

THE LAND STEWARD

Teton Regional Land Trust's Stewardship Newsletter

Fall 2024

Welcome to the Team!

Lydia was born and raised in Teton Valley, spending her childhood running around Grand Targhee and Teton Canyon. After spending a year traveling Europe and South Africa, Lydia attended and graduated with Honors from the University of Idaho with Bachelor's degrees in International Studies and French.

After graduation, Lydia managed the Kids Club at Grand Targhee and taught skiing. She then attended law school at the American University Washington College of Law. She also received a Master's degree in International Relations – Global Environmental Policy from American University. Lydia focused heavily on environmental law in law school and was the Symposium Editor for the Sustainable Development Law and Policy Brief and started a community garden for the law school.

After finishing law school, Lydia clerked for the Honorable Judge Carman in Yellowstone National Park for the District of Wyoming. She then spent two years as a private injury litigator with The Spence Law Firm. Lydia's passions for conservation and wildlife, as well as her home valley, led her to find the Teton Regional Land Trust; she is thrilled to be joining the team.

When not working, Lydia enjoys playing with her fuzzy creatures, Nordic skiing, hiking and backpacking, reading, and dancing. She is also a board member for the Institute for Community Partnerships and Sustainable Development that works in Togo, West Africa.



Lydia Hanson

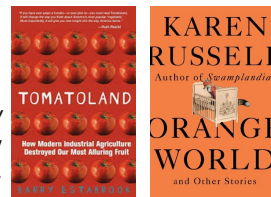
Non-profit spotlight: Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation

Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation (JHWF) has become a close partner of Teton Regional Land Trust, particularly in the past 2 years. Just in 2024, JHWF helped TRLT remove over 1 mile of unneeded barbed wire from fences on conservation easement properties in Teton County. This unique partnership has strengthened landowner relationships and significantly improved wildlife passage in our ecoregion. The latest fence removal effort consisted of an all-female crew, to boot! We look forward to many more exciting opportunities to continue this important work to facilitate wildlife movement through our extraordinary landscape.

Staff Picks

New staff member, Lydia Hanson, recommends the book *Tomatoland: How Modern Industrial Agriculture Destroyed our Most Alluring Fruit* by Barry Estabrook. The book is a fascinating deep dive into American tomato production, including discussions about pesticide use, migrant labor, and the value of smaller, local farmers. Barry Estabrook is an investigative food journalist and discusses the history of the tomato as well as the over \$5 billion industry it is today. While an expose, *Tomatoland* reads somewhat like a suspenseful whodunit.

Stewardship Associate Niah Pennington set a personal challenge to read one short story a day over the past year. Although she hasn't fully met her lofty goal of daily stories, the collections she has chosen have been filled with amazing stories. One standout among them is *Orange World and Other Stories* by Karen Russell. This collection of short stories is full of weird and creepy tales that dig into the darker corners of the human mind. What makes it even better is how Russell balances the strange with humor, so the stories end up being both eerie and funny at the same time—perfect for spooky season. If you're looking for something that's a tad unsettling but also clever and fun to read, *Orange World and Other Stories* is a great pick for this time of year!



Teton Regional Land Trust Staff

Kim Trotter,
Executive Director

Tamara Sperber,
Conservation
Director

Kami Archibald,
Director of
Engagement

Kimberly Holmes,
Stewardship
Director

**Katie Gabel-
Patterson,**
Finance & Operations
Manager

Renee Hiebert,
Conservation
Project Manager

Lydia Hanson,
Staff Attorney/
Conservation Project
Manager

Mandy Crane,
Events & Outreach
Coordinator

Kristy Smith,
Stewardship
Associate

Nicole Cyr,
Stewardship
Associate

Niah Pennington,
Stewardship
Associate

Anna Naylor,
Development
Associate



inspiring you to protect great places



Sandhill Crane Monitoring

Teton Regional Land Trust recently completed the annual sandhill crane monitoring project for 2024. We trained and coordinated with Idaho Master Naturalists and conservation volunteers to help in an ongoing survey effort to support one of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem's most iconic bird species. The program is part of a broader conservation initiative aimed at protecting the critical pre-migration staging habitats of sandhill cranes in Teton Valley.

The Land Trust's mission revolves around conserving working farms, ranches, and critical wildlife habitats in eastern Idaho, and the sandhill crane monitoring program plays an essential role in this mission. Since 2003, the Land Trust has worked to understand the behavior and habitat needs of cranes during their pre-migration staging period, when they gather in Teton Valley to prepare for their long journey to wintering grounds in the southern U.S. and Mexico. With over 90,000 observations made, we've learned that harvested grain fields near secure wetland roost sites provide essential resources for cranes to build energy reserves and ensure a safe passage south.

