



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 3, 2012 12-01

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
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SPECIAL PROGRAM TO DISCUSS COUGAR POPULATIONS

The National Elk Refuge will be hosting a special hour-long presentation on Wednesday, January 11 at 12:30 PM to share information about cougars and to highlight the area's Teton Cougar Project. The presentation, which will be held at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson, will be led by wildlife biologist Marilyn Cuthill from Craighead Beringia South.

Cuthill has been with the Kelly, Wyoming wildlife research organization since 2005. In her role as Teton Cougar Project coordinator, Cuthill oversees the daily activities of field data collection and immobilizing and radio collaring cougars. During her presentation, she will discuss perceptions and facts about cougars, habitat and range, factors that affect cougar populations, and human and mountain lion interactions. "We're looking forward to sharing how cougar populations can shape biodiversity and play an essential role in ecologic function over most of their range," Cuthill said. "With cougars expanding their territories, sightings of cougars have increased. Consequently, it's important to learn more about these elusive animals and their characteristics."

The presentation is open to the public and free of charge. Participants may bring a lunch to enjoy during the noon hour talk; light refreshments will be served. For more information on the program, please contact the National Elk Refuge administrative offices at 307.733.9212.

–FWS–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012

National Elk Refuge News – January 13, 2012

Unique Program Combines Education and Fitness



Julia Heemstra heads the group back towards St. John's at the conclusion of the first collaborative Walk and Talk program.

The National Elk Refuge collaborated with St. John's Medical Center in Jackson earlier this month to offer a unique activity that combined an interpretive talk with a hospital program encouraging wellness.

St. John's borders the south end of the National Elk Refuge and is located immediately adjacent to the refuge administrative offices. Outdoor Recreation Planner Lori Iverson saw an advertisement in December for the medical facility's Walk and Talk Wellness Series, twice-weekly outings that combine a noontime half hour walk with discussions led by hospital staff. Speakers on the tours have used the opportunity to discuss their area of specialty, including hearing, diabetes, and nutrition.

Iverson, a long-time friend of the Community Health Information Center's Program Director Julia Heemstra, offered to tag along on one of the outings and talk about various aspects of refuge management since the walks take participants past the refuge headquarters and out onto the Refuge Road. On a balmy January afternoon, a small group took advantage of the first walk to focus on another subject matter rather than personal health.

"Lori is the only outside speaker we've had so far, and we got really positive feedback on that particular walk," Heemstra explained. "We've scheduled another date later this month for the National Elk Refuge to accompany us because the last one was so well received. We

simply ran out of time for all the participants to get their questions answered, and we had people disappointed they couldn't attend that day."

St. John's Walk and Talk series was initiated as part of the hospital's wellness program but also serves as a way to reach out to the community and allow others to become involved in their wellness activities.

"We were thrilled to be able to help out with the program," Iverson said. "It's a wonderful example of combining community resources in a way that meets each organization's goals."



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 19, 2012 12-02

PO Box 510
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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE TO ASSESS CONDITIONS AFTER CURRENT STORM

Snow has returned to the western mountains of Wyoming this week, with significant snowfall totals recorded since early Wednesday. A winter storm warning remains in effect for the area through Friday morning. Snowfall rates of 1-2" per hour are expected across the mountains and valleys, along with gusty winds and areas of blowing snow. A sudden change in weather, including high winds, snow storms, or rain, prompts National Elk Refuge officials to add additional surveys that assess how a weather event may have affected winter conditions on the refuge.

Biologists from the National Elk Refuge and Wyoming Game & Fish Department begin conducting regular surveys of refuge conditions as early as December. They record measurable data such as the amount and density of the snow and accessible natural forage remaining for elk wintering on the refuge. This, along with other information including elk behavior and elk numbers, factor into the decision as to when supplemental feeding may be necessary. On average, feeding begins during the third week of January.

The amount of forage produced on the refuge during the growing season can have a significant impact on when supplemental feeding may be necessary. This past year, estimated herbaceous forage production was recorded as 18,907 tons, or 5,254 tons higher than in the previous year and 30% above the 1998-2011 average. The increased amount of forage was attributed to both above average precipitation in May and June and additional acres irrigated by a new K-Line system. The new irrigation system, funded by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money, allowed refuge staff to irrigate 3,528 acres during the 2011 growing season. In contrast, approximately 500 acres were irrigated in 2010. When conditions were last assessed on January 10, biologists estimated at least 625 pounds per acre of forage remained on the south end of the refuge. The amount of forage consumed and the effects of the additional snow will be measured again when the current storm subsides.

Approximately 5,000 elk are currently wintering on the south end of the National Elk Refuge. Telemetry information suggests that approximately 80% of collared elk that are likely to winter on the refuge have arrived, with the remaining elk in the Gros Ventre drainage and Buffalo Valley. Additionally, an estimated 350 bison have returned to the refuge since the hunting season concluded on January 8.

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National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 31, 2012 12-03

PO Box 510
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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, February 2. A boost in forage production this past summer and below average snow cover in early January delayed the need for supplemental feeding beyond the refuge's ten-year average start date of January 22.

Supplemental feeding start dates can vary widely depending 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. The 2011 feed season turned into a notable year, beginning on January 6 and lasting 100 days, or 33 days longer than an average year. "The expansion of the irrigation system and the resulting increase in natural standing forage helped push back this year's feeding start date," Kallin explained. "Our overall goal is to reduce the reliance on supplemental feeding."

The decision to implement the program for the year results from a joint recommendation between the Wyoming Game & Fish Department and the National Elk Refuge and is based on regular surveys of refuge conditions by field staff. The amount and density of the snow, the accessibility of remaining forage, and the number of elk and bison using the refuge are key factors to determine when supplemental feeding may be necessary. This week, biologists noted ground ice and compacted snow due to a series of freeze and thaw cycles earlier in the month. They also measured decreasing amounts of forage, with approximately 440 pounds per acre of forage remaining in several of the key sampling sites. The number of bison present on the refuge can have a significant impact on the rate at which accessible forage is consumed. Currently, an estimated 6,000 elk and 600 bison are wintering on the south end of the refuge.

Refuge staff begin the supplemental feeding season by distributing small rations of alfalfa pellets to elk and bison, allowing them to adjust to the new high protein diet. Feeders gradually increase the amount of pellets until the herds are receiving approximately 8 pounds per elk and 20 pounds per bison each day.

The refuge resumed a herd health assessment program last week, a program that was implemented in 2009 to increase the monitoring of elk and bison health in relation to their environment during the feeding season. A team of biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wildlife Health Office in Bozeman, MT conducted pre-feeding condition sampling on the refuge, measuring environmental conditions such as snow compaction, icing, and fecal contamination to establish preliminary information for the season. The biologists will take similar measurements throughout the winter in addition to completing postmortem exams, or necropsies, of elk to determine causes of death and the significance of disease problems.

-FWS-

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012

National Elk Refuge News – February 9, 2012

Major Motion Picture Scene Filmed on the Refuge



Stunning panoramic views of the refuge caught the eye of the film's production crew as they drove by on Highway 89.

When National Elk Refuge Outdoor Recreation Planner Lori Iverson read a Department of Interior intranet article on February 7 entitled, “National Wildlife Refuges Play Well on the Silver Screen,” she couldn’t help but smile at the timeliness of the story. That afternoon, Iverson had made final arrangements to host a film crew the following day for shooting a scene in *Django Unchained*, an upcoming spaghetti western written and directed by Quentin Tarantino.

Tarantino is an American film director, screenwriter, producer, and cinematographer whose movies include *Pulp Fiction*, *Inglourious Bastards*, and *Kill Bill: Vol. 1 and 2*. *Django Unchained* is set in the Old South and follows a freed slave who treks across America with a bounty hunter to rescue his wife from a brutal Mississippi plantation owner. The film stars Jamie Foxx, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Christoph Waltz.

The production crew had planned for the movie’s winter scenes to be shot near Mammoth, California, but the lack of snow there this winter forced the crew to look for a new setting. An advance crew came to Jackson in January and selected the area as the alternate site. The National Elk Refuge was not originally scouted as one of the Jackson filming locations. However, when Tarantino and other film crew members drove by the refuge en route from the airport to town, they were enamored by the landscape and wintering elk. Iverson received an inquiry on February 2 about possible use of the refuge. “There were a lot of details to work out the week before the shoot. Everyone understood and respected the complexity of working around wildlife,” she explained.

On the morning of February 8, filmmakers used the historic Miller Ranch area to stage the equipment and support vans associated with

the project. A small, select crew then continued on to the filming location, thus limiting disturbance to wintering bison and elk. Four refuge staff members accompanied the crew and played a key role in mitigating safety and impacts to wildlife as well as helping with communications and logistics.

“On the day of the shoot, the stars lined up to give us perfect conditions and positioning of the herds,” Iverson said. The refuge staff is keeping the specifics of the shoot confidential, in accordance with Tarantino’s set security policy. “We just hope we make the cut,” she added. The film is scheduled for release in December 2012.

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin welcomed the opportunity to host the crew, acknowledging what the production means to the Jackson tourism-based economy. “This provides great exposure for the area,” he said.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 13, 2012 12-04

PO Box 510
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SPECIAL PROGRAM TO KICK OFF REFUGE CENTENNIAL YEAR

A special program at the Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center on Monday, February 20 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM will serve as the kickoff event for the National Elk Refuge's centennial year. An Act of Congress on August 10, 1912 appropriated money for the purchase of lands and maintenance of a winter elk refuge, which created the present day National Elk Refuge. Refuge staff will offer a chance to look back to an earlier era by providing a day of free, family activities focusing on history in the Jackson Hole valley. The visitor center is located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

A variety of activities for persons of all ages will be offered throughout the day, including:

10:00 AM – 4:00 PM: Displays of historical pictures, items and replicas from the early homesteading, trapper, and prehistoric periods. Both a pioneer and trapper exploration trunk will be available for viewing; each trunk contains an extensive collection of period clothing, relics, books, animal hides, and maps.

10:00 am - 4:00 pm: Children's crafts available. Participants can make a yarn doll or construct a thaumatrope, an optical illusion made from a spinning disk with two pictures.

10:00 AM – 10:30 AM; repeated from 12:30 PM – 1:00 PM : A naturalist–led traditional children's game of jackstraw, also known as pick-up sticks.

11:00 AM – 11:15 AM; repeated from 1:00 PM – 1:15 PM: A naturalist–led lesson and demonstration on the visitor center lawn of an atlatl, a hunting tool that threw long, flexible darts at high speeds to take down prey.

11:30 AM – 12:00 PM; repeated from 1:30 PM to 2:00 PM: A slideshow by the Jackson Hole Historical Society and Museum entitled "Homesteader Hopes and Reality in the High Country of Jackson Hole." The program will share the history of homesteaders and settlers in the valley, using stories and historic photographs. The program also includes stories of early day residents and the challenges they faced, as well as tales of passionate residents who began the conservation movement in Jackson Hole.

1:00 PM – 4:00 PM: Miller House Open House. The historic Miller House, generally only open during the summer season, will be available for a special three–hour winter opening. No admission charge is required. Follow Broadway Street east to the Refuge Road. Turn left and drive north ¾ mile north.

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2:30 PM – 3:15 PM: A ranger-led presentation that explains the lifestyle of early trappers. This program will give insight to the legendary mountain men or fur trappers who lived and trapped in Jackson Hole in the 1820s and 1830s. Dressed in appropriate attire, a Grand Teton National Park ranger will discuss and demonstrate many of the specialized skills that were required of these brave and industrious individuals.

For further information on the February 20 event at the visitor center, please call the refuge administrative offices at 307.733.9212.

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National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 22 , 2012 12-05

PO Box 510
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SPECIAL PROGRAM TO DISCUSS TRUMPETER SWAN HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION

The National Elk Refuge will be hosting its third program in a winter lunchtime speaker series on Friday, February 24 at 12:30 PM. The hour-long presentation, which will be held at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson, will be led by Nongame Biologist Susan Patla from the Wyoming Game & Fish Department.

Patla has been responsible for the management and monitoring of wild trumpeter swans in Wyoming since 1999. She also served as the chairperson of the Greater Yellowstone Trumpeter Swan Working Group for 10 years. During her presentation, Patla will describe her work to manage and improve swan habitat and talk about swan distribution in the state. "Trumpeter swans are one of Wyoming's rarest and most magnificent resident birds," Patla said. "The National Elk Refuge is one of the best locations in the state to observe them throughout the year." Patla will also discuss new grant projects that create wetlands for nesting swans on private land in partnership with landowners.

Patla's presentation is open to the public and free of charge. Participants may bring a lunch to enjoy during the noon hour talk; light refreshments will be served. For more information on the program, please contact the National Elk Refuge administrative offices at 307.733.9212.

