

Columbia Falls native pens wildflower app

By CHRIS PETERSON Hungry Horse News | Posted: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 8:26 am

A Columbia Falls native and botanist has developed a new wildflower identification app for Glacier National Park and surrounding wildlands.

Co-creator Shannon Kimball grew up in Columbia Falls and now lives in Kalispell. The 1985 graduate has a biology degree from Carroll College and a master's in botany from Oregon State. She co-authored the successful paperback field guide "Wildflowers of Glacier National Park" with noted botanist Peter Lesica in 2005. Since then, the paperback has sold 6,000 copies.

Kimball's new app expands on the book. It has full color photographs, and an updated version in April will describe more than 400 species — nearly 100 more than the book version, she said last week.

The app also offers added features, like range maps, hand drawings and several different photographs of each species. A user can search for a plant by simply browsing through the catalog of flowers by name in alphabetical order or through a host of different search criteria. For example, to find a yellow flower, one can search just the yellow flowers in the guide.

"The app helps people connect to the natural world," Kimball said.

Kimball co-authored the app with Whitney Tilt. It was developed by Katie Gibson in partnership with the former Glacier Association.

The Glacier Association has since merged with the Glacier National Park Conservancy, and 5 percent of sales of the app will go toward the nonprofit group. The app works on both Android and Apple devices and does not require an Internet connection once it's downloaded.

Kimball will give a talk on the app tonight (Feb. 20) at 7 p.m. at the Teakettle Hall in Columbia Falls at the Flathead Valley Chapter of the Montana Native Plant Society meeting. The talk is free and open to the public. The app sells for \$4.99 in the app store. A smaller version with fewer species is available for free.