



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 8, 2015 15-01

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
(307) 201-5433

RESULTS OF RECENT FORAGE SAMPLING AVAILABLE

National Elk Refuge and Wyoming Game & Fish Department biologists have been closely monitoring forage over the past few weeks to measure the amount of plant material available to wintering elk and bison. Forage availability is a key factor in the refuge's winter management program, as well as a consideration in determining if supplemental feeding may be necessary.

Another survey was conducted earlier this week at key index sites, or those areas that represent the highest quality forage on the southern end of the refuge. The snow depth at these sites averaged 4.4 inches. Due to recent warm temperatures, the snow was generally wet and heavy but was not an impediment to elk or bison. In most areas, the remaining forage was easily accessible all the way to ground level.

Additionally, biologists measured the amount of remaining forage by calculating the number of pounds per acre at the same key sampling sites. Supplemental feeding is recommended when available forage declines below 300 pounds per acre. Past observations suggest that elk are likely to leave the refuge for private lands in Spring Gulch when available forage falls below this mark. Animals leaving the refuge also begin foraging along U.S. Highway 26/89/191, making travel hazardous for motorists north of Jackson. On Tuesday, field staff calculated the average remaining accessible forage to be 665 pounds per acre, or more than double the threshold for recommending the initiation of the supplemental feeding program.

Forage measurements are taken at different times of the year and used for several purposes. After the growing season has ended in the fall, refuge staff calculates and records the amount of forage that has been produced during the spring and summer. This information can be used to note seasonal environmental conditions, measure the effects of irrigation, and predict possible winter management operations. Consistent methods of gathering the data have been used on the Refuge since 1998, making the information more relevant when comparing numbers from year to year.

This past fall, 62 monitoring sites were again accessed, with 33 plant community types included in the sampling. Both irrigated and non-irrigated areas were included in the selection of monitoring locations. Estimated refuge-wide production for the 2014 growing season put herbaceous (non-woody) forage at 16,517 tons and total Refuge forage production (both herbaceous and woody plants) at 20,195 tons. This represents an increase in production from 2013 by 52% and 47%, respectively. This year's relatively high forage production on the refuge was primarily attributed to average total precipitation during the May through August growing season along with effects of the refuge's irrigation program.

Beginning in December, biologists shift from measuring forage production to estimating the amount of plant material remaining. They also note snow conditions such as deep snow, icing, or crusting that could make it difficult for an animal to paw through the ground cover to reach the remaining vegetation. The Bison and Elk Management Environmental Impact Statement calls for a continuation of forage assessments through a strategy to "consider factors such as the amount of forage produced on the refuge, snow conditions, and numbers of overwintering elk and bison in determining whether or not to provide supplemental food." The frequency of forage assessments are increased by mid-January as more vegetation is consumed and additional animals move onto the refuge.

Since 1995, the average date for initiating feeding has been January 28. The start date, ranging from December 31 to February 28, varies widely depending on winter severity and available forage. The refuge's management strategy includes limiting the time elk and bison are on supplemental feed in order to minimize the time they are concentrated and reduce the potential for disease transmission.

Another forage assessment is scheduled for early next week.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 13, 2015 15-02

PO Box 510
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REFUGE ANNOUNCES SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING START DATE

National Elk Refuge managers have determined that available forage on the refuge will decline to levels where supplemental feeding of elk and bison will be necessary beginning Monday, January 19.

Refuge and Wyoming Game & Fish Department biologists have been regularly monitoring environmental conditions on the refuge during the past few weeks to measure and assess the quantity of remaining forage. Last week, the interagency crew calculated approximately 665 pounds per acre of standing forage at various key sites, or more than double the threshold for recommending the initiation of the supplemental feeding program. Yesterday, they measured 420 pounds per acre, indicating the rate at which forage is being consumed. Based on the established criteria for initiation of the supplemental feeding program, wildlife managers have agreed to start the seasonal feeding program early next week.

The Bison & Elk Management Plan, which guides management activities for habitat and wildlife on the refuge, calls for a reduced reliance on supplemental feed. The same plan also calls for a reduction in the number of animals wintering on the refuge, an important step in scaling back the need for providing alfalfa pellets to wintering herds. The bison population continues to exceed herd size objective. The refuge bison hunt, which ends on Sunday, January 18, is helping to move toward that objective. Rather than end the refuge's bison hunt several days early in order to initiate the feeding program, both State and refuge managers agree delaying feeding through the weekend provides the best balance between needed population controls and habitat management. "We need to balance forage availability with our need to reduce the bison population," explained Refuge Manager Steve Kallin.

Starting the supplemental feeding program on January 19 will be nine days earlier than average. Since 1995, the average start date for initiating feeding has been January 28. Temperatures for the Jackson area are predicted to be relatively mild until Monday and will not cause undue stress to these winter-adapted animals. "Delaying the start of feeding for a couple days will not put wildlife health in jeopardy," Kallin added.

Approximately 5,000 elk are currently on the refuge, with additional elk on adjoining lands. Bison numbers have ranged as high as 530, with many of them remaining in the open hunt area despite the presence of hunters. More elk and bison are expected to move onto the refuge once the supplemental feeding program begins for the season. Travelers on nearby roads should continue to use caution and watch for migrating animals.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 21, 2015 15-03

PO Box 510
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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Winter naturalists at the National Elk Refuge will wrap up their month-long line-up of birding programs next week, moving full steam ahead with a variety of programs in February that focus on winter adaptations and animal characteristics. All programs are free of charge.

On **Saturday, January 31**, staff will again offer a “Birding for Beginners” program at 9:30 AM. The mini-seminar includes a 20-minute presentation at the visitor center on birding basics and a field session on the refuge to practice identification skills. Participants should be appropriately dressed for the outdoor outing, which will last up to 1½ hours. Naturalists will have binoculars and field guides to share, but guests are encouraged to bring their own supplies if available. Reservations are recommended. Eight participants enjoyed the first “Birding for Beginners” program, offered on January 8. The program is free of charge.

Two more naturalist-led outings will take place on the refuge in February:

- **Tuesday, February 3:** Staff will lead a full moon walk in the Miller Butte area from 6:00 – 8:00 PM. Conversations will focus on the night sky, the effects of light on wildlife, and ecological consequences of human development. Parking will be limited, so carpooling is recommended. Reservations are required and can be made by calling (307) 201-5400. Participants are asked to bring a flashlight or headlamp. Refreshments and warm beverages will be provided at the end of the program.
- **Saturday, February 14:** Naturalists will offer their second free refuge trip from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Participants on this excursion will move to various locations on the refuge and discuss how animals adapt to Jackson Hole winters. The program will begin in the visitor center theater, where a temporary exhibit features a variety of photographs portray animals that either migrate, hibernate, or adapt in response to nature’s coldest season. The exhibit will be up from **February 3 –28**.

Refuge staff will also celebrate two holidays in wildlife style this month, with programs planned for Valentine’s Day and Mardi Gras:

- **Friday, February 13 – Saturday, February 14:** Winter seasonal staff will offer a program “Romance on the Refuge” in the visitor center at 1:00, 1:30, 2:00, and 2:30 PM. During the short program, visitors will learn about the astonishing courtship flight of the bald eagle, listen to bull elk bugling, and watch the strut of a greater sage-grouse. Guests will also receive a handout featuring seven refuge animals that mate for life.
- **Sunday, February 15 – Tuesday, February 17:** Mardi Gras and masks go together like peanut butter and jelly; it’s hard to think about one without the other. Celebrate Mardi Gras in style by listening to Cajun music while making your very own animal mask, inspired by wildlife found on the National Elk Refuge.

For more information on February programs at the National Elk Refuge, call (307) 201.5400. The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center is located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 28, 2015 15-04

PO Box 510
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ELK IVORIES AND ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE TO BE DISCUSSED ON FEBRUARY 9

The National Elk Refuge will be celebrating a lesser known holiday next month, using the National Day Calendar's designation of National Toothache Day on February 9 to prompt a program on elk ivory teeth. The discussion will include information on illegal wildlife trade. The program will be held free of charge at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

Many mammals in the animal kingdom have ivory, a term which traditionally applied only to the tusks of elephants. However, "ivory" is now often used to describe any mammalian tooth or tusk of commercial interest which is large enough to be carved or scrimshawed.

On **Monday, February 9** from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM, a refuge winter naturalist will be available discuss the history, significance and value of elk ivories. Ivory is often prized for its ease in carving and the warm, glowing tone it emits when polished, making it desirable for jewelry, fine art objects, and other decorative pieces. These qualities have also made ivory susceptible to poaching, particularly in elephant populations. Participants in the February 9 program will have the opportunity to learn about the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Ivory Crush held on November 14, 2013, an event that was part of a series of actions by the Obama administration to crack down on international poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking.

To complement the program, the National Elk Refuge will be receiving items from the National Wildlife Property Repository, the facility responsible for receiving wildlife items that have been forfeited or abandoned to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These items are stored in a secure environment and later disposed of in accordance with Federal law. The facility is a 22,000 square foot office and warehouse located northeast of Denver, Colorado at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal. The refuge will be exhibiting bear claws, a tiger pelt, a frog purse, snakeskin boots, and an insect display as part of the day's programming.

The National Geographic film "Battle for the Elephants" will play throughout the day in the visitor center theater. The movie explores the slaughter of African elephants for their tusks, explaining how the majestic land animal faces market forces that drive the value of its tusks.

For more information on this or other February programs at the National Elk Refuge, please call (307) 201.5400.

National Elk Refuge News – February 10, 2015

Illegal Wildlife Trafficking Takes Center Stage



A visitor examines a tiger paw as part of a temporary exhibit about illegal wildlife trade.

During winter visits to the National Elk Refuge, people are fascinated with elk antlers and learning more about them: how quickly they grow, how much they weigh, when they shed. This month, however, refuge winter naturalists offered a program focused on a less renewable elk part: the ivories, or two teeth in the animal's upper jaw. The introduction to the unique set of teeth served as a springboard to discuss the larger, global topic of illegal killing and wildlife trafficking.

Illegal harvest of elk ivories

existed in the early days of the Jackson Hole valley but was not considered a significant problem. Edward Preble, a biologist working for the Biological Survey in 1911, was sent to study the condition of elk in Jackson Hole that year, one year before the establishment of the National Elk Refuge. In his report, he listed tusk hunters as "the lowest scale of all enemies of the (Jackson) elk."

Trumpeter swans, however, do represent a local wildlife species that didn't fare as well in U.S. history. Both market hunting and the millinery trade depleted

populations of the bird until they neared extinction. By 1932, fewer than 70 trumpeters were known to exist worldwide, with nearly half of the known birds in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. The passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 and establishment of Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge gave protection to trumpeter swans and helped the population rebound.

During a program on February 9, naturalists focused on how the value of a prized part can devastate an animal population. As an example, they cited the

African elephant, a species at risk due to a dramatic rise in poaching for their ivory.

Though archaeologists and historians have documented many practical tools made from ivory, such as buttons, chopsticks, spear tips, needles, and combs, the ivory market is now driven more by social significance and the status particular items can bring.

In a symbolic gesture in November 2013, U.S. officials smashed 6 tons of contraband ivory, including tusks and carvings that had been seized from smugglers or confiscated from tourists. The U.S. represents the second-largest ivory market, after China. The Ivory Crush sent a message to ivory traffickers and their customers that the United States will not tolerate the illegal trade.

More on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Ivory Crush event can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/le/elephant-ivory-crush.html>.

To complement the refuge's February 9 program, staff requested items from the National Wildlife Property Repository, the Denver, Colorado facility responsible for receiving wildlife items that have been forfeited or abandoned to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The items are stored in a secure environment and later disposed of in accordance with Federal law. For the program, refuge staff received and displayed:

- a tanned tiger skin
- a toad skin purse
- a painted tortoise carapace
- medicinal products, and tortoises, and snakes

- ointments made from rattlesnakes, tadpoles, and bear gall bladders
- a "wine" medicinal made from a Checkered Keelback snake and scorpion
- black bear claws
- white-tailed deer skin glove
- a cobra skin boot
- assorted mounted insects

"The value of a prized of an animal is something that can be changed by education and awareness," refuge spokesperson Lori Iverson explained in a statement advertising for the program. "Even though our program was on a pretty small scale, it's our gesture to help make positive gains toward a global conservation issue.

Approximately 60 people attended the program.



Naturalists used a display on elk ivories to provide a local historical example of a much larger global issue.

National Elk Refuge News – February 13, 2015

Local Band Records Music Video at Refuge Historic Site



The videographer took a break from filming to snap pictures of a bald eagle that landed in a nearby tree as the band played their melodic signature tune.

The music is turned up at the National Elk Refuge this week as the public use staff enjoys new tunes from a soulful Americana local band, Screen Door Porch. The group released their third studio album, *Modern Settler*, on February 10.

The National Elk Refuge receives many commercial filming requests each year, representing media ranging from local organizations to national and international markets. Many of the requests come from travel-related television markets such as the Travel Channel, Discovery Channel, or shows

from other countries marketing U.S. travel. Travel magazines are also well represented in the special use permit queue, from in-flight magazines to retail publications. “We try to accommodate as many of the filming requests as we can, but we’re often limited by access and staffing,” explained Outdoor Recreation Planner Lori Iverson.

