



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 4, 2011 11-01

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
307.733.9212, ext. 6

NATIONAL ELK REFUGE ANNOUNCES SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING START DATE

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin has announced that supplemental feeding of elk and bison wintering on the Refuge will begin on Thursday, January 6, 2011, several weeks earlier than the ten-year average start date of January 24.

Supplemental feeding start dates vary widely based on a number of conditions. During the past ten years, winter feeding has started as early as December 30 and as late as February 28. In 2010, wildlife managers were able to delay supplemental feeding until February 12 due to below-normal snow cover and above-normal grass production during the summer. Biologists from the National Elk Refuge and the Wyoming Game & Fish Department regularly monitor conditions from key sites on the Refuge, measuring factors like snow conditions, forage availability, and elk and bison distribution. Approximately 6,000 elk and 650 bison have been wintering on the Refuge since the third week of December.

When supplemental feeding begins, Refuge staff will distribute small rations of alfalfa pellets to elk and bison, allowing them to adjust to the new high protein diet. The amount of feed will gradually increase until the herds are receiving approximately 8 pounds of pellets per elk and 20 pounds per bison daily. While this is generally considered a full daily supplemental ration, the amount of feed provided can vary with conditions.

An earlier-than-average start date could mean a longer feeding program this year, exceeding last year's 41-day season. The result will be a higher concentration of elk and bison for a longer period of time, a situation that increases the risk of disease. The possible serious disease impacts associated with supplemental feeding and a higher concentration of animals have been identified as a top issue in the Bison and Elk Management Plan, completed in April 2007. State and Federal wildlife managers are working toward reducing the need for intensive supplemental feeding in order to decrease the prevalence of brucellosis and the risk of other diseases which are not currently affecting the Refuge but could be introduced into the Jackson elk and bison populations. "Our goal is to reduce the length of the feeding season and the potential for disease transmission," Kallin explained. "We hope to establish a trend toward a greater reliance on natural forage."

The Refuge, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife Health Office in Bozeman, MT, will continue an increased herd health monitoring project this winter, a multi-year project that began in February 2009. The program focuses on health of elk in relation to their environment during the supplemental feeding season.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 18, 2011 11-02

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE SPECIAL PROGRAM SPOTLIGHTS TRUMPETER SWANS

The National Elk Refuge will be hosting a special program on Saturday, January 22 from 1:00 to 4:00 PM at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson. The program, entitled *Ko-hoh: Restoring the Trumpeter Swans*, features two area biologists involved in the management of the spectacular bird. With a wingspan of seven feet or more and a height of roughly four feet, the trumpeter swan ranks as the largest native waterfowl species in North America. "Ko-hoh" is the voice text often used to describe the unique call of the trumpeter.

Trumpeter swans were once fairly common throughout most of the northern U.S. and Canada, but market hunting and the millinery trade rapidly depleted nesting populations during the 19th century. By the late 1800s, it was widely believed that the species may have become extinct. However, a small nonmigratory population survived in the mountain valleys of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, other government organizations, and private organizations played and continue to play an important role in restoring the birds to their native ranges.

Susan Patla, a Nongame Biologist with the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, will lead off Saturday's program with a presentation at 1:00 PM on wintering swans. Patla is responsible for the management and monitoring of the trumpeter swan population in Wyoming and coordinates efforts with other states. She also served as the chairperson of the Greater Yellowstone Trumpeter Swan Working Group for 10 years. Patla will be followed at 1:45 PM by Drew Reed, Executive Director of the Wyoming Wetlands Society and Trumpeter Swan Fund. Reed will give an overview of the organization's involvement in the restoration of the Rocky Mountain population of trumpeter swans and wetland restoration. From 2:30 to 4:00 PM, both speakers will be available for questions and discussions, and a number of items will be on display, including trumpeter swan feathers, egg replicas, and a full trumpeter swan mount. Winter naturalists will be available to help visitors look for trumpeter swans from the visitor center's upper viewing deck.

For more information on the January 22 program, please call 307.734.9378 or visit the visitor center's web page at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/JacksonHoleVisitorCenter.htm

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 9, 2011 11-03

PO Box 510
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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE PLANS VISITOR CENTER SPECIAL EVENT

The National Elk Refuge will be hosting a special event on Monday, February 21 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson. The event, entitled *Wild About Wildlife*, will offer a variety of free, family activities focusing on the rich diversity of animals that can be found on the Refuge throughout the year, including bison, pronghorns, mountain lions, bighorn sheep, moose, and trumpeter swans.

A number of programs will be available to the public throughout the day, ranging from children's activities to naturalist-led presentations. Visitors can stop at discovery stations to learn about the different animals, make an animal mask or pin, or view and handle a variety of skulls, pelts, antlers, and horns. Special guest Suzan Moulton, Executive Director of the National Bighorn Sheep Interpretive Center in Dubois, Wyoming, will staff an educational trunk of hands-on materials to learn about the biology and habitat needs of the Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, a species regularly seen on Miller Butte by Refuge visitors during the winter months.

In addition to self-paced discovery stations, several scheduled presentations will be offered throughout the day. At 10:00 AM, 12:00 PM, and 2:00 PM, a winter naturalist will present a 20-minute slideshow and talk called *The Elusive Mountain Lion* in the visitor center theater. Guest readers will lead a story time at 10:30 AM and 12:30 PM for preschoolers and young children, sharing short stories from wildlife books. Children ages 6-12 can enjoy a 30-minute *Big Paw, Little Paw Snowshoe Romp* from 11:00 AM, 1:00 PM, and 3:00 PM, giving young participants a chance to strap on snowshoes, take a short walk on the visitor center lawn, and discover how animals move through deep snow in the winter. Snowshoes will be provided for the activity; no snowshoeing experience is required.

For more information on the February 21 event or a complete schedule for the day, please call 307.734.9378 or visit the visitor center's web page at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/JacksonHoleVisitorCenter.htm

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www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge

National Elk Refuge News – February 24, 2011

Refuge Participates in the Great Backyard Bird Count



*Mallards and trumpeter swans, along with a variety of other birds, are often be seen in the vicinity of the Visitor Center.
Photos courtesy of Mark Abetz, National Elk Refuge winter staff (left) and Mark Gocke, Wyoming Game and Fish Department (right)*

The National Elk Refuge participated in the 14th annual Great Backyard Bird Count this month, an event led by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, with Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada and sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited. Organizers designate a four-day period when people of all ages and all levels of bird-watching experience can conduct bird counts in their areas. Participants can document bird sightings for as little or as long as they wish during the designated period. Reports are submitted via an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count web site. Scientists use the information, along with observations from other citizen-science projects, to give them a larger picture of bird populations and distribution.

This year, bird watchers were asked to tally their observations from February 18 through February 21. The National Elk Refuge conducted

two counts during the survey period.

On February 18, winter naturalist Mark Abetz conducted a 15-minute survey from the Flat Creek Bridge, just north of the Visitor Center, where he recorded 54 birds representing 5 species. The sample site is a popular bird viewing area and includes an observation deck.

Two days later, naturalist Justin Walters enlisted help from visitors who had signed up for a wildlife excursion, a naturalist-led program that takes participants out onto the Refuge Road to look for wildlife. The four visitors signed up for the excursion on February 20 were excited to modify the day's wildlife search to focus on bird identification and documentation. During their 1½ tour, the group identified 11 species for a total of 82 birds.

Combining the two counts, the National Elk Refuge reported 13 species and 136 individual birds:

- Trumpeter Swans – 13
- Gadwalls – 18
- American Wigeons – 4
- Mallards – 57
- Buffleheads – 12
- Common Goldeneyes – 4
- Barrow's Goldeneyes – 2
- Common Mergansers – 2
- Bald Eagles – 2
- Rough-legged Hawk – 1
- Golden Eagles – 4
- Black-billed Magpies – 7
- Common Ravens – 10

To date, the Great Backyard Bird Count has had 78,042 checklists submitted for the 2011 count. A total of 9,963,994 individual birds have been counted, with a total of 589 species observed. "It was interesting to see how our results fit into the bigger picture," Abetz said.

For more information on the Great Backyard Bird count, visit <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

National Elk Refuge News – March 1, 2011

Refuge Hosts Two Visitor Center Special Events



Mandy Crane helps a participant create an art project after his visit to a discovery station on pronghorns.

Visitors to the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center had a chance to learn about the rich diversity of animals that can be found on the National Elk Refuge by attending a free, family-centered special event last week. A number of programs were available to the public during the *Wild About Wildlife* event, ranging from children’s activities to naturalist-led presentations.

Four self-paced discovery stations were set up in the center, including stops to learn about bison, moose, pronghorns, and bighorn sheep.

Each station featured hands-on materials such as pelts, skulls, antlers, and horns and offered a

related children’s art project. A total of 253 visits were made to the various displays.



Refuge volunteer Mike Pfeil (far right) staffs a wildlife viewing station during February’s “Wild About Wildlife” event.



Winter naturalist Mark Abetz, center, leads a snowshoe hike to look for signs of wildlife.

Special guest Suzan Moulton, Executive Director of the National Bighorn Sheep Interpretive Center in Dubois, Wyoming, staffed one of the discovery stations. She brought with her an educational trunk of hands-on materials related to Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, a species regularly seen on Miller Butte by Refuge visitors during the winter months. “Though elk are the big draw on the Refuge in winter, people are also surprised and delighted to be able to see bighorn sheep within an easy drive of the visitor center,” Moulton said.

Two Refuge volunteers were available near the upper viewing deck to informally visit with people about wildlife commonly seen in the vicinity of the visitor center. They served refreshments and offered binoculars and a spotting scope to anyone interested in scanning the grounds for bird or mammal sightings. The Refuge’s sleigh

ride program, which runs from mid-December through early April, gave visitors a chance to photograph and enjoy close-up views of the wintering elk herd.

Several scheduled presentations were also offered as part of the day’s activities. Naturalist Mark Abetz repeated a slideshow and

talk on mountain lions throughout the day and led two snowshoe hikes on the visitor center lawn to look for signs of wildlife and discover how animals move through deep snow in the winter. To serve a younger audience, naturalist Mandy Crane held a morning story hour with the children’s book *Antlers Forever*.