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National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 27, 2012 12-06

PO Box 510
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TWO PROGRAMS AT VISITOR CENTER TO DISCUSS ICONIC WILDLIFE SPECIES

The National Elk Refuge will be continuing its winter lunchtime speaker series with presentations on Wednesday, March 7 and Thursday, March 8. Each hour-long discussion begins at 12:30 PM and will be held at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

On Wednesday, March 7, Alyson Courtemanch from the Wyoming Game & Fish Department will talk about Teton Range bighorn sheep and how this small population continues to survive despite loss of its historical migration routes. Courtemanch studied bighorn sheep in the Teton Range for four years as part of the research for her master's degree at the Wyoming Cooperative Research Unit, University of Wyoming. In June 2011, she took a position at the Wyoming Game & Fish Department in Jackson as a terrestrial habitat biologist. During her program, Courtemanch will present recent findings from her research and discuss current threats to the population's persistence and potential management actions.

The speaker series will continue on Thursday, March 8 with Drew Reed, who will highlight the Wyoming Wetlands Society's work with Jackson's trumpeter swan population. The Wyoming Wetlands Society (WWS) is a nonprofit organization whose primary objectives are to aid in the restoration of the Rocky Mountain Population of Trumpeter Swans and to protect, preserve, restore and enhance the wetlands they depend on. The WWS established the Trumpeter Swan Fund to aid in the restoration of swan populations by supplementing wild populations with birds from its captive breeding program.

Reed began serving as the organization's Executive Director in May 2008. During his presentation on March 8, he will describe the organization's Trumpeter Swan Captive Breeding Program, its history, the current population status of the swans, and the organization's efforts to restore wetlands by relocating problem beavers. "Both the Trumpeter Swan and Wetland Restoration projects have provided us with many avenues to educate the public on the importance of this magnificent bird and the habitat they and many other wildlife species depend on," Reed said.

Both presentations are open to the public and free of charge. Participants may bring a lunch to enjoy during the noon hour talk; light refreshments will be served. For more information on the programs, please contact the National Elk Refuge administrative offices at 307.733.9212.

–FWS–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012

National Elk Refuge News – February 29, 2012

Refuge's First Centennial Event Well Attended



Refuge volunteer Claudia Rector walks a young visitor through tables full of pictures, relics, books, and maps related to Jackson Hole history.

The National Elk Refuge held its first centennial event earlier this month, the first of many special programs the refuge staff plans to hold this year.

The event, held on Presidents' Day, allowed visitors to look back at an earlier era through a variety of free, family activities that focused on history in the Jackson Hole valley. Over 1,000 people came to the visitor center that day, with many of them participating in at least one of the special programs. The historic Miller House, generally open only during the summer season, also entertained visitors during a special three-hour winter opening. Fifty-one people took advantage of an off season visit to the historic site.

“All our programs were well attended,” explained winter seasonal Mark Abetz, who led the organization of the event. Refuge volunteers helped children make a total of 115 traditional craft projects, with games and toys also available for younger audiences.

Special presentations by the Jackson Hole Historical Society & Museum and Grand Teton National Park Naturalist Andrew Langford were highlights for many of the visitors. The Historical Society gave a slideshow entitled “*Homesteader Hopes and Reality*,” a program



that used both stories and historic photos to share the history of settlers in the valley. Langford expanded on the Historical Society's descriptions of early day residents and the challenges they faced by portraying an early trapper. Dressed in appropriate attire, he demonstrated many of the specialized skills required of the legendary fur trappers who lived and practiced their trade in Jackson Hole in the 1820s and 1830s. Earlier in the day, Abetz demonstrated the use of an ancient hunting tool called an atlatl.

Additional centennial programs will be posted on the Refuge's web page.

A short multimedia presentation on the National Elk Refuge's centennial can be viewed at

www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/Documents/soundslides/celebratecentury/publish_to_web/



Langford holds up one of the many props used during his mountain man program.

National Elk Refuge News – March 19, 2012

Snowshoes a Popular Teaching Tool This Winter



A snowshoed runner takes the lead over his booted opponent during a competition that focused on traveling over snow.

With Jackson Hole temperatures reaching into the 40s the past few weeks and accompanied by stretches of rain mixed with snow, it may be time for the National Elk Refuge winter naturalist staff to stow away its collection of snowshoes for the winter. However, 157 students benefited from the gear this season, using the snowshoes to learn about winter adaptations while enjoying time outdoors.

The refuge visitor services program made an initial purchase of 15 pairs of snowshoes in 2011, sized for persons ranging from 30 to 120 pounds. Staff made an additional purchase of 9 more pairs this past fall when seasonal naturalists noted how popular a teaching tool they were last winter and identified the need to have larger sizes to accommodate teenage school groups as well.

Because of Jackson's long winters, many of the refuge's educational programs focus on ways that animals survive the harsh season in the valley. Students are taught that animals generally migrate, hibernate, or adapt during the

winter months. Lessons also focus on the need to conserve energy when food supplies dwindle and are less nutritious. Seasonal naturalist Mark Abetz used the snowshoes several times this winter with school groups in a game he called "hare vs. elk." The lesson taught children that if all else were equal, an animal that can travel on top of snow has an advantage over one that punches through the snow as it moves.

The snowshoe purchases were made possible by Skinny Skis, an outdoor store that has operated in downtown Jackson for over 35 years. Skinny Skis evolved from a very small cross country ski shop to a nearly half-block long specialty outdoor store. In the summers, the store offers equipment for running, training, hiking, roller skiing, mountaineering and climbing, but during the winter months, the store focuses on sports such as cross country and backcountry skiing.

Co-owner Jeff Crabtree worked with the refuge's visitor services staff to purchase the snowshoes at a discounted rate. "Two causes that

we're happy to support are wildlife conservation and kids' sports," explained Crabtree, who grew up in the Jackson Hole valley. "Life is outdoors," he added. "If you don't get outside, you don't know what's out there."



A youngster is thrilled with his speed as he dashes across the lawn of the visitor center.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 19, 2012 12-07

PO Box 510
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TETON RAPTOR CENTER SCHEDULED TO BRING LIVE BIRDS TO THE VISITOR CENTER

The National Elk Refuge will host the Teton Raptor Center on Friday, March 23 for an hour-long visit and presentation at 12:30 PM in the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center. The program will be led by Jason Jones, Program Director for the 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 visitor center is located in 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

Jones is a master falconer and has over twenty years of experience training, rehabilitating, and propagating raptors. In addition to overseeing raptor rehabilitation efforts, Jones gives the public opportunities to learn about birds in flight with live demonstrations both at the Teton Raptor Center and at community events. Jones has brought live birds to the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center on a number of occasions. "Our programs featuring the Teton Raptor Center are always well received," stated winter naturalist Justin Walters, who organized the March 23 event. "People of all ages love the chance to see the birds up close and photograph them." With the help of a great horned owl, a falcon, and a hawk, Jones will talk about raptors in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and the role that spring migration plays in the valley.

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

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National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 22, 2012 12-08

PO Box 510
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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE SCHEDULED TO END SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING FOR THE SEASON

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced that supplemental feeding of elk and bison wintering on the refuge is scheduled to end for the 2012 season during the week of March 26. This year's feeding season began on February 2 and will total less than 60 days when the program ends for the year next week.

A boost in forage production this past summer and below average snow cover in early January delayed the need for supplemental feeding beyond the refuge's ten-year average start date of January 22. The southern end of the refuge where many of the elk winter is already showing spring-like conditions, with much of the snow cover gone and a fair amount of residual grass remaining from last year's growing season. Though the ten-year average end date is April 5, supplemental feeding ended in March during three of the previous ten winters, most recently in 2010 when feeding concluded on March 24.

Refuge management plans include increasing grass production through enhanced irrigation and reducing the herd size through hunting as strategies to reduce the reliance of elk on supplemental feeding.

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. Though many environmental factors are measured to determine when the feeding program should begin, elk behavior plays a significant role in deciding when feeding should conclude for the year. Elk naturally begin shifting their distribution and moving away from traditional feeding areas, including leaving the refuge for other locations.

An increased herd health assessment program will conclude for the season in conjunction with the ending of the supplemental season. The herd health assessment is a multi-year project focused on health of elk in relation to their environment during the supplemental feeding season, which includes removing sick or limping elk from the herd throughout the winter to complete postmortem exams, or necropsies. This allows biologists to document causes and the significance of disease problems.

Despite the end to the supplemental feeding program next week, horse-drawn rides on the National Elk Refuge are scheduled to continue through Saturday, April 7; wagons are substituted for sleighs when inadequate snow remains. The rides are a popular way for persons to enjoy the refuge and watch for wildlife. Hours of operation remain from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM daily, including weekends. Tickets are sold at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 North Cache Street in Jackson. For further information on the horse-drawn rides, please call 307.733.0277 or 1.800.772.5386.

–FWS–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012

National Elk Refuge News – April 4, 2012

More GPS Collars Deployed on Elk Wintering on the Refuge



A cow stands ready to return to the herd after receiving a new GPS collar and two red ear tags.

A team of wildlife biologists collared 12 elk on the National Elk Refuge in late March as part of a cooperative research project that evaluates habitat use and elk distribution. Each of the animals received a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit that will track elk movements, including migration routes and summer range use.

Since 2005, the National Elk Refuge and Wyoming Game & Fish Department have deployed 88 collars on elk wintering on the refuge. Biologists initially used VHF radio collars, each of which emits a unique signal that can be picked up by a transceiver. Beginning in 2008, the refuge began using GPS units, devices which use satellites to give a more precise location than the VHF units. This technology allows the newer

equipment to accurately measure collared animals' locations to within 20 meters every two hours. The information is stored in each

collar's unit, which remains on an elk for a maximum of two years. Biologists can remotely access the stored information at any time,



A retrofitted oversnow vehicle carrying four biologists follows a feedtruck out to the Poverty Flats management area to select and collar 12 elk wintering on the refuge.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Carl Brown, right, holds a laser range finder to assist Refuge Biologist Eric Cole, left, in determining when a cow elk is within range of the dart gun. The darts contain a drug that immobilizes the animal within two to four minutes.



using a device with an antenna that establishes a radio link with an individual collar.

After two years, the collars automatically release from the animal in order for staff to perform routine maintenance on the device. The collars are collected and can be refurbished and reused, eliminating the need to purchase new equipment and thus reducing costs. This year, the expense of refurbishing collars was paid for with proceeds from Jackson's annual antler auction held in May.

During the collaring operation, biologists travel in a small snowcat retrofitted with a cab for use during management operations. The snowcat follows a feed truck during

supplemental feeding, allowing the second vehicle to get close to the herd. Biologists select cow elk to receive the collars since the females are generally more representative of the population as a whole.

Once an animal is darted, it takes two to four minutes for the drug to take effect. A team of biologists quickly affix ear tags, check the elk's teeth to determine its age, draw a blood sample, and attach the collar. Data is recorded on each animal, and the operation is timed. After approximately 15 minutes, the process is complete, and a reversal drug is injected into the animal. Personnel steady the elk as it gets back on its feet and returns to the herd.

Elk location data collected from the collars will help wildlife managers map elk movement and habitat use, design hunting seasons to meet objectives, monitor the effects of wolves on elk density, and evaluate the effects of elk density on potential disease transmission.

Additional photos of the collaring operation can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtmprairie/sets/72157629733563037>.

Collars are secured and will remain on an elk for two years. Once a collar is automatically released, its location can be determined and the collar can be collected for reuse.





U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 13, 2012 12-09

PO Box 510
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“100 DAYS TO 100 YEARS” – A SPECIAL CELEBRATION OF THE NATIONAL ELK REFUGE

The National Elk Refuge, Jackson Hole Historical Society & Museum, the Murie Center, and the National Museum of Wildlife Art are pleased to host an evening of storytelling on Wednesday, May 2 from 6:00 to 8:30 PM at the National Museum of Wildlife Art. The free public event celebrates the 100-day countdown remaining until August 10, the 100-year anniversary of the date that an Act of Congress appropriated money for the purchase of lands and maintenance of a winter elk refuge. The National Elk Refuge’s centennial offers an opportunity to highlight area history and the role the refuge has played in defining the character of the Jackson Hole valley.

The evening will kick off with a social hour from 6:00 – 7:00 PM, including a cash bar and light hors d’oeuvres. From 7:00 to 8:30 PM, three community members will share stories and photos about people that played an integral role in the history of both the valley and the National Elk Refuge. Karen Reinhart from the Jackson Hole Historical Society & Museum will present a slideshow entitled “Homesteader Hopes and Reality in the High Country of Jackson Hole.” The program will share historic photos of homesteaders and settlers in the valley, accompanied by tales of passionate residents who began the conservation movement in Jackson Hole. The Murie Center’s Steve Duerr will speak on Olaus Murie’s legacy and his role in studying the largest elk herd in North America. Jim Wallace, who has served as a Boy Scout leader for more than thirty years, will share the history of the Jackson District Boy Scouts and their involvement since 1957 in helping National Elk Refuge staff collect elk antlers. Many Scouts remember the unique experience well into adulthood, considering it a special privilege to participate in an activity that is not open to the general public.