In January, Iverson received an unusual request: Screen Door Porch asked to film a video clip from a winter sleigh to use as marketing material for their new music. Unsure of how the elk herds would react to live music

and performers, staff denied the permit. However, Iverson did suggest the historic Miller House as an alternate location. Not only is the house closed to public use in the winter, but the setting seemed appropriate for the song they’d be recording: “Chasin’ Homestead Blues.” “We loved the site as soon as we saw it,” described Aaron Davis, front man for the band. “When you think about the name of our band and the title of the CD and song, it was a perfect fit.”

The YouTube video featuring the band on the historic porch is still under production and is expected

to be posted soon. The band agreed to credit the refuge's location in their video to help promote the ranch. "It will be great exposure for the historic site since they're a local band," Iverson explained. The Miller House, open from late May through mid-September, receives between 3,000 and 4,000 visitors per season.

The Miller House and surrounding land was the first property purchased by the federal government to become part of the National Elk Refuge, established in 1912. The historic site is open daily throughout the summer season. Volunteer staff is on duty to talk about the history of the National Elk Refuge and early homesteaders who lived on the

land. Entrance to the historic home is free of charge.

More information on the historic Miller Ranch can be found on the refuge's web site at <http://1.usa.gov/19f4The>.



Band member and vocalist Seadar Rose prepares for the video production.



Both of the Miller House's two porches can be seen in this dramatic picture of the historic site.

National Elk Refuge News – February 20, 2015

Horse-drawn Rides Hit Record Mark Over the Weekend



Above: "Neither rain, nor snow, nor sleet, nor hail ..." The sleigh ride contractor is prepared to operate under all kinds of environmental conditions. Below: Riders are especially interested in seeing and learning more about the antlers that adorn the bull elk.

Though snow coverage on the valley floor is below average this month, the enthusiasm of people wanting to view elk on the National Elk Refuge is up, with ridership on horse-drawn vehicles hitting an all-time high mark last weekend. Though the contractor switched from sleighs to wagons to mitigate for the patches of bare ground, the program set a record on Saturday, February 14 for the most riders in a single day. A total of 864 people enjoyed the sunny weather and warm temperatures while participating in the wildlife viewing activity. It took 57 wagon trips to accommodate the record number of passengers, maxing out each wagon that can carry approximately 15 people at a time.

The previous busiest day was on December 28, 2013, when 862 passengers filled 55 sleighs.

The sleigh ride program is the refuge's most popular public

use activity, with over 20,000 people taking advantage of the unique experience each year. The Christmas holiday season and

President's Day weekend always tally up to be the two busiest times of the year. The sleigh contractor, Double H Bar, Inc. prepares for



the expected rush by having extra drivers and horses on hand. “We have 35 draft horses available on site, so we can rotate the teams and give them a rest on busy days,” explained Jeff Warburton, who manages the day-to-day operations with his brother, Chris.

Drivers present an educational program during each ride, enhancing the wildlife viewing and photography experience the trips provide.

To learn more about the sleigh ride program, visit the refuge’s web site at <http://1.usa.gov/1uFGzZb>. More photos of the sleigh rides are posted on a photo gallery at <http://bit.ly/1vOeb93>



Two bulls clash antlers near a sleigh. The sight and sound of males sparring is always a thrilling experience for visitors.



A group of wagons head out from the corrals to the sleigh boarding area with extra teams of horses in tow.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 20, 2015 15-05

PO Box 510
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A VARIETY OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS TO BE OFFERED IN MARCH

The National Elk Refuge has organized a number of events for March, offering a selection of programs to visitors of all ages. All programs are free of charge and are held at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center unless otherwise noted. The visitor center is located at 532. N. Cache Street in Jackson.

Two family-friendly events include an art table where youngsters can create a take-home craft as part of their refuge visit:

- On **Sunday, March 1**, staff will celebrate Read Across America Day and Dr. Seuss's birthday from 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM by helping children make Lorax-themed crafts and learn about the importance of conservation. Copies of Seuss's "The Lorax" and "Map on My Lap! All About Maps" will be available for sale at a discounted price in the visitor center bookstore.
- Families can celebrate National Children's Craft Day on **Saturday, March 14** from 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM by making an animal craft from the selection of projects depicting animals found on the refuge. Live animal props such as antlers, horns, and pelts will be available for inspiration and reference.

Two programs will lead participants onto the refuge for an outdoor learning experience:

- Refuge staff will offer their second moonlight walk of the season behind Miller Butte on **Wednesday, March 4** from 6:30 – 8:30 PM. Conversations will focus on the night sky, the effects of light on wildlife, and ecological consequences of human development. Parking will be limited, so carpooling is recommended. Reservations are required and can be made by calling (307) 201-5400. Participants are asked to bring a flashlight or headlamp. Refreshments and warm beverages will be provided at the end of the program.
- On **Saturday, March 21**, staff will offer another "Birding for Beginners" program from 9:30 – 11:30 AM. The mini-seminar includes a 20-minute presentation at the visitor center on birding basics and a field session on the refuge to practice identification skills. Participants should be appropriately dressed for the outdoor outing, which will last up to two hours. Naturalists will have binoculars and field guides to share, but guests are encouraged to bring their own supplies if available.

March is nationally recognized as Women's History Month, which provided inspiration for several additional programs at the National Elk Refuge:

- A temporary exhibit titled "Women in Conservation" will be displayed in the visitor center's upstairs theater from **Monday, March 2 – Saturday, March 14**, highlighting the careers and contributions of several influential women. The exhibit will feature two local women, Mardy Murie and Grace Miller, as well as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service former female leaders Rachel Carson and Mollie Beattie.
- On **Sunday, March 15**, the "Women in Conservation" display will move to the historic Miller House. Though the Miller House is only open seasonally from late May to mid-September, refuge staff will open the doors to the historic site for the day from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Visitors to the Miller House that day will be able to enjoy the home as hundreds of elk winter nearby.
- The focus on females shifts from humans to animals on **Wednesday, March 11** with a "Wild Women" refuge tour from 1:30 – 3:30 PM. Participants will travel to several refuge locations to discuss when female elk, bison, bighorn sheep, pronghorns, and other animals give birth and how they care for their young. Reservations are required and can be made by calling (307) 201-5400.

For more information on March programs at the National Elk Refuge, call (307) 201-5400.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 5, 2015 15-06

PO Box 510
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REFUGE TO HOLD MARCH MAYHEM WILDLIFE TOURNAMENT

The National Elk Refuge plans to get caught up in the spirit of the NCAA's March Madness this month, creating a wildlife popularity poll using brackets and playoffs similar to those used for the Division 1 basketball tournament. Members of the public can vote for their favorite animal by casting a physical ballot at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson, or via a virtual vote using the refuge's Twitter address (@NatlElkRefuge).

Beginning on March 17, two contests per day will kick off, each beginning at 9:00 AM. Photographs of the animals paired off in the two contests will be provided. Public voting will be allowed until 11:59 PM on the same day. Though voting at the visitor center will be limited to the winter hours of 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, those using the social media method of casting their vote will have an additional seven hours to indicate their choice. All times listed are Mountain Standard Time.

A 16-team single elimination tournament bracket is posted on the refuge's web site. The Swell Sixteen animal match-ups and their "game days" include:

- March 17 – Game 1: elk vs. mule deer; Game 2: pronghorn vs. bighorn sheep
- March 19 – Game 3: sage grouse vs. raven; Game 4: bald eagle vs. cutthroat trout
- March 21 – Game 5: bison vs. moose; Game 6: wolf vs. mountain lion
- March 23 – Game 7: coyote vs. badger; Game 8: trumpeter swan vs. sandhill crane
- March 25 – Extraordinary Eight play-offs
- March 27 – Extraordinary Eight play-offs, continued
- March 29 – Fabulous Four play-offs
- March 31 – Championship final

OFFICIAL RULES OF THE 2015 NATIONAL ELK REFUGE MARCH MAYHEM WILDLIFE TOURNAMENT:

- 1) Two contests per day are scheduled during the tournament, except for the Championship Final on March 31. Participants may vote only once in each play-off game, regardless of the voting method used.
- 2) Voters may use any criteria for making their selection: the animal they like the best, the one they think would be most likely to win in the event of an actual live confrontation, the way the animal is portrayed in the photograph that will be displayed on "game day," etc. The selection criteria is at the discretion of the voter.
- 3) Rules for casting a ballot at the visitor center will be outlined at the front desk; staff will be available for questions. To vote via Twitter, read the day's tweet, click the "reply" single arrow (which will put @NatlElkRefuge at the beginning of the message), and only type the name of the animal you are voting for as it appears in the Twitter message ; i.e. for March 17, game 1, reply @NatlElkRefuge elk or @NatlElkRefuge mule deer. For ease in counting, any replies with additional text may be eliminated.
- 4) In the event of a tie, the winner will be determined by a coin toss.

May the best critter win

– FWS –



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 9, 2015 15-07

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

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NORTHBOUND TRAVELERS HAVE NEW OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ABOUT THE REFUGE

Travelers heading north out of Jackson, Wyoming have a new opportunity to learn about the National Elk Refuge as they pass by the iconic wildlife refuge on Highway 26/89/191. Refuge staff has partnered with TravelStorysGPS to offer a short story and slide show on the mobile app, available to any traveler with a mobile device such as a Smartphone or tablet.

TravelStorysGPS is a free, GPS-triggered app that uses a multimedia storytelling approach to connect people to places. "Storytelling is the captivating and enduring way that we entertain and communicate best with each other and learn about places," explains Story Clark, the company's founder and CEO. The app can be downloaded from the Apple Store and Google Play; a download link is available on the company's web site at TravelStorysGPS.com

Currently, TravelStorysGPS has 11 published tours. The National Elk Refuge is featured as the first tag on the Outer Park Road tour's Wildlife Channel.

Once the app has been downloaded, users can follow these steps to learn more about the National Elk Refuge:

- Tap the gray arrow located on the right side of the image to scroll to the Outer Park Road tour
- Tap the green "Start Tour" button
- Choose the Wildlife Channel in the upper right corner
- Select the National Elk Refuge green tag

An instruction sheet with visual prompts (Adobe PDF) is available online to assist with finding the National Elk Refuge narration and images.

Staff from the Wilson, Wyoming based company will be at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center on March 20 from 1:00 – 3:00 PM to answer questions and help interested visitors install the app on their personal mobile devices. The visitor center is located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson.

– FWS –



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 11, 2015 15-08

PO Box 510
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HISTORIC MILLER HOUSE TO OPEN FOR ONE DAY THIS WEEKEND

The historic Miller House on the National Elk Refuge will be open to the public this weekend for a unique winter visit to the site. Though the Miller House is only open seasonally from late May to mid-September, refuge staff will open the doors to the historic landmark on **Sunday, March 15** from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Visitors to the Miller House that day will be able to enjoy the home as hundreds of elk winter nearby.

A temporary exhibit titled "Women in Conservation" that has been on display this month in the visitor center's upstairs theater will move to the Miller House for the one-day event. The display highlights the careers and contributions of several influential women in the field of conservation.

Entrance to the Miller House is free of charge. For more information, please call the refuge administrative office at (307) 201-5400.

– FWS –



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 17, 2015 15-09

PO Box 510
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Steve Kallin
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REFUGE TO END 2015 SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING SEASON ON MARCH 21

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced today that supplemental feeding of elk and bison wintering on the National Elk Refuge will conclude for the 2015 season on Saturday, March 21. The decision, made in coordination with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, was based on above-average temperatures, a significant increase in snow-free areas due to melting, and new grass growth. These changes have resulted in more natural forage available to elk and bison. Therefore, refuge staff will gradually reduce the amount of supplemental feed over several days until the last day of feeding on March 21.

The end date and the total number of days for the supplemental feeding program can vary greatly from year to year, primarily due to annual variation in snow conditions. This year's feeding program began on January 19, five days earlier than the previous ten-year average. However, this season's end date will be almost two weeks earlier than the ten-year average of April 2, resulting in a total feed season length 8 days shorter than the 70-day average.

The supplemental feeding season has ended in March five times within the last decade, but end dates in the last week of March are more common. The last time that feeding ended in the third week of March was 2007, when feeding ended on March 20 and lasted 68 days.

Horse-drawn rides on the National Elk Refuge are scheduled to continue through Saturday, April 4. Wagons are substituted for sleighs when inadequate snow remains, but visitors can still get close to elk remaining in the area.

– FWS –



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 23, 2015 15-10

PO Box 510
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PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM INTERPRETS BOTH ART AND SCIENCE

The National Elk Refuge is excited to partner with the National Museum of Wildlife Art for the museum's final Wild Wednesday program of the season on Wednesday, March 25 from 5:30 – 8:00 PM. The winter series at the art museum allows guests to indulge in a French-inspired menu in the Rising Sage Cafe and explore the current exhibits outside of traditional work hours.

