

ANNUAL REPORT 2012

# WYOMING

*Wild and Working*

The Nature Conservancy  
in Wyoming

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# Dear Friends,



On a beautiful fall day, at a ranch south of Lander, we tumbled out of our vehicles for lunch and conversation. Our group included conservation leaders from a ranching community in Patagonia,

Argentina, who were visiting Jim Magagna, executive vice president of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association (read Jim's story on page 8). The international guests came to Wyoming to make connections with like-minded ranchers and learn what Wyoming has done to protect our precious lands and waters.

The conversation was interwoven with common interests: range condition, wool markets, and the value of conservation easements for protecting farms and ranches. Shaking hands goodbye, it was amazing to realize how much we have in common with people across the globe and here at home in Wyoming.

What we were able to share that afternoon is that Wyoming has made enormous strides in the past few years. Just this past year, the Conservancy was able to conserve 137,000 acres of land and 168 miles of river through restoration, improved management and legal protection. Through our science and on-the-ground projects, we informed policy and practices on the use of our natural resources. We worked hard to bring new people to conservation through our education and outreach activities.

Are we single-handedly making it happen? Never. We depend on partnerships and collaborations with landowners, other conservation organizations, and a wide variety of leaders and like-minded individuals. You'll read in this annual report about wonderful new collaborations that are making a difference for conservation in Wyoming. The Conservancy is proud to link hands with people across the state.

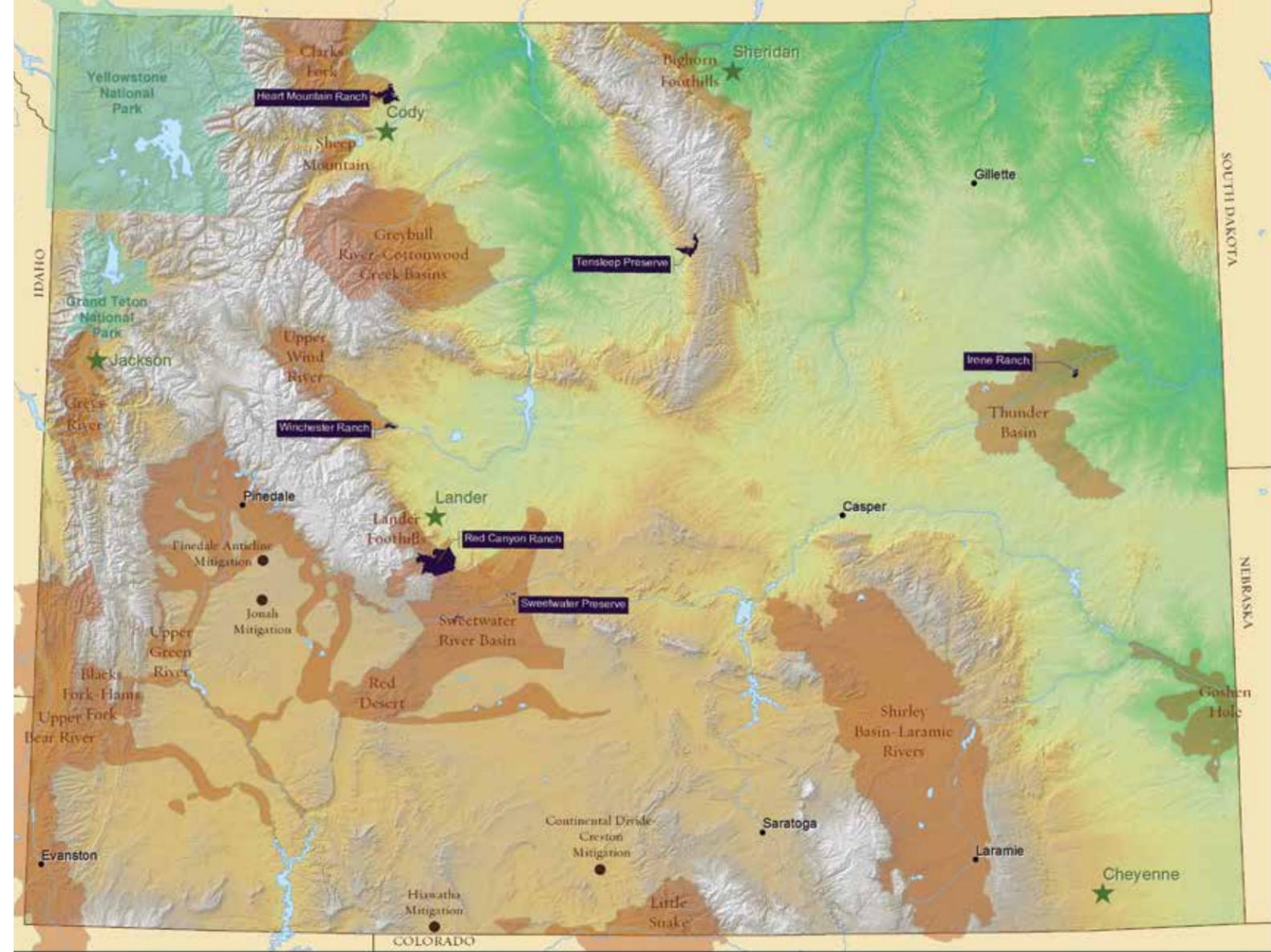
Most importantly, you've also had a hand in our success. Last spring, we sent out a survey asking for your opinion about our work. You told us to stay focused on our values of collaboration and solution-oriented, science-based results. You told us to continue our efforts to protect precious lands in Wyoming, but you have a keen sense of urgency about our water resources. That's advice we will follow: The Conservancy is entering the final year of a conservation campaign unlike anything we have ever done. We have intensified our efforts in the Greater Yellowstone region, grasslands and especially the headwaters of our state. I look forward to announcing our final results next summer.