Other anniversaries that will be highlighted during the evening include the **150th anniversary** of the Homestead Act of 1862; the recent **100th birthday** of conservationist Louise “Weezy” Murie MacLeod; the **50th anniversary** of the publication of conservationist Mardy Murie’s book *Two in the Far North*; the **45th anniversary** of Boy Scout Antler Auction; the **25th anniversary** of the National Museum of Wildlife Art; and the **20th anniversary** of the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program and Contest.

The National Museum of Wildlife Art will open their galleries for the evening, allowing visitors to see the new exhibition showcasing the Wyoming 2012 Federal Junior Duck Stamp winners.

For further information on the May 2nd event, please call the National Elk Refuge Administrative Office at 307.733.9212.

–FWS–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012

INTERAGENCY NEWS RELEASE

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge
675 E. Broadway, PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001
307.733.9212



USDA Forest Service
Bridger Teton National Forest
340 N. Cache, PO Box 1888
Jackson, Wyoming 83001
307.739.5564

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 13, 2012

CRITICAL WINTER RANGE CLOSURE TO BE LIFTED MAY 1

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin and Bridger–Teton National Forest Supervisor Jacqueline Buchanan announce the upcoming spring opening of the Curtis Canyon and Flat Creek Roads and removal of special Forest winter travel restrictions. Starting Friday, May 1 at 8:00 AM, the Refuge Road will be open to public travel beyond the county maintained line, allowing access to the Curtis Canyon and Flat Creek Roads and the adjoining National Forest. These roads are closed from December 1 through 8:00 AM on May 1 to protect wintering wildlife.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife personnel remind area visitors and residents that access 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 to look for elk antlers are responsible for knowing and respecting the boundaries to avoid violating federal regulations. Restrictions for accessing the Bridger–Teton National Forest through the National Elk Refuge on May 1 can be found on the Refuge’s home page at <http://www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge>.

Other access areas to the Bridger–Teton National Forest have varying opening times on May 1. For information on specific opening times or access other than through the National Elk Refuge, please contact the Bridger–Teton National Forest at 307.739.5500.

Regulations are in effect for motor vehicle use on the Bridger–Teton National Forest, affecting persons looking for antlers. On the Bridger–Teton National Forest, motor vehicle use must occur only on designated routes shown on a motor vehicle use map. Motor vehicle use maps are available at the following locations:

- Bridger–Teton National Forest web site, www.fs.usda.gov/btnf
- Bridger–Teton National Forest Supervisor’s Office, 340 N. Cache Street, Jackson, Wyoming
- Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, 532 N. Cache Street, Jackson, Wyoming

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National Elk Refuge News – May 2, 2012

May 1 Marked the Start of Two Seasons



*Right:
Two antler
hunters lie
camouflaged
in the grass,
napping next to
their morning's
yield after spending
an early shift out
looking for antlers.*

*Below: Vehicles park
at the National
Forest boundary,
where their occupants
then set off on
foot or horseback.*



May 1 activity on the National Elk Refuge is usually focused on the influx of antler hunters accessing the Bridger-Teton through the Refuge in search of “sheds,” a colloquial term for antlers that have dropped off bull elk. This year, the event was again the headliner of the day, though a less-noticed flurry of activity initiated the second season for the Refuge’s new irrigation system.

Each year, portions of the Bridger-Teton National Forest are closed on December 1 to protect wintering wildlife. In cooperation with the closure on neighboring land, the Refuge’s primary public road is closed approximately 3½ miles from the main entrance, removing winter access opportunities onto the Forest via two popular routes. Both agencies schedule spring openings of the areas on May 1.

While it’s illegal to remove antlers from the National Elk Refuge, antlers can be collected on National Forest lands. Persons anxious to reach the Forest boundary and begin their search start lining up on the Refuge prior to the 8:00 AM gate opening. When the magic hour arrives, staff escorts

the line of vehicles to the Forest border, making sure people know and respect the boundary to avoid violating federal regulations. A small task force of law enforcement officers spend several days in late April and early May assisting Refuge staff with patrols and enforcement. The activity, though



Right: The Refuge irrigation system was up and running on May 1.

Below right: Nate Pasker and Haley Hueckman repair a K-Line sprinkler pod.

A series of articles on the installation of the K-Line system is archived at <http://www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/NERPRarchive.htm>.



relatively short-lived, puts high demands on Refuge resources.

This May 1, not all of the Refuge staff was focused on antlers. Instead, three irrigators spent the morning turning on faucets rather than turning antler hunters loose, firing up the Refuge's irrigation system for the 2012 season. The crew began filling the system with water on April 23, reaching their target date of May 1 to begin scheduled irrigation. They will spend the remainder of the week pressure testing the system to ensure proper operation for the season.

Last year was the inaugural season for the Refuge's K-Line irrigation system, funded by American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money. The new system was installed to increase irrigation and produce more forage, an objective outlined in the Refuge's Bison and Elk Management Plan to reduce the reliance on winter supplemental feeding.

Last year's growing season was considered a success. Staff irrigated 3,528 acres in 2011, or approximately 3,000 acres more than in 2010. Estimated herbaceous forage production also rose. Refuge biologist Eric Cole recorded production of 18,907 tons, which was 5,254 tons more than in the previous year and 30% above the 1998–2011 average. The increased amount of forage was attributed to both above average precipitation in May and June and additional acres

irrigated by the new system. "It's a trend we hope to continue," stated Refuge Manager Steve Kallin. "We anticipate the additional forage may disperse animals and lead to a reduction in potential disease transmission."

A 2011 Forage Production Survey and Related Irrigation Analysis can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/Documents/2011ForageProductionReport.pdf>





U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 15, 2012 12-11

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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE RECEIVES HIGH MARKS FROM VISITORS

An overwhelming percentage of visitors surveyed at the National Elk Refuge in 2010 and 2011 were favorably impressed with the refuge's recreational opportunities, educational opportunities and services, according to a peer-reviewed government survey released today. Some 90 percent of respondents gave consistent high marks to all facets of their refuge experience.

The survey, commissioned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and designed, conducted, and analyzed by researchers with the U.S. Geological Survey, was carried out on 53 refuges across the National Wildlife Refuge System. The National Elk Refuge was one of the locations included in the survey.

Guidance was given to each refuge participating in the survey to choose sampling periods that best represented the diversity of visitors at their location. National Elk Refuge surveys were conducted between July 24–August 7, 2010 and January 8–22, 2011 to capture peak times during both the summer and winter seasons. A total of 236 visitors completed and returned the survey after visiting the National Elk Refuge.

In addition to a report summarizing national results, each refuge participating in the survey received an individual document evaluating responses for that specific location. Results from the National Elk Refuge survey very closely modeled those reported in the national report for overall satisfaction with a national wildlife refuge visit. Participants in the National Elk Refuge survey reported:

- 88 percent satisfaction with recreational activities and opportunities
- 90 percent satisfaction with information and education about the refuge
- 92 percent satisfaction with services provided by refuge employees or volunteers
- 92 percent satisfaction with the refuge's job of conserving fish, wildlife and their habitats.

"It's very gratifying to know there is high visitor satisfaction with the facility and the services provided," stated National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin. "The unique interagency visitor center, which serves as a location for refuge information and educational programs, supports non-local visitors that contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to the local economy."

Many survey respondents also provided written comments, and several expounded on the excellent customer service they received while at the visitor center. Comments included, "I was impressed by the volunteers at the [National] Elk Refuge – their friendliness and expertise," and "The volunteer hostess was knowledgeable, friendly, and welcoming. She made my stop so enjoyable, I would go back just to see her."

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The National Elk Refuge, which celebrates its centennial this year, was established by various Acts of Congress, executive orders, and other documents to provide, preserve, restore, and manage lands for wintering elk, birds, and other big game animals. The main Act of Congress on August 10, 1912 set aside lands “for the establishment of a winter game (elk) reserve in the State of Wyoming, lying south of the Yellowstone Park . . .” While elk are the primary reason for the Refuge, and the habitat is managed primarily for elk, other highly visible and important species exist on and use the variety of upland, riparian, and wetland habitats. Forty–seven different mammals along with 175 species of birds have been observed on the Refuge.

More than 45 million people visited national wildlife refuges in 2011. Among the most popular refuge activities visitors engaged in were wildlife observation, bird watching, photography, hiking and auto tour route driving. Most visitors also reported viewing refuge exhibits, asking information of staff or volunteers, and visiting a refuge gift shop or bookstore.

The survey was conducted under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, which mandates federal agencies to undertake periodic review of program performance. Findings from a second phase of the survey, covering another 25 refuges, are expected in 2013. The Service will use survey results to help guide refuge transportation, facilities and service planning. To view copies of both the *National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Survey Results: 2010/2011* and the National Elk Refuge individual survey report, please visit www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/NERPublicInput.htm.

Photographs of a variety of visitor opportunities on the National Elk Refuge can be viewed at www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtmprairie/sets/72157629666768844.

–FWS–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 16, 2012 12-12

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ACTIVE DUTY U.S. MILITARY OFFERED FREE ENTRANCE TO NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

To show appreciation for those who serve in the U.S. Military, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will begin issuing a new annual pass for active duty military members and their dependents, granting free entrance to national wildlife refuges, national parks, and other public lands.

Through the years, military members, especially those far from home in times of conflict, have found inspiration and rejuvenation in America's wild landscapes. "Their dedication enables all Americans to enjoy these special places in safety and security," said Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe. "This new pass gives us a way to thank members of the Armed Forces and their families for their service and their sacrifices."

The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, operated by the National Elk Refuge, serves as a Federal Recreational Lands Pass location and will have the new passes available to active duty members of the U.S. Military and their dependents starting on Monday, May 21. The Visitor Center is located at 532 North Cache Street in Jackson. A current, valid military identification card is required to obtain a pass. Although the new pass is not available to veterans and retirees, many of these individuals are eligible for other discounted passes such as the Senior Pass, granting lifetime access to U.S. citizens over 62 for \$10, or the Access Pass granting free lifetime entry for permanently disabled U.S. citizens. More information on the new pass is available at <http://store.usgs.gov/pass/military.html>.

Currently, 35 units of the National Wildlife Refuge System charge entrance fees. The new military version of the America the Beautiful National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass provides free entrance to these sites, as well as to sites managed by the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Forest Service that charge entrance fees. The pass is also available through these Federal agencies.

The National Elk Refuge does not charge an entrance fee. However, Refuge Manager Steve Kallin expressed his pleasure in the Refuge's opportunity to serve as a site location to distribute the passes. "We're proud to participate in this program and offer the pass to the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families," Kallin said. "Refuges across the nation offer outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities, and we welcome military families to relax and have fun with their families on this or other refuges within the National Wildlife Refuge System."

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The Service's National Wildlife Refuge System and the military have strong ties. More than 200,000 acres of the Refuge System are former military lands, and nearly 50 of the 556 units in the Refuge System include lands transferred from the military to the U.S. Fish and Service. Following World War I and all subsequent conflicts in our nation's history, returning veterans took advantage of hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational opportunities on refuge lands – and thousands continue to enjoy these activities today. Today, the Service employs some 1,400 veterans in full-time and temporary positions, equal to nearly 20 percent of the agency's workforce.

For further information on obtaining a Federal lands pass at the National Elk Refuge, please call the Refuge Administrative Office at 307.733.9212.

–FWS–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 19, 2012 12-13

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45TH ANNUAL ANTLER AUCTION HELD IN JACKSON, WYOMING

The 45th annual Boy Scout Elk Antler Auction was held in Jackson, Wyoming on Saturday, May 19, 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, 7,398 pounds of antlers were sold at the auction, slightly below the 10-year average of 8,369 pounds. Refuge officials were concerned that relatively mild conditions and lower snow totals on the Refuge this winter would affect the number of antlers collected and available for sale at the auction. "Many of the bull elk still had their antlers intact when they migrated off the Refuge this spring," explained Refuge Manager Steve Kallin. "We're very pleased with the numbers and the revenue it generated for our habitat management projects."

Though the total number of antlers sold was down, the price per pound was notable. Bidders paid an average of \$12.15 per pound at Saturday's auction, or \$2.81 per pound higher than the \$9.34 average over the last 10 years. Because of the higher average price per pound, Saturday's sale yielded a total of \$90,469. During the past decade, the amount generated from the auction has averaged \$76,941. This year, a total of 93 bidders registered for the auction, compared to 130 registered during the 2011 sale.

The majority of proceeds from the antler 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 projects on the Refuge such as seeding, irrigating, and purchasing necessary equipment to carry out the work. The funds also pay for seasonal laborers required of the Refuge's extensive irrigation program. The remaining 20% of the auction proceeds go to the Jackson District Boy Scouts to pay Friends of Scouting dues, required by the district to remain in Boy Scouts of America.