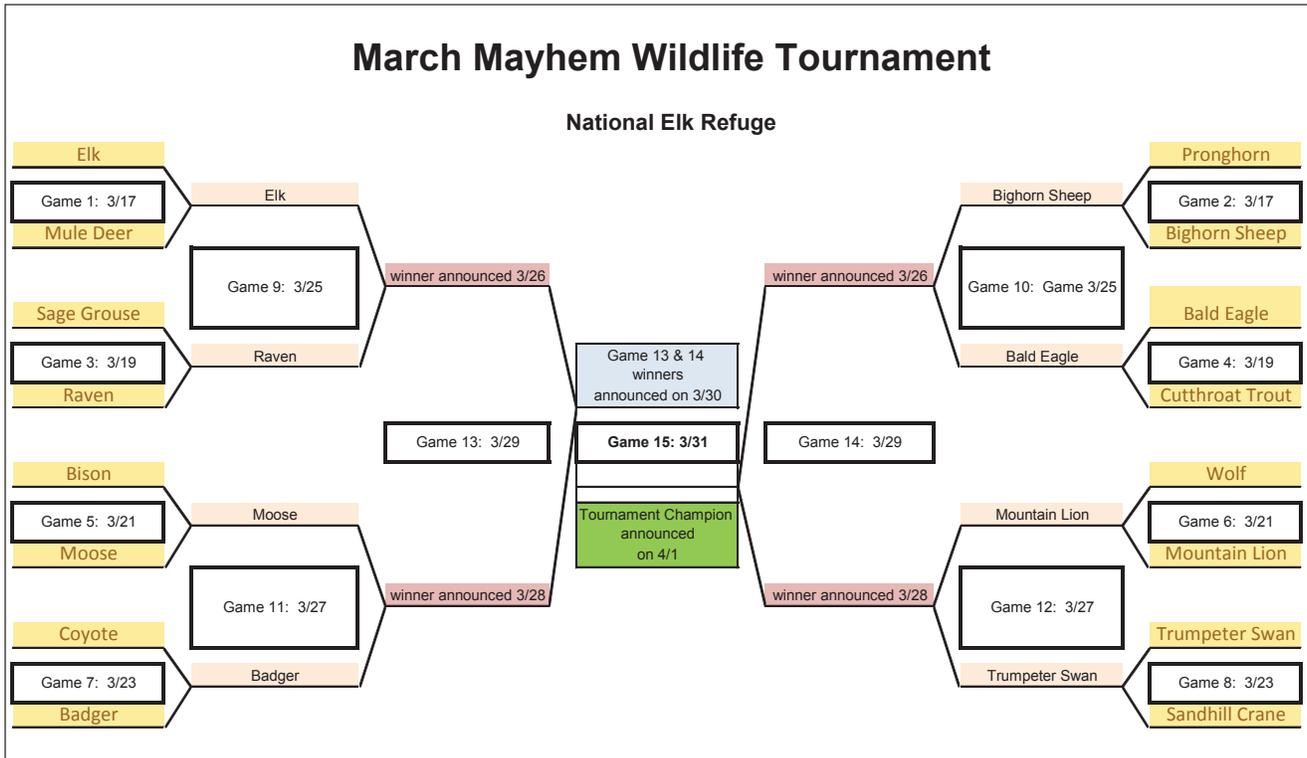
On March 25, refuge seasonal naturalist Julie Stetson will pair up with museum docent Sally Byrne to offer a guided gallery tour at 6:00 PM, repeated at 7:00 PM. The duo will share both a naturalist's and artist's perspective on artwork along the tour. While the docent will discuss individual wildlife art pieces in the museum's premier collection, the refuge naturalist will focus on the species portrayed in the art, along with identification, features, and behavioral traits of the various animals.

The National Museum of Wildlife Art recommends reservations for those that plan to dine at the cafe that evening. For reservations or more information on Wild Wednesdays, including menus and seating times, please call (307) 732-5434.

– FWS –

National Elk Refuge News – March 24, 2015

Extraordinary Eight Remaining in March Mayhem



An on-line bracket keeps participants updated as the tournament progresses.

The National Elk Refuge March Mayhem Wildlife Tournament moves into the second round of play this week, pitting Refuge animals against one another in a friendly competition using brackets and playoffs similar to those used for the NCAA's Division 1 basketball tournament.

Refuge organizers saw several upsets last week as sage grouse were edged out by ravens, and mountain lions prevailed over wolves. "The animals that have received federal protection didn't fare so well," laughed Refuge Naturalist Julie Stetson, who helped to organize the event.

The public can vote for their

favorite animal by casting a ballot at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center or via a virtual vote using the Refuge's Twitter address of @NatElkRefuge. Online voters have up to eight additional hours of playing time after the visitor center closes at 5:00 PM Mountain Time. However, visitor center ballots are outnumbering online votes thus far, giving local residents and on-site visitors an advantage for advancing their favorite species.

Participants can use any criteria for making their selection. While most have picked the animals they like the best, others have based their decision on the

photos accompanying the game announcements. Both the Twitter messages and a large display board inside the visitor center include images of each of the animals. "This has been a really fun activity for everyone," Stetson explained.

The winners of each competition are announced in the morning following each game. Results are posted inside the visitor center, on Twitter, and through a link on the Refuge's web site.

The competition wraps up at the end of the month. Two games are scheduled for March 25, 27, and 29, with the tournament championship game held on March 31.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 30, 2015 15-11

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
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NORTH HIGHWAY 89 PATHWAY STILL CLOSED FOR PUBLIC USE

Despite spring conditions and warm weather, the North Highway 89 Pathway remains closed to non-motorized public use. Though some wildlife have begun their annual migration from wintering areas to summer ranges, approximately 7,000 elk were still on Refuge land last week.

The 5-mile segment of the pathway is subject to an annual closure as part of a condition of the agreement between Teton County, Wyoming and the National Elk Refuge for pathway use on U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service property. Unlike neighboring federal lands with multiple recreational opportunities, the National Elk Refuge is mandated to prioritize habitat conservation and wildlife management, adhering to a "wildlife first" mission when considering or allowing public uses. The seasonal closure of the pathway maximizes benefits to important wildlife habitat and migration corridors and allows the Refuge to be in compliance with its mission and purpose.

Last year, Refuge managers announced criteria to determine when the pathway may open earlier than May 1, using the number of animals remaining on the Refuge and the potential for conflicts with migration as the basis for an annual decision to open the pathway early. GPS collar data shows that peak spring elk movements occur during the second and third weeks of April. However, Refuge Manager Steve Kallin explained that if large numbers of elk migrated off the Refuge early, dropping the number of remaining animals to the May 1 long-term average of approximately 2,500 elk, the pathway could potentially open as early as April 15.

The fall closure date has also been adjusted since the pathway opened in 2011, moving the seasonal closure from October 1 to November 1. The date change reflected the most current data available regarding elk migration patterns near the pathway.

The opening and closing of the pathway is coordinated with Jackson Hole Community Pathways and the Teton County Parks & Recreation Department. "Logistically, we can't open and close the pathway at a moment's notice when animals move near or disperse away from the pathway," Kallin explained.

Some elk began moving north from the Refuge last week, fanning out across the sagebrush flats near the Gros Ventre River and Highway 26/89/191. However, the majority are still in their winter range and are expected to begin moving in large numbers as the warm weather and spring green-up continues.

Even though many of the remaining 7,000 elk are out of the public's view, there are still times when they use the habitat near the pathway, and the potential for disturbance can be high. "We want to maximize the amount of habitat the elk use, especially at this time of the year," Kallin explained. "We don't want them to be discouraged from using the west side of the refuge." Dispersal of animals is important to decreasing the risk of disease.

Kallin also noted and appreciated compliance of the pathway closure over the weekend as many cyclists hit the trails. "I think there are members of the community that recognize the value of the pathway and its availability for six months of the year. It demonstrates a respect and commitment to living compatibly with Jackson's wildlife."

National Elk Refuge News – March 31, 2015

Partnership Program Integrates Art and Science



Julie Stetson and Jim Byrne share information in front of a Carl Rungius painting. While Byrne talked about the colors and time of year depicted in the artwork, Stetson discussed the moose's size and antlers.

A partnership program this month with the National Museum of Wildlife Art benefited the museum staff and provided a fun, unique program for the visiting public. The museum offers a stunning view of the National Elk Refuge from its hillside location on East Gros Ventre Butte.

In early March, Refuge Naturalist Julie Stetson met with the museum's Assistant Curator of Education and Exhibits to discuss a possible training opportunity for the museum's staff and volunteers. The two discussed key information to share, noting the staff had expressed interest in not only learning more about the Refuge but biological facts about some of the animals depicted in the art as well.

On March 18, Stetson led the hour-

long training session, providing updates related to supplemental feeding, shed antlers, and predator and prey species. Stetson also highlighted the role the Refuge plays in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Ten volunteers and staff members attended the training. Additionally, the presentation was videotaped so other volunteers could watch the program at their convenience.

The following week, Stetson returned to the National Museum of Wildlife Art to pair up with two docents for public tours at the museum's final Wild Wednesday event. Wild Wednesday programs are held in the winter season and are designed to give the public an opportunity to explore the current exhibits outside of traditional work hours and enjoy a special evening

menu at the Rising Sage Cafe.

On March 25, Stetson led guided gallery tours with docents Jim and Sally Byrne at 6:00 and 7:00 PM. The team shared both a naturalist's and artist's perspective on artwork along the tour. While the docent discussed individual wildlife art pieces in the museum's premier collection, Stetson focused on the species portrayed in the art. Participants enjoyed hearing about the artists, the composition of the works, and biological facts all in one program.

Roughly 30 people participated in the tours. Visitor Services Associate Carolyn Hawxhurst, who went on one of the tours, praised the collaborative project. "We were very pleased with the participation and the feedback from people attending the event."



GREATER YELLOWSTONE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Participating Agencies

US Department of the Interior

National Park Service

Grand Teton National Park
John D. Rockefeller, Jr.
Memorial Parkway
Yellowstone National Park

US Fish & Wildlife Service

National Elk Refuge
Red Rock Lakes
National Wildlife Refuge

Bureau of Land Management

Idaho, Montana, Wyoming

US Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Beaverhead-Deerlodge
National Forest
Bridger-Teton National Forest
Caribou-Targhee National Forest
Custer Gallatin National Forest
Shoshone National Forest

Chair

Joe Alexander

Executive Coordinator

Virginia Kelly

Interagency News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—March 31, 2015

Media Contacts: Virginia Kelly, (406) 587-6704, Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee
Sarah Beckwith, (307) 347-5207, BLM Wyoming, Wind River/Bighorn Basin
Kristie Salzmann, (307) 578-5190 Shoshone National Forest

Public Invited To Help Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee Chart A Path To The Future

Federal land managers within the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) are inviting the public to join them in a conversation on April 29 in Cody, Wyoming, to help them assess ecosystem issues and to build stronger relationships in the future.

The Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee (GYCC) is a group of eleven federal land managers who work together to coordinate management on more than 15 million acres of public land in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

Rather than hold a discussion about individual agency issues, managers are asking for input on cross-jurisdictional, ecosystem scale issues the GYCC can address. Specifically, the GYCC wishes to explore questions related to:

- Cross-agency land and resource management issues and opportunities;
- The GYCC's GYE-level priorities;
- Future communication and collaboration with the public and stakeholder groups.

Individuals are encouraged to attend the morning orientation session from 8 a.m. to noon, during which each of the GYCC's ten subcommittees will provide an overview of its activities. These Greater Yellowstone working groups coordinate on topics such as air quality, whitebark pine, wildlife and sustainable operations.

A conversation between the public and GYCC leadership follows in the afternoon from 1-5 p.m. The emphasis of the afternoon session will be on interaction and communication between all attendees, with participants discussing issues in small groups with agency leaders.

The meeting will be held on April 29 at the Holiday Inn in Cody. An agenda is available at www.fedgycc.org/gycc_meetingsandevents.htm.

Similar sessions were held in 2014 in Jackson, Wyoming and Bozeman, Montana. Information gathered during these three sessions will help the GYCC develop and strengthen its working relationships with the public and stakeholders as they collaborate to address joint challenges managing these shared landscapes.

All are welcome. For more information please contact Virginia Kelly at vkelly@fs.fed.us.

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ABOUT THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE COORDINATING COMMITTEE: *The Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee (GYCC) includes federal land managers from national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges and Bureau of Land Management's National System of Public Lands across the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA): the largest, essentially intact natural area in the lower 48 states. Together, these agencies manage 15 million acres of federal land. The committee was formed to pursue opportunities of mutual cooperation and coordination in the management of core federal lands within the GYA. Participating federal land managers administer three national parks (Yellowstone, Grand Teton & John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway), two national wildlife refuges (National Elk Refuge, Red Rock Lakes), five national forests (Bridger-Teton, Caribou-Targhee, Shoshone, Custer Gallatin, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge), and Bureau of Land Management – administered lands in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.*

Information about the GYCC and links to member agency websites are available at:
<http://www.fedgycc.org/>



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 21, 2015 15-13

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
(307) 201-5433

REFUGE ACCESS SPRING SCHEDULE ANNOUNCED

National Elk Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced the upcoming spring opening of the Refuge Road beyond the county maintained line. Individuals traveling through the refuge to the Bridger-Teton National Forest on or near May 1 can view access regulations on the refuge's web site at <http://1.usa.gov/1scth3r>.

