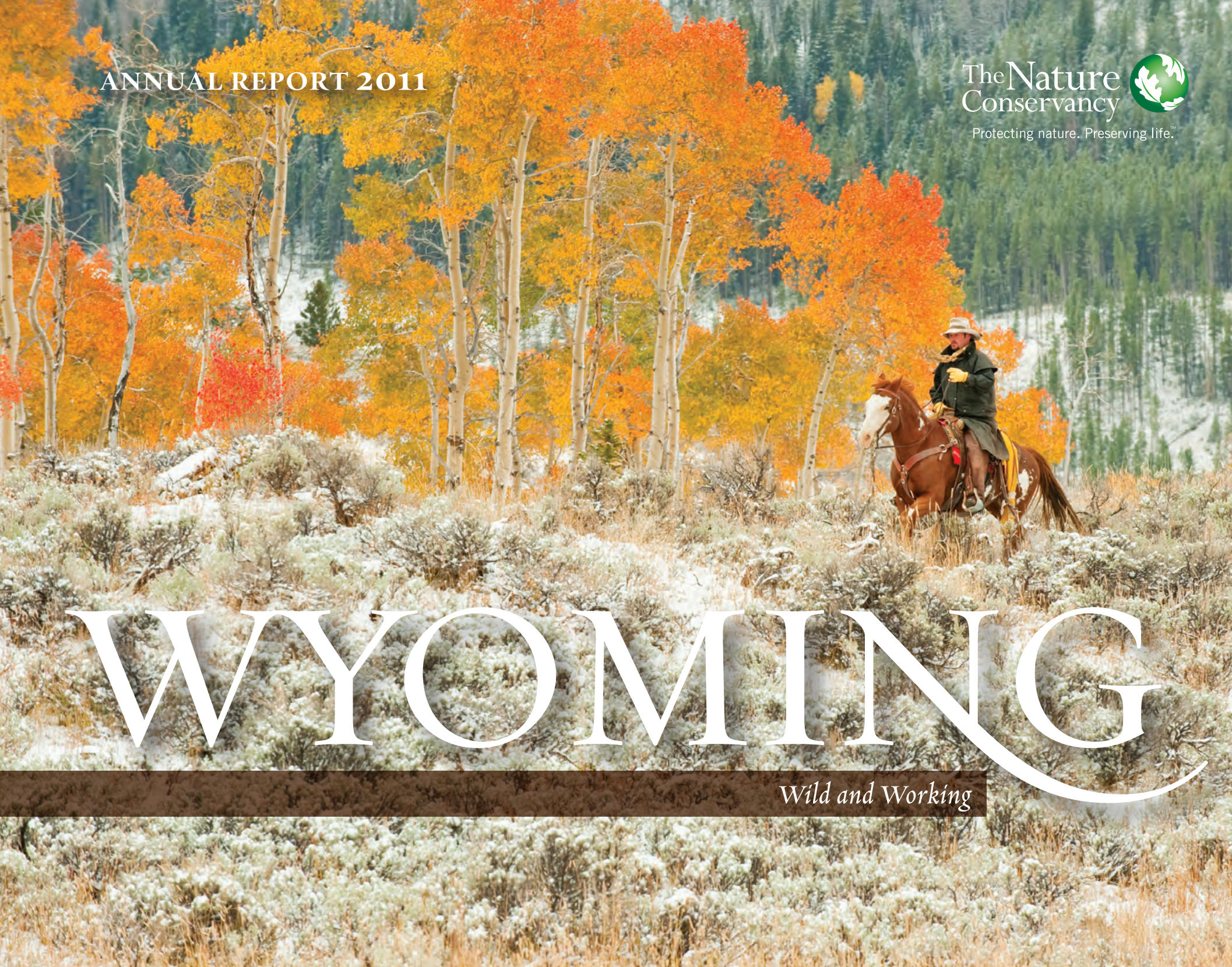
ANNUAL REPORT 2011
The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™
WYOMING
Wild and Working

The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming

(As of June 30, 2011)

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TOP LEFT Andrea Erickson Quiroz © *Joe Quiroz*
TOP RIGHT Wyoming's Green River © *Edward Orth*
ON THE COVER Horseback rider © *Tetra Images*

Dear Friend,

We're a conservation organization. We protect land and water in Wyoming. We believe in the power of sound science, respectful dialogue and practical solutions to solve our conservation problems.

