

# Making a Difference for Wildlife

Hundreds of local conservation projects are undertaken annually by SCI Chapters. They are reinforced by many notable conservation initiatives funded by the SCI Foundation.



## Western Montana Sympatric Moose and Elk Study

Garnet Range, Western Montana, USA  
Total Funds: \$42,500

**T**HE SHIRAS MOOSE is the southernmost occurring moose subspecies in North America, with the southernmost portions of its range extending into the northern Rocky Mountains. There, moose receive less management attention than more abundant ungulates such as mule deer, whitetail deer and elk, and hunting seasons are generally conservative.

Elk, on the other hand, are the major wildlife consideration in forest management, with goals to maximize bull-cow ratios and productivity. These considerations have benefited elk, but the impact on moose is not well understood.

Therefore, the University of Montana at Missoula implemented research to evaluate how management strategies designed for elk influence habitat use by moose. With funding from SCI's *Five Valleys Chapter* and other wildlife conservation groups and agencies, Milo Burcham and col-

laborators classified the habitat of the Garnet Mountains study area in terms of the stage of plant succession. Between 1997-2000, moose and elk use of the habitat types was evaluated using marked animals.

Research observations have resulted in specific management recommendations that can allow for land managers to balance the size of forested stands, road locations and protection of forest canopy in riparian areas to benefit both elk and moose. Other recommendations included optimum timing for moose aerial counts and verification of the sustainability of the current level of moose harvest.