From December 1 through April 30 each year, public travel is limited to the first 3.5 miles of the Refuge Road, from the refuge entrance on Broadway Avenue to the Twin Creek subdivision. Access beyond the Twin Creek subdivision is restricted as part of an area closure to protect wintering wildlife. Once the winter travel restrictions are lifted, the public can access the Curtis Canyon and Flat Creek roads and adjoining Bridger-Teton National Forest.

Motorists driving through the refuge should be cautious of large equipment and activity on the roadway near the McBride Management Area. Crews have been working to replace a box culvert in Flat Creek; the project is expected to be completed by May 1. However, travelers need to watch for posted warnings or flaggers in the Flat Creek area.

Additional construction work on the Refuge Road is scheduled for this summer in cooperation with Teton County, Wyoming. The majority of the project, which includes additional pullouts, drainage grading, and road surface stabilization, is funded by the Federal Lands Transportation Program within the Federal Highways Administration. Teton County obtained additional funding to assist with the project through a Federal Lands Access Program grant.

The North Highway 89 multi-use pathway along the refuge's west boundary opened two weeks ahead of schedule on Friday, April 17. The number of elk remaining on the refuge dropped from 5,000 animals on April 14 to less than 2,000 on April 17, meeting the refuge's criteria for an early opening if the number of remaining animals falls below the long-term May 1 average of 2,500 elk. The seasonal closure is required to reduce the potential for conflicts with migrating animals.

For further information on road conditions or access, please call the National Elk Refuge administrative offices at (307) 733-9212.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 1, 2015 15-14

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
(307) 201-5433

INTERAGENCY PERSONNEL RESPOND TO INCIDENTS ON THE GROS VENTRE RIVER

Interagency law enforcement personnel responded to multiple incidents on the Gros Ventre River, east of Kelly, Wyoming, early this morning as a number of individuals attempted to reach Bridger-Teton National Forest lands when winter closures were lifted at 12:00 AM.

Antler collectors often stage on lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service prior to the spring access, attempting to reach the Bridger–Teton National Forest where antler collection is allowed.

According to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Law Enforcement Officer David Bonham, at least two parties were involved in boating accidents as they attempted to cross the Gros Ventre River. The first incident occurred when a boat carrying five people capsized in the river after leaving the north shore. Three of the occupants were able to reach the south shore on their own, while the other two were swept downstream. They were rescued via a raft operated by two Grand Teton National Park Rangers trained in Search and Rescue functions. The victims were taken to a staging area on the north shore of the river where one Jackson Hole Fire/EMS and one Grand Teton National Park ambulance were on standby. Both individuals, suffering primarily from exposure, declined transport.

The three other occupants of the boat built a warming fire when they reached dry land. They later attempted to return to the north shore via the same boat. During their return, the boat again capsized. They were able to self-rescue without injuries.

Law enforcement also reported that a horse was fatally lost in the river, though the owner of the horse and events leading up to the accident have not yet been determined. Park rangers are looking for the carcass this morning to mitigate the potential for it becoming a bear attractant.

Additional U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife officers are detailed to the National Elk Refuge for the period leading up to and during the May 1 opener. The Bridger–Teton National Forest also has additional staff members available for public information, safety, and law enforcement when the closure is lifted. Interagency cooperation between the National Elk Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, Bridger–Teton National Forest, Wyoming Game & Fish Department, and Teton County, WY, as well as the additional staffing, played a critical role in the immediate response and successful outcomes related to this morning's incidents.

People recreating in areas that have recently opened should be aware of common spring hazards such as swift water, bear and other wildlife activity, and road and trail conditions that may impact safe travel.

<p>National Park Service U.S. Department of the Interior Grand Teton National Park & JDR Memorial Parkway Jackie Skaggs 307.739.3393 www.nps.gov/grte</p> 	<p>National Forest Service U.S. Department of Agriculture Bridger-Teton National Forest Mary Cernicek 307.739.5564 www.fs.usda.gov/btnf</p> 	<p>U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service U.S. Department of the Interior National Elk Refuge Lori Iverson 307.201.5433 www.fws.gov/ner</p> 	<p>State of Wyoming Teton County Charlotte Reynolds 307.732.5786 www.tetonwyo.org</p> 
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Interagency News Release
For Immediate Release
May 4, 2015

Countywide Exercise Prepares Agencies for Coordinated Emergency Response

An assembly of local, state, and federal government officials and staff members, along with non-governmental organizations, recently completed an emergency response simulation exercise based upon a mock wildland fire scenario in the greater Jackson Hole area. Teton County Emergency Management took the lead in planning this exercise along with assistance from Jackson Hole Fire/EMS, and fire personnel from Bridger-Teton National Forest and Grand Teton National Park. Main objectives of the “Operation Broken Sword” exercise were two-fold: to test existing plans in a pre-fire season setting, and to facilitate communication among the various diverse groups and stakeholders.

Headed up by Teton County Emergency Management Coordinator Rich Ochs, the exercise included 28 agencies and 54 participants. The exercise, which was based on three wildfires and their impacts on the communities of Jackson, Teton Village, and areas of Grand Teton National Park, was designed to develop joint decision-making relationships between the various agencies. “Our community is fortunate to have such strong interagency relationships with our governmental and non-governmental partners,” Ochs noted. He continued, “But these relationships must constantly be worked on to maintain this level of coordination. Exercises help to strengthen these relationships.”

During the four-hour exercise, agency officials discussed basic strategies for managing these mock wildfires using the USFS Risk Management Decision Framework. Mock operations included: designation of unified commanders; the prioritization of critical assets at risk; development of methods for multiagency coordination; establishment of a joint information system; and identification of all stakeholders.

The emergency exercise also challenged participants to identify each agency’s role and responsibility following an incident-within-an-incident which included fatalities, as well as multiple destroyed and/or affected homes. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) participated in the exercise, which helped all agencies understand the role of NGOs in restoring basic health and social services following a disaster. Other instrumental players included utility providers, who helped identify critical infrastructure and the consequences of the destruction of such essential infrastructure.

Exercises such as these are regularly planned and executed prior to fire season to assess agencies and their readiness to deal with challenging multi-jurisdiction incidents and also build relationships among the various stakeholders. New to this 2015 exercise was an emphasis on community recovery following a significant incident. Upon completing “Operation Broken Sword,” Grand Teton National Park Deputy Superintendent Kevin Schneider commented that it was one of the best wildfire-related training exercises in which he had participated. The scope of participants and agencies involved provided an opportunity to build effective working relationships, learn what resources are available and establish an understanding of roles and responsibilities before an incident occurs.

—MORE—



Bridger-Teton National Forest Deputy Fire Management Officer Mike Johnston (left, standing) and Grand Teton National Park Deputy Fire Management Officer Mack McFarland (center, standing) observe as an interagency operations group discusses options during the “Operation Broken Sword” tabletop exercise.

About National Park Service:

More than 20,000 National Park Service employees care for America's 407 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Visit the NPS at www.nps.gov, on Facebook www.facebook.com/nationalparkservice, Twitter www.twitter.com/natlparkservice, and YouTube www.youtube.com/nationalparkservice.

About National Forest Service:

The US Forest Service is a multi-faceted agency that manages and protects 154 national forests and 20 grasslands in 44 states and Puerto Rico. The agency's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. We have an elite wildland firefighting team and the world's largest forestry research organization. Find out more about the Forest Service at www.fs.usda.gov, on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/US-Forest-Service> Twitter <https://twitter.com/forestsERVICE>, and YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/usdaForestService>

About US Fish & Wildlife Service:

The Service employs 9,000 people to manage the 150 million-acre [National Wildlife Refuge System](#) of more than 551 National Wildlife Refuges and thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. Under the [Fisheries program](#) we also operate 70 National Fish Hatcheries, 65 fishery resource offices and 86 ecological services field stations. Learn more about refuges at <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>, on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/USFWSRefuges> and Twitter [@USFWSRefuges](#).

About Teton County, Wyoming:

Teton County government, under the leadership of five publicly elected Commissioners and seven publicly elected Officials, supports the well-being of its residents by providing responsive and efficient services; providing programs that contribute to public health, safety and welfare; and supporting the community's goals as expressed in the Teton County Comprehensive Plan. Learn about Teton County at <http://www.tetonwyo.org>.

National Elk Refuge News

Road and Bridge Enhancement Project Update – May 7, 2015



This is the first in a series of updates about a road and bridge enhancement project on the National Elk Refuge. The majority of the project is funded by the Federal Lands Transportation Program within the Federal Highways Administration. The work is being done in cooperation with Teton County, Wyoming, which obtained additional funding through a Federal Lands Access Program grant.

Winter closures on the National Elk Refuge were lifted on May 1, again giving the public seasonal access to the Curtis Canyon and Flat Creek roads.

This season, travelers on Refuge roads can expect to see construction crews and large equipment activity as part of a substantial road and bridge

enhancement project that began on the National Elk Refuge last month. The work includes expanding and adding turnouts in key wildlife viewing areas, improving road drainage, adding and enlarging culverts, and enhancing the gravel surface, all of which are designed to increase safety for travelers.

The first 3½ miles of the Refuge Road are maintained by Teton County, Wyoming through an easement agreement that allows the public to use the Refuge Road.

Teton County receives money each year from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act. Lands acquired by the Service are removed from the tax rolls, but the Refuge Revenue Sharing Act

offsets tax losses that would have been collected if the same lands had been in private ownership. Annual payments are made to the county or other local unit of government where the federal lands are located.

The remainder of the Refuge Road, as well as the Flat Creek and Curtis Canyon roads, is maintained by the National Elk Refuge through federal funding.

In late April, crews replaced a concrete box culvert on Flat Creek near the McBride Management Area intersection. The majority of the work was finished by the time the area opened to the public on May 1, but crews will continue working in the area and complete the final land reclamation and hydroseeding in the fall.



Travelers should watch for posted warnings, regulatory signs, flaggers, or other workers as they travel through the Refuge.

This week, workers began the reconditioning phase on the Flat Creek Road north of the Curtis Canyon junction. Traffic has been confined to one lane of travel only in some sections of the road, with both flaggers and caution signs in place to alert travelers of the activity.

Anyone using the Refuge Road this spring or summer should expect reduced speeds and delays in some sections of the roadway as work continues. Currently, road crews plan to minimize impacts to the public on weekends when more public use is expected.

More information will be available as work progresses south of the Curtis Canyon junction into areas more commonly traveled by the public.

The project is expected to cost \$2.5 million and includes approximately 10 miles of Refuge road and bridge work.





GREATER YELLOWSTONE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Participating Agencies

US Department of the Interior

National Park Service

Grand Teton National Park
John D. Rockefeller, Jr.
Memorial Parkway
Yellowstone National Park

US Fish & Wildlife Service

National Elk Refuge
Red Rock Lakes
National Wildlife Refuge

Bureau of Land Management

Idaho, Montana, Wyoming

US Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Beaverhead-Deerlodge
National Forest
Bridger-Teton National Forest
Caribou-Targhee National Forest
Custer Gallatin National Forest
Shoshone National Forest

Chair

Joe Alexander

Executive Coordinator

Virginia Kelly

Interagency News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—May 11, 2015

Media Contacts: Virginia Kelly, (406) 587-6704, Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee
Sarah Beckwith, (307) 347-5207, BLM Wyoming, Wind River/Bighorn Basin
Kristie Salzmann, (307) 578-5190 Shoshone National Forest

Free Greater Yellowstone Area Xeriscaping Guide Now Available

As another growing season is beginning, the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee encourages people to be mindful and efficient in their water use and to utilize practices that use less water in their residential or business landscaping. The committee's Sustainable Operations Subcommittee is now offering a free, illustrated, color booklet entitled "Xeriscape Landscaping in the Greater Yellowstone Area" which includes suggestions for water-conserving plants and landscaping techniques.

"This year's lower-than-average snowpack across most of the Greater Yellowstone Area has caused renewed interest in water-wise landscaping," said the booklet's co-author and project coordinator, Jane Ruchman, Landscape Architect for the Custer Gallatin National Forest. "Decreasing our landscaping water use also decreases the energy required for pumping and distribution. It's a win-win approach to landscaping."

Water and energy conservation is a priority for the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee, a group that is comprised of the Greater Yellowstone Area federal land managers. While some of the West's great rivers that inspire and sustain this extraordinary environment originate on federal land in the Greater Yellowstone Area, we all share the responsibility to use our water wisely.

For a free copy of this booklet, call your local Forest Service office on the Custer Gallatin, Shoshone, Bridger-Teton, Caribou-Targhee national forests, or the Madison Ranger District in Ennis. Blake Nursery, which provided valuable assistance in the creation of the guide, also has copies available for the public in the Big Timber area. An electronic copy is posted online at <http://fedgycc.org/SOSOverview.htm>. For more information, contact Jane Ruchman at (406) 587-6966.