Ultimately, we protect real places around Wyoming, places you can visit and know are safeguarded for the future. So, why is our annual report full of pictures of people?

Because people matter. It takes people working together to make conservation work and to make it last. Wildlife, water and our wonderful Wyoming landscapes will all be better off if we can find solutions to balance our needs for economic development and conservation. But we truly believe people will be better off, too.

This year, we wanted to highlight some of the amazing people who we have the honor and pleasure to work with. And there are more stories on our website that I invite you to enjoy.

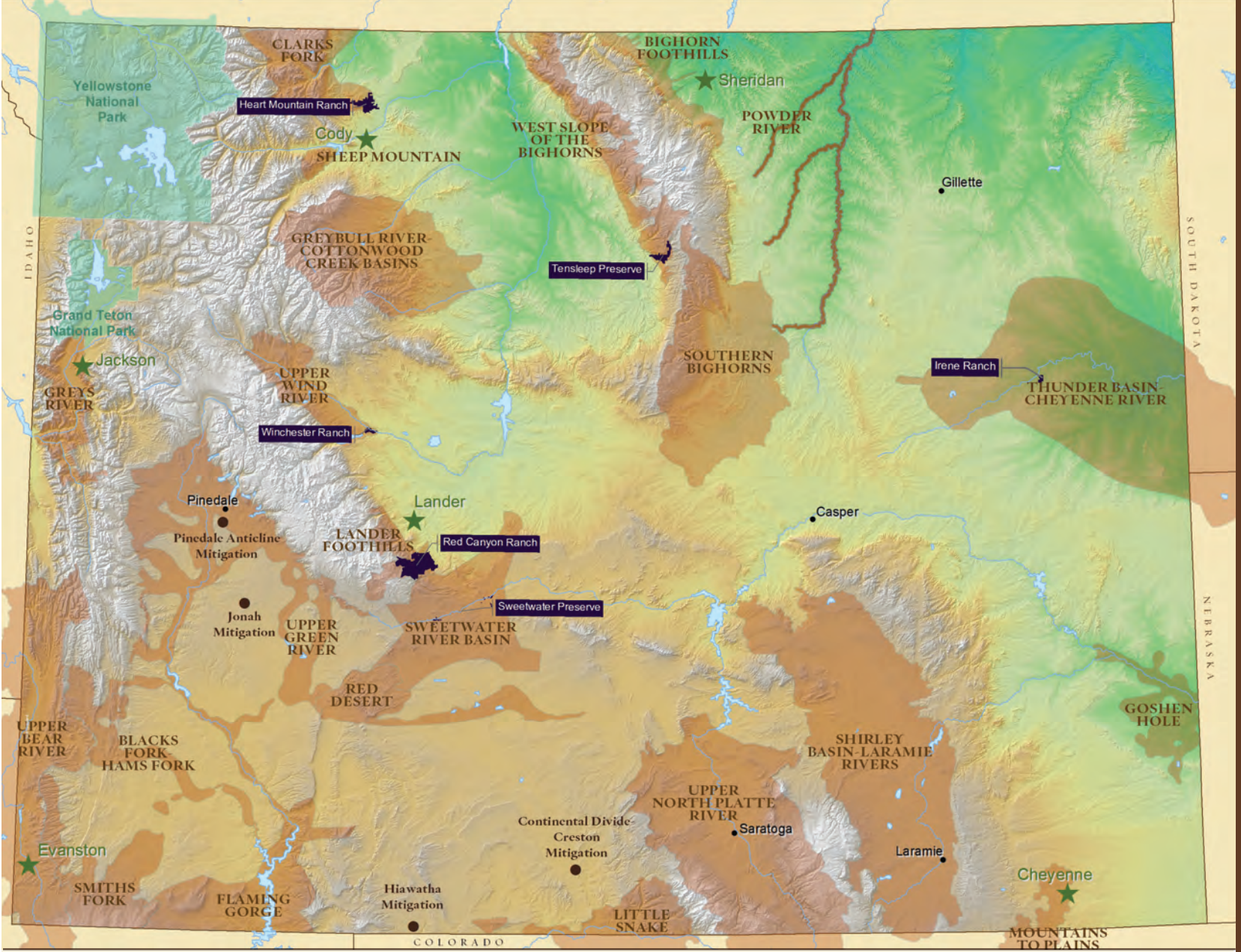
I also wanted to say a word about our conservation campaign: *Wyoming Wild and Working*. We set out three years ago with a courageous set of goals to accelerate our pace of conservation in Wyoming, focusing on three areas: Greater Yellowstone, Grasslands and Headwaters of our Nation. We selected strategies, both on-the-ground projects in priority places around the state and also statewide: Science and Policy Leadership, Rangeland Institute and Conservation Finance. A little over half way through our campaign, we are well on our way to meeting our goals.

