



# HENRYS FORK WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

CHAMPIONS FOR WILDLIFE

## OUR MISSION

Protect and conserve the native wildlife and its enjoyment by the public in the Upper Henry's Fork Watershed

## Volunteers Remove Obsolete Fences to Help Wildlife

Henry's Fork Wildlife Alliance (HFWA) has a goal to remove and recycle obsolete barbed wire fences that are no longer needed or used, and are barriers to wildlife movement. Obsolete fences are significant hazards to migrating pronghorn, deer, and elk who move through the valley below Reynolds Pass. HFWA completed two fence removal projects there this summer.

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, which champions both conservation and hunting, says "many animals become entangled [in fences] and die from either starvation, dehydration, hypothermia, or predation. Juveniles are especially vulnerable and make up a large percentage of big game animals killed by fences. . . . "It's not just existing fencing that can cause trouble—dilapidated fences that are no longer being monitored, used, or maintained can be a real danger to critters, too."

Between the two HFWA projects this summer, 30 volunteers cleaned up this piece of the landscape from human obstacles to animal movement.



Kelsie Huyser (left) is joined by Nancy Olson of Island Park on second fence removal project. (Photo Credit: Jean Bjerke)

The first project, on private land, was undertaken at the request of the landowner who also participated as a volunteer. The second project removed downed and dilapidated fencing on an old sheep allotment on U S Forest Service land. Island Park-area Ranger Liz Davy said the volunteers' work was great and much appreciated.

**"There are a lot of people that love this place and are working their hearts out for it."**

-Becky Lewis

Now the meadow and sage brush on these sections of land is restored to its natural state and the seasonal movement of pronghorn, mule deer and elk through the area is

no longer disrupted by old fences and downed barbed wire.

Volunteer Becky Hall said "There are a lot of people that love this place and are working their hearts out for it."

HFWA hopes to undertake future projects to remove fences that no longer serve their original purpose or modify existing fences to reduce barriers to wildlife movement.



Volunteers gathered on July 7 to remove a barbed wire fence (Photo Credit: Sarah Cubells)

## OUR VISION

The iconic wildlife of the Upper Henrys Fork Watershed will thrive in connected and sustainable habitats because citizens treasure diverse and healthy wildlife populations and understand what is required for their continued success.



# Bear-Tested Trash Containers to be Provided to Island Park

At West Yellowstone's Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center (GWDC), Grizzlies test containers by spending an hour or more attempting to break into them. On display are the damaged containers which have been smashed to pieces, ripped apart, or covered in claw and teeth marks. The containers the bears fail to get into are certified "bear resistant."

Grizzly bear conflicts have increased dramatically in the Island Park area and were at an all-time high in 2020 with 35 grizzly bear conflicts, including two bear attacks. In the last few years, two black bears that got into trash had to be euthanized.

When Randy Gravatt, who runs the product testing at GWDC, ended up with extra containers, he thought, why not place the certified containers where they could be used?

This summer, with financial support from Henry's Fork Wildlife Alliance, Gravatt and Idaho Fish and Game bear biologist Jeremy Nicholson worked on a plan. Volunteer Becky Lewis, who manages the

Campground Bear Safety Program for the Ashton-Island Park Ranger District facilitated the cooperation. Under the plan, several bear-tested trash containers will be placed at high priority locations in Island Park identified by the Department of Fish and Game.

***"Most human-bear conflicts are caused by bears seeking and/or obtaining human foods, often in association with trash and garbage during tourist season."***  
 - Jeremy Nicholson Bear Biologist

An estimated 50-70 grizzly bears spend some portion of their year in the Island Park area which also supports a healthy black bear population.

Nicholson says that the majority of human-bear conflicts are caused by bears seeking food, often in association with trash during tourist season.

In Seminole County, Florida, bear conflicts were reduced by 50% in just three years through the use of similar bear resistant containers in a program supported by homeowners, county commissioners, Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission, and backed up by a county ordinance requiring residents to secure their trash.



At GWDC, Grizzlies test containers for hours, and those that remain unopened are deemed "bear resistant." (Photo Credit: Gretchen Heine)



Photo Credit: Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center

Affiliate of the Idaho Wildlife Federation



## CHAMPIONS FOR WILDLIFE

We are the only citizens organization devoted solely to protecting healthy wildlife populations in the Upper Henry's Fork Watershed.



# Hibernation, Migration, and Adaptation

BY SARAH CUBELLS

There are so many things to love about summer in East Idaho. But this summer has been particularly hot and dry. As I long for cooler temperatures, I often ponder the astonishing changes the local wildlife make every year to survive the shifting of seasons.

Bears, chipmunks, and marmots are among the local species that enter a prolonged snooze to wait out winter months. In general, an animal's body temperature drops and its heartbeat and breathing slow down during hibernation. This helps the animal preserve the precious energy it has stored throughout the summer and fall, either in the form of body fat or as food hoarded safely in its burrow for mid-winter snacks.

Greater Yellowstone is famous for wildlife migration, another method animals use to survive seasonal changes. Famously, elk migrate in and out of Yellowstone, numerous bird species come and go seasonally, and native fish make epic journeys to survive. This type of animal movement is observed on many scales. Insects, such as



Photo Credit: Sue Smith

some butterflies and moths, are known to migrate very long distances. There is still so much to learn about how, where, and why animals migrate, and even what the strict definition of "migration" is.

Finally, some animals stay (awake) in the same climate all year and instead adapt to seasonal changes. For many species, new, thicker fur is essential to surviving colder temperatures. In some cases, this new coat is also a different color. Snowshoe hares and ermine sport their brown coat in the summer, and white coat in the winter, allowing them to blend into their surroundings and better avoid predators.

No doubt, Greater Yellowstone is a harsh ecosystem. The nearly endless amount of mechanisms that the native species exhibit to survive is astounding. And many species use a combination of hibernation, migration, and adaptation to survive. As we endure the heat for a little while longer, perhaps we should keep our eyes peeled for some of these fascinating changes in the animals around us.



Photo Credit: Charlie Lansche

We acknowledge the land of the Henry's Fork as part of the ancestral lands of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes now located on the Fort Hall Reservation in southeastern Idaho



Bonnie Altshuld, HFWA Board Member (Photo Credit: Jean Bjerke)

HFWA has joined the Island Park Chamber of Commerce. We had a table at the "I Love Island Park FUNdraiser" on August 7 and look forward to seeing more Fremont County residents at future events.



Stay tuned for announcements about upcoming projects and events. Visit <https://henrysforkwildlifealliance.org/volunteer> to learn more about our volunteer opportunities and join our volunteer list!

Scan with QR Code Reader app on your smart phone to go straight to our website:



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