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ABOUT THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE COORDINATING COMMITTEE: The Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee (GYCC) includes federal land managers from national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges and Bureau of Land Management's National System of Public Lands across the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA): the largest, essentially intact natural area in the lower 48 states. Together, these agencies manage 15 million acres of federal land. The committee was formed to pursue opportunities of mutual cooperation and coordination in the management of core federal lands within the GYA. Participating federal land managers administer three national parks (Yellowstone, Grand Teton & John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway), two national wildlife refuges (National Elk Refuge, Red Rock Lakes), five national forests (Bridger-Teton, Caribou-Targhee, Shoshone, Custer Gallatin, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge), and Bureau of Land Management – administered lands in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

Information about the GYCC and links to member agency websites are available at:
<http://www.fedgycc.org/>



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 17, 2015 15-17

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
307.733.9212, ext. 6

48TH ANNUAL BOY SCOUT ANTLER AUCTION GENERATES SECOND-HIGHEST REVENUE

The weather was cool and wet but didn't dampen the spirits of the bidders at the 48th Annual Boy Scout Antler Auction, held on Saturday, May 16 in Jackson, Wyoming. The sale, held each year on the Saturday before Memorial Day weekend, makes available shed antlers collected from the National Elk Refuge.

This year, 10,609 pounds of antlers were sold at the auction. Though the number of pounds was less than last year's record-setting total of 13,698 pounds, it was still above the 10-year average of 8,901 pounds. Factors that contribute to the number of antlers available include the number of bulls wintering on the Refuge and the timing of the elk migration off the Refuge to summer ranges.

Most notable, however, was the average price per pound paid this year by the 140 bidders registered at the sale. Bidders paid a record-setting average of \$17.03 per pound at Saturday's auction, or \$5.76 per pound higher than the \$11.27 average seen over the past 10 years. The number of buyers may have contributed to the competitive sale and increase in the price paid per pound. During the past decade, an average of 128 bidders has registered for the annual sale.

A number of matched pairs, which often bring in a higher sale price, were highlights of the sale. The highest price paid for a matched set was \$64 per pound for a 22-pound, very non-typical 9x6 set (lot #124). Two other non-typical matched pairs, a 7x8 large set (lot #115) and a 5x8 unusual pair, (lot #121), sold for \$41 and \$48 per pound, respectively. Bidders also paid top dollar for beetle cleaned skulls. Though a number of the skulls brought in \$700 to \$900 apiece, a 7x7 very large skull (lot #125) was sold for \$5,100.

A list of each of the auction's items, including the lot number, weight, and a description of the item, can be viewed at <http://1.usa.gov/1A8i4gR>.

With the number of antlers for sale and the record-setting price paid per pound, Saturday's sale yielded a total of \$195,432. Refuge records indicate this year's total was the second highest in the auction's 48-year history, exceeded only by last year's figure of \$233,614. During the past decade, the amount generated from the auction has averaged \$101,789. "This unique partnership with the Jackson District Boy Scout organization is incredible," said Refuge Manager Steve Kallin. "It represents an exemplary effort between a government agency and a non-profit organization."

The majority of proceeds from the antler auction (75%) are donated to the National Elk Refuge, which manages approximately 25,000 acres as winter range for the Jackson Elk Herd. The funds are used for habitat enhancement work on the Refuge, including paying for seasonal employees that work with the Refuge's Range Specialist in



the irrigation program. The remaining 25% of the sale's proceeds are given to the Jackson District Boy Scouts, recognizing the extraordinary effort it takes to pull off such a large event as the antler auction.

Each year, Scouts and Scout leaders donate approximately 2,000 hours to prepare and execute the sale, comparable to one staff member working a 40-hour week for a full year. The funding the Scouts receive supplements fees for day camps, leader and Scout training, and other activities. A photo collection and a multimedia slide show on the Refuge's web site describe the behind-the-scenes work that goes into preparing for the auction as well as images from the day of the sale.

Next year's antler auction is set for Saturday, May 21. However, single antlers are available for sale throughout the year at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 North Cache Street in Jackson.

– FWS –



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 19, 2015 15-18

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
(307) 201.5433

NATIONAL ELK REFUGE ANNOUNCES 2015 SUMMER SCHEDULE OF FACILITIES

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced today the 2015 summer season schedule for public facilities on the National Elk Refuge.

The historic Miller Ranch, located approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of the National Elk Refuge entrance on East Broadway Avenue in Jackson, will open for the season this Sunday, May 24. The charming homestead will be open from 10:00 AM through 4:00 PM daily, including weekends, through mid-September.

The Miller House and surrounding land was the first piece of property purchased for the creation of the National Elk Refuge, established in 1912. The homestead is decorated with period pieces and gives visitors the opportunity to learn more about the establishment and early history of the Refuge. The Grand Teton Association also operates a small sales outlet at the Miller House, carrying unique items representative of the early 20th century. Entrance to the Miller House is free of charge.

The staff at the Miller House shares not only information about the history and present day management of the National Elk Refuge but point out wildlife sightings to visitors. Coyotes, sandhill cranes, curlews, and other birds and mammals can often be seen from the location. A spotting scope is available for visitors to scan for and watch nearby wildlife from the tranquil setting.

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 daily beginning Saturday, May 23. 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 items such as maps, brochures, permits, and Federal lands passes. The Visitor Center also includes an extensive bookstore operated by the Grand Teton Association. Proceeds from sales at the Visitor Center benefit educational programming on the Refuge.

For additional information about activities or services at the National Elk Refuge, please call the administrative offices at (307) 733.9212.

National Elk Refuge News – June 9, 2015

Second Refuge Curlew Receives a Transmitter



Researchers lay a mist net over a nesting curlew in order to capture the bird and fit it with a satellite transmitter. Mist nets are commonly used to capture birds for banding or other research projects.

What's good for the goose is good for the gander – but what if the bird in question is a curlew?

Late last month, a male long-billed curlew received the same hardware as his female partner: a satellite transmitter that will track his movements over the next year and provide researchers with valuable data on migration and breeding patterns of the unique bird species.

Just over a year ago, National Elk Refuge and Wyoming Game & Fish Department biologists assisted Boise, Idaho-based Intermountain Bird Observatory staff in capturing a nesting

female curlew on the National Elk Refuge. The bird, identified as “AJ,” was fitted with a transmitter and then released. With the new technology in place, researchers were able to document that she hatched her eggs shortly thereafter, then migrated south for the remainder of the year. Typical of the species, she left the young with her mate to raise. By early July, she had landed approximately 100 miles south of Mazatlan where she spent the winter, staying within a 10-mile radius through late March before beginning her trek back north.

AJ returned to the National

Elk Refuge this spring, again establishing a nest to raise another brood. Her return route varied from her trip south last spring, with both trips documented through satellite-derived location data.

AJ's story sparked renewed interest in the species, which breeds in grasslands of the Great Plains and Great Basin. Now, AJ is no longer the lone Wyoming long-billed curlew with a satellite transmitter. Seven additional Wyoming curlews were fitted with similar technology last month, including one more from the National Elk Refuge. Whereas AJ's transmitter was paid for



Before fitting the curlew with his transmitter, researchers recorded data about the bird.

by a local nonprofit organization, the Meg and Bert Raynes Fund, her tracking success helped draw in funds from additional sources. The Bureau of Land Management, Wyoming Game & Fish Department, and the Wyoming Governor’s Big Game License Coalition joined the nonprofit in offering up funding for expansion of the study.

This year’s work on the National Elk Refuge was especially exciting for the researchers when they realized they had the potential to capture AJ’s mate. Because AJ was nesting approximately one kilometer southwest of last year’s nest, project lead Jay Carlisle suspected she may have a different male partner than last year. “Males keep very similar territories,” he explained, “often returning to the exact location each year.”

On May 29, the team of biologists spotted a curlew with an antenna leaving a nest, visually confirming the individual bird they were

watching was AJ. Male curlews incubate the eggs at night, so the researchers waited until that evening to trail a mist net over the area in hopes of capturing her mate. A thunderstorm threw a wrench in their plans, and a heavy fog the following morning further delayed their quest.

Finally, two nights later, the team had another chance at netting the bird. “By then, my nerves were frayed,” Carlisle described. “Given the sample size of the curlews, this was a huge opportunity we didn’t want to miss.” The mission

successfully came to fruition later that evening.

With AJ’s male partner now also fitted with a transmitter, biologists will gain insight into whether or not curlew pairs winter together or if they breed with the same mate year after year.

The successful capture was documented on film by Jennifer Tennican of JenTen Productions. Tennican is producing a documentary about local conservation icon Bert Raynes. Raynes has a long history of inspiring the people of the Jackson Hole valley to observe and care about their wild neighbors. After founding the Jackson Hole Bird Club in 1976, he began writing a weekly nature-based column for the *Jackson Hole News & Guide* that has been read by lovers of nature for more than three decades.

In addition to Bert’s personality and love of nature, the film will feature conservation projects such as this one that the Meg and Bert Raynes Fund has helped to fund in the area.



With the bird’s head covered to reduce stress while being handled, Jay Carlisle attaches a satellite transmitter to a male curlew.

National Elk Refuge News

Road and Bridge Enhancement Project Update – June 15, 2015



Crews finish road work near the Curtis Canyon intersection, smoothing and grading the road where two new culverts were installed.

This is the second in a series of updates about a road and bridge enhancement project on the National Elk Refuge. The first article can be found at <http://1.usa.gov/1csn3hI>.

The majority of the project is funded by the Federal Lands Transportation Program within the Federal Highways Administration. The work is being done in cooperation with Teton County, Wyoming, which obtained additional funding through a Federal Lands Access Program grant.

Road work continues on the Refuge Road this month, part of a large project to expand and add turnouts in key wildlife viewing areas, add and enlarge culverts, and enhance the gravel surface.

The project is designed to increase safety for travelers and improve road drainage. The work involves approximately 10 miles of Refuge road and bridge work and is expected to cost \$2.5 million.

Crews are wrapping up work this week near the County Maintenance line just south of the Curtis Canyon intersection. The area frequently floods due to poor drainage during cycles of winter freezing and thawing, leaving standing water across the road. As mitigation, workers replaced one 14" diameter culvert with two 30" culverts that will move the water from Sheep Creek more efficiently through the area.

Later this month, work will shift to areas of the Refuge Road closer to the Refuge's entrance at the end of East Broadway Avenue. Crews will focus on reconditioning the road surface and completing more culvert work between East Broadway and the Twin Creek corner, approximately 3½ miles from the Refuge entrance. Travelers on the Refuge Road should expect reduced speeds and short delays as work continues. Both flaggers and cautions signs will be in place to alert travelers of the activity. The public is asked to reduce speeds and use additional caution when driving by work areas or large equipment. Trucks carrying loose aggregate construction material will also be present on the roadway.



Drainage will be improved on the Refuge Road on the east end of Miller Butte with additional culverts and a raised road surface.

Crews will suspend work from Friday, July 3 through Sunday, July 5 to reduce traffic impacts over the Independence Day holiday weekend.

A second crew will move to the interior of the National Elk Refuge next week, focusing on the bridge that crosses Flat Creek near the area where sleigh rides depart during the winter season. The current bridge has a weight limit of 5 tons, adequate for single vehicle travel but not substantial enough to accommodate most Refuge equipment. The replacement bridge will significantly increase the capacity to a highway grade standard, letting much heavier loads cross the stream.

The increased weight limit will also allow for pellet deliveries to be made more directly to Refuge storage sheds. The National Elk Refuge uses alfalfa pellets in its elk and bison winter supplemental feeding program. When pellet



As many as 20,000 people travel over the bridge each year as part of a wildlife viewing interpretive tour via horse-drawn sleighs.

deliveries are made, trucks carrying 30 tons of feed drive through Jackson, past the hospital, down the Refuge Road, and behind Miller Butte where the pellet storage sheds are located. With the new bridge in place, delivery trucks will be able to minimize traffic impacts within the Town of Jackson during the busy seasons.

Pellets are generally delivered in late summer to early fall.

The bridge work will not impede an ongoing Flat Creek habitat restoration project on the stream. The restoration work, led by the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, is upstream from the bridge's location.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 25, 2015 15-19

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

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TWO TEMPORARY EXHIBITS TO BE DISPLAYED AT THE JACKSON HOLE & GREATER YELLOWSTONE VISITOR CENTER NEXT MONTH

Two temporary exhibits will be on display next month at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson. The public is invited to view the colorful exhibits, which celebrate Wyoming successes.

The first exhibit commemorates the 125th anniversary of Wyoming statehood. Wyoming became the 44th state admitted to the Union on July 10, 1890. An interactive display will give visitors an opportunity to learn more about the state's history and fun facts. Both a Wyoming and National Elk Refuge time line will be featured, along with coloring sheets, state logos, and a Wyoming quiz. Small Wyoming flags will be given to the first 200 families that visit the exhibit, which will be in the upstairs theater from **July 2 –12**.

Later in the month, visitor center staff will add a second exhibit to the upper level of the visitor center. The Wyoming Junior Duck Stamp 2015 Artwork Tour for the Top 100 entries and National Best in Show will move from its current location at the Campbell County Public Library in Gillette to the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center from **July 9 through August 2**. The exhibit features an acrylic painting of two wood ducks by Andrew Kneeland, age 17, of Rock Springs. Not only was Kneeland awarded top honors in the state competition, but his artwork was judged the winner among best-of-show entries from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. His design will appear on next year's Federal Junior Duck Stamp, scheduled to be released in June 2016.

The Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program is a dynamic educational program that uses both conservation and design principles to teach wetland habitat and waterfowl biology to students from kindergarten through high school. The program incorporates both scientific and wildlife management principles into an engaging visual arts curriculum. At the completion of their studies, participants complete a Junior Duck Stamp design, which is submitted to a state or territory contest. Top entries move on to the national competition.

Visitor center hours are from 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 29, 2015 15-20

PO Box 510
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REFUGE BISON HUNTING 2015 PERMIT APPLICATION PERIOD TO OPEN IN MID-JULY

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced today the July dates for licensed bison hunters to apply for a National Elk Refuge bison permit for the 2015 season.

Hunters must already have a Wyoming state bison license, issued by the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, to apply for a Refuge bison permit. Individuals who have not already applied and been selected for a 2015 Wyoming bison license are not eligible to hunt bison on the National Elk Refuge this year.

Eligible hunters interested in obtaining a Refuge bison hunt permit begin their application process by visiting the Wyoming Game & Fish Department's Private Lands Public Wildlife Access Program web site at <http://bit.ly/1jjpFQL>. A direct link to the online permit application is also provided on the bison hunting page of the National Elk Refuge's web site at <http://1.usa.gov/1uG8j3m>.

Bison hunters have from July 13 through July 31 to apply for a Refuge permit, initially applying for only one bison hunt period. The results of the computerized random draw will be posted on the application web site by 11:00 AM on August 5. The online system will continue to be active after 11:00 AM on August 5 to allow hunters access to any leftover and alternate permits later in the season. A thorough description of the application process, along with bison hunting information, hunt periods, regulations, and a map, is included in a four-page brochure available on the Refuge's web site or at the following Jackson, WY locations:

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

Bison hunt management on the Refuge is designed to achieve optimum herd size as determined through a cooperative effort between the National Elk Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, and Wyoming Game & Fish Department managers. This year's bison season is scheduled for August 15, 2015 through January 15, 2016.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 30, 2015 15-21

PO Box 510
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JACKSON ELK HERD RESEARCH TO BE PUBLISHED IN SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced today that research related to changing migratory patterns in the Jackson Elk Herd will be featured in the August issue of the *Journal of Wildlife Management*, a publication that publishes original research contributing to wildlife science. Refuge Biologist Eric Cole shares senior co-authorship with Aaron Foley, formerly of the U.S. Geological Survey.

Approximately 7,500 elk winter on the National Elk Refuge, representing about 70% of the Jackson Elk Herd. Elk that winter on the Refuge migrate to different summer ranges, including Yellowstone National Park, the Teton Wilderness, Grand Teton National Park, and the Gros Ventre drainage. However, an increasing number appear to be migrating to areas within only 10 kilometers of the Refuge. The scientific paper summarizes how summer distribution and migration patterns have dramatically changed in the Jackson Elk Herd over the past 35 years.

Researchers used radio and GPS collar data for elk captured on the Refuge from 1978–2012 to assess the changes. They noted, for instance, that in the late 1970s to early 1980s, less than 2% of elk wintering on the National Elk Refuge were “short distance migrants,” or those that summer approximately 8–10 kilometers west–northwest of the Refuge. Now, that number has increased to roughly 40%. During the same time period, about 40% of the elk wintering on the Refuge migrated to southern Yellowstone National Park and the Teton Wilderness, but that number has dropped to approximately 10%. The research outlines other changes and explores possible factors that may explain the shift in distribution and migratory patterns. The information has implications for meeting management goals and objectives on the National Elk Refuge.

An abstract of the paper, titled “Changing Migratory Patterns in the Jackson Elk Herd,” is available for review on the National Elk Refuge’s web site at <http://1.usa.gov/1eYvWRr>.

– FWS –

National Elk Refuge News

Road and Bridge Enhancement Project Update – July 13, 2015



With Miller Butte in the background, culvert work moved closer to East Broadway Avenue last week.

This is the third in a series of updates about a road and bridge enhancement project on the National Elk Refuge. The previous articles can be found in the Refuge's news archive.

The majority of the project is funded by the Federal Lands Transportation Program within the Federal Highways Administration. The work is being done in cooperation with Teton County, Wyoming, which obtained additional funding through a Federal Lands Access Program grant.

After weeks of progressing along the National Elk Refuge, work on the extensive road improvement project is moving closer to the southern end of the refuge and will become more visible to the public. The road work is part of a

large project to expand and add turnouts in key wildlife viewing areas, add and enlarge culverts, and enhance the gravel surface. The improvements, which will increase safety for travelers and enhance road drainage, involves approximately 10 miles of Refuge road and bridge work and is expected to cost \$2.5 million.

During the week of July 20, crews will prepare parking lots and pullouts along the popular Refuge Road. The roadway often becomes congested in the winter with wildlife viewers who stop to watch or photograph animals. The traffic and frequent sudden braking in the roadway can lead to unsafe driving conditions, especially when the roads are icy or snow-covered. The addition of pullouts and improved

parking areas will allow drivers to exit the flow of traffic and let other vehicles continue traveling along the road.

Later this month, up to 11 oversized trucks will be hauling rock, gravel, and other construction aggregate material along the first 1.5 miles of the Refuge Road. In addition to the trucks, each hauling up to 44 tons of loose material, a road grader, water truck, roller, and other large equipment will be present on the roadway. Though the road will remain open for general vehicle use, pedestrians and bicyclists will be restricted for four days when truck traffic is expected to be heaviest. The restrictions are scheduled to be in place Monday and Tuesday, July 27–28, and



Additional pullouts will ease traffic congestion during the winter when bighorn sheep and other animals are visible from the Refuge Road.

again on Monday and Tuesday, August 3–4. “With the amount of machinery, noise, dust, and loose material being hauled and placed on the road surface, we wouldn’t expect recreationists would want to use the road at that time,” explained Refuge Manager Steve Kallin. “However, our primary concern is for the safety of travelers not in enclosed vehicles,” he added. “After consulting with the contractor, we believe the short-term inconvenience is appropriate.”

Other walking and cycling opportunities will still be available to the public during this phase of the road project. The North Highway 89 multi-use pathway along the Refuge’s west boundary offers a quality alternative, while those with pets can use several Forest Service trails adjacent to the Town of Jackson. Staff at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson, can assist with suggesting alternate recreational locations.

Traffic has been limited at times to one lane with short delays on the Refuge Road since the project began this spring. “We appreciate the patience and respect to our workers that’s been extended thus far,” said Troy Price with Evans Construction. As work moves south into the more heavily

traveled section of the Refuge, users of the road are asked to continue to use caution and slower speeds. Regulatory signs and traffic control monitors will be in place during this next phase of the work.



The North Highway 89 Pathway is an option for recreationists during the four-day period when restrictions on foot traffic and bicycles will be in place on the Refuge Road.

National Elk Refuge News

Road and Bridge Enhancement Project Update – July 24, 2015



Trucks line up on the Refuge Road, waiting to unload material at a site approximately two miles from the refuge's Broadway entrance. Work will move further south in late July and early August.

This is the fourth in a series of updates about a road and bridge enhancement project on the National Elk Refuge. The previous articles can be found in the Refuge's news archive.

The majority of the project is funded by the Federal Lands Transportation Program within the Federal Highways Administration. The work is being done in cooperation with Teton County, Wyoming, which obtained additional funding through a Federal Lands Access Program grant.

Two portions of a major road improvement project on the National Elk Refuge are steadily moving along this month, bringing the public closer to enhanced wildlife viewing opportunities and giving refuge staff additional options for equipment use and travel.

Crews have staked and prepared several new pullouts across from Miller Butte on the Refuge Road. Located near rocky outcroppings where bighorn sheep can frequently be seen during the winter, the new turnouts are designed to improve traffic movement. The roadway often becomes congested with wildlife viewers who stop to watch or photograph animals. The additional parking areas will allow drivers to exit the flow of traffic and let other vehicles continue traveling along the road.

In late July and early August, the contractor expects heavy truck traffic to be at its peak on the southern end of the refuge. Refuge Manager Steve Kallin announced earlier that pedestrian and bicycle traffic would be restricted for

four days during the work phase to maximize safety. Originally, the restrictions were scheduled for July 27–28 and August 3–4. However, those dates have now shifted back one week so the contractor will be better prepared for the incoming loads of aggregate material. "It will have the least impact on the public if all the prep work is completed before we start hauling material for this portion of the road," said Troy Price of Evans Construction.

Pedestrians and bicyclists should plan to use alternate recreation areas on August 3–4 and August 10–11 when a road grader, water truck, roller, trucks carrying loose material, and other large equipment will be steadily working on the first mile of the Refuge Road.



The former sleigh bridge was removed in late June and will be replaced with one that has a much greater load capacity.

During the construction phase, the Refuge Road will remain open for general vehicle use. The historic Miller House, located approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of the refuge's Broadway entrance, will remain open during the regular hours of operation, from 10:00–4:00 daily. Visitors are encouraged to keep a trip to the homestead in their travel plans despite possible short traffic delays to the site. The historic site gives guests a glimpse into Jackson Hole's settlement history.

Within the interior of the refuge, workers continue to prepare for the installation of a new bridge over Flat Creek, near the area where sleigh rides depart during the winter season. The previous bridge was removed on June 30. The new bridge will substantially increase the load capacity from five tons to a highway grade standard, allowing for a wider range of equipment and vehicles to utilize the access route. Most

notably, delivery trucks bringing alfalfa pellets for the refuge's supplemental feeding program will be able to minimize traffic impacts within the Town of Jackson by hauling their loads north of town and across the refuge to storage sheds behind Miller Butte.

The Lower Flat Creek and Nowlin Creek fishing seasons begin on August 1. Anglers are asked to avoid any areas that are flagged or signed as they near the Flat Creek construction site.



The historic Miller House will keep its regular seasonal hours of 10:00–4:00 daily despite the road construction nearby.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 12, 2015 15-22

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REFUGE BISON SEASON TO BEGIN AUGUST 15

Refuge Manager Steve Kallin issued a reminder that the National Elk Refuge's bison hunting season will begin this Saturday, August 15 and run through Friday, January 15, 2016. Bison hunt management on the Refuge is designed to achieve optimum herd size as determined through a cooperative effort between the National Elk Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, and Wyoming Game & Fish Department managers.

Reinstating a bison hunt on the National Elk Refuge was approved in the 2007 Bison and Elk Management Plan in order to reach a population objective of no more than 500 wintering bison in the Jackson bison herd. Predation and natural winter die-off do not sufficiently reduce the numbers to a sustainable population; rather, bison numbers increased an average of 10–14% annually during years without hunting.

Large numbers of bison can rapidly deplete winter forage reserves, increasing the need for supplemental feeding of both bison and elk. A key Refuge management goal is to reduce the amount of time wintering animals are on supplemental feed, thus decreasing concentrations of animals and reducing the risk of disease transmission. Currently, the bison population includes approximately 800 animals.

Bison hunting information and regulations can be found on the Refuge's web site at <http://1.usa.gov/1uG8j3m>. A map of the hunting areas is included in the information.

– FWS –



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 14, 2015 15-23

PO Box 510
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NORTH CACHE STREETScape EVENT TO INCLUDE REFUGE VISITOR CENTER LAWN

The National Elk Refuge has partnered with Jackson Hole Public Art to use part of the Refuge's property north of the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center at 532 N. Cache Street for a POP event on Thursday, August 20 from 9:00 AM – 9:00 PM. The acronym "POP" stands for "Place of Possibility," a temporary, creative collaboration to gather information about the amenities residents and visitors would like to see in an area slated for redevelopment.

A POP event is not new to Jackson. In August 2014, Jackson Hole Public Art held a similar event on the Town Square to inspire a more community-centric design for downtown. Next week, the nonprofit organization will organize a day of activities to focus on ideas and interests in the North Cache Streetscape SPET (Special Purpose Excise Tax) project approved by Jackson voters last fall. City planners will occupy Jackson Hole Public Art's Mobile Design Studio at the event to answer questions and solicit input on the Town of Jackson Community Streets Plan.

Though the proposed North Cache Streetscape redevelopment does not include changes to North Park itself, the park will be used to showcase some of the POP events and input opportunities for public art and public spaces. Organizers have a day of free, family events planned, including games, walks, art projects and demonstrations, and concept walks. Because part of the event takes place on Refuge property, dogs are not invited to attend, though they may be leashed and walked in the designated area south of the visitor center. Attendees are encouraged to bike in or walk from town parking facilities to decrease congestion.

For information on the POP schedule, list of events, and picnic ticket sales, visit www.jhpublicart.org.

– FWS –



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 3, 2015 15-24

PO Box 510
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NATIONAL ELK REFUGE TO WELCOME PLEIN AIR PAINTERS

The National Elk Refuge is pleased to welcome members of the Teton Plein Air Painters to the historic Miller Ranch on Tuesday, September 8 to use the site as artistic inspiration and share their craft with others. The informal painting session will give Refuge visitors an opportunity to observe and ask questions as the artists create their works. Though the painters are scheduled during the historic site's regular hours of 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM, the majority are expected to participate in the morning. The Miller Ranch is located $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of the Refuge's entrance at the end of East Broadway Avenue in Jackson.