It's an all-hands campaign to protect Wyoming's lands and waters. Thank you for being a part of it!

Best regards,

Andrea Erickson Quiroz  
*State Director*

ON THE COVER Shoshone River © Sara Caudle, Cody High School  
THIS PAGE LEFT Andrea Erickson Quiroz © Joe Quiroz



## 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, 2012)*

Crucial Winter Range and Migratory Corridors  
**122,195 acres**

Grasslands  
**139,615 acres**

Rivers and Streams  
**478 miles**

Wetlands and Riparian  
**11,230 acres**

Sagebrush Steppe  
**121,746 acres**



ABOVE House finch © Scott Copeland

# Greater Yellowstone

## SAFEGUARDING THE LANDER FRONT'S WORKING RANCHES

In the sweeping foothills outside Lander, large ranches that have been part of this landscape's fabric for generations are rapidly disappearing. In their place sits an expanding network of rural subdivisions springing up as more and more people move in to enjoy the area's stunning scenery.

.....  
**SO** when two of the most visible, intact ranches here went up for sale, the Conservancy rallied to take action before it was too late. "It was important to the community that these ranches remain intact, which is why we received so much local support," says Andrea Erickson Quiroz, the Conservancy's Wyoming state director.

The Conservancy moved quickly in 2012, purchasing the Double A and 3 Bar X ranches and placing conservation easements on both to prevent future subdivision and uncontrolled development. This undertaking was made possible with broad backing from the community and financial support from federal agencies, nonprofits and private donors.

The result: more than 3,500 contiguous acres of unbroken protected land. The 3 Bar X has already sold to a local rancher, who will continue to maintain it as an agricultural operation. The Conservancy is seeking to sell the Double A Ranch to another conservation-minded buyer.

"It seemed everything around us was being chopped up in little pieces," says Rick Allen, who owned and managed the Double A Ranch for more than three decades. "So we thought it was a real stroke of genius and luck when the Conservancy came along and offered to put a conservation easement on it, allowing us to

move on but also protect the ranch and all the resources it has supported."

For wildlife, the adjoining Double A and 3 Bar X ranches provide critical habitat in the vast Greater Yellowstone region, particularly in the winter. Mule deer, moose and elk need these lower elevation valleys to survive when the snow flies. Sage-grouse migrate here in the summer months.

