

You won't find the Shepherd Research Center on a map. That's because it's really three places. It is the headquarters of Floating Island International. It is home for Anne and me. And it is a place, some 340 acres along the Yellowstone River north and east of Billings, Montana. Only I call it the Shepherd Research Center. Everyone else refers to it as one of the other two places. Those are the names you will find on Google search, or in the phone book.

I purchased this place sixteen years ago. It had water and wildlife, and my intention then and now is that this place would be an experiment. A place where research and development around issues between humankind and wildlife, including fish and other aquatic species would happen. So I call it the Shepherd Research Center because that is its primary purpose for me.

So far we've been visited by folks from 44 different countries. Mostly they come to learn about floating islands, but now, more recently, the concept of resurrecting an ancestral life style, blending the best of the old with the new, is bringing people here as well.

As a young person, when asked what I planned to do with my life, I would say, "I want to work with really bright people to solve problems." This dream has come true. We are a think tank.

Our focus is "NATURE AS MODEL." And I can say unequivocally, we are unique. No one else in the world is doing what we do. On the other hand, an entire network of dedicated individuals and businesses are using some of what we have learned to solve critical environmental problems. Today they are operating in eleven different countries in both hemispheres. This group in combination, for example, has launched over 7,000 floating islands of a vast range of sizes. Today our floating islands, BioHavens, are even challenging oceans!

Here are some of the other unique things that go on here at Shepherd:

1. We are engaged in a long term experiment, a case study, in which we intercept the non point nutrients associated with 140 million gallons of impaired agricultural water. We cycle these nutrients into fish and other appropriate biota, instead of algae. This harvest of nutrients includes a fraction of the inventoried nutrients that have accumulated in our watershed since mineral based nutrients, fertilizer, came on the scene some sixty-five years ago. This takes place on our Fish Fry Lake, which today generates more poundage of wild fish per acre foot of water than any other wild fishery in Montana.

2. We are also the most productive wild pheasant hunt in Montana. This one is particularly hard to measure, but to the best of our knowledge, no other ground in excess of one square kilometer has ever approached our harvest level of just less than one rooster per acre.

3. We demonstrate that biological control of mosquito and midge is cost effective, and we quantify a number of other critical benefits associated with this method.

There's much more that happens here. Both Anne and I are intrigued with the vision of integrating the lessons from history, and pre-history, with modern advances. Can a paleo lifestyle address some of the pressing environmental and social and health issues of the day? Our intuition says "YES." But that is not enough. We will quantify both, benefits and costs. We believe in the scientific method, and practice it.

We welcome other bright individuals. You are invited to visit, and share your wisdom. Maybe as part of your visit we can fish, hunt, snorkel, dive, hike, debate, collaborate, learn, and share insights!

Bruce Gregory Kania
A friend