Teton Plein Air Painters is comprised of a group of artists who meet once a week from May through October in the Jackson Hole area. Starting with two people during the summer of 2012, the group now has a communication list of over 70. Typically, 10 to 15 people are on-site to paint during the weekly outings. Art mediums include oil, acrylic, watercolor, and pen and ink.

En plein air is a French expression which means "in the open air" and is used to describe painting done in an outdoor setting. The artists paint natural light, using color to define form. Depending on the light and weather, plein air paintings are generally done in one session. Artists may add final touches to their work once back in the studio.

The Teton Plein Air Painters have used the backdrop of the National Elk Refuge on several occasions and shared some of their work in a special exhibit last fall in the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center. "Our experiences on the Refuge have been enjoyable and inspirational," said Bobbi Miller, facilitator for the group. "We look forward to interacting with more Refuge visitors at next week's session."

The historic Miller Ranch is open this season through Sunday, September 20. Volunteer staff is on duty to talk about the history of the National Elk Refuge and early homesteaders who lived on the land. Entrance to the historic home is free of charge.

National Elk Refuge News – September 9, 2015

Plein Air Painters Capture Refuge Landscapes



While history is the general interpretive theme at the National Elk Refuge's historic Miller House, the focus was on art yesterday when over 20 artists descended on the property to interpret the site through painting.

The Refuge hosted members of the Teton Plein Air Painters on Tuesday, welcoming them to use the historic site as artistic inspiration and share their talent with others. The artists met early in the morning, selected their various locations, and were set up by the time the Miller House opened to the public at 10:00 AM. Visitors to the site could not only learn about Refuge history but see it interpreted through the eyes of various artists.

While some of the painters incorporated the historic buildings

into their art work, others captured the stunning landscape surrounding the Miller Ranch like Miller Butte, nearby ponds,

forested hillsides, and the distant Teton Range.

The Teton Plein Air Painters have



used the backdrop of the National Elk Refuge on several occasions and shared some of their work in a special exhibit last fall at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center. As the artists work, visitors are encouraged to wander the grounds and talk with each of the artists.

Bobbi Miller, who organizes the Teton Plein Air Painter's weekly outings throughout the summer, was grateful for the experience. Though she's no relative of the family who homesteaded here, Miller described the uniqueness of this week's location and was delighted with the season's record participation. "We don't often paint at historic sites like this one," she explained. "It was a notable setting, and all our artists were caught up in the beauty of the

Refuge," she said. The artists, as well as the guests interested in visiting with them, were granted temporary access to areas generally closed to public use.

"The weather couldn't have been better for their outing," described Refuge volunteer Jim Crabb, who works at the Miller House three days per week. "Our guests on Tuesday had an incredible opportunity to look through someone else's eyes as the artists interpreted the landscape with the tools of their trade." Visitors were treated to a variety of painting styles and mediums.

The event coincided with Jackson's Fall Arts Festival, which begins today and runs through September 20.





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Interagency News Release

For Immediate Release
Sept. 21, 2015

Fall Fire Safety Tips

With the nip of fall in the air, the leaves turning gold, and frost on the grass, many outdoor recreationists are turning their thoughts to hunting. Teton Interagency Fire Managers warn visitors of the dangers associated with leaving warming fires unattended on public lands.

Teton Interagency Fire Center has responded to 17 fires this season, of which almost half were caused by abandoned campfires. In addition to this, over 133 campfires were left abandoned or unattended. As history has proven, these small warming or cooking fires can easily send embers outside the ring or spread through adjacent vegetation to ignite a wildfire.

The cost of fire suppression is high, and the threat to campers and adjacent private lands is unacceptable. Never be careless or complacent with fire safety. Morning temperatures are chilly, and many hunters will start warming fires, all too often failing to extinguish them properly, thinking the cool temperatures or wet weather will put them out. Warming fires are generally small in size but lack many of the safety features of a regular campfire. They are usually built on top of dry forest fuels without a rock ring to keep the fire from creeping and spreading.

Remember these tips for fire safety:

- Know where fires are allowed; campfires are only permitted in designated campsites at Grand Teton National Park and are not allowed in the National Elk Refuge.
- Keep fires small.
- Build fires in a fire safe area.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Drown the fire with water and stir until it is cold to the touch. A lack of smoke showing does not mean the fire is out.
- When finished with charcoal briquettes, dunk them in water.

Fire danger for the Teton Interagency area is currently moderate, which means fires start easily, spread at a moderate rate, and can start from most accidental causes.

For more information on preventing wildfires, visit www.tetonfires.com. To report a fire, call 911 or Teton Interagency Dispatch Center at 307.739.3630.

National Elk Refuge News – September 23, 2015

Urban Youth Program Included Refuge Work Project



Part of the Groundwork USA team poses in front of old fence posts that were removed from the Refuge along with strands of barbed wire.

The 2015 summer field season is winding down for Groundwork USA's Urban Wildlife Conservation Program, and as organizers reflect on the successes this year, a visit and work project at the National Elk Refuge rises to the top of the list.

Eleven youths, aged 16–23, spent a day on the Refuge in late July to learn about the National Wildlife Refuge System, be introduced to concepts of range management and conservation, and help remove a barbed wire fence from a portion of the Federal property.

Though the work project lasted only a day, it was part of a growing partnership between the

organization and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to engage youth in conservation and restoration projects outside of their home areas. Groundwork USA involves young people in training programs designed to address the environmental challenges facing their local communities. The majority of Groundwork USA's youth program participants are diverse individuals from poor neighborhoods in economically disadvantaged urban communities.

Though the primary focus of Groundwork USA's work is in urban areas, creating short term restoration projects in places outside of a city setting helps the youths see a connection between the work they do at home and

broader conservation efforts across the country. "It gives them some context for their work," explained Curt Collier, the organization's National Youth Program Director. "It shows them they're part of much larger efforts elsewhere." Collier also noted the participants develop an appreciation for a place more if they have an opportunity to work at a site rather than just visit.

The group that came to the National Elk Refuge was comprised of team members from New Orleans, Dallas, and Denver. With four work days already scheduled in Grand Teton National Park to work on trail projects, Collier reached out to the National Elk Refuge to include the

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the group's Wyoming experience. "The more diverse the experiences we can offer to our youth groups, and the more Federal agencies we can partner with, the more of a learning opportunity it creates," he explained.

For many in the group, the trip to Wyoming was the first time in an airplane and the first chance to be in a mountain setting. "They were very inspired by the open landscape and stunning views," Collier said. "They were also fascinated by the introductory presentation from the Refuge staff on range management. It really captured their attention."

Dele Johnson, a youth leader for the program, wrote about his experience at the National Elk Refuge this summer. His article was posted this week on the Groundwork USA's web site and noted the experience left a lasting impact on all of them. Read Johnson's recently published Groundwork profile at <http://bit.ly/1jaU5pN>.



*Above:
Groundwork USA's work project
took place on a remote parcel
of Refuge land located
on East Gros Ventre Butte.*

*Below:
Though the crew was scheduled to
remove only a portion of a barbed
wire fence, the ambitious team
completed the entire project
in just a few hours.*





U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 1, 2015 15-26

PO Box 510
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STATE PARTNERS TO CONTINUE FLAT CREEK RESTORATION PROJECT

The National Elk Refuge staff will again cooperate with its State partner this month to allow continuation of a Flat Creek restoration project that began in 2013. The project is designed to enhance the Snake River cutthroat trout population and provide more opportunities for anglers. The Wyoming Game & Fish Department's Aquatic Habitat Biologist is serving as the lead on the project.

The Wyoming Game & Fish Department and their project partners completed the first of three phases of the Flat Creek enhancement project in October 2013. Phase One restored one linear stream mile extending upstream from the Jackson National Fish Hatchery outflow by removing deteriorating structures and reed canary grass as well as enhancing pools and riffles.

Next week, Phase Two will begin as project managers continue work downstream of the restored section of Flat Creek, ending at the confluence of Nowlin Creek. This next stage of work, scheduled from October 5 – October 31, will focus on the next 2.5 stream miles and will include construction of new portions of channel in addition to the scope of work accomplished in Phase One.

The Flat Creek restoration project was addressed in the National Elk Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), which was approved on September 18, 2015 and is in the final stages of preparation. The Final CCP includes a Finding of No Significant Impact for the CCP's Environmental Assessment. More information on the plan will be provided in a notice of availability to be published in the Federal Register when the Final CCP is available.

Refuge anglers fishing on Flat Creek through the remainder of the season may see increased turbidity from the activity downstream of the project area. However, unimpaired fishing opportunities are still available upstream in the newly-restored portions of the creek. Information and regulations for fishing at the National Elk Refuge are available on the Refuge's web site at <http://1.usa.gov/1M4jc4z>.

For more information regarding the Flat Creek restoration project, please contact Anna Senecal at the Wyoming Game & Fish Department Jackson Regional Office at (307) 733-2321.

National Elk Refuge News

Road and Bridge Enhancement Project Update – October 4, 2015



New and enlarged turnouts will encourage drivers to safely pull off the Refuge Road while observing and photographing wildlife.

This is the fifth in a series of updates about a road and bridge enhancement project on the National Elk Refuge. The previous articles can be found in the Refuge's news archive.

The majority of the project is funded by the Federal Lands Transportation Program within the Federal Highways Administration. The work is being done in cooperation with Teton County, Wyoming, which obtained additional funding through a Federal Lands Access Program grant.

A Refuge Road improvement project started this past spring will wrap up this month, with one installation remaining before the project is complete. The work thus far has included adding to and improving existing turnouts near Miller Butte to increase wildlife viewing opportunities and improve

road safety, adding and enlarging culverts to mitigate poor drainage and flooding in low-lying areas, and stabilizing the gravel surface.

All that remains in the extensive road improvement work is the installation of a cattle guard near the Refuge's entrance off East Broadway Avenue. The installation is scheduled for October 19–23, with temporary delays and single lane traffic expected in the first ¼ mile of roadway. The placement and design of the cattle guard approximately 90 yards north of the intersection was selected to reduce noise as vehicles pass over. Once the cattle guard is in place, workers will build fencing adjacent to the road up to the structure. The cattle guard and associated fencing will deter elk, bison, and other large animals from leaving

the Refuge and moving into nearby residential areas.

A bridge near the winter sleigh ride boarding area was also replaced as part of the road project, substantially increasing the load capacity and allowing a wider range of equipment and vehicles to utilize the access as a safer and more efficient alternative to the Refuge Road.

The new bridge, visible from the highway, is now in place. The concrete bridge deck was poured on September 25 and has been setting up and curing. Crews will finish off the work and add railing later this month. The surface is expected to have reached its required strengthening and rating and be available for use by Refuge staff in mid-October.



GREATER YELLOWSTONE COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Participating Agencies

US Department of the Interior

National Park Service

Grand Teton National Park
John D. Rockefeller, Jr.
Memorial Parkway
Yellowstone National Park

US Fish & Wildlife Service

National Elk Refuge
Red Rock Lakes
National Wildlife Refuge

Bureau of Land Management

Idaho, Montana, Wyoming

US Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

Beaverhead-Deerlodge
National Forest
Bridger-Teton National Forest
Caribou-Targhee National Forest
Custer Gallatin National Forest
Shoshone National Forest

Chair

Joe Alexander

Acting Executive Coordinator

Bianca Klein

Interagency News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—October 26, 2015

Media Contacts: Bianca Klein, (307) 344-2221, Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee
Sarah Beckwith, (307) 347-5207, BLM Wyoming, Wind River/Bighorn Basin
Kristie Salzmann, (307) 578-5232 Shoshone National Forest

Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee Continues Public Conversation

The Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee (GYCC) will host a public meeting Wednesday, November 4, 2015 beginning at 1:00 PM at Hotel Terra in Teton Village, Wyo.

The GYCC is a group of eleven federal land managers who work together to manage more than 15 million acres of public land in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming.

GYCC managers are inviting the public to join them for an open session that will serve to continue the conversations and dialogue started at previous meetings held in Bozeman, Montana as well as Cody and Jackson, Wyoming.

During the “Continuing the Conversation” portion of the meeting, several managers will provide an overview of the feedback provided by the public from the three recent public conversations and GYCC’s proposed next steps. Members of the public will be encouraged to ask questions and provide additional thoughts on how GYCC can better engage the public and effectively communicate the great work of the subcommittees, as well as the accomplishments, issues, and challenges of GYCC land management agencies. [A draft agenda is available at: http://fedgycc.org/meetings-and-events.](http://fedgycc.org/meetings-and-events)

The public session will also provide updates from GYCC subcommittees and will highlight collaborative native fish restoration efforts in Shoshone National Forest and Yellowstone National Park. The afternoon session will close with a highly anticipated presentation by David Quammen, the sole author of the May 2016 Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem National Geographic Magazine. A question and answer session with David will follow.

All are welcome. For more information please contact Acting Executive Coordinator Bianca Klein at Bianca.Klein@nps.gov.

