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News

'Irreplaceable': Photo exhibit shows images of climate change close to home

By John Cramer

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Odette Grassi, right, and Janel Woodworth hang photographs from the show “Irreplaceable: Wildlife in a Warming World” at the Roxy Theater on Wednesday. The exhibit, which accompanies the 31st International Wildlife Film Festival, features work that shows wildlife threatened by climate change.
Photo by TOM BAUER/Missoulian

Western Montanans have been living with climate change for years, including longer droughts, worsening wildfires and dwindling snowpacks.

But they'll get a new perspective on global warming when a 40-print photo exhibit opens Thursday at the Roxy Theater in Missoula.

The exhibit, which includes images of the grizzly bear, wolverine, moose and other species native to western Montana, is titled “Irreplaceable: Wildlife in a Warming World.”

The exhibit, part of a nationwide tour to promote public awareness of climate change, runs along with the International Wildlife Film Festival, which opens Saturday at the Wilma Theatre.

Janet Rose, executive director of the International Wildlife Film Festival and Media Center, said the exhibit is one of the most impressive collections of photos the center has

ever displayed.

“It's fairly breathtaking,” she said.

The exhibit includes striking images of animals and plants that scientists say are threatened by climate change.

Rose said the exhibit should strike home with local residents because of the number of northern Rocky Mountain fish, flora and fauna that are threatened by climate change.

“It helps to transcend the politics” and to unite environmentalists, hunters, anglers, industrialists and others who value a healthy ecosystem and a vibrant economy, she said.

“Climate change traditionally has been associated with politics, but it should be a universal issue for everyone who cares about clean air, clean water and our natural resources,” she said.

The exhibit is sponsored by a coalition of faith, science, art and justice groups - Earthjustice, the Noah Alliance, the International League of Conservation Photographers and the Center for Applied Biodiversity Science.

“Irreplaceable,” which opened last month in Providence, R.I., will be exhibited over the next year in Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and Washington, D.C.

“Global warming has emerged as the most pressing challenge facing the world today,” said Trip Van Noppen, executive director of Earthjustice. “Our nation's wildlife, from the Arctic's polar bears to the monarch butterfly, are being affected, and we will be judged by future generations on how we respond.”

The U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change estimates that 20 percent to 30 percent of animal and plant species could be at increased risk of extinction if global warming continues to worsen.

“Our massive destruction of tropical forest, freshwater and marine habitats, plus climate change, are driving species extinction a thousand times faster than normal,” said Thomas Brooks, senior scientist at the Center for Applied Biodiversity Science.