In January, the Refuge Visitor Services staff organized and held a special event focusing on trumpeter swans, birds which were once fairly common throughout most of the northern U.S. and Canada. Market hunting and the millinery trade rapidly depleted nesting populations during the 19th century, leading to what was widely believed to be an extinction of the species by the late 1800s. However, a small nonmigratory population survived in the mountain valleys of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with other government and private organizations, played and continue to play an important role



Nongame biologist Susan Patla from the Wyoming Game & Fish Department was a featured speaker at January’s “Ko-hoh-Restoring the Trumpeter Swans” program.



Trumpeter swan photo courtesy of Mark Gocke, Wyoming Game and Fish Department

in restoring the birds to their native ranges. The National Elk Refuge is home to a year-round population of the elegant birds.

Susan Patla, a Nongame Biologist with the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, and Drew Reed, Executive Director of the Wyoming Wetlands Society and Trumpeter Swan Fund, were the featured speakers for the January event, leading presentations and discussions on management and monitoring of trumpeter swan populations in Wyoming and neighboring Rocky Mountain states. Both sessions were well received and led to lengthy question and answer periods. Additionally, ten people attending the event were excited by possible volunteer

opportunities and left their contact information to assist with a trumpeter swan round-up later this year.

To wrap up the winter naturalist series, the visitor center will host a final special event on March 29 focusing on raptors. The day's events will feature live birds from the Teton Raptor Center, a non-profit organization whose mission includes taking in injured, ill and orphaned birds of prey and providing veterinary care and rehabilitation in an effort to return the birds to the wild. More information on the upcoming raptor program will be posted at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/JacksonHoleVisitorCenter.htm



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 16, 2011 11-04

PO Box 510
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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE TO OFFER RAPTOR PROGRAM AT VISITOR CENTER

The National Elk Refuge's winter naturalist series of special events at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center will wrap up on Tuesday, March 29 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM with activities focusing on birds of prey. The day's events will feature live birds from the Teton Raptor Center, a non-profit organization whose mission includes taking in injured, ill and orphaned birds of prey and providing veterinary care and rehabilitation in an effort to return the birds to the wild.

Several craft stations will be set up in the visitor center throughout the day, giving participants a chance to draw their favorite bird of prey, construct a raptor mask, or make a lunch bag eagle. Visitors can also compare their "wingspan" to that of hawks, eagles, and other birds at a discovery station on the center's upper deck. Scheduled presentations include the Teton Raptor Center live bird program at 1:00 and 2:00 PM, giving the audience an up-close learning adventure focusing on the traits of raptors and a chance to meet Owly (Great Horned Owl) and Ruby (Red-tailed Hawk). At 12:30 and 3:15 PM, staff will offer to children of all ages a story reading of the book *Peregrine's Sky*, a beautifully illustrated book that highlights the life of a peregrine falcon. Naturalists will provide an opportunity to dissect an owl pellet at 12:00 and 3:00 PM in order to teach participants more about the feeding habits of owls.

Special guest artist Kathryn Mapes Turner will be on hand in the afternoon to sketch the live raptors on site and visit with guests about her work. To learn more about Turner's work, her ties to the Jackson Hole valley, and a list of her awards and collections, visit www.turnerfineart.com/portfolio/about.

For more information on the March 29 event or a complete schedule for the day, please call 307.734.9378 or visit the visitor center's web page at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/JacksonHoleVisitorCenter.htm

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www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



Press Release

From: Teton County / Jackson Hole Community Pathways

Date: March 22, 2011

Re: North 89 Pathway Project Seasonal Closure

Contact: Brian Schilling, Town of Jackson/Teton County Pathways Coordinator

bschilling@ci.jackson.wy.us

(307) 732-8573

The seasonal closure of the North 89 Pathway between the Town of Jackson and Grand Teton National Park will be in effect through April 30. The pathway, which is still under construction, is subject to an annual closure between October 1 and April 30 in order to reduce impacts to migrating and wintering elk and other wildlife on the National Elk Refuge.

The closure is a condition of the agreement between Teton County and the National Elk Refuge which grants permission to Teton County to construct and operate the pathway on US Fish and Wildlife Service property. While the closure itself is authorized by Federal Law, Teton County will assist with enforcement and reporting. Violators are subject to fines and possible Federal prosecution.

Brian Schilling, Pathways Coordinator for Teton County said "The closure is really in place to limit the impacts of human presence on the pathway to wintering wildlife on the Elk Refuge. The spring closure is critical to reducing stress to animals during a time when they're recovering from a long winter."

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin stated, "The Pathway will provide an exciting opportunity for the public to enjoy the beauty of the National Elk Refuge and observe much of the wildlife that makes Jackson Hole so special. The seasonal closure ensures wildlife, especially elk and nesting waterfowl, are not disturbed during a very sensitive time of the year."

Teton County staff has worked with the National Elk Refuge to develop a management plan that informs the public about the closure. Signs and barriers have been installed at access points along the pathway, and specific outreach will be done with key user groups.

Teton County has completed the majority of the construction work on Phase I, which includes the 4.3-mile segment between the Town of Jackson at Flat Creek and the Grand Teton National Park turnout above the Fish Hatchery. Phases II and III include the underpass to the National Museum of Wildlife Art, the pathway extension to the southern boundary of Grand Teton National Park, and the separate pathway bridge across the Gros Ventre River. Work on the bridge started in early March, and the County will complete their construction by the end of September. Grand Teton National Park, which will construct the pathway segment between the Gros Ventre River and Moose Junction, plans to begin construction later this summer and complete their project by the end of the year.

Schilling added, “The North 89 Pathway is going to be one of the jewels of the Teton County pathway system, and the opportunity to ride from the Town of Jackson all the way to Jenny Lake on a separated pathway is something that people will come to Jackson specifically to experience. We need to make sure that the community is very aware that violating the seasonal closure could actually jeopardize our right to have the pathway at all.”

Questions may be directed to Brian Schilling, Pathways Coordinator for the Town of Jackson, at (307) 732-8573 or bschilling@ci.jackson.wy.us.

National Elk Refuge News – March 30, 2011

Hundreds Attend Refuge Raptor Day Programs



A captivated audience watches as Ruby takes center stage.



Owly and Gus wait patiently for their turn to wow the crowd. Photos courtesy of Refuge volunteer Bud Hamm

It was standing room only for most of the activities at the National Elk Refuge's Raptor Day this week, as many local residents came out to enjoy the fourth and final free family event of the winter season at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center.

The event was offered during the Teton County School District's spring break, a time of year that often falls within a shoulder season that sees slower visitation. "We took a gamble," Public Use Supervisor Lori Iverson explained. "We figured we'd either have a low turnout because so many people were out of town, or our numbers would soar because it gave the families that stayed here a great spring break diversion. We're delighted it was the latter."

Several craft stations were set up throughout the visitor center, giving participants a chance to create an art project to take home as a keepsake from the day. Raptor masks were the most popular craft project, filling the center with youngsters donning their newly-constructed head gear.

Carolyn Hawxhurst, a Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce employee who works at the interagency center, led a story reading of Consie Powell's *Peregrine's Sky*, a beautifully illustrated book that highlights the life of a peregrine falcon. "I envisioned maybe a dozen children showing up for the story hour," Hawxhurst said with a laugh, "but we counted 85. It was a little different than sitting on a couch reading to a couple of

grandchildren!"

The highlight of the day was a visit by three live birds from the Teton Raptor Center, a non-profit organization whose mission includes taking in injured, ill, and orphaned birds of prey and providing veterinary care and rehabilitation in an effort to return the birds to the wild. The featured birds included:

- Gus, a male Golden Eagle approximately five years old. Gus was found by a rancher who noticed the eagle had not fledged as soon as he should have. Either because of an injury when he was very young or because of a birth defect, Gus has a permanent impairment to his right wing and has never been able to fly even a few feet, though he impresses



Guest artist Kathryn Turner Mapes sketches during the live bird presentation.



Two budding artists show off their creations after visiting one of the art stations.

crowds with his wingspan of over 5 feet.

- Ruby, a female Red-Tailed Hawk that was transferred to the Teton Raptor Center from a facility in California after she was struck by a vehicle. Ruby sustained head injuries in the collision, causing her to lose most of her eyesight.
- Owly, a female Great Horned Owl that hatched in 2004. Owly was brought in that same year after being struck by a vehicle and breaking her wing, leaving her with an injury that keeps her wing from properly functioning.

In honor of Owly's visit, Refuge staff helped 125 children dissect 35 owl pellets and identify the contents to learn more about the feeding habits of the nocturnal birds. "It was treasure hunting at its best," explained winter naturalist Justin Walters, who manned the station. Walters also constructed and painted a wooden display that allowed participants to

compare their "wingspan" to that of several birds commonly seen on the Refuge.

Winter programming on the National Elk Refuge concludes on Saturday, April 2, including daily

interpretive talks, naturalist-led wildlife excursions, and the popular horse-drawn rides that take visitors out onto the Refuge for close up views of wintering elk and other wildlife.





U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 14, 2011 11-05

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

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307.733.9212, ext. 6

NATIONAL ELK REFUGE TO END SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING FOR THE SEASON

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin has announced that supplemental feeding of elk and bison during the 2011 season will end on Friday, April 15. Depending on the severity of the winter, snow conditions, and elk behavior, the supplemental feeding program end date can vary from the third week of March through the third week of April; the average end date is April 4.

This year's feeding season began on January 6, or 23 days earlier than average. An above-average snowfall and relatively high numbers of elk and bison led to a 100-day feed season this year, or 33 days longer than an average year. Estimates of animals on feed are recorded daily by staff, but a formal, thorough classification count is conducted each year in cooperation with the Wyoming Game & Fish Department. This year, 7,746 elk and 883 bison were recorded on feed during the Refuge count in February. The last season the Refuge fed beyond 90 days was in 2008, when 7,390 elk and 838 bison were fed a total of 98 days through April 20. "This season is notable because of the total numbers of days fed and the fact that we fed two full weeks into April," Kallin explained. Supplemental feed data indicates this is the second longest feeding season on record.

