



OUR MISSION

Educate and advocate to protect and conserve the native wildlife and its enjoyment by the public in the Upper Henry's Fork Watershed.

Marathon Migrations

By Josh Metten

Twice a year a stunning transformation sweeps over the landscape surrounding Yellowstone National Park. Great herds of animals migrate to more sheltered valleys for winter and return in spring, following a wave of greening vegetation into the mountains. This ancient strategy has enabled them to thrive. But many of these migrations may be at risk, and without help could be lost forever.

6000 years of Pronghorn Migrations: Each spring, herds of pregnant pronghorn, led by a dominant matriarch, follow ancient migration routes to summer range. In Wyoming, many cross specially designed overpasses along HWY 89/191 at Trappers Point, which have reduced wildlife-vehicle collisions by close to 80%, a win for wildlife and humans alike.

Marathon Migrations: Mule Deer goes the Distance Across Wyoming and into Idaho! One herd of deer migrate 150 miles from the Red Desert across Wyoming. Three years ago, one particular doe, #255 took the migration all the way to Idaho. She continued north, eventually settling down for the summer in Island Park. She had traveled close to 250 miles, an incredible distance. Two years later she was found, alive and well, having made that migration at least twice.

Protecting Migration Routes: Federal and State officials want to protect these migrations. The Department of the Interior has prioritized working with local agencies to protect migrations on federal lands. The 11 western governors have asked federal and state agencies to work together to protect wildlife movements.

Preserving America's Last Great Migrations: Riding my mountain bike 30 miles through the Lionhead Mountains north of Island Park, I took in the stunning vistas, alpine lakes, and wildflower meadows. It's easy to see why this place is special to so many, it's become a part of who we are, our culture. Places like the Lionhead, Targhee Pass, and Island Park are also habitat for thousands of migratory animals, each following routes that have been passed down from generation to generation.

Biologist Arthur Middleton has called these migrations "the lifeblood of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem." Migrations are also intertwined in western culture; hunting in Idaho alone accounts for around \$500 million in economic activity. But most importantly, they connect us across the landscape and are a reminder of our wild past. May they forever persist into the future.



"Migrations are the lifeblood of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem"
- Arthur Middleton

Pronghorn (Josh Metten)

Born and raised beneath the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, Josh Metten is a Professional Naturalist with Jackson Hole EcoTour Adventures. In his free time he enjoys hunting, fly-fishing, mountain biking, rafting, skiing, and exploring the the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Join Josh on a half day, full day, or multi day wildlife safari in Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks here: www.jhecotouradventures.com @jacksonholecotours @joshmettenphoto

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OUR VISION

The iconic wildlife of the Upper Henry's 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.

Great Gray Owls in Island Park

By Jean Bjerke

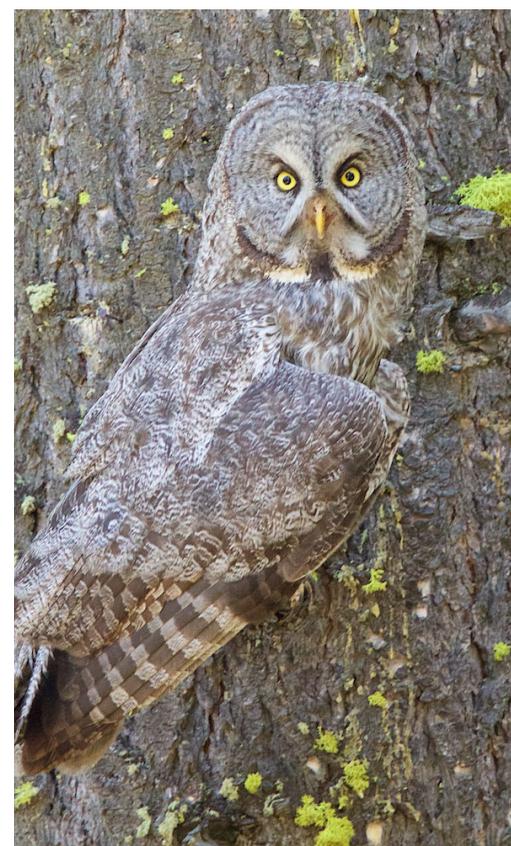
A huge owl just landed on my deck rail!" "A big owl is perched on a branch right over my drive-way!" "It landed on my car!" This doesn't happen often, but happened in my neighborhood a couple of years ago here in Island Park.

Neighbors started to report big owls landing on decks, roofs, and cars towards the end of August. We live on the edge of old growth fir forest just below the continental divide, and a pair of owls had nested nearby. The birds we were seeing were three fledglings, young owls that had just learned to fly. They reminded me of goofy, silly kids that didn't quite know how to act right. After a couple of weeks, of course, they grew up a bit and were no longer landing on cars and deck rails.

Fun Facts

- The Great Gray Owl is the largest North American owl - its wingspan extends up to five feet.
- Great Gray Owls make no sound when flying - an advantage in hunting.
- Great Gray Owls are nocturnal (active at night) and feed on small rodents. But they also hunt during the day, especially when the adults are feeding young birds.
- When the young first start to fly, they can be heard constantly calling for food - making them easier to find in the woods than the adults.
- Great Gray Owls stay in their mountain habitat year-round.
- Great Gray Owls can locate prey by sound, even plunging up to a foot under the snow to catch prey in winter.

We are fortunate in Island Park and the Upper Henry's Fork to enjoy magnificent and abundant wildlife and birds. I hope we are able to protect enough of their habitat that our children and grandchildren will continue to be able to enjoy them.



Upper images: adult owl
Left image: juvenile owl

Photos by Jean Bjerke



Staying Safe in Bear County

Store trash in a secure place and lock bear-proof trash cans.

Don't leave food or pet food outside. In a campsite, use bear storage containers provided, or hang your food high and away from camp.

Take down your bird seed and hummingbird feeders in summer. If you insist on a bird feeder hang it high and bring it in at night. If you want to attract birds, try a bird bath, birds love these in the summer!

Do not leave coolers, trash or food scraps around a campsite and don't pour cooking grease on the ground or in a fire pit.

If you see a bear, stay away and leave it alone.



Bear Biologist Jeremy Nicholson speaks to volunteers about bear safety.
Photo credit: Jean Bjerke

Interview with a Bear Biologist

Volunteers from Henry's Fork Wildlife Alliance are joining other volunteers to help Idaho Department of Fish and Game with bear safety education. Recently we had a chance to interview Bear Biologist Jeremy Nicholson

HFWA: What does a bear biologist do? We know you trap and collar bears. Why?

Jeremy: We collect data from bears that were captured and fitted with a radio collar, especially females - females drive the the population. We track the age of first reproduction, average litter size, cub and yearling survival, and how often they produce a litter. We collar and monitor adult males to estimate survival rates, causes of mortality, and better understand habitat use and food habits. We also use cameras to monitor the presence and distribution of bears.

We spend a significant time trying to educate the public about living and recreating in bear country.

HFWA: Are you ever surprised by what you learn when you trap a bear?

Jeremy: Each time a trap door is down and a bear is inside, I feel like a kid getting up early on Christmas morning. It's exciting to see what we find when we pull the bear out of the trap. Bears are so impressive. Big males are often covered in years of battle scars. They can have large, open wounds from fighting during breeding season, wounds that would kill most animals, but grizzlies are tanks and just scab over and keep going. We can quickly tell if females have

ever had cubs. Sometimes we've even pulled up to a trap and saw cubs scurry away and up a nearby tree. Then we could hear the sow and her cubs vocalizing to each other. Pretty cool! The bond between a sow and her cubs is legendary. She may lack the size and battle scars of a large male, but rest assured, she would quickly take on anything that threatens her cub.

HFWA: What do you most want the public to know about bears?

Jeremy: They're wild animals and will generally try to avoid humans. However, they are driven to fatten up

for the winter, and they will pack on the pounds with human food whenever they can. If they get used to getting food and being around people, they usually get in trouble. Sometimes we have to euthanize the bear. We hate to have to do this to a wild animal, particularly when its people's actions that led to the death. Some people say, just take it to a zoo. But there aren't enough zoos; there aren't enough places in Idaho to safely relocate bears to keep them away from people; and we aren't allowed to transport them across state lines. So we don't have a lot of options. It's best to prevent problems before they occur by storing attractants properly.

"Bears are wild animals."

Photograph: Josh Metten

CHAMPIONS FOR WILDLIFE

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



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



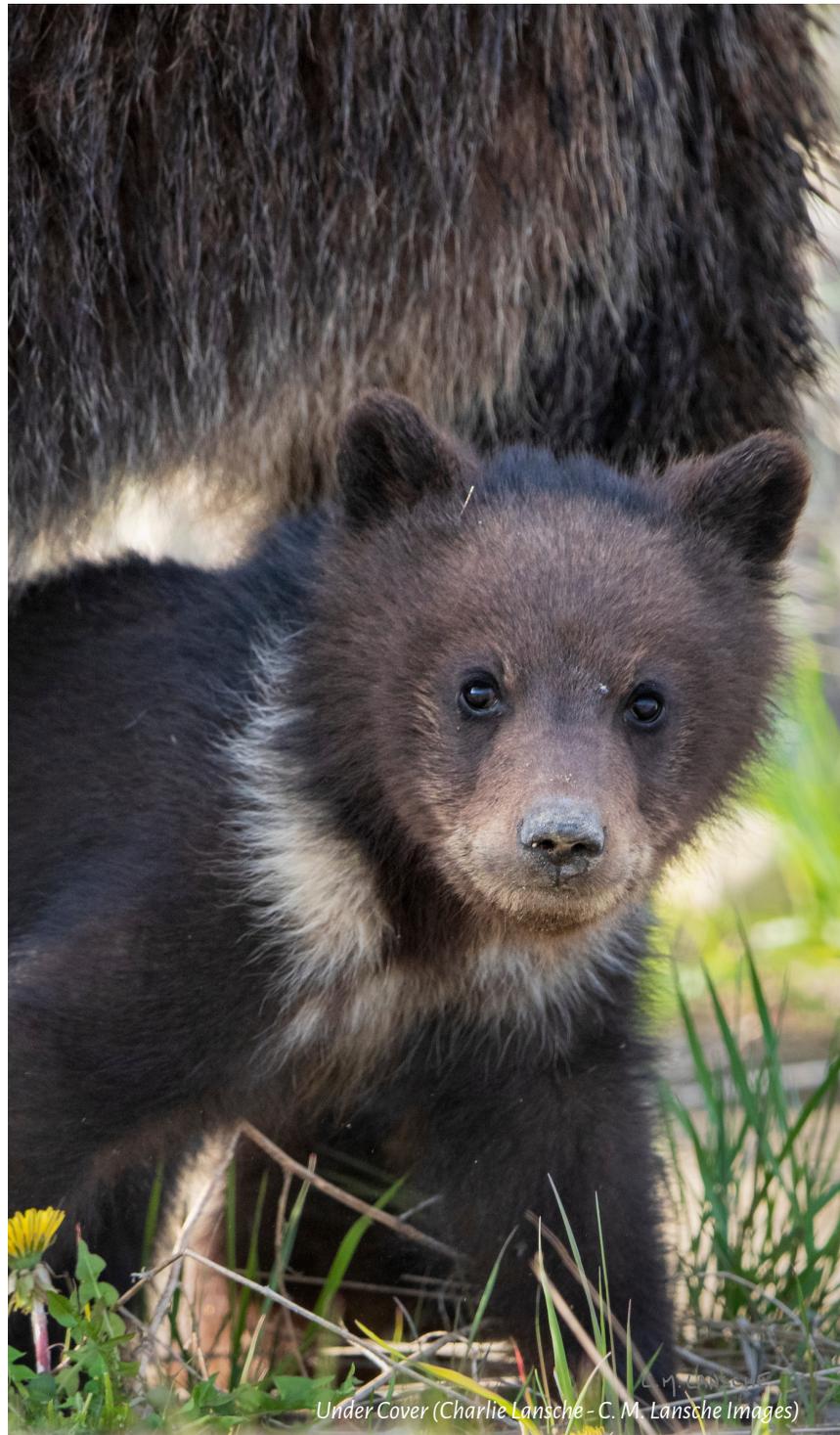
SCAN ME

Under Cover

By Charlie Lansche

I loved this brief encounter with an adorable grizzly cub beneath the safety of its mother earlier this summer. Cute? Absolutely! Yet bears live a challenged and difficult life, fraught with inherent danger and the continuous struggle for survival in the natural world.

When you combine that with increasing and often deadly interface with humans - including vehicular collisions and exposure to unnatural food sources that can lead to habituation and conflict -- you end up with increased mortality for grizzlies, especially among young bears. Please be mindful of this if you're visiting or live in bear country.



Under Cover (Charlie Lansche - C. M. Lansche Images)

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