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ABOUT THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE COORDINATING COMMITTEE: *The Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Committee (GYCC) includes federal land managers from national parks, national forests, national wildlife refuges and Bureau of Land Management’s National System of Public Lands across the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA): the largest, essentially intact natural area in the lower 48 states. Together, these agencies manage 15 million acres of federal land. The committee was formed to pursue opportunities of mutual cooperation and coordination in the management of core federal lands within the GYA. Participating federal land managers administer three national parks (Yellowstone, Grand Teton & John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway), two national wildlife refuges (National Elk Refuge, Red Rock Lakes), five national forests (Bridger-Teton, Caribou-Targhee, Shoshone, Custer Gallatin, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge), and Bureau of Land Management – administered lands in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.*

Information about the GYCC and links to member agency websites are available at: <http://www.fedgycc.org/>



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 6, 2015 15-28

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
307.733.9212, ext. 6

ALTERNATE PERMITS FOR REFUGE ELK HUNT AVAILABLE WEEKLY

With colder, winter-like weather settling into the Jackson Hole valley, wildlife managers expect to see an increase in movement of elk from summer to winter range lands. This seasonal migration may increase current hunting opportunities on the National Elk Refuge. Elk hunt management on the Refuge is a critical tool for achieving population objectives determined through a cooperative effort between the National Elk Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, and Wyoming Game & Fish Department managers. This year's Refuge elk hunt began on October 17 and will run through December 18.

National Elk Refuge hunters have four options for obtaining an elk hunting permit, beginning as early as mid-August. The application process is coordinated with the Wyoming Game & Fish Department, utilizing the State's Private Lands Public Wildlife Access Program web site.

For the remainder of this year's elk hunt season, hunters can apply for alternate permits issued during weekly computerized draws. Individuals who were already successful in obtaining any elk permit for another hunt period may still apply for an alternate permit for a different week. Applicants begin the on-line process at <http://bit.ly/1jjpFQL>. A direct link to the on-line permit application is also provided on the elk hunting page of the National Elk Refuge's web site at <http://1.usa.gov/1uG8j3m>.

Hunters apply for an alternate permit between Friday at 9:00 AM and Sunday at 11:59 PM (Mountain Standard Time) for the upcoming hunt period. Individuals designate during the application process if they want to be considered for a Tuesday – Friday or a Saturday – Tuesday alternate permit for the upcoming hunt period. The results of the weekly computerized random draw for permits will be posted on the application web site by 11:00 AM on the following Mondays: November 9, November 16, November 23, November 30, December 7, and December 14. The number of alternate permits issued will vary, depending on hunter harvest rates and participation.

Later in the season, generally from late November through the remainder of the hunt, daily field permits may be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Hunters can call a recorded message at (307) 201-5437 to be notified if field permits are available. These are issued at a specified location on the Refuge Road and are valid for the day of issuance only. Decisions to issue daily field permits will be based on current conditions; there is no guarantee daily field permits will be available.

Both alternate permits and daily field permits allow wildlife managers flexibility to adjust the number of permits issued, responding to the amount of current hunters and the dispersal of animals. This helps safely manage the hunt while still achieving population objectives.

– continued –



All hunters are required to obtain a copy of the National Elk Refuge 2015 Elk Hunting Information and Regulations handout. In addition to application information, the handout includes specific regulations, access and travel information, and harvest reporting. All hunters should print the handout, referred to on the State's web site as "Ranch Rules," when printing their on-line permission slip and harvest report. The document is also available on the Refuge's web link at <http://1.usa.gov/1Mo4mtX> and at the following locations:

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

For further questions regarding Refuge hunt applications, please call the Refuge Administrative Offices at (307) 733-9212, or the Wyoming Game and Fish Department Jackson Regional Office at (307) 733-2321.

– FWS –



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 24, 2015 15-29

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
(307) 201-5433

2015 / 2016 WINTER PROGRAMS TO BEGIN ON THE NATIONAL ELK REFUGE

The National Elk Refuge is pleased to announce the 2015 / 2016 winter program schedule for the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center. The visitor center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson, is open from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM daily this season, except for Christmas Day.

The refuge's most popular educational program takes place from the unique setting of a horse-drawn sleigh. Sleigh rides begin for the season on Saturday, December 19 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, and other wildlife.

Participants purchase sleigh ride 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 \$21 for adults and \$15 for children ages 5 through 12, with children under age 5 riding for free. Reservations are required for private tours and groups of 20 people or more; smaller groups or families may make reservations, but advanced booking is not necessary. Additional information on sleigh rides, including group rates, reservations, and gift certificate purchases, is available by visiting <http://1.usa.gov/1hwpEXj> or by calling (307) 733-0277.

In order to highlight the variety of animals found on the National Elk Refuge, naturalists have planned a "Feature Creature" hour at the visitor center each day from 10:00 to 11:00 AM. Visitors can use the opportunity to informally visit with staff to learn more about the featured animal's characteristics, habitat, and daily life. Naturalists often have props such as horns, antlers, furs, and photographs available as they discuss wildlife with guests.

Refuge naturalists are also available to assist anyone interested in traveling in their own vehicle for additional wildlife opportunities. 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. In order to accommodate the amount of multi-use on the busy secondary road, some important regulations are needed for a safer wildlife viewing experience. A wildlife viewing guide, available both on-line or at the visitor center, lists driving safety and wildlife observation considerations and includes a map showing where parking is allowed on the Refuge Road.

Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce staff is also available at the visitor center to provide a complete listing of wildlife viewing companies operating commercially guided road tours in the Jackson Hole valley. Many of the companies listed have a special use permit to include the Refuge Road as part of their tour package.

The Grand Teton Association, a nonprofit organization that operates a sales outlet in the visitor center, has scheduled their annual winter holiday sale. All full-price merchandise is discounted 20% from November 27 through December 24, with current or new Grand Teton Association members receiving 25% off. Sales support educational, interpretive, and research projects on the National Elk Refuge.

Please visit the National Elk Refuge's web site at www.fws.gov/refuge/National_Elk_Refuge for announcements later this season listing additional special events.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 3, 2015 15-30

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
(307) 201-5433

A VARIETY OF REFUGE PROGRAMS THIS MONTH WELCOMES VISITORS TO WINTER

National Elk Refuge naturalists have planned an assortment of educational programs this month, giving visitors opportunities to learn about wildlife and habitat in a variety of settings. All programs take place or begin at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 N. Cache Street in Jackson. The programs are all free of charge.

Staff from the Visitor Center and Teton Raptor Center have partnered to hold a “Feathered Friday” event on Friday, **December 18** from 12:00 – 2:00 PM. Guests can learn more about birds of prey within an arm’s length of live avian ambassadors from the non-profit organization. At least two of Teton Raptor Center’s resident birds will enhance the informal presentations led by raptor experts, which will include a description of raptors people may see on the Refuge.

Beginning Sunday, **December 20**, a family-friendly, interactive exhibit in the visitor center theater will provide a fun challenge for anyone interested in learning more about winter adaptations. Participants will read clues describing characteristics and behaviors of animals found in the area and guess the wildlife being described in this self-paced, self-checking activity. The clues and photographs focus on attributes that help the animals survive the harsh Jackson Hole winters. The display will remain up through Friday, **January 2**.

On Sunday, **December 27** and Monday, **December 28**, the winter adaptations display will be expanded to recognize the Endangered Species Act, which was signed into law on December 28, 1973. The Act is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Commerce Department’s National Marine Fisheries Service and is designed to protect and recover imperiled species and the ecosystems upon which they depend. Staff will run continuous showings of the National Geographic video, “*America’s Endangered Species: Don’t Say Goodbye,*” chronicling photographers Susan Middleton and David Liittschwager as they capture powerful portraits of America’s most threatened creatures. A complementary visitor center activity will focus on Wyoming species that are threatened, endangered, or recovered.

Guests of all ages are encouraged to stop at a craft station in the visitor center on Wednesday, **December 23** and Thursday, **December 24** to make a snowflake decoration in celebration of the official arrival of winter. Artists will find a variety of craft materials available for the project.

Visitors can take a short interpretive walk in the wetlands area near the visitor center on Monday, **December 21** or Monday, **December 28** from 1:00 – 2:00 PM. Naturalists will lead the walk while exploring tracks and signs of wildlife in the rich habitat area. The wetlands support waterfowl and other birds year-round, with occasional moose and deer using the area during the winter months. Reservations are not required, but warm layers and waterproof footwear are recommended.

Naturalists will also offer a longer tour by vehicle on Saturday, **December 26** and Thursday, **December 31** from 1:00 – 4:00 PM. Participants on the excursion will move to various locations along or near the Refuge Road, carpooling or caravanning between stops, to view and learn about wintering wildlife. Because of limited parking space, reservations must be made by calling (307) 201-5406.

The Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center is open daily from 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, except for Christmas Day.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 22, 2015 15-31

PO Box 510
Jackson, Wyoming 83001

Lori Iverson
(307) 201-5433

REFUGE TO OFFER A VARIETY OF BIRD PROGRAMS

In celebration of National Bird Day on January 5, and to recognize some of the other wildlife that frequents the National Elk Refuge, winter naturalists have scheduled a line-up of programs in January to highlight the avian species that inhabit the Refuge both seasonally and year-round. National Bird Day was established to provide public education and support for conservation of the world's bird populations.

The National Elk Refuge has partnered with the Teton Raptor Center to bring live birds to the Visitor Center for "Feathered Friday" visits throughout the winter, beginning on Friday, **January 8**. Guests will have an opportunity to learn more about birds of prey within an arm's length of live avian ambassadors from the non-profit organization. At least two of the Teton Raptor Center's resident birds will enhance the weekly informal presentations led by raptor experts, which will include a description of species people may see on the Refuge.

A series of displays will be on exhibit in the upstairs theater of the Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center throughout the month. The displays will change each week, with a focus on raptors (**January 3-10**), waterfowl (**January 11-18**), and songbirds (**January 19-31**). The displays will be accompanied by activities appropriate for a variety of ages and levels of knowledge related to bird identification. In the same theater area, guests can enjoy a rotating selection of bird-related films.

During each Sunday of the month – **January 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31** – naturalists will lead a short interpretive walk around the visitor center and the North Park lawn to explore the wildlife that lives beneath the snow as well as the aerial predators that seek them out for food. Reservations are not required, but warm layers and waterproof footwear are recommended. The easy walks are scheduled from 1:00 – 2:00 pm.

Anyone interested in a longer tour can book a naturalist-led excursion onto the National Elk Refuge to learn about birds and the unique adaptations that allow them to winter in this area. The birding excursions will be offered on Saturday, **January 16** and Thursday, **January 28** from 1:00 – 4:00 pm. Naturalists will have binoculars and field guides to share, but guests are encouraged to bring their own supplies if available. Participants should be appropriately dressed for the outing, which will include frequent stops in and out of the vehicle. The trip will include travel into areas of the Refuge generally closed to the public.

On Sunday, **January 10**, Biologist Ross Crandall from Craighead Beringia South will present research on lead levels in local raven and eagle populations. Crandall will give an overview of his organization's research, noting how elevated blood lead levels correspond with area hunting seasons. Crandall will also discuss the voluntary non-lead initiative on the National Elk Refuge and have ballistics gel on hand to compare fragmentation between copper and lead bullets.

Look for a fun photo opportunity on Thursday, **January 14** when Puddles the Blue Goose will make a special appearance at the Visitor Center from 2:00 – 4:00 pm. The Blue Goose has been the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System since it first was drawn by Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist J.N. "Ding" Darling, one of the greatest proponents of wildlife conservation in the 20th century. Darling was the first chief of the U.S. Biological Survey, the forerunner of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For more information on January programs, please call the Refuge naturalist reservation line at (307) 201-5406.

National Elk Refuge News – December 28, 2015

Visitor Center to Feature Feathered Fridays



Owly has the distinction of being the first resident raptor at the Teton Raptor Center.

Guests that came to the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center on Friday, December 18 were pleasantly surprised by the greeting they received. In addition to the smiling interagency staff giving standard greetings, three unique ambassadors were on hand to welcome visitors with curious stares. Named Ruby, Owly, and Mendel, the trio is comprised of residents of the Teton Raptor Center and was at the visitor center through a partnership between the National Elk Refuge and the non-profit organization.

The Teton Raptor Center is no stranger to the visitor center. They have provided one to two

programs there each year, bringing live birds of prey to share with audiences. Due to the popularity of the programs, the National Elk Refuge and Teton Raptor Center have scheduled a series of “Feathered Friday” visits this winter, running weekly from January 8 through March 25. The informal presentations, held from 12:00-2:00 PM, will give visitors an opportunity to learn about the birds as they stand an arm’s length away from the avian emissaries. The program is free of charge.

“Our trial run earlier this month was a huge success,” said Becky Collier, Senior Avian Educator for the Teton Raptor Center. “We look forward to our new



Ruby is a female Red-tailed Hawk who came to the Teton Raptor Center after being struck by a vehicle.

venue and expanded partnership,” she added.

Learn more about the avian ambassadors who will take turns making visitor center appearances at <http://bit.ly/1khzKPt>.