The National Elk Refuge is celebrating its centennial this year, a landmark date that was recognized at this year's antler auction. Jackson Mayor Mark Barron read a town proclamation prior to the start of the auction, noting the Refuge's centennial, the contributions of the Jackson District Boy Scouts to the Refuge, and the importance of the ElkFest event to the local community. Shortly after the auction began, several large birthday cakes provided by Wilson (Wyoming) Cub Scout Pack 40 were carried into the Town Square. A crowd of spectators joined in singing "Happy Birthday" to the National Elk Refuge and helped consume the special treat. A craft table was also available for those that wanted to make a birthday card for the Refuge.

The Jackson District Scouts volunteer over 2,000 hours to prepare for and conduct the sale. Photos of the antler auction, including the collection, preparation, and sale of the antlers, can be found on the National Elk Refuge photo gallery at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtmprairie/collections/72157627800456603>.

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Next year's antler auction is set for Saturday, May 18. 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. In recognition of the Refuge's centennial, all antlers purchased at the Visitor Center this year will be accompanied by a certificate of authenticity, recognizing that the antler was purchased from the Grand Teton Association and that the sale supports educational programs on the National Elk Refuge. Refuge centennial products will also be available for sale at the Visitor Center.

For further information on the Boy Scout antler auction, please contact the National Elk Refuge Administrative Office at (307) 733.9212.

–FWS–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 21, 2012 12-14

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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 2012 summer season.

The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 North Cache Street in Jackson, will expand its hours of operation to 8:00 AM through 7:00 PM beginning Friday, May 25. 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. The facility is owned and operated by the National Elk Refuge and is a source for maps, brochures, permits, and Federal lands passes. The Visitor Center also includes an extensive bookstore, with proceeds from the sales benefitting educational programming on the Refuge.

Volunteer naturalists will be available throughout the season on the Visitor Center's upper viewing deck to assist guests 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 schedule programs will be posted throughout the season on the Refuge's web page at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge.

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 Sunday, May 27. The charming homestead will be open from 10:00 AM through 4:00 PM daily, including weekends, through Labor Day. The Miller House and surrounding land was the first piece of property purchased for the creation of the National Elk Refuge, established in 1912. In addition to the National Elk Refuge's centennial, this summer marks the 150th anniversary of the Homestead Act of 1862. Summer volunteers will be on duty daily to talk about history and early homesteading on the Refuge as well as 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.

–FWS–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012

National Elk Refuge News – May 30, 2012

Refuge Issues First Military Pass on Memorial Day Weekend



Memorial Day is a day of remembrance for those who have died in our nation's service, and many celebrations recognizing the holiday also honor service men and women who have served in previous wars or are currently in active duty status. This past Memorial Day weekend, National Elk Refuge staff had the opportunity to show their appreciation to six visiting military families by issuing new passes that will grant them free entrance to national wildlife refuges, national parks, and other Federal lands for the following year.

The America the Beautiful – National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass is a long-standing program that offers U.S. citizens a suite of annual and lifetime passes to access Federal recreation lands. On May 19, the program expanded, adding a pass that is available to active duty military members and their dependents. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sent out an announcement describing the new pass on May 16, with individual refuges sending out site-specific news releases that same day to announce the availability of the passes at their location. The National Elk Refuge was one of those stations.

"I'm not sure how the National Elk Refuge news release made it to Ogden, Utah," explained Staff Sergeant Joshua Aisel, who is stationed at the Browning U.S. Army Reserve Center 240 miles south of Jackson, Wyoming. "I received it from my Sergeant Major. The timing was perfect." Aisel called National



Refuge volunteer Betty Mulcahy helps Kanha and Joshua Aisel complete the paperwork to be the first party receiving an active U.S. Military Federal lands pass from the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center.

Elk Refuge Outdoor Recreation Planner Lori Iverson just days after the Refuge's news release was issued, noting that he and five of his close military friends and families were heading to Jackson in a few days to spend time together over the holiday weekend. Aisel was seeking additional information for his party to obtain their passes, a token of appreciation they could put to immediate use as their weekend plans included trips to both Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks. Iverson arranged to meet the families at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center and photograph the first military pass issued from the National Elk Refuge.

"It just seemed like such a great story," Iverson said. "All six of the men in the group are a close knit bunch. They wanted to have one last weekend together with their families before they're reassigned." Most of the group has recently

returned from deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq, and all are scheduled for a permanent station change after spending an average of three years in Ogden. One will head to Germany, another to California, while three are still awaiting their reassignment. Aisel is leaving for Ohio in just a few weeks. "The fact that we issued that first military pass on Memorial Day weekend made it all the more special," Iverson added. "We were pleased to be able to reward the incredible dedication it takes to serve our country."

Despite cloudy skies, snowfall, and wind over the weekend, the group enjoyed their stay in Jackson Hole. "When you're with friends, the weather doesn't really matter," Aisel explained. "It was a pretty special weekend." Aisel added that he and his wife Kanha look forward to using their Federal lands pass to explore recreation areas near their new Ohio home.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 3, 2012 12-15

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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE PHOTOGRAPH TO BE RAFFLED AS PART OF CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

As part of the National Elk Refuge's centennial celebration, the public will have an opportunity to win an iconic photo of the refuge landscape entitled, "Winter's Refuge." The stunning matted and framed photograph, which measures approximately 17" x 21", was taken by Henry Holdsworth from Wild by Nature Gallery in Jackson.

The Grand Teton Association is sponsoring the raffle of the photograph, with tickets offered at \$5 each or 5 for \$20. National Elk Refuge staff will kick off raffle ticket sales at the season opener of the Jackson Farmer's Market on the Town Square at 8:00 AM this Saturday, July 7. After Saturday, the photograph and ticket sales will move to the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson. The drawing for the photograph will be held at 4:00 PM on Sunday, August 12; persons do not need to be present to win.

"I shot the photo on a frosty, cold January morning, when the temperature was around 25 degrees below zero," Holdsworth described. "The sun was just cresting over the ridge, and I only got off about four or five photos before the fog from Flat Creek completely engulfed the scene and the view of the elk." The photo was later used by *National Geographic* magazine as a full page spread in its November 2003 issue, accompanying an article by local author Alexandra Fuller. The picture shows a group of bull elk near the site of the Winegar homestead, a recognizable and often-photographed refuge location marked by a single cottonwood tree along Flat Creek.

For further information on the raffle, please call the National Elk Refuge administrative offices at (307) 733.9212.



–FWS–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012

National Elk Refuge News – July 13, 2012

Fence Removed to Decrease Risk to Wildlife



The National Elk Refuge is celebrating its centennial this year, a milestone that is usually marked by reflections on the past. Though many activities scheduled for the Refuge's August celebration will focus on history and events from long ago, a fencing project underway this summer is centered on getting rid of the old and looking to the future of making the Refuge's boundary more wildlife friendly.

Last month, approximately 25 people gathered in the northeast corner of the Refuge, tasked with removing a mile of barbed wire fence and a short stretch of dilapidated buck and rail along part of the Refuge's boundary. The site was selected as a collaborative

project between the National Elk Refuge and the Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation (JHWF), an organization whose mission is to promote ways for the Jackson, Wyoming community to live compatibly with wildlife.

Fences can block daily movements of animals, make them more susceptible to predation, and interrupt seasonal migrations. Though big game animals such as deer, elk, and pronghorn are capable of jumping over fences, they are vulnerable to misjudging heights or colliding with a fence and becoming entangled. Because of the prevalence of fences in Western Wyoming, the JHWF has an active task group that organizes volunteers each summer to take

down old barbed wire fences in the Jackson Hole valley.

Representatives from the JHWF contacted Refuge staff in March, soliciting ideas for a fence removal project for this summer. After several reconnaissance tours of Refuge lands this spring, a section of barbed wire fencing that is estimated to be 30-40 years old was identified and selected as a 2012 fence removal project. The fence line ran perpendicular to typical elk migration onto and off the Refuge, making it particularly hazardous to moving animals. JHWF members made contacts with private landowners in proximity or along the fence line from the Refuge work site prior to the start of the project to



Volunteers roll strands of barbed wire onto a spool after they were removed from the fence posts.



A line of workers holds lengths of barbed wire and walks them forward as they're fed onto the spool.

both inform them and obtain their consent.

The fence removal volunteer group included eight students from the AmeriCorps program. On a bright, sunny Saturday, the group pulled wire from the posts and wrapped it onto spools to be recycled. Each bale of discarded wire, six in all, weighed several hundred pounds. A small section of buck and rail fence was also removed, with the decayed rails scattered throughout the area.

Just as the work was wrapping up for the day, Deputy Refuge Manager Paul Santavy watched a mule deer walk up to the boundary and the remaining fence posts. He described, "The deer looked left

and right as though it was looking for the old barrier." According to Santavy, several onlookers observed the mule deer gingerly step through the now-open boundary and continue on its way. "It was almost as if it had been scripted," Santavy said. "It was a satisfying moment to actually see the effects of our work."

Another section of Refuge fence is scheduled to be removed later this month.



The end result of a hard day's work.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 16, 2012 12-16

PO Box 510
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TWO PROGRAMS SCHEDULED THIS WEEK AT THE JACKSON HOLE & GREATER YELLOWSTONE VISITOR CENTER

The National Elk Refuge will be hosting two free programs at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center this week to recognize the Grand Teton Association's Membership Week. The Grand Teton Association is a nonprofit organization that operates sales outlets in a number of federally-operated visitor centers and contact stations throughout the area, with sales supporting educational, interpretive, and research projects of their partnering organizations. The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson, serves as one of the association's largest sales outlets.

On Tuesday, July 17, the Teton Raptor Center will be offering an hour-long "Hawk Talk" at 9:00 AM, featuring a live bird demonstration. The Teton Raptor Center is a nonprofit organization that takes in injured, ill, and orphaned birds of prey year-round and provides veterinary care and rehabilitation in an effort to return raptors to the wild.

National Elk Refuge Facilities Maintenance Worker Amanda Soliday will give a Search & Rescue demonstration at 10:00 AM on Friday, July 20 with the help of her search dog, Roscoe. Soliday and Roscoe volunteer with the Wyoming K-9 Search and Rescue program, a nonprofit organization committed to training competent search dog teams and assisting local, state, and federal authorities in search and rescue situations. Roscoe, a 7 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 provide a series of live search demonstrations with Roscoe. Otis, Soliday's 4 month-old puppy, will also make a guest appearance. Soliday will explain the steps necessary to begin early training with a search and rescue dog.

During the Grand Teton Association's Membership Week, all sales items will be reduced by 10% on Thursday, July 19; current or new members will receive a 25% discount off all purchases throughout the week. Persons purchasing new memberships this week at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center location will also receive one free ticket to win a 17" x 21" framed Henry Holdsworth photo of the National Elk Refuge entitled "Winter's Refuge." Raffle tickets for the iconic photograph of the refuge landscape went on sale on July 7, with sales running through August 12. The photo, shot by Henry Holdsworth of Wild by Nature Gallery in Jackson, is currently on display at the Visitor Center. The raffle is sponsored by the Grand Teton Association and is part of the National Elk Refuge's centennial celebration. Information on the Refuge's centennial celebration and the opportunity to win the photo can be found at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge.

To learn about the Grand Teton Association and membership benefits, please visit www.grandtetonpark.org.

–FWS–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 25, 2012 12-17

PO Box 510
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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE TO HOST A SERIES OF CENTENNIAL EVENTS

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin is pleased to announce an exciting line-up of programs scheduled for Friday, August 10 through Sunday, August 12 to celebrate and honor the Refuge's 100-year history. The weekend centennial celebration dates were selected to coincide with the historic date of August 10, 1912 when an Act of Congress set aside lands "for the establishment of a winter game (elk) reserve in the State of Wyoming, lying south of the Yellowstone Park . . ."

Centennial activities will kick off at **10:30 AM on Friday, August 10** at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson. An hour-long program, free of charge and open to the public, will take place on the Visitor Center lawn. Invited guests include Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar or his representative, Wyoming Governor Matt Mead, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Dan Ashe, and Regional Director Steve Guertin. The program will feature music, speakers, a short performance by Theodore Roosevelt impersonator Case Hicks, and birthday cake. Parking will be limited; persons attending the event are encouraged to car pool, use off-site parking, or walk from START bus stops such as the Home Ranch Parking Lot located three blocks south of the Visitor Center at the corner of North Cache and Gill Streets.

The National Elk Refuge administrative offices at 675 E. Broadway Street and the Historic Miller House, located ¼ mile north of the Refuge's entrance off East Broadway Street, will be closed on Friday, August 10 from 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM so all Refuge staff can attend the ceremony.