We chose the name *Wyoming Wild and Working* because we believe that Wyoming should always have an element of the wild: wildlife and wild places that we want to protect for generations to come. But we believe that Wyoming also has to be working: working family farms and ranches, energy development, vibrant communities. Most of all, we want this campaign to be about all of us working together to protect the Wyoming we love.

Thank you for joining with us. We have accomplished a lot together so far. And there is much yet to do.

Sincerely,

Andrea Erickson Quiroz
State Director



The Conservancy's Current Focus Areas

- ★ The Nature Conservancy's Offices
- ● Mitigation Projects
- Priority Conservation Areas
- The Nature Conservancy's Preserves & Ranches

WYOMING WILD AND WORKING

Campaign results to date achieved through conservation easements, restoration and improved management of lands and waters. (July 1, 2008- June 30, 2011)

Crucial Winter Range and Migratory Corridors
104,738 acres

Grasslands
33,181 acres

Rivers and Streams
300 miles

Wetlands and Riparian
6,648 acres

Sagebrush Steppe
113,247 acres

ABOVE Finalist image from our annual student photo contest © *Tyrell Finley/ Dubois High School*

Headwaters

TREY DAVIS
CANYON CREEK'S CHAMPION

Trey Davis knows Tensleep Preserve's Canyon Creek by heart—he's spent almost every day for the past decade somewhere along this rugged and remote 12-mile stretch of water.

In the spring, Davis skis to the creek's alpine headwaters one day, and is down in the jungle-like creek bottom doing a beaver survey the next. He knows every nook and cranny and shares this knowledge with visitors who come to enjoy the creek's stunning canyon scenery.

For Davis, the Conservancy's Wyoming land management supervisor and Tensleep Preserve manager, watching over Canyon Creek is one of his most important responsibilities on the 9,000-acre preserve. Protecting Canyon Creek is also one of the Conservancy's top freshwater priorities in the state.

Slicing deeply through the southwestern flanks of the Bighorn Mountains, Canyon Creek's vertical cliffs rise 600 feet, with dense overhanging vegetation providing shelter for bats, raptors, bears and more. The high canyon walls tuck away caves and Native American archeological sites.

Every part of the preserve flows into Canyon Creek, so keeping the creek healthy means working well beyond its banks. Ongoing restoration projects reach from the preserve's uplands all the way down to the end of the canyon.

Under Davis's direction, the Conservancy's work here involves planting native seeds to grow vegetation that will prevent muddy run-off into the creek, and reclaiming the many old roads left from the preserve's time as a Girl Scout Camp. The work also requires lots of weed removal. Sometimes, this takes slowly walking every inch of the preserve to find and pull nasty invaders like Canada thistle, burdock and hound's tongue.

Davis has help from academic and public agency groups throughout the summer to monitor and track the preserve's ecological health. The Draper Museum of Natural History at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Eastern Illinois University, Illinois Natural History Survey, Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality, Wyoming Game and Fish, and Washakie County Conservation District are just some of the groups that help conduct insect, fish, bird, plant, bat and water-quality surveys.

These ongoing monitoring efforts indicate the preserve's stretch of Canyon Creek is one of the healthiest waterways in the entire region. For this, Davis is proud but pragmatic that the work to keep this rugged creek healthy will never end. But that's okay with him—it means tomorrow he'll be back in the canyon again.

Have you been to Tensleep Preserve? Are you thinking of visiting? Share your comments at nature.org/tensleep.

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Teaming Up to Restore Creek Drainages

The old saying "many hands make light work" was only partly true this summer when the Conservancy organized a workday on the LU Ranch and Spring Gulch Cattle Company in northwest Wyoming. After all, the work wasn't light—removing electric and barbed-wire fences never is.

