



| 2023 Winter Newsletter



Open Lands

Beyond Boundaries

The bounds of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem can be contentious. Why? Because it's hard to draw a line around one of the most intact temperate ecosystems in the world. The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem is defined by the movement patterns of wildlife, the flow of rivers, the distribution of plant communities, and the geological features that shape this landscape. It's interconnected open space where flora and fauna move and interact, disregarding man-made lines.

While there may not be an agreed-upon boundary around its edges, there are certainly

boundaries of land ownership within it – a checkerboard of private lands mixed into our national parks, forests, and other public lands. This private land can pose a challenge to migrating wildlife, and that is why I'm so pleased to share that in the past few months, the Jackson Hole Land Trust has worked to secure more than 4,600 acres of new easements across Northwest Wyoming, comprising critical elk calving lands in Teton County, high-quality pronghorn winter habitat in the Red Desert, open space that will forever stay in agriculture just outside of Cody, and a vital tributary of the Green River in Sublette County. Acre by acre, these protected lands safeguard the connectivity that is the hallmark of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

Throughout these pages, you'll hear from a wildlife biologist studying ungulate movements across our service area in real time. You'll also get a glimpse into some of our work connecting people to place, from sharing a Teton legacy to lining R Park pathways with light throughout the shortest days of the year. This work is not just ours – it's shared by each one of you, champions of conservation and stewards of our open spaces. Your unwavering support fuels our efforts and empowers us to continue protecting Northwest Wyoming landscapes for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Max Ludington
President

Photo: Flo McCall



Mission

Our mission is to protect and steward Northwest Wyoming landscapes for current and future generations.

Vision

We envision a legacy of resilient open spaces, wildlife habitat, working lands, and community places, forever protected across Northwest Wyoming.

In Memory of Al Hilde

Al served on the Jackson Hole Land Trust Board of Directors for a term in the early nineties. We are grateful for his passion for conservation.

Photo: Alexandra Munger



Board

Mike Fenn, *Chair of the Board*
Lori Fields, *Vice Chair*
Shawn Smith, *Second Vice Chair*
Michael Schrotz, *Secretary*
Kelly Davis, *Treasurer*
Jan Davis
Mark Fisher
Garrett Growney
Mekki Jaidi
Des Jennings
Cody Lockhart
Anita Miles
Marion Mussafer
Emilé Newman
George Putnam
Sonja Rife

Pati Rocha
Nicole Sheehan
Amy Staehr
Patti Stancarone
Hal Wheeler
Lindsay Wilcox

Emeritus

Vince Lee
Rod Moorhead
Scott Pierson
Allan Tessler
Mike Wardell

Staff

Max Ludington, *President*
Liz Long, *Vice President*
Derek Schaefer, *Chief Operating and Financial Officer*
Zach Andres, *Director of Community Conservation*
Jill Callahan, *Director of Advancement*
Ella Driscoll, *Advancement Manager*
Alex Few, *Park County Open Lands Director*
Steffan Freeman, *Senior Land Steward*
Kerry Gold, *Green River Valley Program Director*
Lindsay Halderman, *Director of Communications and Outreach*
Madison Harper, *Conservation Project Manager*
Alexandra Munger, *Events and Outreach Manager*
Emily Reed, *Conservation Project Manager*
Roxanne Rosales, *Advancement and Operations Manager*
Alex St.Clair, *Conservation Project Manager*
Kathryn Tolley, *Grants Manager*

| Community Conservation Programming

R Park Lanterns

Each year, schoolkids from across Teton County decorate the lanterns that will line the trails of R Park, illuminating the shortest nights of the year. The Jackson Hole Land Trust is delighted to support local art projects, like this enchanting tradition, empowering schoolkids around the valley to explore their artistic sides and their connection to the environment. The JHLT hopes to nurture a sense of wonder and creativity by facilitating these kinds of hands-on art projects and then bringing out the children and their families to see the result at our flagship community open space: R Park.

The lanterns begin as small, plain mason jars. With an artful eye, handfuls of tissue paper, and heaps of glue, eager schoolkids breathe life into the lanterns through color and patterns. Each masterpiece is topped with a solar panel lid that powers a small string of LED lights, emitting a soft glow for several hours each night.

This year, the lantern trail boasts an impressive array of over 275 lanterns, each a testament to the creativity and dedication of participants from our partners:

- C-V Ranch
- Girls Actively Participating!
- Jackson Hole Community School
- Jackson Hole Middle School
- Jackson Hole High School
- Kid's Ranch

“They are so looking forward to taking their families to R Park to find their lanterns along the pathways and to see others!”