Case Hicks, portraying Theodore Roosevelt at Friday's ceremony, will also offer two hour-long programs later that same weekend, giving audiences an opportunity to learn about Roosevelt's establishment of the nation's first wildlife refuge in 1903 and his important contributions to present-day conservation efforts. In character, Hicks will offer a special children's program on **Friday, August 10 from 1:00 to 2:00 PM**, entertaining the audience with stories of his childhood and adventures. Free prizes will be given to all children ages 5-12 attending the program, including a limited number of "Teddy Bears." A second full performance for persons of all ages will be held on **Saturday, August 11 from 10:00 to 11:00 AM**. Both Theodore Roosevelt performances will be at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center and are free of charge.

Other events at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center include:

- **Friday, August 10, 3:00 to 3:30 PM:** Slideshow and talk by the Jackson Hole Historical Society & Museum entitled "Homesteader Hopes and Reality in the High Country of Jackson Hole." The program will share the history of homesteaders and settlers in the valley through stories of early day residents and historic photographs.
- **Friday, August 10, 4:30 to 6:30 PM:** "Partners in Pathways" celebration, bicycle ride and free barbecue. Sponsored by Friends of Pathways, Jackson Hole Community Pathways, Town of Jackson, Teton County, and the National Elk Refuge. Persons planning to leave the Visitor Center to participate in the ride should park at the Home Ranch Parking Lot located three blocks south of the Visitor Center.

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- **Saturday, August 11, 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM:** A ranger-led presentation giving insight to the legendary mountain men or fur trappers who lived and trapped in Jackson Hole in the 1820s and 1830s. Dressed in appropriate attire, a Grand Teton National Park ranger will discuss and demonstrate many of the specialized skills that were required of these brave and industrious individuals.
- **Sunday, August 12, 4:00 PM:** Raffle drawing for a Henry Holdworth's framed photo entitled, "Winter's Refuge." The photo is currently on display at the Visitor Center, with ticket sales available through August 12 at 3:30 PM.

A number of weekend events are also scheduled for the Historic Miller House, located ¾ mile north of the Refuge's entrance off East Broadway Street in Jackson. They include:

- **Friday, August 10, 12:00 to 4:00 PM:** Flint knapping demonstration by artist Tom Lucas, who has a working knowledge of the methods of ancestral tool making.
- **Friday, August 10, 12:00 to 4:00 PM ; Saturday, August 11 and Sunday, August 12, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM:** Period costumes and props on loan from the Jackson Hole Playhouse. A variety of costumes of all sizes will be on display and available for try-on and photographs.
- **Saturday, August 11, 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM:** Chuckwagon cooking demonstration with free samples, provided by Western Range Catering.
- **Sunday, August 12, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM:** Quilting demonstration by the Jackson Hole Quilt Guild.

Two additional public programs will be offered at locations other than the Refuge's two primary visitor services facilities. They include:

- **Friday, August 10, 1:00 to 2:30 PM:** Refuge staff will lead a public feed shed tour to give participants an opportunity to learn more about the Refuge's supplemental feeding and irrigation programs. Persons on the tour will drive caravan-style to the feed shed and must provide their own transportation. The tour, offered free of charge, will depart from the Historic Miller House at 1:00 PM.
- **Friday, August 10, 7:00 to 9:00 PM:** An evening of storytelling and reminiscing, entitled "Refuge Reflections: A Manager's Perspective," will be held at the National Museum of Wildlife Art, located on the west side of Highway 89, 2½ miles north of Jackson's Town Square. The program will include interviews with four National Elk Refuge Managers, followed by a social hour to meet and visit with each of the speakers.

A schedule of activities, listed by day, can be found on the National Elk Refuge's home page at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge. "We encourage families to come out and enjoy a variety of fun, educational programs and be a part of the celebration," Kallin said.

For further information on any of the individual events, please call the Refuge administrative offices at 307.733.9212.

– FWS –

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
AUGUST 9, 2012 12-18

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
307.733.9212, ext. 6

NATIONAL ELK REFUGE MAKES PREPARATIONS FOR BISON AND ELK HUNTING SEASONS

The 2012 bison hunting season on the National Elk Refuge will begin on Wednesday, August 15 and run through January 6, 2013. 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 2012 season are not eligible to hunt bison this season.

The Refuge bison hunting season will be comprised of 11 hunt periods of varying length. Similar to last year's season, the schedule incorporates two weeklong breaks 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 6 through December 16 and will consist of 11 consecutive hunt periods. Persons interested in hunting elk may begin applying for Refuge-specific permits beginning Tuesday, August 14. Applications for elk permits must be submitted electronically by September 25 to be entered into a computerized random draw. The results of the drawing will be posted on the application web site by September 28. Application for National Elk Refuge elk hunting permits is done in cooperation with the Wyoming Game & Fish Private Lands Public Wildlife Access program. Hunters may initially apply for only one hunt period per hunt unit and must already have a valid Wyoming elk license to enter the electronic drawing. Elk hunters attempting to fill two valid licenses on the Refuge during the same hunt period do not need to apply for two Refuge permits.

Bison and elk hunting information, including general information, application procedures, regulations, maps, weapons restrictions, and access can be found at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/NERHuntingRegs.htm. Printable versions (Adobe PDF) of the regulations and maps are available on the web site. Printed copies of the regulations can be picked up in Jackson at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center (532 N. Cache Street), Wyoming Game & Fish Department (420 N. Cache Street), or the National Elk Refuge Administrative Offices (625 E. Broadway Street).

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–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012

National Elk Refuge News – August 16, 2012

Happy 100th Birthday, National Elk Refuge



The National Elk Refuge celebrated its centennial in style this past week, offering an exciting line-up of programs to honor the refuge's 100-year history. The weekend centennial celebration schedule was selected to coincide with the historic date of August 10, 1912 when an Act of Congress set aside lands “for the establishment of a winter game (elk) reserve in the State of Wyoming, lying south of the Yellowstone Park . . .”

Centennial activities kicked off on the morning of Friday, August 10 at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center. An hour-long program, open to the public, featured music, speakers, a short interpretive performance, and birthday cake. The program began with a presentation of the colors by the Jackson District Boy Scouts and a beautiful *a cappella* version of the National Anthem sung by the Bar J Wranglers, a western musical group from the Jackson area.

After welcoming comments by National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin, Jackson Mayor Mark Barron, and Teton County Commissioner Paul Vogelheim, former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Director John Turner took the stage. Turner, who lives in the Jackson, Wyoming area, served as the Master of Ceremonies for the program.

Wyoming Governor Matt Mead was the first distinguished speaker to give a full address to the audience of approximately 250 people. Mead grew up in Jackson



Wyoming Governor Matt Mead and USFWS Director Dan Ashe blow out the candles on the National Elk Refuge's centennial birthday cake during a public ceremony on August 10.

and reminisced on how he spent time on the National Elk Refuge as a youth. Mead was followed by USFWS Regional Director Steve Guertin and Theodore Roosevelt impersonator Case Hicks, who, as Roosevelt, explained to the audience the importance of conservation and the establishment of the National Wildlife Refuge System. In character, Hicks wasn't shy about pointing out to the crowd that he established the first wildlife refuge at Pelican Island in Florida in 1903, with the designation of the

National Elk Refuge occurring not too far behind.

At the conclusion of his short interpretive performance, Hicks introduced the final speaker: USFWS Director Dan Ashe. In his comments at the ceremony and on his blog the following day, Ashe stated, “If you ever have occasion to speak to the public, here's a quick tip: try to avoid coming to the stage after one of the greatest presidents of the 20th century.” He went on to state that “. . . I'm sure



Left: Theodore Roosevelt impersonator Case Hicks gave a short performance at the refuge's centennial ceremony. Hicks also gave two hour-long performances later that weekend.

Above: All participants in a special children's program given by Hicks on August 10 received a "Teddy Bear."

'TR' would have been pleased and amazed at the growth and success of the National Wildlife Refuge System he founded more than a century ago."

Following Ashe's presentation, a birthday cake was carried into the ceremony. Ashe and Governor Mead again took the stage, singing the Happy Birthday Song along with the Bar J Wranglers and the rest of the audience. The two then blew out the candles, signaling the end of the morning's ceremony. The audience was treated to cupcakes and lemonade on the lawn of the Visitor Center to wrap up the event.

The celebration didn't end with the inaugural ceremony. A number of events were held throughout the day, both at the Visitor Center and

the Historic Miller House on the Refuge Road.

Case Hicks returned to the stage as Theodore Roosevelt that afternoon, offering a special children's program that gave a younger audience an opportunity to learn about conservation and an important part of our nation's history. All children attending the event received a special "Teddy Bear" resembling the program's speaker. They were also asked to participate in the Service's "Get Your Goose On" campaign, a promotional activity that includes obtaining photos and video footage of visitors waving "Get Your Goose On" towels as they visit refuges throughout the region. The children were given towels bearing the slogan, asked to stand behind a large paper banner, and instructed

to run and break through the banner on cue while two social media coordinators from the regional office recorded the stunt. The blue goose is the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Other Visitor Center activities included a slideshow narrated by the Jackson Hole Historical Society & Museum that shared stories and historic photographs of settlers in the Jackson valley, and a large community celebration entitled "Partners in Pathways" centered around the new portion of pathway running north of Jackson and along the west side of the National Elk Refuge. The pathways event featured music, a group bicycle ride, and a free barbecue.

At the Historic Miller House, artist Tom Lucas gave a flint knapping



The centennial weekend provided an opportunity for the refuge's contribution to the USFWS's "Get Your Goose On" campaign, which encourages visitors to enjoy national wildlife refuges. The fun, promotional program involves photo shoots from various refuges.

demonstration. Lucas has a working knowledge of ancestral tool making that he loves to share with audiences. He entertained small groups throughout the afternoon, with some people staying as long as 30 minutes to watch him work. At the same time Lucas was practicing his craft, refuge staffers Eric Cole and Kirk Hayenga met a group of approximately ten people at the historic site to take them out onto the refuge for an up-close view of the irrigation system and a chance to visit one of the supplemental feeding sheds where pelletized alfalfa is stored.

Friday's activities wrapped up that evening when Refuge Manager Steve Kallin was joined by previous managers Don Redfearn (1966-1977), John Wilbrecht (1977-1989), and Barry Reiswig (1996-2007) as they gathered on stage at the National Museum of Wildlife Art. The four spoke about the challenges they faced during their tenure and

the public scrutiny the National Elk Refuge receives compared to other wildlife refuges. The discussion was moderated by John Morgan of Dialogue Business Strategies and was followed by a social hour in the museum's lobby.

Centennial events continued throughout the remainder of the weekend. "August is a busy month in Jackson," explained Visitor Services Specialist Lori Iverson. "We wanted to offer programs throughout the weekend for people that already had a full schedule on any one particular day."

On Saturday, Case Hicks gave his final performance as Theodore Roosevelt at the Visitor Center, followed by a second living history program. Grand Teton National Park naturalist Andrew Langford, dressed in appropriate attire, discussed and demonstrated many of the specialized skills that were required of the legendary mountain

men who lived and trapped in Jackson Hole in the 1820s and 1830s.

While the history programs entertained audiences at the Visitor Center, Joe and Vicki Jones of Western Range Catering provided a chuckwagon cooking demonstration at the Historic Miller House. They gave samples to all who came to look at their set-up and learn about their unique style of preparing food.

Programs wrapped up on Sunday with a quilting demonstration by the Jackson Hole Quilt Guild. A number of guild members spent the afternoon at the Historic Miller House, stitching in front of a backdrop of colorful quilts. The quilt frame the group brought with them was an antique, a relic built by an early valley homesteader and grandfather of one of the quilters.

One event lasted all three days of the refuge's centennial weekend.



A number of programs were offered at the Historic Miller House during the refuge's centennial weekend, including flint knapper Tom Lucas and a chuckwagon cooking demonstration by Western Range Catering.

Thanks to the generous loan of costumes from the Jackson Hole Playhouse, period clothing was available all weekend at the Historic Miller House for people to try on and have a fun photo opportunity. "Everyone, especially the children, had a lot of fun with the opportunity to slip on some of the clothing," explained refuge

volunteer Jim Crabb. "Who doesn't like to dress up?"

In all, refuge staff considered the centennial weekend celebration a big success. "It really was a lot of fun," added Refuge Manager Steve Kallin, who thanked those that organized and attended the event. "It appropriately highlighted the

importance of the National Elk Refuge to this community."

Over 50 photos of the National Elk Refuge's centennial have been posted to the web-based photo sharing site *Flickr* in a set entitled "Celebrating a Century" at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtmprairie/sets/72157629853975498/>



The Historic Miller House saw a dramatic increase in visitation over the refuge's centennial weekend as people came to enjoy the unique activities.