Teton Valley is one of the most important pre-migration staging areas for the Rocky Mountain Population of sandhill cranes due to its wetland proximity to grain fields. To maintain and enhance these habitats, the Land Trust, through its Greater Yellowstone Sandhill Crane Initiative, works with local farmers and landowners to establish crane food plots and protect roosting habitats. By managing grain fields and wetlands in a strategic manner, the initiative ensures that cranes have access to both food and secure roosting sites during their staging period.

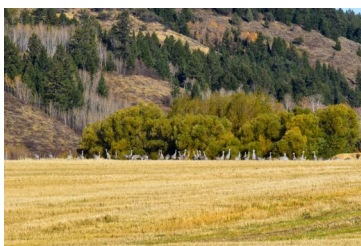
This vital monitoring effort wouldn't be possible without the dedication of volunteers and partners. On the peak staging day for sandhill cranes in 2023, the US Fish and Wildlife Service recorded a total of 1,253 cranes in Teton Valley. Our volunteer counts closely matched this aerial count, highlighting the value of citizen science and enthusiasm of our volunteers. In 2024, the peak staging day count by volunteer and staff count was just over 1,300 cranes. As we continue to gather data on sandhill crane populations and habitat usage, this program plays an important role in conserving this spectacular species and ensuring future generations can witness their annual migration spectacle in Teton Valley.

- Niah Pennington, Stewardship Associate

2024 Trumpeter Swan Release

This fall, TRLT completed the 11th Trumpeter Swan release in Teton Basin since the Teton Basin Trumpeter Swan Restoration Project began in 2013. To date, 55 Trumpeter Swans have been released through this project. This year, before 8 cygnets were released in the crisp wetland water, they were fitted with identifying ID Fish and Game leg bands as well as solar powered Ornitela GPS-GSM neck collars. These collars enable us to gather valuable data such as habitat preferences, nest site selection, migration routes, and flock characteristics. If you see a collared Trumpeter Swan, please let us know! You can report observations to Nicole Cyr (Stewardship Associate) via email at nicole@tetonlandtrust.org or via phone at 208-354-8939 ext. 11. We are grateful for all of our partners and supporters who make this project possible.

- Nicole Cyr, Stewardship Associate Photos by Anna Kirkpatrick



When to Give Notice

If you are unsure if an activity requires prior notification and/or approval from the Land Trust, or if you are unsure of the timeframe you need to give the Land Trust to grant approval of an activity,

Give us a call!

We are always happy to answer questions regarding your conservation easement.

Planning to build or add on to a structure?

Give Us a Call!

Planning to change your land management practices?

Give Us a Call!

Planning to build a fence or road?

Give Us a Call!

Planning to sell/gift your conservation easement property?

Give Us a Call!

Need to update your contact information or preference?

Give Us a Call!

Have you been approached about a commercial lease or

utility easement?

Give Us a Call!

208-354-8939



TETON REGIONAL LAND TRUST

Regional County Weed Contacts

Don't forget to reach out to your local county weed representative to stay up to date regarding any weed control assistance that might be available:

Bonneville County:

Judd Elkington,
Weed Superintendent
208-529-1397

Clark County:

Bo Billman,
Weed Department
208-709-6706

Fremont County:

Bryce Fowler,
Weed Supervisor
208-821-8854

Jefferson County:

Mitch Whitmill,
Weed Superintendent
208-745-9221

Madison County:

Jeremy Johnson,
Weed Supervisor
208-356-3139

Teton County, ID:

Cameron Hieronymus
208-821-0984

Teton County, WY:

Lesley Beckworth
Teton County Weed &
Pest District
307-733-8419



Defensible Spaces : Taking Action to Protect Ourselves and Our Property from Wildfire

We are no strangers to smoky summer days here in Eastern Idaho. This year saw several small fires spring up locally. In late July, a lightning-strike ignited what would become the Wapiti Fire. This fire complex has grown to over 129,000 acres, destroyed multiple structures, and had been burning for over three months as of the date of this article.

A changing and warming climate has produced larger, hotter, and more catastrophic fires each year. In fact, a 2023 article published by the National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) operating under the umbrella of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) stated that from 1971 to 2021, human-caused climate change contributed to a +172% increase in burned areas. The US is projected to continue this trajectory into future years.

The good news is that there are many things we can do to lower the threat wildfires pose to ourselves and our homes and properties. A great way to reduce our risk is to make our spaces defensible against fires. A defensible space is a buffer between your home or property and potential fires in adjacent open spaces or wildland areas. This buffer slows or stops the spread of fire. Idaho Firewise divides defensible space into 3 zones extending out from the house or structure like a bullseye:

The immediate zone is the area is the 5 feet closest to the house or structure. **Helpful changes in this zone can include using stone pavers/gravel/concrete instead of bark/mulch, removing dead plants, trimming trees so that their branches do not extend into the zone, and moving firewood, propane tanks, and barbecues out of this zone. What these changes all have in common is that they reduce the risk that a fallen ember in this zone will land on something flammable.**

The intermediate zone is the area between 5 – 30 feet from the house or structure. **Helpful changes in this zone can include removing all dead plants and fallen leaves, trimming trees to maintain at least 10 feet of space between the branches of individual trees, and keeping patio furniture, firewood piles, and swing sets separate from each other. What these changes all have in common is that they reduce the risk of a fire jumping from one fuel source to another.**

The extended zone is the area 30-100 feet from the house or structure. **Helpful changes in this zone can include removing highly flammable plants and replacing them with fire-resistant plants, removing all dead plants and fallen leaves, trimming trees, and placing firewood and propane tanks on gravel or concrete pads. What these changes all have in common is that they reduce the risk of a fire jumping from one fuel source to another.**

As we head into the winter months, consider setting aside time to brainstorm ways you can make simple and impactful changes around your property and home to protect them in potential wildfire events in the coming years. As is true for most things in life, it is best to hope for the best and prepare for the worst-case scenario. Wildlife and native ecosystems are a top conservation priority for Teton Regional Land Trust, but so is the safety and livelihood of the invaluable landowners, such as yourself, who choose to protect their lands for benefit of wildlife and future generations. Visit your state and local county fire services websites for further resources and information.

- Kristy Smith, Stewardship Associate

Reducing Our Impact on Wildlife During Winter

As we slowly transition from fall to winter, it is a great time to think about how we can reduce our impact on wildlife during the winter and spring months. Generally speaking, the winter and spring months can be challenging for wildlife. Increased snowfall can make it difficult for wildlife (particularly ungulates) to find naturally available food and move across the landscape. Furthermore, dormant grass has lower nutritional value than summer grass and is available when caloric requirements are higher (in the winter). In addition, humans can increase ungulates' stress during this time of year through regular everyday recreational activities. Thus, it is important to be considerate of wildlife and how our actions affect them. To reduce stress on wintering wildlife, be mindful of seasonal closures that are used to protect wintering grounds. While recreating, use a regularly traveled route, or trail, to decrease the frequency that wildlife are startled and pushed to flee the area. If you come across wildlife, give them space and slowly move in a different direction. Regardless of if you are at your house or in the backcountry, please do not let your dogs chase wildlife. Lastly, do not feed wildlife! Feeding wildlife may appear to have a short-term benefit, but the long-term risks are greater. Feeding ungulates increases the transmission of disease, such as Chronic Wasting Disease. Also, habituating any species of wildlife to humans can be detrimental. While enjoying the fresh powder this winter, please be cognizant of the wildlife and do your part to reduce their stress levels. Lastly, please recognize that spring is still a challenging time for wildlife as they are at the end of their energy reserves.

- Nicole Cyr, Stewardship Associate



Game Camera photos from a conserved property along Teton Creek

Farm Succession: Upholding the Future of Agricultural Lands

The Teton Regional Land Trust (TRLT) is pleased to announce our participation in the American Farmland Trust's Land Navigator program. In the fall of 2023, TRLT received a four-year grant from American Farmland Trust (AFT) to support our involvement in this program. Land Transfer Navigators is a national program developed by AFT, with support from the United States Department of Agriculture's National Resources Conservation Service, to assist farmers and ranchers in succession planning in order to dramatically increase the transfer of working agricultural land to a new generation of producers. The program catalyzes practitioners from across the country to support equitable farm and ranch transfers that work for both entering and exiting generations.

In the next 20 years, close to one-third of agricultural lands in the United States will be transferred. This transfer of land is directly related to the rising average age of farmers and ranchers. As they retire and land ownership changes, the land previously stewarded by the producer is vulnerable to conversion away from agricultural use. The rural communities of Southeastern Idaho depend on the viability of agricultural lands. In the Greater Yellowstone Region, the changes we have seen on our landscape are very real and concerning. Farmers are feeling more and more pressure to sell their land to development, and low-density housing developments are replacing agricultural lands. The Land Trust acknowledges this strain and stress our communities are facing during this time of monumental change.

Through a four-year program, AFT will provide training along with technical and financial assistance to support land trusts to serve as "Land Transfer Navigators." Through participation in this program, we are hopeful that we will be able to help our farming families navigate some of the difficult decisions they face when planning ahead. Succession planning is an integral part of the effort to keep our working lands working. By planning ahead for the future of the family's farm, they can feel secure that agricultural heritage will continue on to the next generation of producers.

If you are interested in learning more about farm succession, we encourage you to visit the Farm Succession Planning page on our website, visit the Idaho Farm and Ranch Center at agri.idaho.gov/farmcenter, or contact Lydia at lydia@tetonlandtrust.org.

- Lydia Hanson, Staff Attorney/ Conservation Project Manager