Munger Mountain Elementary School
TCSD After School Program

Girls Actively Participating!, now in their third year of collaboration, have found immense joy in the project. Victoria Wade, assistant director of GAP!, shared, “Being able to collaborate on

a creative and community-based project has been so refreshing. The GAP! middle school ladies have had nothing but positive things to say about the JHLT collaboration for the winter solstice project. They are so looking forward to taking their families to R Park to find their lanterns along the pathways and to see others!”

The R Park Lantern Trail project is a shining example of the Jackson Hole Land Trust’s commitment to community engagement through its community conservation program. By partnering with various organizations, the JHLT aims to instill a sense of wonder and connection to open spaces, fostering a love for art and nature in the hearts of the next generation.

The R Park Lantern Trail debuts at the R Park Winter Solstice Celebration in December, and the light show continues through the beginning of January.



Muleys on the Move

Jill Randall is the big game migration coordinator for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. She studies the movements of ungulates across the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) and works with a variety of government, nonprofit, and private partners to inform management across Wyoming. Hear from Jill what her department has been learning about migrations and how private lands are an essential piece of the puzzle.

Jackson Hole Land Trust: Where in Northwest Wyoming is WGFD prioritizing migration research?

Jill Randall: We are lucky around the GYE to have some of the world's most intensively studied big game populations. For example, we know mule deer that summer in Grand Teton National Park use winter ranges in nearly every direction from the Park. Although

the national parks and forests have been an important anchor for conservation in the GYE, we now realize the private land surrounding these public lands is essential, particularly during winter. Animals cannot thrive or have sustainable populations without connectivity to all seasonal ranges. We must work collectively across all land ownerships to sustain these populations. Private land has been the focus of many recent conservation programs because our data shows how essential these lands are for our wildlife.

JHLT: What are you learning about mule deer movement across the GYE from collar studies?

JR: Wildlife managers throughout the GYE have never had such a wealth of data to help make recommendations and decisions. We are in the era of big datasets, and our partners at the University of Wyoming are leaders in the nation in analyzing data and making it something we can convert to conservation work. Before recent years, we have never had the opportunity to know every detail about the routes animals choose between summer and winter range. New data allows us to prioritize conservation easements, fence modifications, and invasive species treatments in the most effective places.

JHLT: Why do the mule deer return to the same winter range year after year?

JR: Through some of our long-term research, we have studied multiple generations of deer using GPS collars. This work has demonstrated that does often establish a summer range adjacent to that of their mothers and where they were raised in their first six months of life. Similarly, the paths deer take on their first

trips to winter range end up being the paths that they use in future years, in most cases. Some individuals deviate from this norm and chart their own paths across the landscape, but this is less typical than those who adopt their seasonal ranges and migration routes from their mothers. Along with this learned behavior, they frequently accompany their mothers to winter range when they are less than a year old and typically use the same winter range in future years. Individuals who successfully survive winter can reproduce and bring future generations to the same winter range, creating greater use of the winter ranges that allow survival of the fittest individuals. In the most severe winters, there are times that deer leave their traditional range in search of better access to food, and this further supports the need for open and connected landscapes that allow wildlife to make these movements when necessary for survival.

JHLT: Mule deer use a few different migration strategies. Which is the most effective?

JR: We have learned that mule deer

“In the most severe winters, there are times that deer leave their traditional range in search of better access to food, and this further supports the need for open and connected landscapes that allow wildlife to make these movements when necessary for survival.”



Photo: Alexandra Munger



Photo: Emily Reed

populations with long-distance migrations typically demonstrate a wide variety of migration strategies. Although the longest distance migrations are the ones that get the most attention, herds like the Sublette/Red Desert to Hoback mule deer herd have individuals that migrate anywhere from ten to over 200 miles. Some individuals in these migratory populations will choose to be resident and use the same habitat all year. To support the herd long into the future, we want to preserve all of these strategies so animals have as many possible options to adapt to our quickly changing environment. Deer also benefit from being dispersed, particularly on summer range, so they can take advantage of the highest quality forage and habitat, which results in many different migration routes. Research in western Wyoming shows that even though a great deal of energy is expended by does over a long-distance

migration, these does are consistently the healthiest when they arrive on winter range and have higher success bringing fawns into adulthood. This data shows us that if we lost the ability of these populations to complete long-distance migrations, they would be less successful in rearing fawns, and populations would likely decrease as a result.

JHLT: What role do migration corridors play in the seasonal needs of mule deer?

JR: Although many people understand the connectivity component of migration, the nutritional benefits of migration are less widely discussed. During the spring migration, in particular, the forage opportunities are superior as animals utilize the highest quality forage along each elevational gradient of their route. As peak green-up and forage conditions follow snow melt, the deer follow this foraging

opportunity through several months, as opposed to if they stayed in one place, the peak forage window would come and go relatively quickly. Migratory habitat is another important seasonal range, similar to winter or summer range.

JHLT: In what ways do ranches and working lands provide habitat for migrating ungulates?

JR: Working ranch lands provide critical habitat throughout different seasons of the year and for a wide variety of species. By supporting ranchers and their economic stability, we are ensuring open space and continued access to habitat for wildlife. We would certainly not have the extent of long-distance migrations throughout Wyoming without the vast open landscapes working lands provide. We have witnessed the demise of big game migrations in many other places throughout the Intermountain West when working lands are converted to other uses. Managing productive habitat dominated by native species is good for livestock and wildlife, so we all do best when working together to accomplish these mutual goals. These working lands are especially critical as mule deer and pronghorn populations rebound from last winter's elevated mortality levels. When wildlife can select from all available habitats, instead of experiencing restricted access to some habitats, they can maximize nutritional gains that will help recruit more fawns into the population.

JHLT: Why are conservation easements an important tool for protecting migration corridors?

I feel very strongly that conservation easements are one of the most impactful ways to ensure open space and the ability for wildlife to move between seasonal ranges in perpetuity. Once land gets subdivided, it never goes back to functioning at a high level for wildlife. There are a few examples of subdivisions that are designed in a way to allow for connectivity, but forage quality and habitat security are typically still lost. If we provide economic tools to landowners like conservation easements, they are more likely to maintain a working livestock operation, which is good for them and wildlife. Aside from the Serengeti in Africa, the GYE is one of the only other places on Earth that still supports long-distance migrations for multiple species across the same landscape. Conservation easements are one of the best tools to ensure we maintain this ecological phenomenon into the future.

JHLT: What can we do in our communities to help protect migration corridors?

JR: Whether you live in the GYE or beyond, you can get informed and support researchers and recommendations from wildlife managers. Tell your elected officials that you want them to make decisions that support the needs of wildlife. This could include funding for wildlife work or efforts that support migration through land use decisions like planning and zoning. We should also be responsible with our outdoor recreation. There are critical times of the year when wildlife need extra space, such as in winter and during fawning/calving, so recognizing these important habitats and backing away from wildlife can help reduce their energy expenditures.



Photo: Emily Reed

“I feel very strongly that conservation easements are one of the most impactful ways to ensure open space and the ability for wildlife to move between seasonal ranges in perpetuity.”

Meet Lyndelle

Meet Teton Legacy Society member Lyndelle Fairlie (right). Lyndelle joined Jackson Hole Land Trust staff in the Tetons last summer to reflect on her love of Jackson Hole and to share her intent to leave a lasting impact on conservation in Northwest Wyoming. See what Lyndelle had to say and consider the legacy you'd like to create.

Jackson Hole Land Trust: What is your connection to Jackson Hole and the Jackson Hole Land Trust?

Lyndelle Fairlie: I began coming to Grand Teton National Park with my parents when I was a small child. I was so impressed by those mountains that it's always a pleasure to return. We lived in the Chicago area, so the Tetons were a tremendous change.

One of the great pleasures of my life has been the Teton viewscape and I want to do what I can, so I made arrangements to include the Jackson Hole Land Trust in my will.

JHLT: What is your favorite thing about the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem?

LF: Just the impressiveness of the mountains from the Grand Teton to Moran. I just love to look at that stunning, just stunning, group of mountains.

JHLT: What do you hope to accomplish through this planned gift?

LF: I hope in some small way that I can contribute to the goal of preserving the Teton

viewscape and wildlife corridors. I hate to see wildlife unable to move around because of too much development.



JHLT: Why would you encourage others to make a planned gift to the Jackson Hole Land Trust?

LF: It's nice to have something like this as part of your legacy. Something that gave you great joy in life... you're helping after you pass on. To help make sure others can have the same kinds of opportunities that I enjoyed when I was a child. I've been coming here for more

than 70 years! And I hope other people will get the same pleasure in the future.

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to learn more about the Teton Legacy Society, access planned giving resources, or to let us know you've included the JHLT in your estate plans.



Photo: Alexandra Munger



"It's nice to have something like this as part of your legacy. Something that gave you great joy in life."

Explore

jhlandtrust.org

Call

(307) 733-4707

Mail

PO Box 2897
Jackson, WY 83001

Visit

Jackson Office
690 S Hwy 89 Ste 101
Jackson, WY 83001

Pinedale Office
7 W Pine St
Pinedale, WY 82941

Cody Office
1131 13th St #106
Cody, WY 82414



PO Box 2897
Jackson, WY 83001

Photo: Zach Andres

| 2024 Events

Save the Date

R Park Solstice Celebration

Thursday, June 20

PCOL Community Picnic

Friday, June 28

WRP Community Picnic

Thursday, July 18

Concert at the Greenspace on the Block

Tuesday, July 23

JH Annual Community Picnic

Sunday, August 11

GRVP Community Picnic

Sunday, September 8