National Elk Refuge News – September 7, 2012

SCA Conservation Internship Comes to a Close



Dominick Harris, right, was one of 25 individuals that participated in a fence removal project on the refuge's northern boundary in June.

At the National Elk Refuge this week, it's difficult to measure which is the larger of the two: the amount of personal belongings Dominick Harris is packing into his vehicle, or the wealth of experiences and memories he'll be taking with him when he hits the road on Saturday to finish his last quarter this fall at North Seattle Community College. Harris's 12-week internship on the refuge is coming to a close, a summer position that brought with it a variety of learning experiences.

Harris came to the National Elk Refuge this summer through the Student Conservation Association (SCA) Program, an affiliation that provides college and high school-

aged members with hands-on conservation service opportunities in a variety of fields. The program's internships are structured to let participants learn from resource management professionals, gain tangible skills and experience, and make a substantial contribution to natural and cultural resources.

Harris began looking for an SCA internship in March. The organization's available summer positions are advertised annually on their web site, but Harris later learned of other internships he would be eligible for that were not posted on the internet. As a Native Alaskan and member of the Aleut tribe, Harris could also apply for internships offered

through SCA's Tribal Internship Program. The program, now in its second year, reaches out to under-represented populations within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In its first year, the program offered 18 conservation internships on wildlife refuges. This season, 11 students were placed in refuge positions, including Harris and his appointment on the National Elk Refuge.

Harris spent much of the summer inventorying and mapping forage on the refuge. For several weeks, he canvassed over half of the 25,000 acre refuge and documented areas of cheatgrass infestation. Cheatgrass is an annual grass that invades rangelands, pastures,



Harris takes a break from his weed spraying along the Gros Ventre River.

prairies, and other open areas. The aggressive, invasive weed, notorious for thriving in disturbed areas, has the potential to radically alter the ecosystems it invades. It can completely replace native vegetation and become difficult to control once it becomes established. Harris entered the information he gathered during his surveys into a computer database and created a map showing the areas where the cheatgrass occurs on the refuge.

Harris also participated in two “spray days,” where a large task force of interagency resource personnel eradicate known populations of noxious weeds in targeted areas. The first spray days project, which has become an annual July event on the National Elk Refuge, was a three-day invasive plant control effort along the Gros Ventre River, primarily targeting spotted knapweed. The second session took place a week later at the Laurance S.

Rockefeller Preserve and along the Snake River within Grand Teton National Park. It was the first ever Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee’s (GYCC) noxious weed spray project and involved nearly 70 participants from 13 federal,

state, and county agencies as well as private stakeholders. There, the crews targeted St. John’s wort, hound’s tongue, and musk thistle, all invasive weeds that compete with native vegetation and adversely impact wildlife habitat.

In addition to getting rid of noxious weeds, Harris helped remove dilapidated buck and rail fence along a section of the refuge’s boundary. The fence removal project was part of a collaborative effort between the National Elk Refuge and the Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation, an organization whose mission is to promote ways for the Jackson, Wyoming community to live compatibly with wildlife. A full article on the fence removal project can be found at http://www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/Documents/Refuge%20Updates/2012/07_13_12_FenceRemoval.pdf. After the fence came down, Harris returned to the site and posted boundary stakes where the fence once stood, creating a more wildlife-friendly way to delineate the refuge property line.



Refuge biologist Eric Cole, right, received help from Harris during his forage sampling work in early September.

Other projects Harris worked on this summer included collecting scat for a climatology study, counting bison and monitoring their movement onto and off the refuge in July and August, conducting forage sampling surveys with the staff biologist, and entering historic elk collar data from the 1970s and 80s to aid in assessing elk migration trends.

His shining moment, though, came in August during the National Elk Refuge's 100-year celebration. The refuge held a centennial ceremony on the morning of August 10, followed by a children's program and a "Get Your Goose On" photo

shoot that was part of a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service promotional campaign. Despite the warm temperatures, the number of children wanting a hug, and the ambulatory challenges that come with wearing a costume, Harris donned the refuge's elk suit for the festivities. With all the media coverage the events received, Harris achieved his 15 minutes of fame – even if it was all incognito.

The SCA program has its roots in the Jackson Hole valley, when, in 1957, SCA (then called the Student Conservation Program) placed 53 summer volunteers in Grand Teton National Park during the program's

first year of operation. The National Elk Refuge is pleased to have hosted an intern in an area that has meaning to the the conservation organization's history. "Dominick contributed to many projects this summer and was a valuable asset to our staff," stated Deputy Manager Paul Santavy, who supervised Harris. "We really benefitted from his learning experience and appreciated his enthusiasm at helping out wherever and whenever we needed the assistance."

Best of luck, Dominick. Thanks for a job well done.



Unrecognizable on the right, Harris patiently posed for a number of photos during several of the refuge's centennial events. Here, Harris was photographed with USFWS Mountain-Prairie Regional Director Steve Guertin and his family. The identity of the Blue Goose, pictured in the center, has not been publicly disclosed.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 7, 2012 12-19

PO Box 510
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ELK HUNTING PERMIT APPLICATION PERIOD CLOSSES SEPTEMBER 25

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin wishes to remind hunters they have until the close of business on Tuesday, September 25 to apply for a permit to hunt elk on the refuge during the 2012 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 25 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 by September 28.

On September 28, 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 during the initial drawing may reapply for a first-come, first-served leftover permit valid for another hunt period.

During the hunting application process, hunters do not need to apply to hunt in a specific unit within the National Elk Refuge. All refuge permits will be valid for either the North or South hunt unit, but hunters must understand and comply with weapons restrictions based on the area where they will be hunting. Also, permits 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.

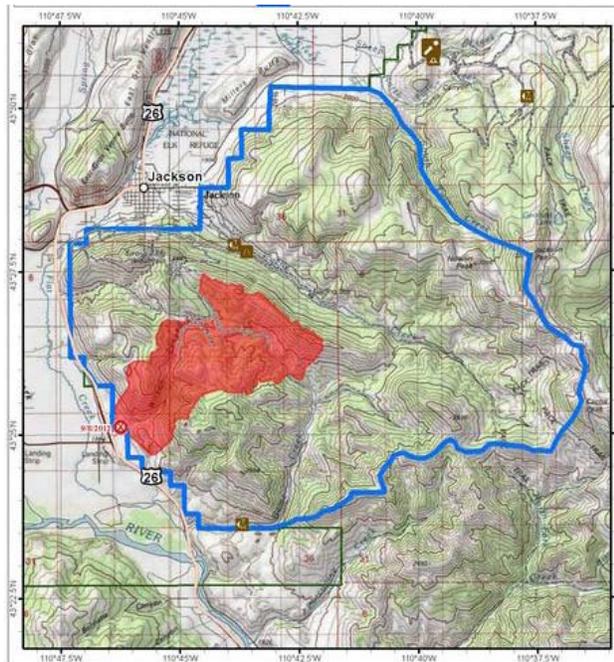
For assistance or questions about hunting on the National Elk Refuge, please call the refuge administrative offices at 307.733.9212.

–FWS–

National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012

National Elk Refuge News – September 17, 2012

Refuge Supports Helibase During Wildland Fire Operations



The red shaded area designates the fire's location as of Sunday, September 16. By Monday, the fire was reported at 3,373 acres and 57% contained.

By mid-September, the National Elk Refuge typically begins scaling back its seasonal irrigation operations. The cooler temperatures, occasional frosts, and the end of the growing season serve as the trigger to begin breaking down and storing irrigation equipment for the upcoming winter season. This week, however, the irrigation system on the south end of the refuge is still fully operational, with its purpose shifted to a new and unexpected use.

The Horsethief Canyon Fire began on the afternoon of Saturday, September 8, originating several miles south of the Town of Jackson near Highway 89. The fire quickly spread and initially posed a threat to the Game Creek subdivision. Within the next operational period, the fire's direction of spread moved north and east, and emergency responders issued an evacuation

advisory for portions of East Jackson. Additional resources, including air support, were put on the fire as the number of values at risk increased.

Aircraft are most effective in the early stages of a wildfire, known as initial attack. Helicopters can drop both water and chemical retardant on hot spots, allowing ground crews to make some advance. Air drops are used to slow down the growth of a wildfire, reduce the fire's heat, help push the fire in a more favorable direction, and protect structures facing imminent threat from the fire.

The incoming Type II Fire Management Team prioritized the need for a location that could support the anticipated helicopter operations. Fire managers designate a helibase during an incident, where parking, fueling,

maintenance, and loading of the helicopters can occur. Through interagency fire management cooperation between the Bridger-Teton National Forest, Grand Teton National Park, National Elk Refuge, and Teton County, the refuge had already been discussed as a potential helibase location if the need should arise. The site has previously been used during both fire and search and rescue missions, but only for short-term operations involving a single helicopter.

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin was initially contacted on Sunday, September 9 regarding possible use of the refuge's southeast corner for the Horsethief Canyon Fire. The temporary helibase used during the first operational period was located south of Jackson near the fire's origin, but the flight path involved flying over Highway 89. Not only was there the safety concern of operating aircraft near vehicles and persons unaccustomed to helicopter safety standards, but emergency managers took into consideration that air operations could create traffic conflicts with persons wanting to stop on the highway and watch. The refuge site met the criteria for selecting a helibase, which includes specifications like a reasonably flat area clear of people, vehicles and obstructions such as trees, poles, and overhead wires.

Helicopters have the ability to draw water from natural sources such as rivers, ponds, or lakes and carry it to the fire, but some also have the capacity to transport and drop fire retardant. If retardant is used, a ground facility is required where the concentrated powder can be



A Sikorsky S-64E, also called a Skycrane, flies up to a holding tank to draw up more fire retardant. The mixing plant, or red tanker, combines the containers of retardant powder with water and sends the mixture through a hose to the dip tank. There, the fire retardant can be accessed by the helicopter through a draft hose suspended from the bottom of the aircraft. Skycranes can generally carry around 1,000 gallons of fire retardant in one load. To date, approximately 144,000 gallons of retardant have been dropped on the fire.

combined with water to create the liquid slurry. By Monday afternoon, refuge lands were being considered for establishing a retardant base next to the helibase, where the compound could be mixed, stored, and loaded into aircraft. A mixing unit was brought onto the scene to support three Type I helicopters. Bob Rebarchik was brought in as a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service agency representative. Rebarchik, now Deputy Refuge Manager at the National Bison Range in Montana, previously served as a Zone Fire Management Officer for the region.

A portable fire retardant mixing plant requires a substantial amount of water be provided on site. Nearby fire hydrants were looked at as a water source, but it would have required several miles of connected lengths of hose

and accessories on the ground in trafficked areas. Instead, refuge personnel looked at modifying the station's new irrigation system as a water source for the plant.

The National Elk Refuge received American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding in 2009 to purchase and install a new irrigation system, replacing a series of flood irrigation ditches and hand lines that were used for decades. The new system was completed and fully operational in May 2011, making this its second year of use. The system operates through an underground water delivery system and above ground hoses and pods for water distribution. During the Horsethief Canyon Fire, irrigation hoses were used to continually fill a 10,000 gallon freestanding water storage unit to make water readily



One half of the portable mixing plant is filled with water; while the other half combines the retardant powder with water and stores it.

available for the mixing tank. Additionally, water was sent to a second, larger temporary storage



Three 2" diameter hoses lead into a 10,000 gallon water tank, or "pumpkin," which serves as a holding tank. One 4" diameter hose draws water away to the portable retardant mixing plant as needed.

tank that could be accessed by the helicopters for rinsing and cleaning equipment. Refuge staff modified the plain water dip tank so the hose bringing in water could be attached through the bottom of the collection unit. Supplying water from the bottom mitigated safety concerns that a hose laid over the top of the tank could pop up during water drafting operations and create a hazard for the helicopters.

The location of the retardant mixing plant significantly decreased the turnaround time from when a helicopter could pick up a load

of retardant, carry it to the fire, release it, and return for additional loads. Because the retardant supply was so close to the fire's location and the areas where the retardant was needed, the turnaround time was approximately three minutes. "That's an efficient use of time," Rebarchik explained. "It really increased the amount of retardant that could be applied to the fire." It also helped to cut down on costs by reducing the flight time needed to deliver a load of retardant. Use of the refuge's irrigation system further contributed to cost containment by eliminating

the need to order and use water tenders for transporting large quantities of water.

A total of 650 personnel are currently assigned to the fire, including 9 helicopters (3 Type I, 3 Type II, and 3 Type III). "This was a complex operation," explained Alan Mitchell, Operations Section Chief for the Great Basin Incident Management Team. "A mobile retardant plant needs a good water source and space to operate effectively," Mitchell continued. "The refuge gave us both this and the helibase in one location, which is something we can't always find. The retardant in general was integral to our success."

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin spoke to the strong interagency component of the local fire management program when he stated, "We were very willing to open refuge lands for suppression operations and make our irrigation system available as a much-needed water source. We're proud of our interagency cooperation and welcomed the opportunity to assist in any way possible."