But with 50 volunteers, including Conservancy staff and supporters, ranchers and students with the University of Wyoming Conservation Corps, the crew got a lot done. In just one day, they covered rough terrain to remove more than a half-mile of old, rusty, wildlife-impeding fences, planted 200 willow cuttings, and installed escape ramps for small mammals and birds on two new livestock tanks.

The volunteer day was part of a large, collaborative effort in the Grass Creek and Cottonwood Creek drainages between Meeteetse and Thermopolis. In 2009, the Conservancy joined a group of partners coming together to improve wildlife habitat, water quality, range condition and the health of livestock operations. The project area now encompasses almost 200,000 acres and 164 miles of perennial streams. Each year, it expands to include more partners and more stewardship activities.

The Grass and Cottonwood Creek project will serve as a blueprint for restoration work around the state, demonstrating how even the hardest projects are a lot easier when there are more people to help.

BACKGROUND Tensleep Preserve's Canyon Creek © *Edward Orth*
INSET Conservancy trustee Anne Young at this summer's volunteer day © Andrea Erickson Quiroz/TNC

OPPOSITE PAGE Trey Davis © *Ellie Martin*

Greater Yellowstone

THE LICHTENDAHLS

SETTING THE PACE FOR CONSERVATION IN THE ABSAROKAS

Ken and Kathy Lichtendahl are trailblazers in every sense of the word. Self-proclaimed "transplants" to the rugged eastern edge of Greater Yellowstone, they're as invested as any local couple in protecting the special area they call home.

They moved West to spend more time outdoors, and they can almost always be found hiking, fishing or camping in the backcountry of the Absaroka-Beartooth Front. As members of the county Search and Rescue team, it's not unusual for them to take last minute rides—sometimes through the night—across rugged backcountry to help out a trekker who's gotten into trouble.

"This place is paradise," says Ken, "but the first thing we have to recognize is that we're just caretakers here. We're going to be here one nanosecond in the big scheme of things. We just happen to be the caretakers right now. We're shepherding over this land and then we're going to pass it on."

That's why they decided to donate a 1,200-acre conservation easement on their property—and they're hoping that others will do the same. They're also members of the Conservancy's Legacy Club, a group of supporters who make a life-income gift or have named the Conservancy as a beneficiary in their estate plans.

The Absaroka-Beartooth Front is a key area for elk, grizzlies, bighorn sheep and other Yellowstone wildlife that come down from the snow-packed highlands to winter in lower elevations.

Unfortunately, the area is developing fast. Mineral deposits underground have drawn oil and gas developers, and escalating property values are forcing some large ranches to subdivide—all of which puts wildlife at risk of losing their winter homes.

"The park had three million visitors this year—it's biggest year ever," says Ken. "That means a lot for the economy here. It's the unique and abundant wildlife that draws people to Yellowstone, and we need to do our part in protecting it."

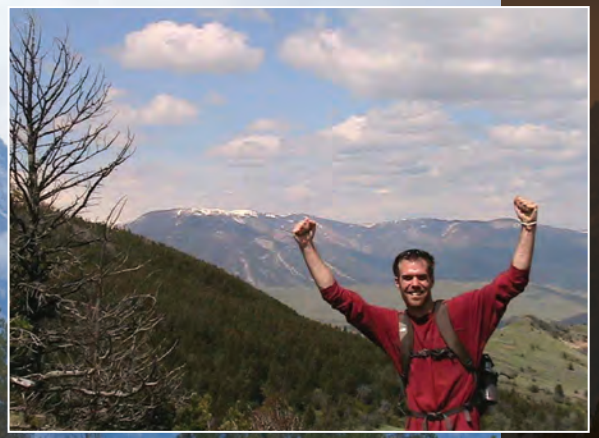
Much of the land in Wyoming is federally owned, but many of the large ranches along the Front have a critical role to play in protecting crucial winter habitat and migratory corridors. Ken and Kathy have made a choice to set aside land that will remain winter habitat long after they're gone. They're blazing the trail for conservation in this area and hoping others will follow.

Who else is helping safeguard the Greater Yellowstone?
Meet more landowners making a difference at nature.org/greateryellowstone.

RANGELAND INSTITUTE

Building Tomorrow's Land Stewards One Summer at a Time

With six ranches and preserves and more than 270,000 acres under conservation easements across the state, the Conservancy's no stranger to the side of land management that requires thick leather gloves—irrigating, fixing fences, moving cattle on horseback or yanking invasive weeds out of the ground. Our Rangeland Institute is a way for the next generation of Wyoming land stewards to roll up their sleeves, too.



This summer, the Conservancy hosted five students on our Red Canyon Ranch and Tensleep Preserve, as well as two private ranches. Hailing from several universities, the students helped solve today's land management challenges while preparing for their future careers.

In addition to day-to-day ranch chores, the interns led several special projects that brought their classroom lessons to life. On Red Canyon Ranch, they conducted weed-control research and did a restoration project to maximize a pasture's ecological and economic values.

Elsewhere, the interns cleared trails, identified solar electric opportunities, led interpretive hikes and attended land management workshops.

"There was much to learn from others, but also I was able to conduct my own scientific projects," says intern Tyler Grupa. "All of this knowledge will be recalled when I'm in the field in the future."

Now in its fourth year, the Conservancy's Rangeland Institute continues to shape tomorrow's land stewards—and there is no greater hope for the future than preparing young people to one day tackle our ever-complex conservation challenges.

BACKGROUND Elk wade across the Snake River © *Scott Copeland*
INSET Rangeland Institute summer intern Tyler Grupa © *TNC*
OPPOSITE PAGE Ken and Kathy Lichtendahl © *Ken Blackbird*

Grasslands

DAVE PELLATZ
FINDING THE BALANCE IN THUNDER BASIN

Life can be tough in northeast Wyoming's Thunder Basin Grasslands. Things have never come easy for the folks who run cattle there.

Some families date back generations, all the way to the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl drought of the 1930s that hit Wyoming's hardscrabble agriculture industry hard.

Dave Pellatz's ties to the land date back even farther—his grandparents came to Thunder Basin in 1914. They found hard, but beautiful country.

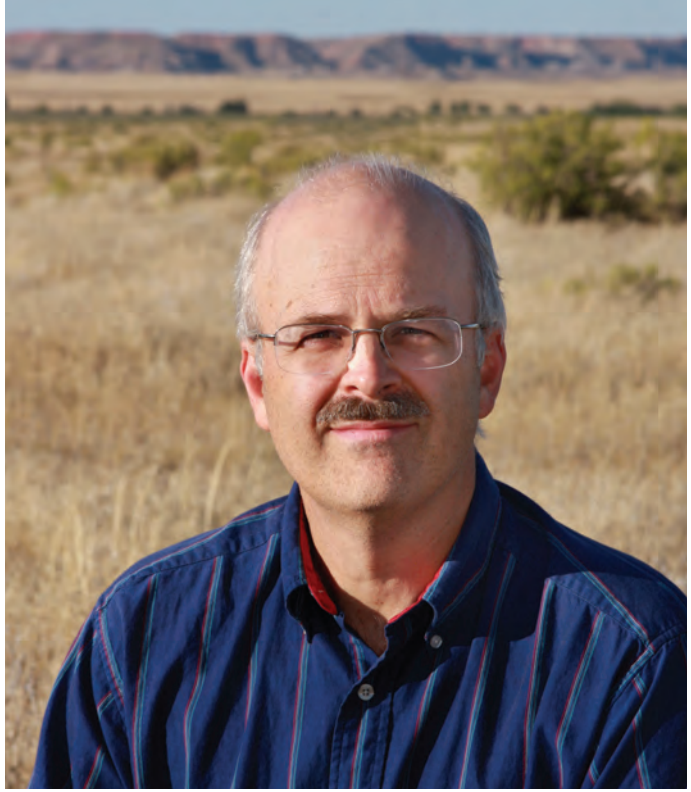
"It was the last land homesteaded," he says. "If you had money and were looking to buy a place, you probably would have looked elsewhere. There wasn't much water and it was still pretty wild."

His grandparents stuck it out, though, as did his parents. While Pellatz's brother continues the family tradition on the Cheyenne River Ranch, Dave follows a different course, but one just as tethered to the grasslands of Wyoming.

As project manager for the Thunder Basin Grasslands Prairie Ecosystem Association, a non-profit affiliation of private landowners that includes the Conservancy, Dave works to design pragmatic strategies to protect the vast prairies that have supported his family for nearly a century.

The Conservancy is lending a neighborly hand by funding a monitoring program that's examining how native grass, forb and shrub species respond to different types of cheatgrass control. The ongoing program also seeks to gain a better understanding of the distribution and habits of wildlife in the area. By controlling invasive cheatgrass and other weeds, the association hopes to protect habitat for iconic Wyoming sagebrush bird species like the Brewer's sparrow, sage thrasher and the greater sage-grouse, a candidate for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The way Pellatz sees it, conservation of the grasslands is a "win-win" for people and wildlife. "We need multiple services from these lands," he says. "We need to find a balance that protects the important values of this land—the landscape vistas, the vast grasslands, the amazing wildlife—but that doesn't come at the expense of energy or the other demands on this chunk of ground out here."



Watch a video of Dave's mother, Betty Pellatz, sharing her own connection to the Thunder Basin Grasslands at nature.org/wygrasslands.

THE FORBES FAMILY

Securing a Ranching Future in the Bighorns

The Beckton Stock Farm, located where rolling prairie meets the Bighorn Mountains near Sheridan, has been in the Forbes family for more than 100 years. Today, Cam Forbes manages the ranch his grandfather's family started in the late 1800s. Over the years, the family has raised cattle, sheep and even draft horses on these plentiful grasslands.

But they've seen more than grass grow out here on the shortgrass prairie—residential development has increasingly taken over what were once working ranches and wide-open fields. "We've seen a lot of growth," says Cam. "It's changed the character of this place from being a ranching community to steadily increasing development and urbanization."

Faced with the threat of seeing more unfragmented habitat lost to housing subdivisions, the Forbes family has joined the Conservancy to safeguard 1,020 acres on the ranch with a conservation easement.

This project is the latest in an ongoing effort between the Conservancy and landowners in the Bighorns to connect the dots between several properties and create a large swath of intact grasslands. The Conservancy has now secured conservation agreements on more than 48,000 acres here, a benefit for the many birds, elk and black-tailed prairie dogs that also call this prairie home.

For Cam and others in the Forbes family, the conservation easement lays the groundwork so that his family can still be out here on the land and ranching well into the future.

BACKGROUND Thunder Basin Grasslands © *Edward Orth*
INSET The historic Beckton Stock Farm © *Courtesy Beckton Stock Farm*

OPPOSITE PAGE TOP Dave Pellatz © *Channis Tagart*
BOTTOM Ranching has been a way of live for generations in the Thunder Basin Grasslands. © *iStockphoto/Eliza Snow*

Conservation Finance

PAUL SHELTON
SUSTAINING WYOMING'S WORKING PLACES FOR SAGE-GROUSE

This year, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) allocated an unprecedented $52.2 million in Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) funds.

The 2011 funds brings the two-year FRPP total to $73 million—the vast majority will be used to help conserve sage-grouse habitat on private lands in Wyoming.

The effort will conserve an estimated 200,000 acres for this iconic Western bird by working with the state's landowners to secure conservation easements that keep these lands in ranching—and sage-grouse habitat intact.

Paul Shelton, assistant state conservationist for operations with the NRCS in Wyoming, is front-and-center in this program to help Wyoming landowners who want to take steps to prevent development on the lands they love.

Can you describe the importance of Wyoming's landowners in this effort to safeguard sage-grouse habitat?

Fragmentation is the number one threat to sage-grouse, so conserving Wyoming's large working ranches is really what's going to make the difference.

There's a growing segment of our agricultural community saying, "This ranch was my grandparents' life work, and I'm not interested in seeing it turn into trophy homes." They want to maintain their working ranches, and in the process are making a huge difference in helping the state avoid the economic loss we'll see if the sage-grouse gets listed under the Endangered Species Act.

How does Wyoming's land trust community fit into this effort?

Wyoming has the best land trust community in the nation. You name it, these people are incredibly engaged, and each and every one of them is bringing incredible projects to the table.

What role is the Conservancy's science playing in locating the "hotspots" for sage-grouse protection in the state?

This is not about random acts of conservation. Understanding where to focus dollars on sage-grouse conservation is critical. The Conservancy's scientists are giving us an important tool to get the most out of our investments.

The science is fairly complex, but the analysis they're generating is really amazing and will help quantify the benefits of existing conservation easements, and bring into focus the need for the NRCS, the land trust community, and most importantly, Wyoming ranchers, to continue to work cooperatively on these amazing projects.

What is your hope for the sage-grouse initiative's legacy in Wyoming?

Part of my motivation is that I have a 10-year-old and 7-year-old. In 15 or 20 years, I hope to drive them around Wyoming, show them these working lands, and say, "Here's what we were able to do." I also want young ranching families who participate to know they'll still be working out here in 40 years. Ultimately, let's not look back and say, "We should have worked harder."

Science & Policy Leadership

HOLLY COPELAND AND AMY POCEWICZ

THE SCIENCE BEHIND SAGE-GROUSE CONSERVATION

There's no way to see into Wyoming's future—or is there? Conservancy scientists Amy Pocewicz and Holly Copeland can take a virtual glimpse forward in time, and their cutting-edge research has some valuable implications for safeguarding sage-grouse.

The two scientists are using predictive modeling to generate data that simulates what Wyoming's future landscape will look like. Their models place oil and gas wells, housing developments and wind turbines on the land—and predict where development overlaps with critical sage-grouse habitat.

After months churning out statistical analyses in collaboration with other scientists, biologists and University of Wyoming professors, the outcome will provide a valuable tool to help decision makers like the NRCS focus efforts in the right places now to help imperiled sage-grouse.

"This is the most complex project I've worked on," says Copeland. "The number of pieces and models that have to be built is mind-boggling. But the end game is scientific data that lets us get the most conservation out of each dollar funded."

Fortunately for Wyoming, the future isn't here yet. By working with the state's landowners on conservation easements today, we can ensure sage-grouse have a home on the range tomorrow.

Read a Q&A with Conservancy scientist Holly Copeland and find more Wyoming science news at nature.org/wyscience.

TOP Greater sage-grouse © *Scott Copeland*
BOTTOM Conservancy scientists Holly Copeland and Amy Pocewicz © *Scott Copeland*

OPPOSITE PAGE Paul Shelton and his 7-year-old daughter © *Jodi Shelton*

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The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

Donor Profile

SUMMERFIELD "SKEY" AND GILLIAN JOHNSTON

SAFEGUARDING RANCHLANDS AND SUPPORTING THE CAMPAIGN

Conserving the land we love comes naturally for Conservancy supporters Summerfield K. "Skey" Johnston and his wife, Gillian. The Conservancy holds three conservation easements on ranchlands they own and love in Wyoming, providing wildlife habitat on nearly 5,500 acres of buckbrush, lodgepole pine, aspen and ponderosa pine. These easements have also been a catalyst for other conservation-minded landowners on the eastern slope of the Bighorn Mountains, with other ranchers and landowners following suit to preserve the lands they love, too.

In addition, the Johnstons have given a major gift to the Conservancy's *Wyoming Wild and Working* campaign to help build the Rangeland Insititute, and fund ranch internships and continuing education scholarships in northeast Wyoming. Through the Johnstons' generous support, conservation goals are being met for generations to come.

Interested in finding more ways you can make a difference?
Visit nature.org/waysofgiving.

ABOVE Summerfield "Skey" and Gillian Johnston © *Courtesy Johnston Family*

By The Numbers

FINANCIALS (JULY 1, 2010 – JUNE 30, 2011)

The Wyoming Chapter's FY11 Conservation successes are reflected in—and supported by—our equally strong financial performance.

A Few Highlights:

- In FY11, the Wyoming Chapter received $2,776,000 in cash contributions, as well as $2,475,000 in grants and contract payments from government agencies. This represents an increase of 51% and 26% over FY10 results.
- The Wyoming Chapter was also proud to raise more than $400,000 of additional funding from foundations and generous individuals that were specifically designated to global Conservancy programs.
- The Chapter received $2,000,328 through gifts of conservation land along with sale of the Sheahan property to a Conservation Buyer. This figure represents the total property value that generous, conservation-minded families gave to the Conservancy, and brings the total book value of our land interests to $146M. Conservation easements comprise the majority of these interests, reflecting the commitment of Wyoming landowners who have granted 162 conservation easements to the Conservancy.
- With over 300,000 acres of private land in Wyoming protected as Conservancy preserves and ranches or through conservation easements comes a tremendous responsibility. To ensure that we will always be able to monitor and protect these conservation properties, we have built an endowment of over $10 million. The majority of our endowment contributions are bequests from generous Conservancy supporters who included the Wyoming Chapter in their estate plans. These contributions are managed to generate both income and growth.

