travelers along the river have helped to spread these invasive weeds on their boat bottoms, tire treads, camping gear, and clothing. Wild and domestic grazing animals, people, and pets also transport seeds.

Once introduced, invading species thrive in Montana's climate. Leafy spurge adapts to many habitats and spreads by seed dispersal and its long-reaching root system. Knapweeds invade disturbed sites and, like Dalmatian toadflax, can adapt easily to a wide variety of sites. Invasive plants out-compete native plants and reduce wildlife habitat.

You can help protect pristine areas from invading species by learning to recognize individual plants and not walking or driving through infestations. You can help by washing your clothing, gear, and vehicles between site visits.

Invasive Plant Species

Leafy spurge	Knapweed	Toadflax
height: 1 to 3 feet habitat: variety	height: 1 tp 3 feet species: spotted and diffuse habitat: variety	height: 2 to 3 feet habitat: variety
Bright yellow-green flowers and linear leaves make leafy spurge easy to identify. Look for milky latex in the stem and long creeping roots.	The pinkish-purple flower heads of spotted knapweed differ in color from the white to occasionally pink flower heads of diffuse knapweed.	Dalmatian toadflax was introduced to the United States as an ornamental and is used in fabric dyes. Snapdragon-like flowers are bright yellow with orange throats and long spurs.
		
<i>Euphorbia esula</i>	<i>Centaurea maculosa C. diffusa</i>	<i>Linaria dalmatica</i>