

## National Elk Refuge News – March 10, 2009

### Visitor Center Hosts Photography Family Event



*Justin Walters helps a young naturalist view a wooden coyote cutout placed along the fenceline. The activity stressed the importance of gauging appropriate distances for viewing wildlife.*

Photographers of all ages roamed the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center on Saturday, participating in a program offered in cooperation with the national “*Get Outdoors, It’s Yours*” campaign. Entitled “*Discovering Wildlife Through the Lens of a Camera*,” Saturday’s free family event gave participants an opportunity to be creative with digital cameras, attend several naturalist-led sessions, make a picture frame, and download their favorite image of the day for entry into an amateur photo contest.

Participants checked in at a welcome station and were given a booklet outlining the various stations. The self-paced selection of activities gave them the flexibility to work within their own time

constraints and interests. “The activities were all kid-centered, but the parents came away with some new information and ideas, too,” noted winter naturalist Susan Owen, who helped organize the event.

Each family had access to a digital camera while at the visitor center, made possible through a partnership with the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival. Many participants first attended a presentation on photo composition, enhanced by beautiful wildlife images taken at or near the visitor center by local photographer Mark Gocke. The ideas presented there complemented a photo scavenger hunt that challenged participants to take a variety of photos using different techniques. With the

use of life-size animal cutouts strategically placed on the lawn, participants also learned acceptable wildlife viewing distances. “It’s not worth disturbing an animal during winter for the sake of a good shot,” explained Justin Walters, who led the demonstration. “A good zoom lens allows you to get your photo while reducing a lot of stress on the animal.”

The photographs taken at Saturday’s event will be displayed at the visitor center through April. Visitors will vote on a “People’s Choice” award, with the winner receiving a gift certificate to the Grand Teton Association, a non-profit cooperating association that operates a retail store in the facility and supports educational programming on the refuge.