The decision to end the program for the year results from a joint recommendation between the Wyoming Game & Fish Department and the National Elk Refuge. Wildlife managers consider both spring conditions and animal behavior to determine when rations can be gradually reduced and supplemental feeding is no longer needed. Both elk and bison have been ranging more widely this spring to take advantage of newly-emerging green grasses and residual forage that has been exposed by melting snow. Snow pack at the lower elevations on the Refuge has diminished, and south facing areas have seen significant "green-up," a term which refers to the transition from winter dormancy to active spring growth.

As animals begin migrating to summer ranges, motorists, pedestrians, and other roadway users are reminded to be especially careful of wildlife movements, particularly at times of low-light levels such as dusk and dawn. Motorists are reminded to adhere to the posted speed limit and consider decreasing speeds in areas where wildlife is commonly seen. Travelers should be prepared to stop suddenly for wildlife on the roads. The public is also reminded that the new section of multi-use pathway from the Town of Jackson north to Fish Hatchery Hill, approximately 4 miles long, is closed to all use through April 30.

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www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge

INTERAGENCY NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge
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USDA Forest Service
Bridger Teton National Forest
PO Box 1888
Jackson, Wyoming 83001
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 25, 2011

CRITICAL WINTER RANGE CLOSURE TO BE EXTENDED FROM APRIL 30 THROUGH MAY 15

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin and Bridger-Teton National Forest Supervisor Jacqueline Buchanan announce the extension of a winter range closure through May 15 for the Curtis Canyon and Flat Creek Roads and special Forest winter travel restrictions. The Refuge Road will remain closed to public travel beyond the county maintained line until Monday, May 16 at 8:00 AM, restricting access to the Curtis Canyon and Flat Creek Roads and the adjoining National Forest. These roads, along with critical winter range areas on the Bridger-Teton National Forest, are annually posted as closed from December 1 through April 30 to protect wintering wildlife. However, current snowpack and conditions in summer range areas have led to an emergency special order to extend the closure from April 30 through May 15.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife personnel remind area visitors and residents that beginning May 16, access to the Bridger-Teton National Forest through the National Elk Refuge is restricted to public roads only; all off-road travel is prohibited, including hiking, biking or other recreational activities. Additionally, it is illegal to remove antlers from the National Elk Refuge. Persons accessing the National Forest after the May 16 opening to look for elk antlers are responsible for knowing and respecting the boundaries to avoid violating Federal regulations. Regulations for accessing the Bridger-Teton National Forest through the National Elk Refuge on May 16 can be found at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/Documents/05_01_11antlers.pdf

Persons interested in accessing Bridger-Teton National Forest lands other than through the National Elk Refuge should contact 307.739.5500 for opening times and restrictions. Additional information about the extended winter closures and special order maps can be found at www.fs.fed.us/r4/btnf

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Press Release

From: Teton County / Jackson Hole Community Pathways

Date: April 26, 2011

Re: North 89 Pathway Season Opening and Construction Schedule

Contact: Brian Schilling, Town of Jackson/Teton County Pathways Coordinator

bschilling@ci.jackson.wy.us

(307) 732-8573

The North 89 Pathway seasonal use closure ends on Sunday May 1st and the completed sections of the pathway will be open to public use. Additionally, construction on additional segments of the North 89 pathway will be starting on May 2nd and continuing through spring and summer. Pathway users should expect short detours to avoid construction areas, and motorists should expect traffic control regulations and speed reductions to be in place between the Town of Jackson and Moose Junction through October.

Phase I of the North 89 Pathway (the 4.3-mile section between the Town of Jackson and Grand Teton National Park south boundary turnout above the Fish Hatchery) will be opened to public use on Sunday, May 1st, giving bicyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized users the opportunity to travel off the busy highway along the National Elk Refuge. Users should be aware that a portion of the pathway just south of the Fish Hatchery Road is still under construction and will be closed for the immediate future. Construction crews will be working to complete a section of retaining wall and guardrail, and a detour around the construction area will briefly divert pathway users through the vehicle turnout and onto the highway shoulder for approximately 700 feet. Pathway users are expected to use caution and obey all closure signs and instructions from work crews when travelling through construction areas.

Construction on the remainder of the pathway project, including the underpass connecting the pathway to the National Museum of Wildlife Art and the 1.4-mile

pathway section from the Grand Teton south boundary turnout to the Gros Ventre River will start May 2nd and continue through the spring and summer, with final completion of the Teton County project by the end of September. Until the completion of the underpass in late May, a temporary detour will be necessary to route pathway users around the construction area.

The Phase III construction of the Gros Ventre River Bridge has already started with installation of the bridge abutments and piers during March and April to take advantage of the pre-runoff river levels. Placement of the bridge structure is scheduled for late August, following completion of the Phase II pathway section.

Additionally, later this summer Grand Teton National Park will be constructing approximately 6 miles of pathway between the Gros Ventre River and Moose Junction to connect the Teton County system to the GTNP system. Construction of the Grand Teton National Park pathway project is expected to run through at least the middle of October.

The construction crews will be implementing traffic control measures, including a speed reduction from 55 mph to 45 mph between the Town of Jackson and Moose Junction through the entire summer for the duration of both the Teton County and Grand Teton projects. Two-way traffic should be maintained at all times and underpass and bridge crews will work double shifts to minimize the overall length of the impact to motorists.

Questions may be directed to Brian Schilling, Pathways Coordinator for the Town of Jackson, at (307) 732-8573 or bschilling@ci.jackson.wy.us.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Projects

National Elk Refuge — April 29, 2011



Three American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects on the National Elk Refuge that were under construction last year will soon be up and running, including two public use projects and an expansion of the Refuge's irrigation system.

Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center Exhibits

The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center has been a hub of activity for the past two weeks, as 26 new permanent

exhibits have been installed inside the center. The updated displays replace a collection of dated panels that lacked a cohesive look. The new exhibits feature theme-based interpretive material that introduces visitors to Federal lands within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and emphasizes partnerships in wildlife management within the Greater Yellowstone Area.

The exhibits were funded primarily through \$241,200 in ARRA funding in 2009. Formations, Inc., a Portland-based firm specializing in interpretive exhibits and thematic

interiors, was awarded the contract and worked with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service personnel from the National Elk Refuge and Region 6 Education & Visitor Services Division throughout the various stages of the project. After extensive discussions, design work, and budget reviews, a final design plan was completed in September 2010, with fabrication underway by October. The exhibits were approved in early April 2011 and arrived in Jackson for installation on April 15. Local contractors were hired to assist with the preparation and installation of the exhibits.



Doug Vipperman from Formations, Inc. breathes a sigh of relief that the animals in the diorama are not real as he adds ground cover to the expanded exhibit.

In addition to enhancing the interpretive experience, the project will greatly improve accessibility for visitors of all abilities. Tactile, audio, and Braille elements take the displays beyond base, or universal, design standards. “This project promotes a wonderful opportunity to learn through a full range of universal design and accessibility elements woven into the exhibit storytelling,” explained Fred Paris, Chief Operating Officer at Formations, Inc.

Many of the displays include tactile pieces such as hides, tracks, and even small scale models of the animals in both a large diorama and an outdoor sculpture. A tactile wayfinding map near the entrance to the building orients visitors to the facility, while a raised and labeled map of the Greater

The pathway has a seasonal closure to mitigate for wintering and migrating wildlife.

Yellowstone Area provides an overview of the region. Audio tours are in development and will be available in September. The primary audio tour will give a summary of the information in the exhibits; an audio description option will include additional narration that describes the displays, offers a direct reading of the panel text, and helps with wayfinding.

The exhibits include messages to

inspire families and other visitors to learn more about the resources, encourage them to spend time outdoors, and help them identify ways they can be good stewards of their public lands.

Last year, the Visitor Center recorded a total visitation of approximately 320,000 people.

North Highway 89 Pathway Project

The first phase of the North Highway 89 multi-use pathway will open to the public on Sunday, May 1, giving pedestrians and non-motorized users a travel option on the east side of Highway 89 between the Town of Jackson and the Grand Teton National Park south boundary turnout.

One area of the Phase I section, located just south of the Jackson National Fish Hatchery, will remain under construction for several weeks while crews finish work on a retaining wall and install guard rails. A short detour around the construction area will briefly divert pathway users through a highway



turnout and onto the shoulder of the road.

Crews are scheduled to begin work on Monday, May 2 to build a highway underpass that connects Phase 1 of the pathway to the National Museum of Wildlife Art, located on the west side of Highway 89. Until the completion of the underpass in late May, a temporary detour will be necessary to route pathway users around the underpass construction area. Two-way traffic for motorized vehicles on the highway is expected to be maintained during the underpass construction, but speed reductions will be in effect on North 89 between Jackson and Moose Junction for the remainder of the summer as Teton County and Grand Teton National Park complete various construction projects.

Work on Phase II of the North Highway 89 project is expected to get underway in mid-May and be completed by the end of September. This construction phase will continue the pathway north from the Grand Teton National Park south boundary turnout to the Gros Ventre River, joining the approved Grand Teton National Park pathway system currently under design and scheduled for construction later this summer.

Irrigation Expansion Project

An Irrigation Expansion Project to improve the production and management of winter forage for elk and bison populations is moving closer to completion as Refuge staff

work through final preparations to begin fully utilizing the system in early June.

Within the next few weeks, a crew will finish construction on portions of the underground pipeline system along with finalizing procedures needed to ready the system. Refuge staff expect they will need approximately one to two weeks after opening the system for the nearly 50 miles of pipeline to fill with water before the system can be fully operational for the first time. “The first full scale use of the system will be critical,” Refuge Manager Steve Kallin explained. “We need to vent the air and not put too much pressure on the pipeline when we fill it.” The Refuge tested a small portion of the system last fall on the south end of the Refuge after much of the pipeline installation was completed, but the K-Line system has not been completely filled with water and opened to large-scale irrigation.

In mid-May, representatives from the K-Line company will travel to the Refuge to train staff on the Global Positioning System (GPS) component of the system. The satellite system will give operators

real-time information on the location of the portable K-Lines, which can be conveniently moved from one irrigation area to another through the use of a utility terrain vehicle (UTV). The system will also communicate to operators where to pick up and drop off the lines in pre-programmed irrigation zones.

The GPS information can also be downloaded and used by the Refuge’s biologist when creating annual forage reports. The data can help determine the needs of individual grass species and help with overall forage production.

