

# THE STRAIGHT SHOOTER

## NEWS of ENNIS and the MADISON VALLEY, MONTANA for JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2019



*Trout live in nice neighborhoods*

➤ **MADISON VALLEY JANUARY & FEBRUARY “HAPPENINGS”** → The Elling House in Virginia City hosted a **Montana Raptor Program** (featuring owls, osprey, hawks, eagles, falcons and vultures) and a **Chautauqua**. → Ennis Continuing Ed presented a **Beekeeping Workshop** and a **Women’s Archery Workshop**. → Virginia City held their annual **Winter Fest** with events like Broomball, Log Sawing, Firehose Roll, and other strange things! → A new book was released called “**A Birth of Justice, the Vigilantes of Virginia City,**” by Donna McNamara, revealing some previously uncovered vigilante history. → The annual **Christmas Bird Count**, an annual census of birds, was conducted on January 5<sup>th</sup> with a total of 59 species identified. The CBC was started back in 1900 with the Audubon Society, and has taken place in Ennis and the Madison Valley since 1958. Mark your calendars for the next census! Check it out at <https://ebird.org/explore> → **The Sportsman’s Lodge** is under new ownership/management and looking forward to bringing new energy, ideas and commitment to this fine, historic resort. → **The Riverside Motel** is under new ownership and there are plans to develop a new Steakhouse and a Creamery on the property between the motel and Lions Park. → **The Longbranch Saloon**, the **Ennis Café** and the **Bear Trap Grill** all sold, recently and the **Gravel Bar** is building a 2-story building for their new **Burnt Tree Brewery**, with a rooftop patio! Lots of changes in Ennis! → The **Madison Valley Public Library** was again recognized as the second busiest library in the nation! (*for its budget category*). **The Madison Valley Woman’s Club** donates \$10,000 a year to support the MVPL, with proceeds from the **Nearly New Shoppe!** Both are great community resources. → **Plain Jane’s** hosted another Pajama Party. → There was a celebrity spotting when supermodel **Cindy Crawford** came to Virginia City for a photo shoot. → A local Pony resident has created a new educational board game, called **Wildlife Web**, that challenges the players to identify the Montana wildlife species and how they interact with one another and their surroundings. [http://www.hopspress.com/Games/Wildlife\\_Web.htm](http://www.hopspress.com/Games/Wildlife_Web.htm). → Ennis has been experiencing **historic snow levels** and the schools were closed on Feb 27<sup>th</sup> for the first time in 16 years! And the Madison River gorged!



➤ **MADISON VALLEY MARCH “HAPPENINGS”** → Avalanche danger is high across SW Montana. Check with the Forest Service before going out. There will be an **Avalanche Safety Workshop and Field Day** on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Call (406) 682-4258 to register. And be safe out there! → And still lots more to do! You can go **ice skating** on the pond in Virginia City, **ice fishing** at Hebgen or Ennis Lake, **ski** great snow at Big Sky Resort, **x-country ski** in West Yellowstone or take a **snow coach** through Yellowstone Park! → And back in the valley, find live music at **Willie’s Distillery**, the **Blue Moon Saloon**, the **Pony Bar**, **Norris Hot Springs (Water of the Gods)**, and the **Gravel Bar**, great shopping and dining, plus first-rate movies at the **Madison Theatre** and fun at the **Bowling Alley!** → And if you are determined to **fish**, go for it – you will have most of the river to yourself!

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➤ **MONTANA NEWS** → Although Vermont is the Beer Capital of the US, Montana was right behind with 11.5 breweries per 100,000 people over 21 years old. In Madison County alone, there are currently 3 breweries in operation – 2 in Big Sky, one in Sheridan (soon to be expanding) and there will soon be a 4<sup>th</sup> when the **Burnt Tree Brewery** opens in Ennis! Find them all at: <https://montanabrewers.org/trail-map/> → And Montana produces more **lentils** than any other state in America! Nearly 40% of all the country's



lentils come from Montana. And I thought we were known for our cattle and cowboys!! → A bill introduced to the Montana legislature could help facilitate steps to bring **film projects** into Big Sky Country with tax incentives. A local Virginia City resident recently produced a film, “**Peace is a Woman’s Job,**” about the life of Jeannette Rankin, filmed entirely in Virginia City and Nevada City. → The Montana Preservation Alliance (MPA) has launched a new heritage resource, “**The Path Less Traveled: Guide to Montana’s Hidden Rural Heritage,**” now online at <http://www.preservemontana.org/pathlesstraveled> It focuses on rural and off-the-beaten-path historic sites and rural landmarks. More of Montana to explore!