And since wildlife don't follow property lines, the fact that the Double A and 3 Bar X ranches connect to a network of 14,000 acres of working ranchland already under conservation easements, and more than 500,000 public acres, is an added gain.

"Finding a conservation buyer for the Double A Ranch will fit the last piece into place in this amazing conservation story," says Erickson Quiroz. "When we talk about leaving a legacy, this is what it's all about."

## Rangeland Institute

BUILDING TOMORROW'S LAND STEWARDS ONE SUMMER AT A TIME

Twenty-one-year-old Stephanie Winters spent a recent Saturday night with a very different worry than most college-aged women, reported the *Powell Tribune* this summer. "How am I going to build a fence?!" Winters agonized. "My back's going to be gone!"

A student in rangeland resource management and soil science at Humboldt State in California, Stephanie spent three months in Wyoming this summer as part of the Conservancy's Rangeland Institute.

On our Heart Mountain Ranch Preserve near Powell, Stephanie "spent her days studying vegetation, herding cattle, learning about irrigation and yes, building fences," reported the *Powell Tribune*.

In all, three interns participated in the Rangeland Institute Program this summer on our Red Canyon Ranch and Heart Mountain Ranch Preserve. Hailing from different universities, the students attended rangeland education programs and tours, and conducted on-the-ground research projects on rangeland health.

Now in its fifth year, the Conservancy's Rangeland Institute continues to shape tomorrow's land stewards to one day tackle our ever-complex conservation challenges.

After his experience this summer, University of Wyoming student Nate Brown feels ready. "I believe my time at Red Canyon Ranch has developed me into a well-grounded person who wants to be a cow-calf producer in Wyoming and who also has a focus on conservation practices while being profitable and sustainable."



# Headwaters

## BRINGING CRITICAL ATTENTION AND FUNDING TO WYOMING'S WETLANDS

Wyoming may be an arid state, but Lindsey Washkoviak found plenty of water this summer. Working knee-deep in wetlands, she was constantly on guard for trampling moose but more often encountered frogs and an occasional toad.



**WASHKOVIK** and fellow University of Wyoming field researcher Adam Skadsen spent three months in the Upper Green River Basin, traversing from the Fontenelle Dam all the way to the Wind River Mountains. Their mission: gather as much data as possible on the basin's wetlands. During their long field days (and long nights, depending on the bugs), they took careful inventory of individual wetlands, assessing vegetation and nearby land use, digging soil pits, and taking water samples.

This summer research was part of a much broader effort that the Conservancy is helping lead to draw more attention—and funding—to our state's wetlands. And it's working on both fronts.

In 2010, the Conservancy led a collaborative effort to conduct a first-ever analysis of Wyoming wetlands, resulting in a report that prioritized nine critical sites across the state. Then, a year later, the effort received a boost with a \$98,000 EPA grant to send a field crew to inventory Upper Green River Basin wetlands for future protection and restoration efforts.

When more EPA money became available this year to inventory the report's Laramie Plains and Goshen Hole sites, the Conservancy and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department applied and received a \$280,000 grant to move forward.

And the momentum doesn't stop there, says Holly Copeland, the Conservancy's spatial

ecologist in Wyoming, who was at the forefront of the first report and subsequent conservation work.

Five of the nine sites Copeland helped prioritize have already shown up in a highly respected wetlands assessment of the entire North American region. And she believes there's even more to come in the form of federal grants now that Wyoming wetlands have more visibility.

"We've helped jumpstart the first large-scale baseline monitoring effort of wetlands in Wyoming," says Copeland, "and the more we learn about the values of our wetlands, and document what needs to be done in terms of restoration and protection, the more likely we will be to succeed in conserving them."

For Wyoming's often under-appreciated wetlands, all of this attention will lead to healthier water, ultimately feeding back into our economy, our wildlife and our very well being.

Visit [nature.org/wyscience](http://nature.org/wyscience) to meet our science team and find links to published scientific studies, special reports and more.

THIS PAGE Wyoming wetlands © Scott Copeland  
OPPOSITE PAGE Science at work © Amy Pocewicz/TNC  
INSET Wind turbines © Paula Hunker/TNC

# Science and Policy Leadership

WANT SCIENCE? WE GOT IT!