The Irrigation Expansion Project was one of the largest ARRA habitat enhancement projects in the nation for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The expansion of the Refuge’s previous irrigation methods, which primarily relied on flood irrigation, is a strategy to benefit the long term health of wintering wildlife by reducing reliance on supplemental feeding and reducing the risk of disease transmission by dispersing concentrations of bison and elk.

Refuge staff tested a portion of the new irrigation system on the south end of the Refuge last August.





U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 22, 2011 11-07

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

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44TH ANNUAL ANTLER AUCTION HELD IN JACKSON, WYOMING

The 44th annual Boy Scout Elk Antler Auction was held in Jackson, Wyoming on Saturday, May 21, the premier ElkFest weekend event that showcases shed antlers collected from the National Elk Refuge. The antler auction is held each year on the Saturday before Memorial Day weekend.

This year, 13,104 pounds of antlers were sold at the auction, far exceeding the 10-year average of 7,892 pounds. Refuge officials attribute the significantly larger quantity of antlers to the late spring and lingering snow in surrounding areas which delayed the migration of elk from the Refuge and kept them concentrated at the lower elevations. During the last two weeks of April, roughly 5,200 elk remained on the south end of the Refuge, compared to 2,000 elk during the same time last year. "Many of the elk shed their antlers before they left the Refuge this year," explained Refuge Spokesperson Lori Iverson. "We even collected a fair number of spike antlers this spring, which are generally the last to shed." Larger bulls begin dropping their antlers in early March, with smaller sets shedding later in April and on into early May.

Saturday's sale brought in a total of \$111,305, or more than \$37,000 above the average over the last 10 years. Bidders paid an average of \$8.29 per pound at Saturday's auction, higher than the \$8.12 average in 2010 but still below the 10-year average of \$9.45. A non-typical 1x6 elk skull weighing 24 pounds brought in \$54.00 per pound, making it the highest per pound bid of the day. A photo of the non-typical skull, along with a listing of each lot sold and its final purchase price, can be found at <http://elkfest.org/auction2011/antlerlist.htm>.

The majority of proceeds from the auction (80%) are donated to the National Elk Refuge, which maintains approximately 25,000 acres as winter range for the Jackson Elk Herd. The funding is used for habitat enhancement projects on the Refuge such as seeding, irrigating, and purchasing necessary equipment to carry out the work. The remaining 20% of the proceeds from the auction goes to the Jackson District Scouts to pay for their annual dues and expenses. Last year, the Scouts and their leaders volunteered 2,075 hours to prepare for and conduct the sale.

Next year's antler auction is set for Saturday, May 19. 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.

– FWS –

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 24, 2011 11-08

PO Box 510
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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE ANNOUNCES SUMMER SCHEDULE OF FACILITIES

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced today the schedule changes for public facilities on the National Elk Refuge for the 2011 summer season.

The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 North Cache Street in Jackson, Wyoming, will expand its hours of operation to 8:00 AM through 7:00 PM beginning Friday, May 27. The popular multi-agency center is staffed by personnel from the National Elk Refuge, Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Grand Teton National Park, and the Grand Teton Association, offering a convenient way to gather a wealth of visitor information. The facility is a source for maps, brochures, permits, and Federal lands passes, and includes an extensive bookstore. New exhibits, funded through the American's Recovery and Reinvestment Act, were installed in the Visitor Center in early May, replacing a collection of dated panels that lacked a coordinated look. The new theme-based interpretive exhibits introduce visitors to Federal lands within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and emphasize partnerships in wildlife management.

Roving naturalists will be available throughout the season on the Visitor Center's upper viewing deck to assist visitors in learning more about the National Elk Refuge, surrounding lands, and area wildlife. A spotting scope, binoculars, and field guides will be available, giving visitors an opportunity to observe and identify many nearby birds and wildlife. Other hands-on activities and short talks will be offered throughout the summer. An updated list of scheduled programs will be posted throughout the season at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/JacksonHoleVisitorCenter.htm.

The historic Miller House, located approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of the National Elk Refuge entrance on East Broadway Street in Jackson, will open for the season on Tuesday, May 31. The charming homestead will be open from 10:00 AM through 4:00 PM daily, including weekends, through Labor Day. The Miller Ranch represents the coming together of settlement, ranching, and conservation in the Jackson Hole valley. The home site and surrounding land was the first piece of property purchased for the creation of the National Elk Refuge, established in 1912. Summer naturalists will be on duty daily to talk about the history of the Refuge and the key role the Miller Ranch played in local conservation efforts. The Grand Teton Association operates a small sales outlet at the Miller House, carrying items representative of the early 20th century. Entrance to the Miller House is free of charge.

For additional information about activities or services at the National Elk Refuge, please call the Administrative Offices at 307.733.9212 or visit www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge

National Elk Refuge News – June 3, 2011

Refuge Participates in Unique Recycling Program



Refuge volunteers Steve and Sara Miller receive instructions from Margaret Wilson, a Park Planner from Grand Teton National Park.

Recycling at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center stepped up to a new level this week as the National Elk Refuge joined other public and private organizations to participate in a new program that recycles a specialized item common in bear country.

Many visitors purchase and carry bear-deterrent pepper spray while in the Jackson area, an effective and often recommended precaution for people hiking or recreating in areas where bears are often seen. Area hikers can encounter black bears on trails or in developed sites such as campgrounds and lake shores.

In the last few years, there has been an increase in the number of frontcountry grizzly bear sightings as their range has expanded further south, including locations in close proximity to visitor service areas. As a result, many travelers purchase bear spray but leave it behind when departing the area, unable to take the cylinders on commercial flights or no longer having a need for the deterrent.

In 2008, Yellowstone National Park and the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality agreed on the need for a recycling program to address the environmental concern

regarding the number of canisters ending up in landfills. A viable solution became a reality when three Montana State University engineering students designed a machine that would safely remove any remaining pepper oil and propellant from a bear spray cylinder, crush the container, and prepare it for recycling as high-quality aluminum. After the students' prototype was approved and funding was secured, a Montana-based firm used the research and principles to develop the first recycling machine.

The National Elk Refuge will serve



In 2009, Mark Gocke from the Wyoming Game & Fish Department led a training for Visitor Center staff on how to properly use a can of pepper spray. Participants in the training each had an opportunity to discharge an inert can of spray. The year, staff will be able to give visitors an option for recycling the product once they no longer have a need for its use.

as one of the many convenient collection sites located throughout the area. Visitor Center staff will receive training on how to safely collect and store the containers to reduce the chances of an accidental discharge.

Neighboring Grand Teton National Park will take the lead on regularly collecting the canisters from the Visitor Center and transporting them to the recycling unit located in Yellowstone National Park.

“Because of the Refuge’s proximity to an airport that serves much of the visiting public, we hope to be an effective partner in the program,” explained Refuge Manager Steve Kallin, who also serves as the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee’s Chairperson.

More information on the recycling program can be found at <http://www.bearsprayrecycling.info>.

National Elk Refuge News – June 16, 2011

Refuge Programs Receive National Award



Two National Elk Refuge programs received national recognition this week by being selected for the 2011 Beacon Award from the American Recreation Coalition. The award recognizes outstanding efforts by federal agencies and partners in using technology to improve public recreation experiences and federal recreation program management.

Nominations and selections were judged against the following award criteria:

- Innovative use of technology for visitor services or recreation management;
- Use of partnerships with for-profit and nonprofit organizations;
- Efforts to share news of creative solutions within the agency; and
- Community support for the work of this initiative.

Recipients were given the award during Great Outdoors Week on Monday, June 13, at a ceremony on the patio of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Whitten Building in Washington, DC. They included:

- Lake Okeechobee Visitor Center Rehabilitation Project, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Cleveland and Angeles National Forests Apply Robert Bateman's Get to Know Your Wild Neighbors Program, U.S. Forest Service
- Web Enhancements of Delivery USFS Recreation, U.S. Forest Service
- "Journals & JPGs: Seasons on the (National Elk) Refuge" and "Refuge Connections," U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge Visitor Enjoyment Initiative, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Youth Ambassador Program at New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, National Park Service

The National Elk Refuge "Journals and JPGs" program utilizes technology to unleash student creativity and understanding of the Refuge. Art, science, writing, and digital photography are used to stimulate the interest of Teton County School District second-grade students. The concept of an ecosystem comes alive through seasonal visits and observations.



Lori Iverson, Supervisory Outdoor Recreation Planner for the National Elk Refuge, is flanked by Mike Molino, Board Member for the American Recreation Coalition (left), and Jim Kurth, Acting Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System (right).

The result is a lasting connection with local natural resources. A second program, "Refuge Connections," specifically targets first-generation Latinos, a rapidly growing segment of the community. Employing field guides, digital cameras, naturalist and computers, Teton County School District English Language Learner (ELL) students convert time in the field observing the National Elk Refuge into presentations utilizing photos and recorded sounds. Information on the programs, which involve multiple community partners, has been featured in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's national *Refuge Update* publication.

A news release about the 2011 Beacon Award can be found at <http://www.funoutdoors.com/>



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 27, 2011 11-09

PO Box 510
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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE TO HOST GRAND TETON MUSIC FESTIVAL PERFORMANCES

The National Elk Refuge has paired up with the Grand Teton Music Festival to join the organization's residency program and offer short programs of music inspired by nature. The Festival's resident Brass Quintet, Axiom Brass, will play on the lawn of the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson from 3:00 PM to 3:30 PM on July 1, July 8, July 15, and July 29. The four Friday afternoon performances are open to the public and are free of charge.

Music is one way people connect with public lands, using it and other arts as a means to express emotions experienced while in a natural setting. "Sounds in nature have inspired artists for hundreds of years," notes Outdoor Recreation Planner Lori Iverson. "The residency program compliments new displays in the Visitor Center that encourage people to use their senses when out in nature, including exploring the living world through sound. When people take photographs, keep journals, or compose music based on an outdoor experience, it transforms it into something personal and memorable."

Roving naturalists will be available on the Visitor Center's upper viewing deck prior to the performance to assist visitors in learning more about the National Elk Refuge, surrounding lands, and area wildlife. A spotting scope, binoculars, and field guides will be available, giving visitors an opportunity to observe and identify nearby birds and wildlife. Naturalists offer informal interpretive talks and information from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM daily.