➤ **FISHING REPORT** → **Madison River Fishing Report from The Tackle Shop.** Wow! Was the end of February a doozy, or what?! We went from 91% snowpack to 121% in just a few days. The river gorged and flowed over the highway. For the shortest month of the year, it had a big impact on things to come. March is supposed to come “*in like a lion and out like a lamb.*” If the trend continues, it will be one bad lion.

Things really get going around here in March. We get more daylight, the official end to winter and you need a new fishing license. All good things in the fisherman’s handbook. We can probably take not-having-enough-water this summer out of the worry box right now. We can also add how the gorge and dump of snow will mess up our early spring fishing. Remember the **worry box** always needs to stay full so when you take something out you must add something.

So, until we get a significant week of warm weather, the Madison is out. Looking into my magic, crystal 8 ball, that should happen about mid-month. The access at Ennis, Valley Garden, Burnt Tree and 8 Mile will be jammed up with ice for longer. Usually when it starts melting it goes fast. Once we get days and more importantly a few nights above freezing, it will be a different story. Once it gets opened up it will be a brand-new river. The gorge moves gravel bars, holes and runs so it will be like ground hog day every day. “*Wow! That is new!*” will be the song of spring. Once we see some spring, your best bet is to nymph with lots of weight. Worms, eggs, midges and stone fly stuff will be the staple for the first few weeks. The fish will be hungry and eating like a fat kid on cake.

The bright light you see shining in the snowdrift is not a train, it is the good stuff ahead. Right now, it might feel like winter has its hold but know things are about to change and good times are ahead. While you’re waiting, come by the store and check out all the new gear that is arriving. If you shovel our sidewalk on the way in, we will give you 20% off.

The Madison River Negotiated Rule Making Committee is scheduled to meet on March 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>, at the Sportsman’s in Ennis. Public Comment is at 4:30. This is your chance to try and influence those making the future recreational rules for the Madison River.

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We are headed to Belize for our annual hosted fly-fishing trip with 10 guests at the start of March. Will be back just in time when the fishing gets good. Looking forward to being warm! *John FishEnnis*, from John Way, Owner of The Tackle Shop, **The 2017 Orvis Outfitter of the Year!** (Check it out at <http://www.thetackleshop.com>) Ennis, Montana, the **CULTURAL EPICENTER OF TROUT**.  
**Check out other fishing reports at:**

- ✚ Madison River Fishing Company at: <http://www.mrfc.com/MadisonRiverMontanaFishing/MadisonRiverReport.aspx>.
- ✚ Dan Delekta at <http://beartoothflyfishing.com/flyfishingreports/uppermadisonriver.htm>.
- ✚ The Madison Valley Ranch at <http://www.madisonvalleyranch.com/blog/>
- ✚ Joe Dilschneider's Montana Trout Stalkers at <http://www.montanatrou.com/>
- ✚ Yellowstone Fly Fishing at <http://www.yellowstoneflyfishing.com/madisonreport.htm>.

➤ **WEATHER** → January was quite dry, and we were showing properties that are usually not accessible at that time of year. The Snow gods decided to send it all at once, in February. We have certainly made up for **no White Christmas** in Ennis this year! We haven't seen a Snowpack report recently, but it must be huge! If you can get there, Big Sky has 106" at the summit. <https://bigskyresort.com/current-conditions>. January a little unusual with a daytime high of **51°** and daytime low of **10°**, a nighttime high of **32°** and low of **minus 15°**! We got .42" of precipitation, including 5.99" of snow. Then February was a real surprise, with a daytime high of **48°**, daytime low of **-9°** and a night time high of **27°** and a low of **minus 26°**! We had 2.13" of precipitation, including **14.67"** of snow! And the Madison River gorged, big time!