Additional photos of the helibase on the National Elk Refuge can be found at www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtmprairie/sets/72157631552655604.

Two temporary tanks can be seen. The one on the left contains fire retardant, while the one on the right contains plain water for rinsing.

Due to the proximity of helicopter operations to the Refuge Road as seen here, the road has been closed to foot and bicycle traffic from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm daily. Cars were allowed to travel through but were not allowed to stop for the first ¼ mile.



National Elk Refuge News – September 19, 2012

Mobile Retardant Plant Begins Demobilizing



PHOS-CHEK technicians clean a dip tank that previously held retardant. The containment berm underneath the tank keeps any residue from directly seeping into the ground. It will be highly diluted before being cleaned up.

With the Horsethief Canyon Fire 83% contained and no fire activity expected to challenge established fire lines, the demobilization of some fire resources has begun. Crews and equipment are released when an operation can be downsized, helping to reduce the cost of the fire and make personnel available to other incidents if needed.

This morning, crews started dismantling the mobile retardant plant that has been set up on the National Elk Refuge since last week. All equipment used during the retardant operation will be moved off location by September 20. The retardant plant crew has been working with refuge staff to mitigate any environmental concerns or impacts the operation

may have had on the landscape.

Fire retardants work by containing salts that react with wildland fuels such as woody material, grass, and other organic matter. The heat from the fire generates a chemical reaction in the substance that renders it noncombustable. When the fire is deprived of fuel, the intensity and the rate of spread decreases.

The fire retardant produced on site at the National Elk Refuge was a product called PHOS-CHEK, the trade name for a retardant manufactured by ICL Performance Products LP. PHOS-CHEK products consist of 80% water, 14% fertilizer type salts, and 6% coloring agency, along with corrosion inhibitors and flow

conditioners. All mixed PHOS-CHEK retardants are non-toxic by U.S. Forest Service criteria.

Retardants are categorized as either an “R” or an “F” product, depending on whether the individual product contains iron oxide. The retardant mixed on the refuge was an “F” product, also known as a fugative-colored retardant. “Retardants are colored red so pilots have a visual cue during the drops,” explained Lou Gildemeister, Senior Technical Representative for PHOS-CHEK. “Pilots have to see where they have already laid the retardant and be able to gauge their next target.” After exposure to sunlight, fugative retardants fade to an earth tone color. Sunlight affects the coloring agent in the retardant

A portable water tank with a 10,000 gallon capacity, also known as a “pumpkin,” is hoisted and rinsed to remove any weeds prior to being folded up and stored.

The pumpkin was continually filled with water from the refuge’s irrigation system during the fire to support air operations.



so the reddish tint eventually dissipates. “Any red coloring left on the ground is only temporary,” added Gildemeister. “With 18,000 Langleys, this particular PHOS-CHEK product will fade.” A Langley is a unit of measurement to calculate the amount of solar radiation, named after American astronomer and aeronautical pioneer Samuel Pierpont Langley (1834-1906).

During initial attack on the Horsethief Canyon Fire, retardant was brought in from both Casper and Pocatello (ID). The mobile retardant plant on the National Elk Refuge arrived on September 10, or the third operational period of

the fire. Once the temporary plant was established on the refuge, retardant no longer needed to be supplied from out-of-area locations. The flight time between retardant drops significantly decreased, and the aerial operations became much more efficient.

When diluted by rain, the salts that are not consumed in retarding the spread of the fire don’t leach far into the soil. Since retardant is basically a high-grade form of fertilizer, it provides readily available forms of nitrogen, phosphates, and sulphur. Regardless, all the retardant mixed on the refuge was used up in aerial operations so the crew wouldn’t have to dispose of any unused slurry. Any remaining residue was diluted as it was rinsed from the tanks.

Fire crews are also required to mitigate for the spread of noxious weeds while working on an incident. A critical part of both the check-in and demobilization process is a weed washing station so weeds aren’t transported from one location to another. Retardant plant crews have been busy all day scrubbing down all pieces of equipment that were used on site in preparation for their departure. Vehicles will also need to be washed before they are driven away. “We’re glad that check is in place,” said Deputy Refuge Manager Paul Santavy. “Weeds pose a significant threat to wildlife habitat.”

An additional story on the mobile retardant mixing plant and helibase operations on the refuge during the Horsethief Canyon Fire can be found at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/Documents/Refuge%20Updates/2012/09_17_12_HorsethiefCanyon.pdf



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 20, 2012 12-20

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

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VISITOR CENTER TO BE INCLUDED IN ONE OF JACKSON HOLE QUILT FESTIVAL'S EVENTS

The National Elk Refuge is pleased to announce its upcoming participation in the Jackson Hole Quilt Festival, scheduled for October 8–13 in Jackson. This year's quilt festival, sponsored by the local business Stitch 'n Time, replaces the former Quilting in the Tetons event that celebrated its 25th and final year in 2011.

The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson, will be one of almost 40 Jackson locations where a quilt will be displayed during the festival. The dispersed quilt display is part of an event called *Quilts on the Square and Beyond*, designed to promote quilting as an art form and encourage participants and local residents to visit the stores and businesses that are part the event. Maps will be available to show viewers the locations of the quilts, and attendees will receive tickets each time they visit one of the locations. The tickets will be used for incentives or door prizes at one or more of the festival's social events.

The quilt that will be on display at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center is a collage made by the Jackson Hole Quilt Guild and created through a very unique process. With the permission of artist Wendy Morgan of Crane Creek Graphics, the guild divided one of Morgan's designs into 16 equal portions. Sixteen guild members were then tasked with recreating an individually assigned portion of the artwork in their choice of fabric and technique. They were given a different small color photo of 1/16th of the original design and a copy enlarged by 200%. Their instructions were to match the colors in the small piece and make it the size of the larger copy. None of the quilters knew what the whole piece or adjoining parts would look like. Five other guild members pieced together, added borders, and hand quilted the finished piece. "We haven't gotten a sneak preview of the quilt we'll be displaying," explained refuge spokesperson Lori Iverson, "but we do know it has a wildlife theme."

This will be the second event this year where the National Elk Refuge and the Jackson Hole Quilt Guild have teamed up to offer a display and educational opportunity to the public. During the refuge's centennial weekend celebration August 10–12, the guild held a quilting demonstration at the historic Miller House on the Refuge Road. A number of guild members spent the day at the historic site, stitching in front of a backdrop of colorful quilts. The quilt frame the group brought with them was an antique, a relic built by an early valley homesteader and grandfather of one of the quilters. "The quilters enhanced our 100-year celebration through their traditional craft, and their demonstration in August was very well received," Iverson said. "We look forward to reciprocating by supporting their event in October."

For more information on the Jackson Hole Quilt Festival, including a calendar and description of events, please visit www.stitchntimeinc.com.

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National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 15, 2012 12-21

PO Box 510
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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 Thursday, October 25 in order to conduct an annual inventory of the Grand Teton Association's sales outlet stock. The building will reopen at 9:00 AM on Friday, October 26.

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 Street, 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 Street, Jackson (307) 733-2321
- National Elk Refuge Administrative Office – 675 E. Broadway Street, 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 to 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.

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National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 15, 2012 12-22

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

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ALTERNATE ELK HUNT PERMITS TO BE ISSUED WEEKLY FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE SEASON

The National Elk Refuge issued its first group of alternate elk hunting permits today, allowing hunters additional opportunities for harvesting elk on the refuge this fall. The process for issuing alternate permits has changed for the 2012 elk hunting season, but still requires hunters to apply on-line for the available permits.

Elk hunters have several opportunities throughout the year to obtain a refuge hunting permit. Hunters initially have from mid-August through late September to apply on-line for a designated week during the hunting season, entering their application into a lottery system. The results of the computerized random draw are posted on the application web site by the end of September. The permits for any weeks that were undersubscribed, with fewer applicants than available permits, then become available on a first-come, first-served basis. These permits, referred to as leftover permits, remain available throughout the season until all the permits have been taken. Persons who were successful for one hunt period during the late September drawing may reapply for a first-come, first served leftover permit valid for another hunt period.

A hunter's third opportunity to obtain an elk hunting permit comes later in the season, available on a weekly basis. These permits, known as alternate permits, differ from the leftover permits because they do not become available until after the season has begun. Alternate permits allow refuge staff to adjust the number of hunters in the field based on current conditions and participation. To disperse hunters over the hunt period, half of the alternate permits issued are valid for Monday through Friday of the respective week, and the remaining half are valid for Wednesday through Sunday of the same week.

National Elk Refuge staff adjusted this year's alternate permit process in response to the high demand and rapid distribution during the first-come, first-served system used for alternate permits over the past few years. Similar to the initial draw earlier in the year, hunters interested in obtaining an alternate permit use the same on-line system used for initial and leftover permits. Hunters must apply for an alternate permit between Friday at 9:00 AM and Sunday at 11:59 PM Mountain Standard Time for the upcoming week. During the application process, hunters will designate if they want to be considered for a Monday – Friday permit or a Wednesday – Sunday alternate permit for the upcoming week. The results of the weekly computerized random draw for alternate permits will be posted on the application web site by 11:00 AM each Monday morning. For the remainder of the 2012 refuge elk season, alternate permits will be issued on October 22 and 29; November 5, 12, 19, and 26; and December 3 and 10. The number of alternate permits issued will vary, depending on hunter harvest rates and participation.

Individuals who were already successful in obtaining a permit for another hunt period may still apply for an alternate permit for a different week.

— continued —



For additional information on hunting elk on the National Elk Refuge, please call the refuge administrative office at 307.733.9212 or visit the refuge's web site at www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge. The refuge home page contains links to 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. Hunters should review all regulations and maps prior to applying for a permit.

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National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012

National Elk Refuge News – October 18, 2012

National Elk Refuge Participates in Non-Lead Outreach



Filmmaker Christie Koriakin of Koriakin Etc. holds up a reflector while Nick Staron of Jackson Adventure Video prepares to film Refuge Manager Steve Kallin for their video blitz project.

The National Elk Refuge participated in the production of a locally produced video this week, one of eight films that are part of a “video blitz” that will culminate on Saturday evening.

The video blitz is sponsored by 1% for the Tetons, an organization that funds projects fostering long-term sustainability of the area’s natural resources. The organization was developed as a locally based chapter of 1% for the Planet, an international alliance of businesses which donates one percent of their sales to environmental organizations worldwide.

In its first six years, 1% for the Tetons has awarded over \$625,000 to 54 projects helping to sustain the region’s essential qualities.

The video blitz will serve as a means to draw attention to some of these innovative projects. At a “Match Party” on October 13, eight Teton-area filmmakers were randomly matched with eight projects funded by 1% for the Tetons. Each filmmaker has been scrambling this week to produce a compelling three-minute video that tells a story about the funded project. The collection of films will be shown on Saturday, October 20 at a community celebration.

Filmmakers Christie Koriakin and Nick Staron were tasked with creating a film on reducing lead from wildlife and wildlands. As part of the production, Koriakin interviewed Refuge Manager Steve Kallin to highlight cooperation and efforts between the National Elk Refuge,

Grand Teton National Park, and Craighead Beringia South (CBS), a research and education institute based in Kelly, Wyoming. The organizations have worked together to promote voluntary use of non-lead ammunition during the hunting season.

Koriakin and Staron’s film will focus on CBS’s educational campaign that began in 2009, encouraging participants to work with federal agencies and non-profit cooperators in a wildlife study by voluntarily using non-lead ammunition and reporting that use. Using information submitted by hunters, CBS researchers determined that in 2011, 41% of all successful elk hunters taking part in Grand Teton National Park and National Elk Refuge elk reduction programs

Top: A bald eagle prepares to land on a post where it will have a good vantage point of its wintry surroundings on the National Elk Refuge.

Bottom: An inquisitive raven tugs on an attractive piece of metal from a gate on the National Elk Refuge. Credit: Ann Hough, refuge volunteer

Eagles and ravens are at the center of Craighead Beringia South's research that measures changes in blood lead levels after the implementation of an area voluntary non-lead ammunition program.

used non-lead ammunition, up from 31% in 2010 and 24% in 2009.

In their corresponding research, CBS biologists documented significant declines in bald eagle and raven blood lead levels as a result of hunters using non-lead ammunition. These data strongly support the hypothesis that the number of hunters using lead-free ammunition has had a substantial positive impact on lead ingestion by wildlife during the last three years (as measured in ravens and eagles). More information about the CBS research project can be found on the organization's web site at www.beringiasouth.org.