For additional information about activities or services at the National Elk Refuge, please call the Administrative Offices at 307.733.9212 or visit www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge

National Elk Refuge News – July 8, 2011

Camp Jackson Visits the Miller House



Camp Jackson Adventurers pose with copies of a souvenir book they received after spending an afternoon on the National Elk Refuge learning about homesteading.

The National Elk Refuge hosted four groups from the Teton County Parks & Recreation Department's Camp Jackson last week, giving the local children an opportunity to visit the historic Miller House and learn about history and homesteading in the Jackson Hole Valley.

The "Wooly Buggers" and "Rock Hoppers," who will be in first and second grade respectively, gained some basic information about the National Elk Refuge on their visit, including how long ago the Refuge was established and its purpose.

Each student received a copy of the National Wildlife Refuge System coloring book and used it as a basis to talk about habitat and the kinds of animals that might be protected on a Refuge. They colored in the large blue goose near the front of the coloring book after learning about the importance of the symbol, then looked for the Refuge sign with the same emblem as they drove away after their visit.

The "Explorers" and "Adventurers" spent a longer day on the Refuge, focusing on homesteaders. The

fourth and fifth graders used the setting of the Miller House to create a list of personal belongings they would have taken if their family had moved from the eastern United States to Wyoming in the early 1900s. The answers ranged widely and included items such as a pillow, a treasured stuffed animal, books to read, an extra pair of pants, and a cheesecake.

Their adventure moved from the Miller House to the old site of the Flat Creek School, where the children learned about schooling

Students look at a photograph of what a typical area homestead looked like, noting why the Miller House was considered such a luxury home for its time.

during the turn of the century. When the topic of recess came up, the students brainstormed what activities may have been popular at a time when playground equipment didn't exist. Using jump ropes and their imaginations, the students created jump rope jingles that incorporated information they had learned about the Refuge. "It was a fun activity," said Refuge volunteer Patsy Dicken, who helped with the program. "Making up a rhyme was a great way for them to share the highlights of what they had learned that day."

At the end of the day, each child was able to choose a copy of *Jenny of the Tetons* or *The Legend of Jimmy Spoon* as a souvenir of their visit. Both stories are young adult historical fiction novels by Kristiana Gregory and are sold by the Grand Teton Association, which serves as the Refuge's cooperating association. The books were inscribed with a personal note, which read "Happy summer reading from the staff at the National Elk Refuge."

While on a tour of the Miller House, students study a typewriter model common in the late 1920s. "Is this what a computer used to be?" one of the children asked.





U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 11, 2011 11-10

PO Box 510
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SPECIAL PROGRAMS FILL UP THE MONTH OF JULY AT THE NATIONAL ELK REFUGE

A number of special programs will be offered at the National Elk Refuge later this month, providing an exciting variety of free demonstrations and activities for persons of all ages. The event will be held at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

On **Monday, July 18**, at 10:00 AM, Master Falconer Jason Jones will lead an up-close learning adventure as he brings live birds to the Visitor Center lawn for a presentation on birds of prey. Jones is Program Director at the Teton Raptor Center, a non-profit organization that takes in injured, ill, and orphaned birds of prey and returns them to the wild after providing veterinary care and rehabilitation. Jones and his staff will introduce several live raptors and discuss their special skills and adaptations.

National Elk Refuge Facilities Maintenance Specialist will give a Search & Rescue demonstration at 11:00 AM on **Tuesday, July 19** with the help of her search dog, Roscoe. Soliday and Roscoe volunteer with the Wyoming K-9 Search and Rescue program, a non-profit organization committed to training competent search dog teams and assisting local, state, and federal authorities in search and rescue operations. Roscoe, a 6 year-old golden retriever, is certified in Level 3 tracking, Human Remains Detection, buildings, shore and open water, avalanche, evidence, and wilderness work. Soliday will first lead a brief discussion focusing on the importance of staying in one place when lost, followed by a series of live search demonstrations with Roscoe.

On **Thursday evening, July 21**, the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance will host a birding walk and potluck from 6:30 to 8:30 PM on the Visitor Center lawn. Retired Bridger-Teton recreation and wilderness staffer Susan Marsh will lead a walk for anyone interested in observing or learning about local birds. Participants are encouraged to bring an appetizer to share at a hors d'oeuvre potluck that will precede the walk. For more information on the event, please call the Conservation Alliance at 307.733.9417. Reservations are not required.

Friday, July 22, marks the final performance of the Grand Teton Music Festival's Brass Quintet at the Visitor Center this season from 3:00 to 3:30 PM. The group, Axiom Brass, has offered 30-minute performances each Friday earlier this month, allowing visitors to enjoy music in the natural setting of the Visitor Center lawn. The Grand Teton Music Festival's "Music in Nature" outreach program has brought free performances this month to the National Elk Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, Teton Village, and the Jackson Town Square.

On **Tuesday, July 26**, the National Elk Refuge will hold a "Just For the Birds" event from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM, featuring a number of demonstration areas where participants can learn general birding information and identification tips, play games, take a birding walk, dissect an owl pellet, make and decorate a cardboard



birdhouse (while supplies last), and learn about bird adaptations through an interactive activity focusing on beaks. The family-friendly event is designed around informal stations that allow participants to spend as much time as they would like on the various activities.

For information on any of the special events, please call the National Elk Refuge Administrative Offices at 307.733.9212, or visit the Visitor Center web link at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/JacksonHoleVisitorCenter.htm.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 2, 2011 11-11

PO Box 510
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PUBLIC CELEBRATION PLANNED AT THE NATIONAL ELK REFUGE ON AUGUST 13

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin, along with the Board of the Grand Teton Association, invites the public to a celebration on Saturday, August 13 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM when the nonprofit association officially donates the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center to the National Elk Refuge. Affectionately known as the "grass roof building," the Visitor Center is located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

The Visitor Center was formerly owned by the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WDOT) and occupied by the Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce. In addition to providing Chamber of Commerce services and administrative offices, the facility also served as a State Information Center for the Wyoming Division of Tourism. Because the Visitor Center is located on Refuge lands, the Chamber of Commerce was later advised they could no longer continue to use the space for administrative offices due to compatibility and right-of-way issues from operating on federal property. However, the Chamber of Commerce continued to provide information desk personnel, along with staff from the National Elk Refuge and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

When WYDOT built a new office complex south of Jackson, they offered the National Elk Refuge the building in 1995 for \$1,000,000 to be used as a visitor services and wildlife education facility. Unable to obtain appropriated funds for the purchase of the building, and facing the prospect of the building's removal, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service approached the Grand Teton Association, then known as the Grand Teton Natural History Association, to purchase the building in partnership with the Refuge.

The Grand Teton Association, founded in 1937, operates as a cooperating association to provide informational materials to be sold to visitors on federal lands. The Association had partnered with the National Elk Refuge from 1980 to 1994 by operating a winter sales outlet in conjunction with the sleigh ride operation. The Association, which had a long-standing and successful business practice within Grand Teton National Park, negotiated a purchase price of \$800,000 in 1997 to procure the building with a written expressed intent to donate the building to the National Elk Refuge when the mortgage was paid. The Association obligated \$740,000 for the purchase; additional financial support came from the National Elk Refuge, the Bridger-Teton National Forest, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation for the remaining \$60,000, as well as contributions to fund exhibits.

Purchases made from association bookstores support the educational, interpretive, and scientific programs of their federal partners. It was from sales proceeds at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center that the Grand Teton Association was able to pay off the building at an accelerated rate by July 2011. The ceremony on August 13th will include a symbolic "mortgage tearing" to celebrate the unique and significant contribution of the Association.

The 10:00 AM ceremony will be accompanied by a number of activities throughout the day. The schedule includes:

- 9:00 am – A naturalist-led birding walk will be offered on the grounds of the Visitor Center. Binoculars will be provided for the casual walk to view waterfowl, songbirds, and other wildlife in the area.
- 9:30 AM – Friends of Pathways will provide an educational booth at the south end of the new Highway 89 multi-use pathway to provide education about their organization and the Jackson Hole pathway system.
- 10:00 AM – Donation ceremony, including speakers from each of the Visitor Center participating organizations and the official “tearing” of the mortgage.
- 11:00 AM – The Teton Raptor Center will bring live birds to the Visitor Center, showcasing several of their birds of prey and giving the audience an exciting up-close learning opportunity.
- 11:00 AM through early afternoon – Local artist and art instructor Fred Kingwill will offer an artist-in-residence session at the Visitor Center, setting up an easel and painting while he talks with guests. Kingwill has worked with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service by serving as a judge for the Federal Duck Stamp national contest in 1989, the Service’s premier annual art event.
- 1:00 PM – Grand Teton National Park Interpreter Andrew Langford will give a mountain man program. Dressed in vintage clothing, Langford will give a fascinating and educational hour-long presentation that explains the lifestyle of early trappers.
- 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM – Landscape painter Scott Christensen will paint at the Cathedral Group Turnout in Grand Teton National Park. A Wyoming native, Christensen’s work was selected in June 2008 to be part of the prestigious permanent art collection for Grand Teton National Park at the Craig Thomas Visitor and Discovery Center.

Once the building is formally donated to the National Elk Refuge on August 13, the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center will continue to be staffed by personnel from the Refuge, Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, the Bridger-Teton National Forest, Grand Teton National Park, and the Grand Teton Association, which helps with visitor services as well as operating a busy retail outlet. The Wyoming Game & Fish Department, with offices located next door, helps provide hunting information and upgrades to visitor center exhibits. “It’s an outstanding partnership arrangement that provides exemplary customer service and education to our visitors and plays a vital role in our community’s economy,” said Steve Kallin. “We look forward to our continued work together.”

For updated information to the August 13 event, or for more information on the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, please visit www.fws.gov/nationalelkrrefuge/JacksonHoleVisitorCenter.htm.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 11, 2011 11-12

PO Box 510
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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE MAKES PREPARATIONS FOR BISON AND ELK HUNTING SEASONS

The 2011 bison hunting season on the National Elk Refuge will begin on Monday, August 15 and run through January 8, 2012. Bison hunting licenses are issued by the Wyoming Game & Fish Department. A Refuge-specific bison permit is required and is provided with the State license. Individuals who have not already applied and been selected for the 2011 season are not eligible to hunt bison this season.