With your support, the Conservancy made strides in 2012 to establish conservation policies and practices that are guided by science and seek to conserve Wyoming's natural diversity while supporting sustainable communities and economic growth.

## SOME HIGHLIGHTS:

- **What's the Risk?** We are partnering with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to assess how vulnerable wildlife and lands identified in Wyoming's 2010 State Wildlife Action Plan are to climate change, invasive species, disease, and energy and residential development.
- **At the Core** Our science team conducted a research study on the effectiveness of conservation easements and the state's core area policy for conserving sage-grouse in Wyoming. The research will help target easement locations for optimal sage-grouse protection.
- **Mapping Migration** Migratory birds face potential risks from new wind energy developments, but maps showing places important for bird migration have been nonexistent. In partnership with the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, our science team developed models to map concentration areas for four groups of migratory birds across Wyoming and identified which groups may face the most risk from wind development. These maps will help guide conservation efforts for migratory birds and fill a critical data gap for companies and agencies working to locate new wind developments.

# Grasslands

## RANCHERS AND CONSERVATIONISTS TEAM UP FOR FUTURE OF WYOMING'S RANGELANDS

As a sheep rancher who has spent more than 50 years on the vast Wyoming range, Jim Magagna now spends a good bit of his time on the hill—Capitol Hill, that is, where he's working hard to protect the very landscape that sustains the state's ranching way of life. As executive vice president of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, Jim has been working on behalf of the livestock industry for the past 15 years. Recently, he teamed up with other interested groups, including the Conservancy, in hopes of getting support from Washington.

### WHAT is the Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition, and what are its goals?

The Coalition was formed last year with the initial goal of working together to support the conservation title of the Farm Bill. We shared a common interest in some of the programs that provide funds directly to ranchers to carry out conservation work, so it seemed like a good starting point to begin working together.

We realized that, individually, our priorities were not all the same, but that there were a number of programs that we all *could* support. As a result, collectively, we could together advocate for the conservation title of the Farm Bill. And, importantly, I think that has opened the door to the potential for collaboration on other projects.

### What is the value of working with conservation interests on agricultural policy?

In agriculture, we often work in collaboration with other industry groups, both agriculture and other natural resource industries. But what

people sometimes forget is that ranchers are also interested in successful conservation. I've spent my career as a sheep rancher and I can tell you that, as a rancher, your future depends on the conservation of natural resources.

The value of this particular Coalition is that it brings together the concept that both conservation and agriculture are about wise use of the land. Conservation doesn't always have to mean fencing off the land and keeping people and livestock off of it. In our case, we want to use the land in a way that both protects and enhances the resource—which also enhances the productivity of the land for agriculture. This Coalition bridges a gap that has, at times, existed between the groups. It also brings a lot of horsepower to the political table, which hopefully increases our chances for success.