National Elk Refuge staff has also paired with CBS to help develop a public program on the same topic at the Center for the Arts building in Jackson on Friday, November 2. Billed as "Eagles and Ammo," the educational program will begin with a social hour and booths staffed by several government and non-profit organizations. Two films are scheduled to be shown later that evening, including a clip from "American Eagle," created for PBS, and "The Non-Lead Hunter," produced by Anthony Prieto. Following the screening, Prieto will sit on a panel with representatives from the National



Elk Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming Game & Fish Department, and the Hunter Education program to discuss the area's voluntary non-lead program and the resulting benefits.

"We're pleased to bring some attention to CBS's valuable research," stated Refuge Manager Steve Kallin. "This program is more than just a partnership

between agencies," he added. "By voluntarily using non-lead ammunition, hunters have a unique opportunity to get involved in scientific research. They can also help maintain support for hunting programs by demonstrating a commitment to safe, quality hunting practices that benefit the long-term conservation of wildlife."



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 1, 2012 12-23

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

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REFUGE COMPLETES FORAGE PRODUCTION ANALYSIS

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced today the completion of the refuge's summary of forage production for the 2012 growing season. Irrigation began on May 1, with a seasonal crew watering a total of 2,582 acres during the spring and summer months. Data collection on the amount of forage produced began on September 4 and ended on October 4, with 71 sample locations measured. At least one sample was taken from each type of the various plant communities found on the refuge. Forage production has been sampled with the same observer and consistent methodology since 1998.

Irrigation can increase natural standing forage and attract animals into traditionally less utilized areas, which reduces herd concentrations and the potential for elk-to-elk disease transmission. The amount of standing forage can also affect when supplemental feeding may occur during the winter. While a substantial forage yield can delay the feeding start date, the number of elk and bison, the duration of time the animals spend on the refuge, elk distribution, and environmental conditions are other important factors.

The severity of this year's drought was a key variable in the amount of forage produced this season. One year ago, Wyoming was 100% free of drought. However, drought conditions developed and worsened rapidly after a below normal winter snowpack and a record dry spring and summer. Wyoming reported the driest March through September period on record, with statewide reported precipitation at 53.8% below average. The U.S. drought monitor for Wyoming released on October 18 showed that moderate drought covered most of northwest Wyoming except for Yellowstone National Park, which was classified as abnormally dry.

The spring and summer drought conditions in the Jackson area accounted for a relatively low refuge-wide forage production on the refuge this season. An estimated total of 11,677 tons of herbaceous forage (grasses, forbs, and other non-woody plant material) were produced in 2012, or 19% below the 1998-2012 average. The refuge's irrigation system partially mitigated for the effects of the below average precipitation. Models estimating forage production without irrigation predicted a production of 10,792 tons, indicating that irrigation led to an increase of an additional 885 tons of forage over non-irrigated conditions. The effects of irrigation on herbaceous production were more pronounced in the southern portion of the refuge, which is the primary area used by wintering elk and bison. There, production was 13% higher compared to what would have been produced without irrigation, with 7,600 tons of herbaceous forage produced compared to an estimated yield of 6,710 tons with no irrigation.

Photos of the refuge's irrigation program and forage production sampling can be found at www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmtmprairie/sets/72157631889143417

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National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 21, 2012 12-24

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 Saturday, December 1 through Tuesday, 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 16, with the bison season running through Sunday, January 6. 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 often stop, park, or leave vehicles unattended while observing wildlife. This 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 accidents or injuries,” said Refuge Manager Steve Kallin. Refuge personnel have seen an increase in the number of vehicles driving or sliding off the road and getting stuck in the snow during the past several winters, often as a result of drivers having to unexpectedly brake or maneuver around other vehicles. To allow for safer wildlife viewing experiences, a number of roadside turnouts are provided. Vehicles are encouraged to pull off the roadway and safely park in order to extend photography and wildlife viewing experiences.

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National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 4, 2012 12-25

PO Box 510
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VISITOR CENTER OFFERS AN AFTERNOON TO CELEBRATE SNOW

The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center will offer an afternoon of free programs on Saturday, December 15 titled *'Tis the Season for Snow*. From 2:00 through 4:30 PM, a variety of activities will celebrate snow and give participants a chance to learn about the unique attributes of everyone's favorite form of winter precipitation. The Visitor Center is located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

At both 2:15 and 3:15 PM, National Elk Refuge winter naturalists will lead several experiments to observe falling flakes, compare the volume of snow to its water equivalent, and take a core sample of snow on the ground to discern layers. Though the weather-dependent activities may be modified to accommodate current conditions, young naturalists will ultimately have a chance to learn about and observe the physical features of snow.

From 2:30 to 3:00 PM, visitors can meet former scientist Wilson A. Bentley through a living history program featuring National Elk Refuge volunteer Joe Lozar. Bentley (1865-1931) attracted worldwide attention with his pioneering work in the area of photomicrography, most notably through his extensive work with snow crystals. Through years of dedicated trial and error, he adapted a microscope to a bellows camera and became the first person to photograph a single snow crystal in 1885. He would go on to capture images of more than 5,000 snowflakes during his lifetime, discovering that no two were alike. His snow crystal photomicrographs were acquired by colleges and universities throughout the world, and he published many articles for magazines and journals including *Scientific American* and *National Geographic*. Because of his passion for working with snow crystals, he is often affectionately referred to as "Snowflake" Bentley.

At 3:30 PM, guests can gather around a "campfire" inside the Visitor Center theater for a half-hour storytelling program. After lighting the campfire logs with Christmas lights, staff will read two short tales with a snow theme.

Snowflake crafts, including paper and beaded snowflakes, will be available from 2:00 to 4:30 PM with helpers on hand to assist with the projects. Participants can either keep the snowflakes they create or add them to the snowflake decorations currently adorning the visitor center.

For further information on the event, please call 307.739.9322.

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National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 5, 2012 12-26

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 2012–2013 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 refuge's most popular educational program takes place on the refuge itself, from the unique confines of a horse-drawn sleigh. Sleigh rides begin for the season on Monday, December 17 and operate daily from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, except for Christmas Day. The rides are an exciting way to observe and photograph wildlife on the refuge. In addition to elk, passengers routinely see coyotes, bald eagles, trumpeter swans, ravens, magpies, and other wildlife. Participants purchase tickets at the visitor center and are transported on a free shuttle bus to the sleigh boarding area three miles north of Jackson. Sleighs depart three to four times each hour throughout the day, with rides typically lasting an hour. 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. Wagons may be substituted for sleighs to accommodate for snow conditions. Additional information on sleigh rides, including group rates, reservations, and gift certificate purchases, is available by visiting www.fws.gov/nationalelkrefuge/NERSleighRides.htm or calling 307.733.0277.

Also beginning December 17, staff naturalists will offer a short program each day at 11:30 AM as part of a "Home on the Refuge" presentation series. The daily visitor center program gives guests 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 interpretive programs, generally 15-20 minutes long, give sleigh riders an activity to couple with their trip onto the refuge. 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 trip scheduled for December 18. The wildlife viewing excursions depart from the visitor center and stop at various refuge locations where animals such as elk, bighorn sheep, and waterfowl can frequently be seen. A spotting scope and binoculars are provided on the tours. Participants enjoy accompanying a naturalist to learn more about refuge history and wildlife management other than in a traditional visitor center setting. 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. The wildlife excursion is free of charge.

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

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National Elk Refuge
Celebrating a Century: 1912 – 2012



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 18, 2012 12-27

PO Box 510
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PROGRAM TO CELEBRATE THE START OF REFUGE WINTER ACTIVITIES

The National Elk Refuge will be hosting a free, family event at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center on Saturday, December 22 from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM to celebrate this week's start of public winter activities. Saturday's "Discover December at the National Elk Refuge" event will showcase programs offered throughout the season, as well as offer a few additional opportunities for participants to enjoy. The Visitor Center is located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

Refuge naturalists will provide all regularly-scheduled winter programs on Saturday, which include:

- An 11:30 AM presentation as part of an on-going "Home on the Refuge" daily program series. Offered daily throughout the season, beginning December 17.
- A free, 2-hour wildlife viewing excursion onto the Refuge Road at 1:30 PM. Offered Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays throughout the season, beginning December 18. 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 (except Christmas Day) through early April. 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 22 include:

- Arts and crafts activities for children of all ages from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Participants can choose from several animal crafts and earn a prize for completing multiple projects.
- An additional free, 2-hour wildlife viewing excursion onto the Refuge Road at 10:00 AM. Group size is limited; reserve a seat by calling 307.734.9378.
- A naturalist-led discussion from 12:00 to 1:00 PM on the importance of energy conservation for wintering wildlife. Animal cutouts will be placed on the visitor center north lawn for participants to visualize recommended safe wildlife viewing distances and learn what effects stress can have on animals during the harsh winter months.
- Staff demonstrations from 1:00 to 3:00 PM of radio telemetry equipment used to track elk on the refuge. Participants will have an opportunity to handle the equipment and learn how biologists use wildlife telemetry research. Coffee, hot chocolate, and light refreshments will be served during the informal presentations.
- Prizes for visitor center guests given out at 12:00 and 4:00 PM. Free tickets for the drawings will be available at the visitor center throughout the morning; persons need not be present to win.

With the exception of the sleigh rides, all activities are free of charge. For more information on the special event, please call 307.734.9378.

National Elk Refuge News – December 26, 2012

Two December Events Celebrate the Winter Season



Winter naturalist Justin St. Onge helps three young scientists with a snow experiment during a special event at the visitor center.

The National Elk Refuge public use staff organized two events this month to celebrate the arrival of the winter season. The free, family events offered a variety of activities to guests at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center.

An event on December 15th, billed as *'Tis the Season for Snow*, gave participants a chance to learn about the unique attributes of everyone's favorite form of winter precipitation.

Naturalists led several experiments to observe falling flakes, compare the volume of snow to its water equivalent, and take a core sample of snow on the ground to discern layers. Though snow

was late in coming to the Jackson Hole valley floor this month, a fresh covering of "white stuff" kept the staff from having to improvise to carry out the experiments.

National Elk Refuge volunteer Joe Lozar testing his acting skills as he donned period clothing to portray former scientist Wilson Bentley. By adapting a microscope to a bellows camera, and through years of dedicated trial and error, Bentley became the first person to photograph a single snow crystal in 1885. He would go on to capture more than 5,000 snowflakes during his lifetime, discovering that no two were alike. Because of his passion, he is often affectionately referred to as "Snowflake Bentley." Lozar gave a 30 minute

living history program that gave the audience a glimpse of the former scientist's life and work. Following his performance, Lozar's wife Margaret gathered children around a "campfire" inside the visitor center theater. After lighting the campfire logs with Christmas lights, she read two short tales with a snow theme.

Visitors to the center that day could make a paper or beaded snowflake to commemorate the event.

On the following Saturday, December 22nd, winter naturalists hosted a second event titled *Discover December at the National Elk Refuge* to celebrate the start of public winter activities. The

event showcased programs offered throughout the season, as well as offered a few additional opportunities for participants to enjoy.

Naturalists set up a greeting table near the front door, providing a list of activities scheduled for the day. A free raffle for two gift packages ran throughout the day, with drawings at 12:00 and 4:00 PM. The first prizewinner was present at the time of the drawing, and the second winner was a guest that had already scheduled a return trip to the visitor center the following day to take a naturalist-led wildlife excursion. At the greeting table, staff also gave away “bentcils,” promotional pens and pencils bent into animal shapes.

During the winter season, naturalists give a daily program in the visitor center at 11:30 AM as part of an on-going “Home on the Refuge” series, with topics varying. At Saturday’s event, 35 people attended a talk to learn about adaptations of wildlife wintering on the refuge.

The regular winter program schedule also includes free, 2-hour wildlife viewing excursions onto the Refuge Road at 1:30 PM on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. For the *Discover December* event, naturalists offered an additional tour at 10:00 AM.

This year, the visitor services staff has leased a 15-passenger van for the wildlife tours, a convenience over the Suburban used in previous seasons. Both excursions on December 22nd filled the new van to capacity. During both tours, wildlife viewers were treated to a confrontation between two bighorn sheep rams. The pair



While holding a prop, seasonal Justin Walters (right) talks about elk antlers to a group of visitors viewing elk during a wildlife excursion.

created a deafening sound as they butted heads along the side of the road, giving excited participants ringside seats to the match.

In addition to the excursion, visitors could view wildlife from the upper deck of the visitor center. Staff set up a spotting scope and visited with guests during an informal “Coffee with a Naturalist” program. Thirty people visited with a naturalist to learn about telemetry equipment and the important data it can provide to biologists, while another 25 people participated in an exercise on the visitor center lawn that used animal cutouts to help participants estimate distances from wildlife. The activity stressed the importance of safe viewing distances and how good wildlife viewing practices can help wintering wildlife conserve energy.

A variety of crafts were available throughout the day, giving young

artists an opportunity to create a likeness of an animal they may spot here in the Jackson Hole area.

A total of 483 people participated in the *Discover December* event.

A proud artist holds up her rendition of a porcupine that she created at one of the animal craft tables.