The Refuge bison hunting season will be comprised of ten hunt periods of varying length. Similar to last year's season, the schedule incorporates two weeklong periods of non-disturbance. This is intended to increase the success rate for hunters since bison, along with other animals, may learn to avoid an area with continued hunting pressure. Wildlife managers are using the hunt period structure as a tool to achieve herd objectives set in a cooperative effort by the National Elk Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, and Wyoming Game & Fish Department.

The Refuge elk season will run from October 8 through December 11 and consist of nine consecutive hunt periods. Persons interested in hunting elk may begin applying for Refuge-specific permits beginning Tuesday, August 16. Applications must be submitted electronically by September 27 to be entered into a computerized random draw. The results of the drawing will be posted on the application web site by September 30. Hunters may initially apply for only one hunt period and must already have a valid Wyoming elk license to enter the electronic drawing. Hunters attempting to fill two valid licenses on the Refuge during the same hunt period do not need to apply for two Refuge permits.

New this season, all Refuge elk hunting permits will be valid for either the North or South units; persons applying for a permit do not need to select a specific hunt unit within the Refuge during the application process. However, hunters must understand and comply with weapons restrictions based on the area where they will be hunting.

Bison and elk hunting information, including general information, application procedures, regulations, maps, weapons restrictions, and access can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/NERHuntingRegs.htm>. Printable versions (Adobe PDF) of the regulations and maps are available on the web site.

Persons traveling on Refuge roads, including Curtis Canyon and Flat Creek roads, are encouraged to familiarize themselves with hunt boundaries and be aware that hunters may be in the area.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge

National Elk Refuge News – August 18, 2011

Grand Teton Association Donates Visitor Center to Refuge



Grand Teton Association (GTA) Executive Director Jan Lynch (left) and National Elk Refuge Outdoor Recreation Planner Lori Iverson (right) present Refuge Manager Steve Kallin and GTA Board Chair Clay James with a framed copy of the mortgage, which was ripped in half earlier in the donation ceremony.

The National Elk Refuge officially took ownership of the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center on Saturday, August 13 at a special event which honored the vision and initiative of the Grand Teton Association (GTA). The GTA purchased the Visitor Center building in 1998 and paid off the mortgage in July, leading to the generous donation of the facility to the Refuge last week.

A formal donation ceremony was held on the Visitor Center lawn and featured speakers from the various organizations that help staff and support the multi-agency facility, including the National Elk

Refuge, Bridger–Teton National Forest, Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming Game & Fish Department, and the GTA.

Presentations included a history of the GTA's role in the purchase of the building as well as accolades from partners that are supported by the nonprofit organization. Refuge Manager Steve Kallin and GTA Board Chair Clay James were applauded by the audience as they put a symbolic close to the donation ceremony by tearing up the mortgage.

The GTA was founded in 1937 and

operates as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit cooperating association to provide informational materials for sale to visitors on public lands. Proceeds from the sales are donated to the GTA's federal partners in support of support educational, interpretive, and research programs. The association operates 23 sales outlets in various locations, thereby supporting Grand Teton National Park, the National Elk Refuge, and the Bridger–Teton and Caribou–Targhee National Forests.

The Visitor Center building was formerly owned by the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) and occupied by



Former GTA Executive Director Sharlene Milligan was recognized for her role in the purchase of the VC building.



Former U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Director John Turner reported for his Master of Ceremonies duty Saturday in a 1965 Dodge pickup that was once used on the Refuge as an irrigation vehicle.

the Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce. In addition to providing Chamber services and administrative offices, the facility served as a State Information Center for the Wyoming Division of Tourism. Because the Visitor Center is located on Refuge lands, the Chamber of Commerce was later advised they could no longer continue to use the space for administrative offices due to compatibility and right-of-way issues from operating on Federal property. However, they continued to provide information desk personnel, along with staff from the National Elk Refuge and Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

When WYDOT built a new office complex south of Jackson,

they offered the Visitor Center building to the National Elk Refuge in 1995 for \$1,000,000 for use as a visitor services and wildlife education facility. Unable to obtain appropriated funds for the purchase of the building, and

facing the prospect of the building's removal, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service approached the GTA, then known as the Grand Teton Natural History Association, to purchase the building in partnership with the Refuge.



Artist Fred Kingwill, who painted a watercolor of the Visitor Center for the ceremony invitation, entertained guests as an artist-in-residence.



Three mascots were on hand to add to the festive atmosphere on Saturday's event. An elk and blue goose stood streetside prior to the donation ceremony to welcome arriving guests. They later joined Smokey Bear to mingle with the crowd.

The GTA had partnered with the Refuge from 1980 to 1994 by operating a winter sales outlet in conjunction with the sleigh ride operation. The GTA, which had a long-standing and successful business practice within Grand Teton National Park, negotiated a purchase price of \$800,000 in 1997 to procure the building with a written expressed intent to donate the building to the National

Elk Refuge when the mortgage was paid. The GTA obligated \$740,000 for the purchase, which was finalized in 1998. Additional financial support came from the National Elk Refuge, the Bridger-Teton National Forest, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation for the remaining \$60,000, as well as contributions to fund exhibits. Through proceeds from Visitor Center sales, the GTA was able

to pay off the building at an accelerated rate by July 2011.

Visitor Center staff offered a number of activities on Saturday to the public as part of the celebration. Activities included a bird walk, a visit by live birds from the Teton Raptor Center, a mountain man presentation by a Grand Teton National Park naturalist, and an artist-in-residence demonstration.



Representatives of the Visitor Center participating organizations included (left to right) Steve Kallin, John Turner, Bud Oliveira, Mary Gibson Scott, Jim Waldrop, Jackie Buchanan, Pete Jorgensen, Tim Fuchs, Clay James, and Jan Lynch.

National Elk Refuge News – August 18, 2011

Service Director Visits the National Elk Refuge



Deputy Refuge Manager Paul Santavy points out four wolves to Director Dan Ashe. The wolves responded to a series of howls from Mike Jimenez, Wyoming Wolf Project Leader (front).

The National Elk Refuge was pleased to host a visit by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director this week. Dan Ashe, who was confirmed on June 30, 2011 as the 16th Service Director, was in Jackson Hole to attend a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation board meeting. Ashe serves on the Board of Directors of the nonprofit organization.

Ashe began his morning by touring the Jackson National Fish Hatchery, operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries Program. He then spent the rest of the day on the National

Elk Refuge, visiting with staff and touring the Refuge to learn about some of the programs and management challenges. Ashe viewed new visitor center exhibits and watched a demonstration of a new irrigation system, both paid for through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding. Much of the day was spent discussing the management of bison, elk, wolves and other species. His Refuge tour included a hike to a wolf den site and a sighting of several wolves from the Pinnacle Peak pack.

Prior to his appointment as Director in June, Ashe served as

the Service's Deputy Director for Policy beginning in 2009, where he provided strategic program direction and developed policy and guidance to support and promote program development and fulfill the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service mission. He has also served as Assistant Director for External Affairs, Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System, Science Advisor to the Director, and Deputy Director for Policy.

A biography outlining Ashe's education and career can be found at www.fws.gov/offices/biodanielash.html



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 22, 2011 11-13

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
307.733.9212, ext. 6

NATIONAL ELK REFUGE PLANS FREE FAMILY EVENT AT VISITOR CENTER

The National Elk Refuge will host a special event on Thursday, August 25 from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson. The event, entitled *From Mice to Moose: Come Mingle with Mammals*, will offer a variety of free, family activities focusing on mammals and their characteristics.

A number of self-paced discovery stations will offer interesting information about mammal skulls, bones, tracks, scat, antlers, and horns. Participants can examine a number of specimens, learn about animal adaptations, hear stories of how fur trappers made an impact on animal populations, play a game to help with track and scat identification, or make a paper bag elk puppet.

For more information on the August 25 event or a complete listing of activities, please call 307.739.9322 or visit the Visitor Center's web page at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/JacksonHoleVisitorCenter.htm

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 31, 2011 11-14

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
307.733.9212, ext. 6

SMALL FIRE IGNITES ON NATIONAL ELK REFUGE

Firefighting resources responded to a single-tree fire on the National Elk Refuge on Wednesday, August 31, one of multiple new fire starts reported in the area following an overnight lightning storm. The Elk Refuge fire was south of the Gros Ventre River, near the Pedersen management unit and a hunt retrieval road on the north end of the refuge.

Teton Interagency Fire Dispatch received a smoke report at approximately 1:30 PM, with the smoke visible from the Gros Ventre Road. Two engines on loan from the Caribou-Targhee National Forest and a 10-person Teton Interagency fire crew, all assigned to the Red Rock Fire in the Gros Ventre Wilderness, were in the vicinity of the National Elk Refuge and responded to the call. The fire was located at approximately 2:30 PM, burning on a northwest facing slope. The fire was declared out shortly after 5:00 PM.

Fire danger in the area is rated at high. An approaching cold front and strengthening pressure gradient brought very windy conditions to the area on Wednesday, prompting the National Weather Service to issue a hazardous weather outlook statement. The strong wind gusts, along with warm temperatures and low relative humidity, created conditions that had potential for rapid fire growth. Much of Central and Southwest Wyoming remains under a red flag warning until 8:00 PM on Wednesday, meaning that extreme fire weather conditions are expected.

For more information on fires in the Jackson area, visit www.tetonfires.com.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 7, 2011 11-15

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
307.733.9212, ext. 6

NATIONAL ELK REFUGE ANNOUNCES WINTER SCHEDULE OF FACILITIES

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced today the schedule changes for public facilities on the National Elk Refuge for the remainder of the 2011 calendar year.

The historic Miller House, located approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of the National Elk Refuge entrance on East Broadway Street in Jackson, will be closed for the season beginning Monday, September 12. The charming homestead, open from 10:00 AM through 4:00 PM daily during the summer, will reopen next spring in late May.