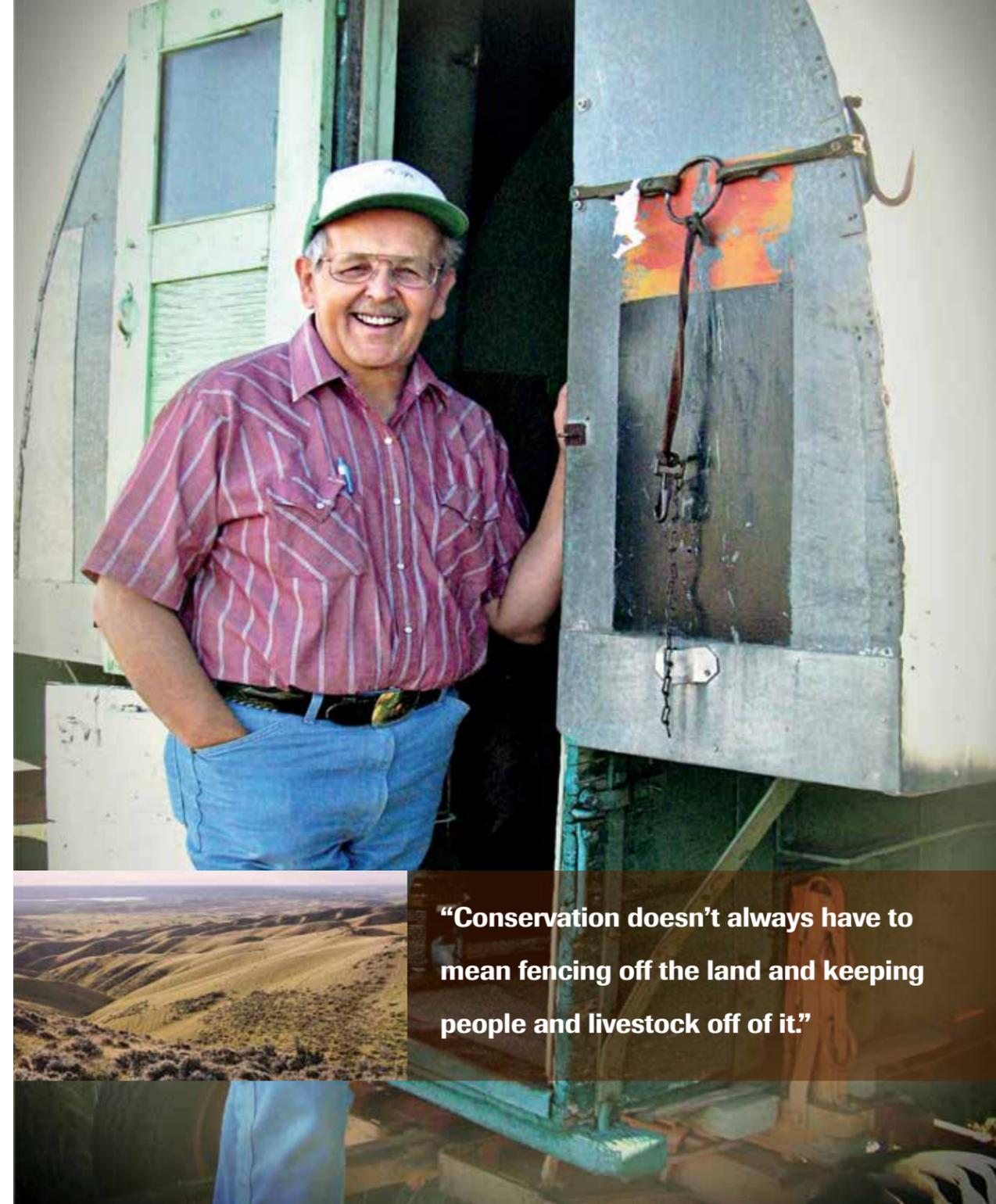
### What is your personal hope for the future of Wyoming's rangelands?

We face many challenges, not the least of which is the drought we've been experiencing this past year, but I believe that the opportunity

to make these lands more productive—for both agriculture and wildlife—is greater than it's ever been. For one thing, we have range science to bring to the table that we haven't had in the past, and that enables us to do more. We also have a better understanding of the relationship between agricultural production and conservation, and there's still undiscovered opportunity in that middle ground.

#### Members of the Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition include representatives from:

- Arizona Public Lands Council
- California Farm Bureau Federation
- Trout Unlimited
- Wyoming Stock Growers Association
- The Nature Conservancy
- Environmental Defense Fund
- Family Farm Alliance
- Public Lands Council
- Irrigation Association



**“Conservation doesn't always have to mean fencing off the land and keeping people and livestock off of it.”**

OPPOSITE PAGE Jim Magagna © Courtesy Jim Magagna  
INSET Wyoming grasslands © William Sutton

## Col. Gibson “Sloan” Peterson

### RENOWNED TAXIDERMIST MAKES LASTING GIFT TO CONSERVATION



Col. Gibson “Sloan” Peterson © Courtesy Peterson Archives

An acclaimed taxidermist, Col. Gibson “Sloan” Peterson, has preserved nature of another kind—his 2,000-acre ranch east of Casper, Wyoming.

The 97-year-old naturalist, wildlife filmmaker and leader in the field of modern taxidermy died peacefully at his home on July 24. He left the ranch he and his late wife acquired in 1949 to the Conservancy as part of his estate plan.

