



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
National Elk Refuge

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
May 19, 2008 08-09

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## **41<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL ANTLER AUCTION HELD IN JACKSON**

Hundreds of residents and visitors celebrated Elkfest in Jackson, Wyoming this past weekend, highlighted by the 41<sup>st</sup> annual Boy Scout Elk Antler Auction held at the Town Square on Saturday, May 17. This year, 10,669 pounds of antlers were sold at the auction for a total of \$108,591, representing a significant increase from 2007 when 5,379 pounds went for \$59,748. Though the price per pound was lower compared to one year ago, averaging \$10.16, the increase in the number of antlers on the auction block brought in an impressive grand sum.

Last year, warm March temperatures and a below average snowpack resulted in earlier snow-free conditions and a large migration of elk off the refuge by the third week of March. Many elk leaving the refuge in 2007 still had their antlers intact, shedding them later in areas surrounding the refuge. This year, however, a substantial lingering snowpack kept elk on the refuge much longer. Many of the animals dropped their antlers prior to migrating to their summer range, leading to the 98% increase in antlers available at the auction.

Shed antlers are routinely removed by National Elk Refuge personnel throughout the spring in order to minimize damage to feeding and farming equipment and to prevent trespassing by antler poachers. Through a special use permit, the Jackson District Boy Scouts assist in collecting the antlers and preparing them for public sale. On one Saturday each year, just weeks prior to the auction, over 100 Scouts and leaders converge to canvas the refuge for any remaining antlers. The antlers must then be sorted, bundled, weighed and labeled. In addition to preparing the antlers for sale, the Boy Scouts assist during the auction by carrying the individual lots up to the stage for viewing during the bidding process, while Scout leaders register bidders and record the sales.

The majority of proceeds (80%) from the auction are donated to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which operates the National Elk Refuge. The funding assists with long-term habitat enhancement projects on the refuge such as growing grasses, improving irrigation on the refuge, and purchasing equipment used for this type of work. As outlined in the Bison and Elk Management Plan that was finalized in April 2007, the National Elk Refuge will continue to explore ways to refurbish and enhance its irrigation infrastructure in order to increase the amount of natural forage produced. Plans include making repairs to existing ditches and headgates and installing water pipelines.

Next year's antler auction is set for Saturday, May 16. However, single antlers are available for sale throughout the year at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center located at 532 North Cache Street in Jackson.