The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 North Cache Street in Jackson, will continue operating under summer hours of 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM through Thursday, September 29. Beginning Friday, September 30, the facility will transition to winter hours of operation from 9:00 AM through 5:00 PM. The popular multi-agency center is staffed by personnel from the National Elk Refuge, Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce, Bridger-Teton National Forest, Grand Teton National Park, and the Grand Teton Association. In addition to providing one-stop, high quality visitor services, the center serves the local community by offering National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands passes and permits for products and activities such as firewood collection, ORV and snowmobile use, Christmas trees, and fishing.

For additional information about activities or services at the National Elk Refuge, please call the administrative offices at 307.733.9212 or visit www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 7, 2011 11-16

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
307.733.9212, ext. 6

NATIONAL ELK REFUGE ELK HUNTING PERMIT APPLICATION PERIOD CLOSSES SEPTEMBER 27

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced today that hunters have until the close of business on Tuesday, September 27 to apply for permits to hunt elk on the Refuge during the 2011 season. The application process for National Elk Refuge elk hunting permits is conducted in cooperation with the Wyoming Game & Fish Private Lands Public Wildlife Access program.

Applications must be submitted electronically by September 27 to be entered into a computerized random draw. Hunters may initially apply for only one hunt period and must already have a valid Wyoming elk license to enter the electronic drawing for a Refuge elk permit. The results of the drawing will be posted on the application web site on September 30.

On September 30, the on-line system will continue to be active to allow access to any permits that were not issued during the initial random draw. Any unissued (leftover) permits will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Persons who were successful for one hunt period on the September 30 drawing may reapply for a first-come, first-served leftover permit valid for an additional hunt period.

This season, hunters do not need to apply for a specific hunt unit. All National Elk Refuge permits will be valid for either hunt unit, but hunters must understand and comply with weapons restrictions based on the area where they will be hunting. Also, permit holders with two valid Wyoming elk hunting licenses may use and fill both licenses while hunting on the Refuge. Hunters attempting to fill two valid licenses during the same hunt period do not need to apply for two Refuge permits.

A full set of instructions on how to apply for a National Elk Refuge elk hunting permit, including information on the permit application process, hunt area maps, and a direct link to the application web site can be found on the National Elk Refuge's home page at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge under the "What's New" column. Hunters should review all regulations and maps prior to applying for a permit.

For assistance or questions about hunting on the National Elk Refuge, please call the Refuge administrative offices at 307.733.9212.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 7, 2011 11-17

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
307.733.9212, ext. 6

NATIONAL ELK REFUGE ELK HUNTING SEASON BEGINS OCTOBER 8

The annual elk hunting season on the National Elk Refuge will begin on Saturday, October 8 and conclude on the evening of Sunday, December 11. The hunting program helps manage and sustain elk population objectives set in cooperation with the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, which includes 11,000 animals for the Jackson elk herd and 5,000 elk wintering on the refuge. Biologists and administrators from both agencies make annual changes in the hunting program to reflect current conditions and desired outcomes.

New this season, all refuge elk hunting permits will be valid for either the North or South hunt units; hunters must understand and comply with weapons restrictions based on the area where they will be hunting. Elk hunting information and regulations, including details on the permit application process, refuge access and travel, and retrieval of harvested animals, can be found at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/NERHuntingRegs.htm. Hunters are responsible for reading the National Elk Refuge hunting regulations specific to their designated area and to have a current copy of these rules available when hunting.

Persons using public roads within the boundaries of the National Elk Refuge, including Curtis Canyon and Flat Creek roads, are encouraged to familiarize themselves with hunt boundaries and be aware that hunters may be in the area. Several additional roads and parking areas are opened on the refuge during the hunting season, but only to persons with a valid hunt permit specific to that area. Maps of the hunt area can be obtained on-line or at the following Jackson, Wyoming locations:

- Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, 532 North Cache Street
- National Elk Refuge Administrative Office, 675 East Broadway Street
- Wyoming Game & Fish Department, 420 North Cache Street

For additional information on the refuge elk and bison hunting programs, please call the National Elk Refuge Administrative Office at 307.733.9212.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 18, 2011 11-18

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
307.733.9212, ext. 6

JACKSON HOLE & GREATER YELLOWSTONE VISITOR CENTER TO CLOSE OCTOBER 25 FOR INVENTORY

The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson, will be closed on Tuesday, October 25 in order to conduct an annual inventory of the Grand Teton Association's sales outlet stock. The building will reopen on Wednesday, October 26 at 9:00 AM.

Visitor services will be available on October 25 at the following area locations:

- Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce – 112 Center Street, Jackson – (307) 733-3316
- Bridger-Teton National Forest – Supervisor's Office – 340 N. Cache, Jackson – (307) 739-5500
- Grand Teton National Park – Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center, Moose – (307) 739-3399
- Yellowstone National Park – (307) 344-7381
- Grand Teton Association sales outlets – (307) 739-3606 for a listing of locations
- Wyoming Game & Fish Department Jackson Regional Office – 420 N. Cache, Jackson – (307) 733-2321
- National Elk Refuge Administrative Office – 675 E. Broadway, Jackson – (307) 733-9212

The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center is open year-round; winter hours for the facility are from 9:00 AM through 5:00 PM daily, except on Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

For additional information on services at the National Elk Refuge, please call the administrative office at 307.733.9212 or visit www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Projects

National Elk Refuge — October 27, 2011



Mike Lutz from Q Media Productions installs one of seven infrared devices that prompts continuation of narration on the new audio tour.

Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center Exhibits

The final phase of an exhibit replacement project at the visitor center was completed last week with the installation of hardware to support an audio tour. The audio tour, available through handheld devices issued at the information desk, gives an overview of the information presented in the exhibits. An audio described tour option is available for visitors with impaired vision. The audio described tour augments the general tour with descriptions of the exhibits, help with

wayfinding, and an option to hear a direct reading of the panel text throughout the exhibits.

Public use staff began developing the narrative for the audio tour shortly after 26 new permanent exhibits were installed in the center in late April, replacing a collection of outdated interpretive panels. The updated displays were funded primarily through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars. The new theme-based interpretive exhibits introduce visitors to Federal lands within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and emphasize wildlife management partnerships in the Greater

Yellowstone Area.

Q Media Productions, the contractor selected for the audio tour project, made an initial site visit in May. Media writer/producer Stasha Boyd, certified by the American Council of the Blind for audio description, walked through the new exhibits with personnel from both the National Elk Refuge and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 6 Education & Visitor Services Division. During her visit, Boyd gathered background information on the displays and determined the focus and feel that would best suit the audio tour. The final script was approved in July.

Left: Q Media Productions Technical Director Mike Lutz gives National Elk Refuge winter naturalist Mark Abetz instructions on how to use the audio guide.

Below: The Orpho handheld guides are relatively easy to use.



Last week, the technical director for Q Media Productions, Mike Lutz, installed the infrared triggers that prompt the audio tour to automatically play as users move through the exhibits. The system is supported by handheld Orpho audio guides, which allow visitors to pause the narration or set the pace of their individual tour.

The audio tour is one of several project components that helps visitors of all abilities enjoy the

new displays. Many of the exhibits include tactile elements such as hides, tracks, raised surfaces, and small scale models that represent the animals in both a large diorama and an outdoor sculpture. A tactile wayfinding map located inside near the entrance to the building orients visitors to the facility. Several other tactile maps help visitors locate their position on the Refuge and in the Greater Yellowstone Area as well as understand migration patterns

of some of the regional wildlife. The tactile elements have been incorporated into the audio tour.

Irrigation Expansion Project

The National Elk Refuge's new K-Line irrigation system has been put to rest for the year. The inaugural season got under way when crews began running water through the system in May; the season began winding down in late August when irrigators started gradually pulling equipment in from the field. Staff extended two existing fenced areas and modified two others to hold the K-Lines and pods over the winter and protect them from damage by wildlife and equipment.

Though Refuge irrigators have previously watered approximately 900 acres per season, only 500 acres were irrigated in 2010 while the new system's underground infrastructure was being installed. Ditches used for flood irrigation were filled in as part of the new construction project, limiting the



K-Line pipes and pods are carefully laid out in preparation for winter.



The K-Line irrigation system disperses water on an early July morning.

amount of acres that were watered in 2010 by the Refuge's primary irrigation method. This past season, however, 3,538 acres were irrigated with the new K-Line system. An additional 100 acres were watered using flood irrigation practices.

Refuge biologist Eric Cole recently completed this year's annual report that estimates Refuge-wide forage production. This season, herbaceous forage is estimated at 18,907 tons, the highest number of tons since 2004 and 5,254 tons more than in 2010. The number of tons also puts the herbaceous forage production at 30% above the 1998–2011 average.

Cole's analysis includes information gathered from a number of sample sites. By using transect level data that compared areas irrigated in 2010 but not in 2011 and vice versa, along with sample sites that were irrigated the same amount both years, Cole's report suggests that 962 tons, or 18%, of the increase

in Refuge-wide forage production from 2010 to 2011 was due to the increase in irrigated acres.

Precipitation was above average in May and June, with the greatest effect of the spring rains on native grassland and shrub communities on the north of the Refuge and Flat Creek riparian areas that were subject to unusually high run-off. However, Cole notes that relatively high numbers of elk and bison remained on the south end of the Refuge until mid-May, and grazing by both species likely reduced the influence of spring precipitation on forage production on that part of the refuge. A comprehensive report entitled, "2011 Forage Production Survey and Related Irrigation Analysis" is available at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/NERrefugeprojects.htm

Forage production information is important to wildlife managers since the amount of annual growth

can affect when supplemental feeding may be needed on the Refuge. Higher forage production can delay the feeding start date, but the number of elk and bison, the length of time they spend on the Refuge, and snow conditions are other important factors.

North Highway 89 Pathway Project

Final work on a new multi-use, non-motorized pathway connecting the Town of Jackson to Grand Teton National Park is nearing completion, a project that began in May 2010 and runs along the western edge of the National Elk Refuge. Crews are busy hydroseeding, striping, and finishing work on a bridge and retaining walls.

Public use of the pathway closed on October 1 and will run through

May 1. The annual seasonal closure was a critical piece of the Environmental Assessment (EA) which allowed the construction on Refuge land. Another alternative presented in the EA proposed the location of the pathway on the west side of the highway, but there was “overwhelming public preference for an east side alignment,” explained Brian Schilling, coordinator for Jackson Hole Community Pathways. The county organization, which worked extensively with Refuge staff during planning and construction of the pathway, was the lead on the project.