Col. Peterson first came to Wyoming in 1933 as an 18-year-old. He entered active duty in the U.S. Army in 1939 as a Second Lieutenant in the Seventh Cavalry Regiment of First Cavalry Division, participating in five major campaigns in Europe, including the D-Day invasion in France.

After World War II, Col. Peterson served as Military Governor in Germany before relocating to Casper. He met his wife, Ida Jarrad, when he was a Cavalry officer and she was a member of the Boots and Spurs Club.

Ida was a wildlife photographer and Col. Peterson had a long and distinguished career in taxidermy that would bring serious big game hunters to his renowned studios in Wyoming.

Throughout his life, Col. Peterson remained steadfast in his quiet commitment to preserve the natural world. “I don't need publicity,” said the Colonel about leaving his ranch to the Conservancy. “I'm just happy to know that wildlife have a home.”

**Want to learn how you can leave your legacy to conservation? Contact Rita Faruki, philanthropy coordinator, at [rfaruki@tnc.org](mailto:rfaruki@tnc.org) or 307-332-2971.**

## For the Love of Nature



TOP Fence repair on the LU Ranch © Katherine Thompson/TNC  
RIGHT Antelope Dash © Randy Craft/TNC



### Volunteer Day

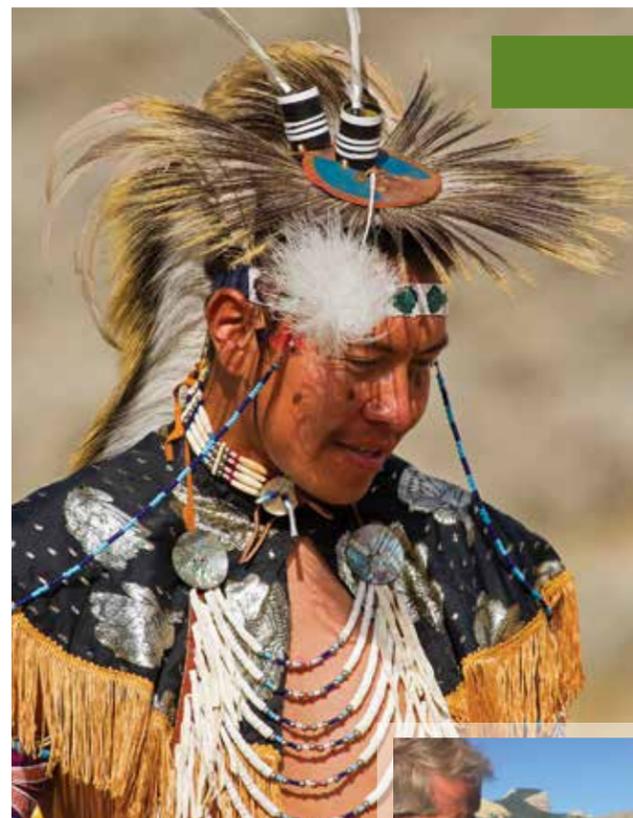
A crew of Conservancy volunteers armed with wire cutters and chain saws removed a rusting old fence in a matter of hours on the LU Ranch in northwest Wyoming, part of an ongoing effort to improve livestock operations and wildlife habitat.

### Butterfly Blitz

Catching a butterfly isn't easy, but it's a worthwhile effort for volunteers who help the Conservancy in our annual butterfly count on Red Canyon Ranch, part of a national effort to track and monitor butterfly populations. This year, volunteers and staff counted more than 248 butterflies, the highest ever for this effort.

### Team Nature

Ready, set, go! For the third year in a row, Conservancy supporters gathered at Curt Gowdy State Park between Cheyenne and Casper for the Antelope Dash, a 4- or 8-mile trail run/walk that raised more than \$3,000 for the Conservancy's work in Wyoming.