➤ **REAL ESTATE TIPS** → **DO A "MARIE KONDO" ON YOUR HOME, BEFORE YOU SELL IT!** This is a great way to help sellers get a handle on decluttering before it's time to list. Marie Kondo is a new Netflix star and Japanese organizing consultant who offers the KonMari Method of Tidying Up. Her handy sorting and releasing tips make it easier to get rid of years of belongings that will help sell a home. Tidying up can significantly increase profits when selling. Check it out at: <https://konmari.com/>

#### **How to "Marie Kondo" a Home before you sell it:**

1. Objectively look at all possessions to sort through what to keep for sentimental value and what you can get rid of.
2. Set aside some time to look through the house with fresh eyes before you bring in a photographer to take listing photos.
3. In each room, look for any item, décor style, or piece of furniture that sticks out and that a buyer would notice.
4. Pack and store special items to keep them safe during open houses and showings and minimize how much you will have to pack later.
5. Commit yourself to tidying up.
6. Imagine your ideal lifestyle.
7. Finish discarding first.
8. Tidy up by category, not by location.
9. Follow the right order.
10. Ask yourself if it sparks joy.

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➤ **FIND A HOME FOR YOUR SOUL... Featured Property of the Month...SPECTACULAR VIEWS from this hilltop Log Cabin! *Start planning for your next vacation!*** Perfect get-away for vacations, this 2,249 SF log cabin has 3 BR, 2.5 BA, wood-burning FP, 2-car attached garage + detached 3-car garage/toy barn with finished living space above. All on 20 acres, bordering NATIONAL FOREST, with exclusive fishing access on the Madison River! Furniture package available for "move-in" convenience. Seasonal access, great recreational property, close to hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, hiking, etc. 20 Trollhaugen Way, Sundance Bench, Cameron. **\$525,000.**



MLS # 319830. [http://www.arrowreal.com/pdf/brochure/Brochure\\_319830.pdf](http://www.arrowreal.com/pdf/brochure/Brochure_319830.pdf).

➤ **CURRENT REAL ESTATE NEWS** → WASHINGTON (February 27, 2019) – Pending home sales rebounded strongly in January, according to the National Association of Realtors®. All four major regions saw growth last month, including the largest surge in the South. The Pending Home Sales Index (PHSI), a forward-looking indicator based on contract signings, increased 4.6 percent to 103.2 in January, up from 98.7 in December. Year-over-year contract signings, however, declined 2.3 percent, making this the thirteenth straight month of annual decreases.

**Lawrence Yun**, NAR chief economist, had expected an increase in January home sales. *"A change in Federal Reserve policy and the reopening of the government were very beneficial to the market,"* he said. Of the four major regions, three areas experienced a decline compared to one year ago, while the Northeast enjoyed a slight growth spurt.

Yun also said higher rates discouraged many would-be buyers in 2018. *"Homebuyers are now returning and taking advantage of lower interest rates, while a boost in inventory is also providing more choices for consumers."* Additionally, Yun noted year-over-year increases in active listings from data at realtor.com® to illustrate the potential rise in inventory. Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, Colo., Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, Wash., San Diego-Carlsbad, Calif., Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, and Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, Tenn., saw the largest increase in active listings in January compared to a year ago.

Yun says positive pending home sales figures in January will likely continue. *"Income is rising faster than home prices in many areas and mortgage rates look to remain steady. Furthermore, job creation will help lift home buying."* In 2019, Yun forecasts for existing-home sales to be around 5.28 million – down 1.1 percent from 2018 (5.34 million). The national median existing-home price this year is expected to increase around 2.2 percent. In 2018, existing sales declined 3.1 percent and prices rose 4.9 percent.

The PHSI in the Northeast rose 1.6 percent to 94.0 in January and is now 7.6 percent above a year ago. In the Midwest, the index rose 2.8 percent to 100.2 in January, 0.3 percent lower than January 2018. Pending home sales in the South jumped 8.9 percent to an index of 119.8 in January, which is 3.1 percent lower than this time last year. The index in the West increased 0.3 percent in January to 87.3 and fell 10.1 percent below a year ago.

*The National Association of Realtors®, "The Voice for Real Estate," is America's largest trade association, representing 1.3 million members involved in all aspects of the residential and commercial real estate industries.*

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➤ **LOCAL REAL ESTATE MARKET STATISTICS** → Housing prices are up substantially, across Montana, with prices doubling since 2000 in 5 counties and up by 70% in two-thirds of MT counties. Shortages of “affordable housing” exist throughout the state. There are several bills before the MT Legislature to boost affordable housing projects. Ennis has severe shortages in homes under \$300,000 and anything new on the market, is snapped up fast. We have been turning buyers away from showing properties in many areas of the valley that are inaccessible due to the snow. So, we should see some pent-up demand in the spring! **Big Sky Country** Multiple Listing statistics for the Madison Valley area (including Ennis, Cameron, McAllister, Norris, Virginia City, Harrison, and Pony), for the months **January** and **February 2019** are as follows:

- **HOMES:** 65↓ homes listed (\$119,000 to \$4,250,000); 6↑ pending sales (\$179,000 to \$4,950,000); and 5 homes have sold in 2019 (\$235,000 to \$460,000), totaling \$1,620,500, at 94%↓ of list prices.
- **LAND:** 233↓ vacant lots listed (\$25,500 to \$3,150,000); with 18↓ pending sales (\$36,000 to \$79,500); and 17 lots have sold in 2019 (\$28,500 to \$75,000), totaling \$590,000, at 95.3%↑ of list prices.
- **RANCHES:** 4 ranches listed (\$1,495,000 to \$4,495,000); 0 pending sales, and 0 ranches have sold in 2019, so far.
- **COMMERCIAL:** 15↓ listed (\$75,000 to \$1,100,000); 6↑ pending sales (\$115,000 – \$785,000); and 2 commercial properties have sold in 2019 (\$179,000 to \$350,000), totaling \$529,000, at 90.1%↓ of list prices.

***“The best investment on Earth is earth.”*** Louis J. Glickman, real estate mogul/philanthropist

➤ **MONTANA TRIVIA** → *Did you know that... some people believe the Madison River is the only river in North America to “gorge” this way?* Just what is “the Gorge?” This is a main source of conversation around Ennis during especially cold weather. Old timers have great stories of cows getting stuck out on ice flows in the middle of the river and the year the gorge took out the old Varney Bridge. I have been fascinated by this phenomenon ever since we moved to Ennis in 1993. It is awesome to witness and hard to understand. I interviewed some of the natives and hydrologists as well, trying to find out the cause. In the winter of 2010, Greg Lemon, Editor of The Madisonian, our local newspaper, wrote an article that pretty much describes what causes the Gorge. He said, “It happens nearly every year. When the temperatures drop near zero and the wind howls mercilessly, the Madison River begins to freeze up. Around Ennis, when the Madison River will gorge becomes big topic of conversation. *“Have you seen the river?”* someone will ask. *“Yeah. She’s froze up down by the lake,”* will be the reply. *“Betcha she gorges in by the end of the week.”*

If you search the Internet for Madison River gorging, amongst the stories of big trout gulping salmon flies, you’re apt to find a variety of pictures and stories about ice choking the river around Ennis and pushing water out into nearby fields, overflow sloughs and pastures. Along with the anticipation come the rumors and legends about the uniqueness of the Madison River ice jams. Some say it freezes from the bottom up because the wind blows so hard. But the fact is many rivers around southwest Montana freeze in a similar fashion, said William Locke, professor of environmental science at Montana



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State University in Bozeman. "It's actually pretty common," Locke said. "Take for instance the Gallatin River," he said. "The most common form of flooding on the lower Gallatin is the result of ice jamming." "However, the speed the ice on the Madison River and the depth the ice reaches are impressive," said Pat Clancy, a former fisheries biologist in Ennis. Every year Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks close the Ennis and Valley Garden Fishing Access sites because of the ice gorging.

In a 1921 article in "Proceedings of the Society of Civil Engineers," written by J.C. Stevens about the ice-jamming phenomenon on the Madison River. "It has been stated by local authority that the Madison is the only river in Montana which overflows from ice gorges during cold weather. This statement is not true. The Ruby, Boulder, and many small streams behave exactly in the same manner as the Madison in this respect," writes Stevens.

Some of the characteristics that contribute to the flooding and ice gorging are the shallowness of the river, the low river banks and the relatively steady flow of the water, Stevens wrote. The ice gorge itself comes from a mix of frazil and anchor ice, he wrote. Frazil ice is formed on turbulent rivers when the weather is cold enough to freeze surface water. It looks like shards or chunks of ice in the river. It's also sometimes called slush ice or needle ice. Anchor ice is formed around rocks and cobbles in shallow water and is a result of "a rapid radiation of earth heat from the river bed into space," writes Stevens. It forms most rapidly on dark-colored stones, during clear and cold nights. Larry Love, who is an Ennis native and on the board of the Madison Valley History Association, believes this anchor ice is really what distinguishes the Madison River from others.

*But it remains a mystery to me. When I look at the gorged river, I don't think about all those different kinds of ice and slush, I just see the amazing beauty of nature and thank God I live in the middle of so much of it.*

## **SEE YOU IN MONTANA!**

### **Our ERA Landmark Arrow Real Estate Team**

**Toni and Don Bowen, Broker Associates and Accredited Buyer Brokers**



**Debbie Reilly-Richardson,  
Office Administration**



**Thank you in advance for your personal referrals.  
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## USEFUL WEBSITES TO REMEMBER→

### ENNIS AND THE MADISON VALLEY:

<http://www.ennismontana.org/> - for community and local government information

<http://www.ennischamber.com/> - The Ennis Chamber of Commerce website

<http://www.madisonvalleyhistoryassociation.org> – The Madison Valley History Association website

<http://www.mvmedcenter.org> – for information about the Madison Valley Medical Center

<http://www.mvvetsmemorial.org> – The Madison Valley Veterans Memorial website

<http://ennisarts.org/> - The Ennis Arts Association website for all artists!

<http://www.backroadtoyellowstone.com> – information for travelers about the route through our valley

### MADISON COUNTY:

<https://madisoncountymt.gov/525/Emergency-Information> - for Madison County emergency news

<http://www.madison.mt.gov/> - Madison County Government website

<http://virginiacity.com> – Virginia City Chamber of Commerce

### NEWS:

<http://www.madisoniannews.com/> - the latest news from the Madisonian newspaper for Madison Co.

<http://bozemandailychronicle.com/> - news from the big city of Bozeman, an hour northeast of Ennis

<http://www.mtstandard.com/> - news from historic Butte, an hour & ½ northwest of Ennis

### MONTANA:

[www.fwp.mt.gov/](http://www.fwp.mt.gov/) - Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks website – for hunting and fishing regulations

<http://fwp.mt.gov/education/bow/> - “Becoming an Outdoors Woman” – a must for female newcomers!

<http://www.visitmt.com/> - Official website Montana Vacations, Recreation, Accommodations and Travel

<http://www.montanapictures.net> – for people homesick for Montana – a great visual connection

[http://mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/weather/rwis\\_list.shtml](http://mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/weather/rwis_list.shtml) - State Highway Web Cams

<http://montanakids.com/> - State website for all things KIDS in Montana

<https://www.nps.gov/yell/index.htm> - Yellowstone National Park – for all things Yellowstone Park

<https://www.facebook.com/Ennisrealestate?ref=hl> – Facebook page for ERA Landmark Arrow R. E.

### SKIING:

<http://bigskyresort.com/> – Check out latest snow conditions & things to do at Big Sky

<http://www.lmranch.com/winter/> - Lone Mountain Ranch in Big Sky for cross country trails

[http://www.westyellowstonenet.com/skiing/cross\\_country\\_skiing.php](http://www.westyellowstonenet.com/skiing/cross_country_skiing.php) - Skiing Yellowstone Park Trails

### HORSEBACK RIDING:

[www.wolfpackoutfitters.com](http://www.wolfpackoutfitters.com) – trail riding guides for the Madison Valley

<http://www.sphinxmountainoutfitting.com> – trail riding and outfitting guides in the Madison Valley

### RANCHING:

<http://www.madisonvalleyranchlands.org/> - working to keep the ranching way of life alive

### FISHING:

<http://www.madisonriverfoundation.org> - The Madison River Foundation

<http://www.montanatu.org/> - Montana Trout Unlimited

### GOLFING:

<http://www.madisonmeadowsgolfcourse.com> – Madison Meadows Golf Course in Ennis

### REAL ESTATE:

[www.arrowreal.com](http://www.arrowreal.com) – A wealth of resource information, local listings and a portal to the Big Sky MLS

[www.eralandmark.com](http://www.eralandmark.com) – Our Main Office website, covering Bozeman, Livingston, Big Sky & Ennis

<http://www.realtor.com/> - The world's #1 Real Estate website. The source for all properties on MLS

[www.houselogic.com](http://www.houselogic.com) – Helpful information from the National Association of Realtors

[www.homesandland.com](http://www.homesandland.com) – Search for homes for sale and rent, home values and mortgage rates

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