BACKGROUND House finch © Scott Copeland

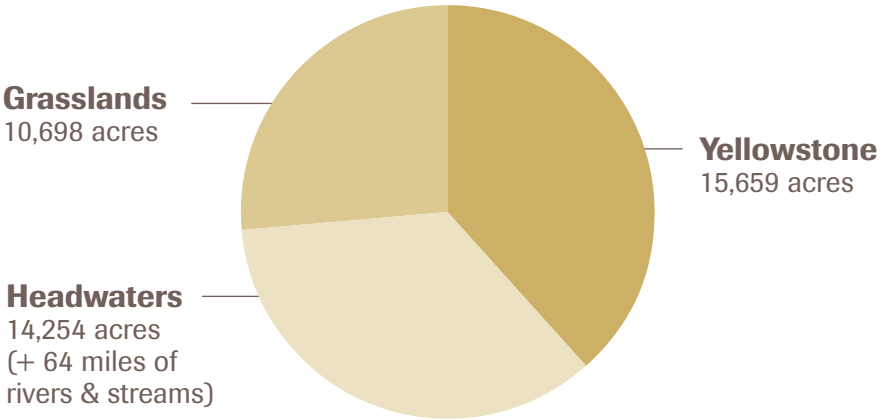
OPPOSITE PAGE Winning image from our annual student photo contest
© *Kathleen Backman/Natrona County High School*

YOUR RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Your individual contributions were matched 3.3:1 this year through our other revenue sources, including public funds and landowner donations. This fiscal year, we conserved together with partners approximately 41,000 acres of land and 64 miles of river through conservation easements, restoration or improved management of lands and waters, at a cost of roughly $68 (of private contributions) per acre! Without your gifts and the matching dollars they generate, it would be impossible to put the boots on the ground to accomplish the projects we do. In addition to the acres conserved, your contributions support many other areas of conservation work, such as science, research, policy and educational internships, represented in this annual report.

We hope this FY11 financial summary illustrates the critical importance of supporters, like you, who have helped the Conservancy protect Wyoming's unique natural legacy for future generations.

FY11 WYOMING RESULTS (JULY 1, 2010 – JUNE 30, 2011)



Historical To-Date

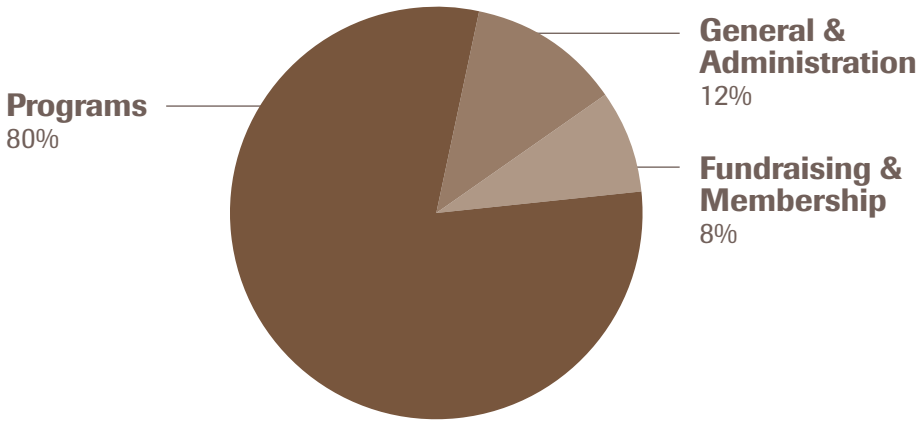
Total conservation easements: 162

Rivers: 910 miles legally protected, 214 miles restored

Total lands: 471,013 acres legally protected, 148,606 acres conserved through stewardship and habitat improvement

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY'S PROGRAMMATIC EFFICIENCY

Based on 2009-2010 audited numbers



The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

The Nature Conservancy
Wyoming Chapter
258 Main Street
Lander, Wyoming 82520
nature.org/wyoming

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Be Our Friend!

We're now on Facebook, where you can join our Wyoming community to learn about events, projects, conservation news from around the state and more!

Go to www.facebook.com and search for Wyoming Nature Conservancy.

LEFT Finalist image from our annual student photo contest © *Jaimie Lee/Dubois High School*