TOP Crow Pipe Ceremony © Kathy Lichtendahl  
RIGHT Bird banding © Carrie Peters/TNC



## Preserve Notes

### Heart Mountain Ranch Preserve

It's been a busy year at Heart Mountain Ranch Preserve, with a well-attended community hike in June (despite the bad weather), a Crow Pipe Ceremony held on the mountain's eastern flank, and the grand opening of the Trailhead Interpretive Cabin (see sidebar). Research projects on the preserve included owl banding and a fencing project to benefit the preserve's resident elk herd.

### Tensleep Preserve

Education and exploration come together on Tensleep Preserve. Each year, the preserve serves as a research facility for universities, agencies and community groups studying everything from weed science to sagebrush. It's also a place for local camp programs, youth corps and schools to connect with nature. One highlight this year: hosting the Wyoming Resource Education Days in cooperation with conservation districts and the NRCS to conduct a plant identification contest and soil study.

### Red Canyon & Winchester Ranches

The Red Canyon and Winchester ranches continue to be places where the Conservancy does more than just sustainably raise livestock. From stewardship projects to public recreation and education, the ranches are working resources for conservation. Ongoing projects include a multi-year study looking at rotational grazing impacts on native bee populations at Red Canyon Ranch, and the renovation of 100 acres of hay land and 30 acres of knapweed-infested ground at the Winchester Ranch.



TOP Eagle Scout sign project © Sonya Murphy  
RIGHT Trailhead Interpretive Cabin © TNC



### Heart Mountain Trailhead Interpretive Cabin Opens

On August 18, Conservancy staff, trustees and community members gathered to celebrate the opening of the new Trailhead Interpretive Cabin at the base of Heart Mountain.

The new cabin offers information about Heart Mountain's geology, cultural significance and ecology—and a place to launch your 7-mile round-trip hike to the mountain's summit.

Installed in cooperation with the Buffalo Bill Historical Center, the cabin includes a scale model of the mountain, interpretive panels, and photography from yesteryear and today. The Conservancy also worked with Cody High School woodworking students and local Boy Scouts to construct and install some of the cabin's new directional and informational signs.

Originally built in 1884 as a small, four-room cabin near the Corbett Bridge north of Cody, the trailhead cabin was slated for demolition when Conservancy supporters Anne Young and Jim Nielson stepped in to save it. Young devoted years of work and patience to create a place she hopes the entire community can enjoy.

"There's so much that is magic about this mountain. It's a wonderful spot," Young told the *Billings Gazette* on the day of the opening.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

The following donors made gifts/pledges to the Wyoming program or live in Wyoming and made gifts/pledges to other Conservancy programs between July 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012.

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Yonder Star

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Wyoming Stock Growers Association  
Wyoming Stock Growers  
Agricultural Land Trust  
Wyoming Wildlife and Natural  
Resources Trust Fund

And thank you to 1,800 supporters  
who also contributed amounts up  
to \$999.

\*Wyoming board member, emeritus  
board member or staff member.



## Deborah MacKenzie

### REMEMBERING OUR FRIEND IN CONSERVATION

Longtime Conservancy supporter and trustee Deborah MacKenzie passed away in May, leaving behind a conservation legacy that's preserving Wyoming's open spaces and wildlife heritage.

In 1989, she was one of the first to contribute to a start-up fund that built the Conservancy chapter in Wyoming. Her support continued, with critical donations to our Sweetwater Preserve, Red Canyon Ranch, and Greater Yellowstone Program for Wyoming, Idaho and Montana.

More recently, Deborah's conservation interest focused on finding new ways to engage the public in conservation problems. She and her husband, David, helped us highlight the critical issues facing this part of the world by funding "Out of Yellowstone," a documentary highlighting the voices of ranchers, scientists and conservationists working together to save the Greater Yellowstone's magnificent wildlife.

It's a story Deborah knew well. For more than 30 years the MacKenzie family has owned Red Rock Ranch in Wyoming's Gros Ventre Mountains. The working dude ranch was homesteaded in the 1890s and provided a place where Deborah's four children and 11 grandchildren could soak in her passion for nature.

"I'll always be touched by Deborah's optimism for Wyoming's future," says Andrea Erickson Quiroz, the Conservancy's Wyoming state director. "She seemed to often be a step ahead, with a vision of what comes next. And she committed her time and resources to make things happen. That's a big part of her legacy that we will carry forward here at the Conservancy."



The mission of  
The Nature  
Conservancy is  
to conserve  
the lands and  
waters on which  
all life depends.

# By The Numbers

## FINANCIALS (JULY 1, 2011 – JUNE 30, 2012)

The Wyoming Chapter's FY12 Conservation successes are reflected in—and supported by—our equally strong financial performance.

### A Few Highlights:

- In FY12, the Wyoming Chapter received \$3,714,000 in cash contributions, as well as \$763,000 in grants and contract payments from government agencies. This represents a 33% increase in private contributions over FY11. Government grants are lower in FY12 due to project closings late in the fiscal year that were reimbursed in FY13.
- The Wyoming Chapter was also proud to raise more than \$200,000 of additional funding from foundations and generous individuals that were specifically designated to global Conservancy programs.
- The Chapter received over \$2,400,000 through gifts of conservation easements. This figure represents the total easement value that generous, conservation-minded families gave to the Conservancy, and brings the total book value of our land interests to \$148M. Conservation easements comprise the majority of these interests, reflecting the commitment of Wyoming landowners who have granted 166 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 \$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.



## YOUR RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Your individual contributions were matched 1.3:1 this year through our other revenue sources, including public funds and landowner donations. This fiscal year, we conserved together with partners approximately 137,000 acres of land and 168 miles of river through conservation easements, restoration or improved management of lands and waters, at a cost of roughly \$27 (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 FY12 financial summary illustrates the critical importance of supporters, like you, who have helped the Conservancy protect Wyoming's unique natural legacy for future generations.



## FY12 WYOMING RESULTS (JULY 1, 2011 – JUNE 30, 2012)

**Grasslands**  
106,434 acres

**Yellowstone**  
17,457 acres

**Headwaters**  
5,089 acres of riparian & wetlands  
8,499 acres of sagebrush  
168 river miles

## HISTORICAL TO DATE

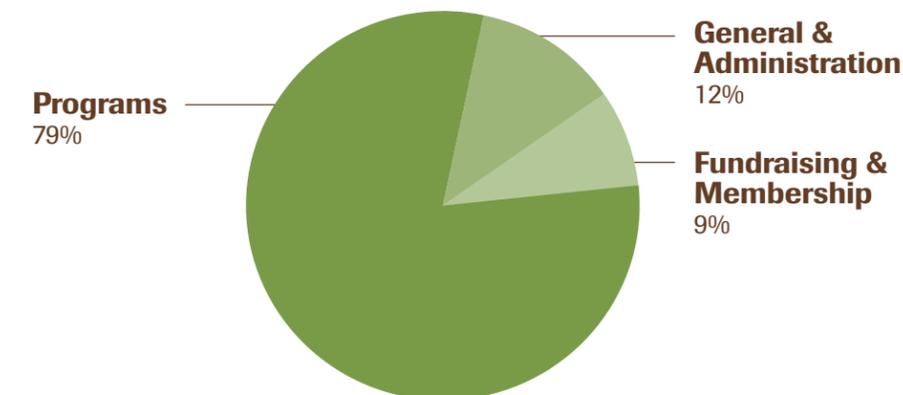
**Total conservation easements:** 166

**Rivers:** 921 miles legally protected, 371 miles restored

**Total lands:** 485,238 acres legally protected, 264,222 acres conserved through stewardship and habitat improvement

## THE NATURE CONSERVANCY'S PROGRAMMATIC EFFICIENCY

Based on FY11 audited numbers





“Like” the Wyoming Nature Conservancy on Facebook and receive updates on our work!



# The Next Generation in Action

## WYOMING 2012 STUDENT PHOTO CONTEST



The Conservancy’s “I Believe in Conservation” Wyoming student photo competition, now in its fourth year, continues to provide an opportunity for the state’s next generation to showcase their relationships with Wyoming’s wild and working places.

Watch a slideshow of the winners and finalists at [nature.org/wyoming](http://nature.org/wyoming)



Winners and finalists from this year’s student photo contest  
Left © Angela Henrich, Cody High School; Right © Darienne Oard, Dubois High School