Locating the pathway on the west side of the highway did pose some safety concerns to transportation planners. “We weighed the pros and cons of both alignments and chose the Refuge as the most desirable location for the pathway,” Schilling said. “Though it required a seasonal closure to meet Refuge purposes, it still gave the public an outstanding resource for a large majority of the cycling season.”

The National Elk Refuge is adjacent to both the Bridger–Teton National Forest and Grand Teton National Park, two federal land units which have more recreational opportunities than the Refuge. “We encourage people to learn more about our purpose and how that guides the activities we allow,” Kallin said. For instance, hunting and fishing, which are approved activities within the National Wildlife Refuge System and take place on the National Elk Refuge beyond October 1, both serve as important management tools for the Refuge. Hunting is the primary means to reduce the number of elk wintering on the Refuge and to reach an established population set in coordination with the State of Wyoming. The Refuge’s fishing program strongly encourages the harvest of non–native trout in order to reduce their impact on the native cutthroat trout population. “Non–motorized pathway use is in different category,” Kallin added.

Schilling has worked with Refuge staff on outreach about the closure, including meetings and articles in

the Jackson Hole News & Guide. A non-profit organization, the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, also partnered in helping explain the closure by developing a series of advertisements paid by for the county pathways organization. “Our outreach has tried to center on the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and a clearer understanding of the ‘wildlife first’ concept,” Schilling said.

The National Elk Refuge has relied on GPS and radio collared elk to track movement to and from the refuge and assess possible impacts to the pathway. New infrared counters were installed earlier this year to record animals traveling across the pathway to reach openings in the Refuge fence, and motion activated cameras are scheduled to be installed this fall. “We’re committed to thorough documentation of potential wildlife conflicts related to the pathway before any restrictions would be adjusted,” Schilling explained.



Pathway completion includes seeding of disturbed soil and the installation of erosion control structures.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 23, 2011 11-19

PO Box 510
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REFUGE ROAD WINTER TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS BEGIN DECEMBER 1

In conjunction with Bridger–Teton National Forest winter travel restrictions, a portion of the National Elk Refuge Road will be closed to public travel from Thursday, December 1 through Monday, April 30 to protect wintering wildlife. The closure, which begins approximately 3½ miles northeast of the Refuge’s entrance on Broadway Street in Jackson, includes both Curtis Canyon and Flat Creek roads.

Elk and bison hunters with National Elk Refuge permits will be allowed to drive through the closure to access hunt parking lots during the days their permits are valid. Hunters must drive directly to the designated lots to park and stay within the specified boundaries while hunting. The elk season concludes at dusk on Sunday, December 11, 2010, with the bison season running through Sunday, January 8, 2012. No public travel beyond the closure will be allowed after the hunting seasons conclude.

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin reminds visitors and residents using the open portion of the Refuge Road that travel is confined to the roadway only. All off–road travel is prohibited, including walking, skiing, or other recreational activities. Dogs are also limited to the roadway and must be leashed at all times. This limits disturbance to wintering animals during a time when energy conservation is key to their survival.

The Refuge Road is a popular destination in the winter as elk, bighorn sheep, and other animals can frequently be seen close to the roadway, providing both wildlife viewing and photography opportunities. However, travelers on the roadway frequently stop, park, or leave vehicles unattended while observing wildlife, which obstructs the safe movement and passing of other vehicles. In addition to recreational traffic, the Refuge Road is used by large vehicles including delivery trucks, service vehicles, plows, and refuge equipment. “We encourage people to take advantage of the rich wildlife on the Refuge during the winter months, but it has to be done in a safe manner that won’t result in an accident or injuries,” said Refuge Manager Steve Kallin. “We have growing concerns with the number of people that stop in the road.” Refuge personnel have seen an increase in the number of vehicles driving or sliding off the road and getting stuck in the snow, often as a result of drivers having to unexpectedly brake or maneuver around other vehicles. To allow for safer wildlife viewing experiences, Refuge staff has increased the number of roadside turnouts. Vehicles are encouraged to pull off the roadway and safely park in order to extend photography and wildlife viewing experiences.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 30, 2011 11-20

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

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WINTER PROGRAMS TO BEGIN ON THE NATIONAL ELK REFUGE

The National Elk Refuge is pleased to announce the 2011–2012 winter program schedule for the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center. The visitor center, open from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM daily, is located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

The National Elk Refuge sleigh ride program is an exciting, popular adventure that take visitors out onto the refuge among the elk herds. The horse-drawn rides will begin on Monday, December 12 and operate daily from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Passengers purchase tickets at the Visitor Center and are transported on a free shuttle bus to the sleigh boarding area three miles north of Jackson on Highway 26/89/191. Sleighs depart three to four times each hour throughout the day, with rides typically lasting one hour. The horse-drawn rides are a unique way to observe and photograph wildlife on the refuge. Passengers routinely see coyotes, bald eagles, trumpeter swans, ravens, magpies, and other wildlife in addition to elk. The sleigh rides are operated under contract by Double H Bar, Inc. Rates are \$18 for adults, \$14 for children ages 5 through 12, with children under age 5 riding for free. Reservations are required for private tours and groups of 20 people or more; smaller groups or families may make reservations, but advanced booking is not necessary. Additional information on sleigh rides is available by visiting www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/NERSleighRides.htm or calling 307.733.0277.

Beginning December 12, staff naturalists will offer a 15-minute program each day at 11:30 AM as part of a “Home on the Refuge” presentation series. The daily program gives visitors an opportunity to learn about the lives and homes of some of the resident wildlife as well as aspects of refuge history and management. A different theme is featured daily. The programs are free of charge; reservations are not required.

Naturalists will also lead a free wildlife excursion at 1:30 PM each Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday during the winter season, with the first tour scheduled for December 13. The wildlife viewing excursions will depart from the Visitor Center and stop at various refuge locations where animals can frequently be seen. A spotting scope and binoculars will be provided on the tours. Reservations are required for the 2 – 2 ½ hour educational tour and can be made by calling 307.734.9378 or signing up in person at the Visitor Center.

For further information on National Elk Refuge sleigh rides or other winter programs, please visit www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/JacksonHoleVisitorCenter.htm.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 30, 2011 11-21

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

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307.733.9212, ext. 6

SPECIAL PROGRAM TO DISCUSS LEAD POISONING RESEARCH

The National Elk Refuge will be hosting a special hour-long presentation on Friday, December 16 at 12:30 PM to highlight an area research project focused on monitoring and reducing blood lead levels in eagles and ravens in Jackson Hole. Bryan Bedrosian, Avian Program Director for Craighead Beringia South in Kelly, Wyoming, will present a slide show and research findings at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

Because of the prevalence of big game hunting in the area, Craighead Beringia South began investigating the relationship between scavengers, their access to discarded game meat, and the presence of lead in 2004. Bedrosian's talk will give an overview of the project and focus on the progress the nonprofit organization has seen in reducing blood lead levels, particularly during the late fall and early winter. "We're excited to share some of our findings that hunters are making a real difference in reducing lead poisoning in the wildlife of Jackson Hole," Bedrosian stated. "With support from the National Elk Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming Game & Fish Department, Bridger-Teton National Forest, and a host of local and out-of-state hunters, the community is coming together to solve the ecological issue of lead poisoning in scavengers in a cohesive and sustainable way." Background on the project can be found at <http://beringasouth.org/lead-levels-in-wildlife>.

The presentation is open to the public and free of charge. Light refreshments will be served. For more information on the program, please contact the National Elk Refuge administrative offices at 307.733.9212.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 5, 2011 11-22

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE SPECIAL PROGRAM TO WELCOME WINTER

The National Elk Refuge will be hosting a free event at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center on Saturday, December 17 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM to celebrate the start of the winter season. The event, entitled "Discover December at the National Elk Refuge," showcases the programs offered throughout the winter and adds a few additional opportunities for participants to kick off the beginning of the season. The Visitor Center is located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

Refuge naturalists will provide all regularly-scheduled winter programs that day, including:

- An 11:30 presentation as part of an on-going "Home on the Refuge" daily program series (offered daily throughout the season beginning December 12)
- A free 2-hour wildlife viewing excursion onto the Refuge Road (offered Tuesday, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays throughout the season, beginning December 13). Group size is limited; reserve a seat by calling 307.734.9378.
- A variety of films in the auditorium (offered daily, year-round)
- Sleigh rides departing every 20 to 30 minutes (offered daily through the end of March). Rates are \$18 for adults, \$14 for children ages 5 through 12, with children under age 5 riding for free. Reservations are not required.

Additional activities on December 17 include:

Arts and crafts activities for children of ages will be available from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Participants can choose from several seasonal craft projects, including wildlife origami.

From 10:00 to 11:45 AM, refuge staff will be giving guided tours of the new interpretive displays that were installed in the Visitor Center this past year. The exhibits were funded primarily through American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding and replaced a collection of dated panels. The new exhibits feature theme based-interpretive material that introduces visitors to Federal lands within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and emphasizes partnerships in the wildlife management within the Greater Yellowstone Area. They also include messages to inspire visitors to learn more about the area resources, encourage them to spend time outdoors, and help them identify ways they can be good stewards of their public lands.

At 12:00 PM, a variety of prizes will be offered to visitor center guests. Visitors can pick up their free tickets for the noon drawing throughout the morning at the information desk but must be present to win.

From 1:00 to 4:00 PM, naturalists will give demonstrations of radio telemetry equipment used to track elk on the refuge. Participants will have an opportunity to handle the equipment, listen for signals, and learn how biologists monitor elk migration and winter distribution. The activity will be held on the upper viewing deck; coffee and hot chocolate will be served.

–continued–



A special feed shed tour is scheduled from 3:00 to 4:00 PM, giving the public an opportunity to visit one of the facilities on the refuge where alfalfa pellets are stored. The pellets are used as supplemental feed for wintering elk and bison. Persons on the 1:30 PM wildlife viewing excursion will also incorporate this activity into their Refuge Road tour.

With the exception of the sleigh rides, all activities are free of charge. For a complete schedule listing or additional information on the special event, please call 307.734.9378 or visit www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/JacksonHoleVisitorCenter.htm.

–FWS–

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge
