

Wild art



Chad Trettin IR staff photographer - Al Swanson hangs a photograph of emperor penguins by Kevin Schafer is one of many that will be on display at the Al Swanson Gallery throughout January as part of a travelling exhibit featuring some of the world's top nature photographers. In Chad - yourtime - al swanson gallery

Top wildlife photographers use exhibit as educational tool on climate change's effects on world's animals

Al Swanson believes everything is affected by global warming.

And Montanans particularly witness what the changing climate does to the land, because it happens in their own backyard, he said referring to the deteriorating glaciers at Glacier National Park.

“We all need to recognize what impact the world is having on us and what impact we are having on the world,” he said.

Swanson, owner of A.L. Swanson Gallery on the Walking Mall, is hosting a traveling show of work by award-winning conservation photographers, many of whom have been published in “National Geographic.”

Swanson doesn't claim to be a die-hard conservation activist, but rather a wood-worker who values the outdoors and believes any increased public awareness is positive. Not to mention, the opportunity to see the dramatic wildlife photographs the exhibit offers.

The exhibition, “Irreplaceable: Wildlife in a Warming World” aims to bring attention to how climate change could become a leading cause of species extinction over the next several decades, organizers say.

According to Derek Goldman with the Endangered Species Coalition, the campaign, led by a coalition of justice, faith, art and science groups, is part of an effort to bring attention to the plight of plants and animals imperiled in the face of climate change. The show highlights species that are already being threatened by the effects of global warming from the majestic polar bear in the Arctic to the grizzly bears in the Rocky Mountains.

Wildlife photographer Wendy Shattil, of Denver, says her picture in the show of an American pika is a perfect example of climate change effecting animals.

Shattil says, the small, fur-covered animal that lives above the tree line doesn’t have the ability to move somewhere else, and hot temperatures will kill them.

“They are very specialized and real sensitive to temperature changes,” she said. “They are a good example of an animal that could be at risk.”

Shattil, and her partner, Bob Rozinski, specialize in photographing North American wildlife because it’s what she knows best after living in Denver for 37 years.

“Our philosophy is we can be most effective when we are photographing something we know rather than going someplace for a month or even a year,” she said.

One of the local partners for the exhibit is the Montana Audubon Society, and that organization’s Janet Ellis said the timing is good with the legislative session in full swing.

“The main reason that Audubon is involved is it shows that with our warming climate that wildlife is going to be impacted, and this is a way to put a face on some of the wild animals that are going to be impacted as our climate warms,” she said.

Swanson said the show is unlike anything that’s ever been at his gallery. Not only because none of the pieces from the traveling show are for sale, but also because it creates a unique opportunity to bring in locals that wouldn’t typically visit the showroom.

He says the exhibition is perfect for families and young people because the images will resonate with adults and children alike.

Freeze frame

A traveling photography show at the A.L. Swanson Gallery is a visual depiction of the effects global warming has on animals. An opening reception, free to the public, is scheduled for Friday, Jan. 9 from 6 to 9 p.m. but the show will remain on display throughout the rest of the month.

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