

fall 2019

Teller

WILDLIFE REFUGE

to inspire, educate, and demonstrate conservation in action



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ON THE COVER: Blackbirds flock to Teller’s 10-acre pollinator plot to feed on annual sunflower.
Image by Heather Tellock

A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As fall is in full swing here at Teller, I can’t believe two years have passed since my return to the refuge. I am thrilled with the numerous achievements of the board, volunteers, staff and support base. This year’s TNT was second only to our best year ever in 2018, which speaks to the fantastic community support for what our programs are accomplishing. Teller launched several new education programs including seasonal education camps, Women’s Waterfowl Weekend, Teller Youth Conservation Leadership Council, and proudly hosted a group of students for Global Youth Service Day. From a lands conservation perspective, Teller enhanced 5-acres of wetlands, established a 10-acre pollinator plot and planted 100 native shrubs. The farm land, grounds and facilities have never looked better and we continue to attract new guests to the Teller experience through our wedding and lodging program. As we welcome in 2020, join me in thanking all of the Teller supporters for making 2019 a great year. We could not have done it without you!! Enjoy the Holidays.

Sam Lawry, Executive Director



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David Whitmoyer, *Lands Manager*



above: a garden spider makes its home amongst the refuge wetlands. photo by Heather Tellock

LAND'S MANAGER UPDATE

David Whitmoyer, Land's Manager

In my first article ever for the Teller Wildlife Refuge, I would like to start off by thanking everyone involved with the refuge for the warm welcome to this great team! Board members, staff, and volunteers have been more than gracious in helping acclimate me to my new environment and making me feel welcome and comfortable in this position! A big thank you to Sam, Karen, and Heather for giving me pointers and guidance in my first 6 months on the team, I have learned a lot from the three of them, and their compassion and drive for Teller to thrive has only made this a better place. Also, I need to give a big shout out to Chuck Burrier, and Brett and Sherrie Adolphson! These three have been my guiding light to questions surrounding our housing and wedding facilities.

Spring and summer were filled with projects on the refuge. We installed beautiful new sliding barn doors on the west side of the Slack barn, painted old buildings on the property, and mitigated weeds by mowing and hand pulling, to name a few. Spring time also meant planting on the farm. This year was a hustle to get everything in the ground when the weather would allow. The late snow that we had this year pushed our farming back a few weeks, but thankfully Bob and Levi Gingrich were prepared and we successfully planted all our crops.

I want to close by saying that maintaining our conservation heritage is a huge piece of my life. Keeping land around like this for our youth to learn on and from is a big reason I chose to work for Teller. My wife, Kelly, and I took our two year old daughter, Annabelle, out fishing on the refuge for her first fishing trip ever, this summer. We didn't catch anything but the fact that I was able to introduce my daughter to the sport and get her interested in the outdoors meant the world to us! Thanks for having me aboard and please don't hesitate to swing by the shop to say "hi!"

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF A TRUE CONSERVATION HERO

It was a sad day for Teller when we learned of the passing of Anne Perrin Teller on May 27th, 2019. Anne was a remarkable person and when her husband, Otto, passed away in 1998, Anne could have let Teller Wildlife Refuge fade away. Yet, she stood tall and supportive of the refuge all the way up to her passing. Anne, who some say had the handshake of a sailor, used little words to express her thoughts. She communicated largely in her expression. We, at Teller, would often ask ourselves when challenged, “What would Anne have done?” The answer would soon pop up, and was undoubtably correct. On June 20th, the Teller board planted a tree in Anne’s honor near Thomas Pond. The tree will grow tall and strong symbolizing Anne’s steady “true to yourself” nature. She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

A portion of her obituary as published in Sonoma County, CA:

Anne was a founding member of the Sonoma Land Trust, co-founder of the Teller Wildlife Refuge in Corvallis, Montana, and always a strong supporter of environmental causes. She worked to protect the natural world, establish wildlife corridors, and preserve open space and parkland. Anne was a no-nonsense environmentalist--a re-user of everything from plastic bags to old toothbrushes. Ever on the lookout for invasive weeds, she was a gardener and decorator with fabulous style and confidence. An inveterate adopter of abandoned dogs, she provided them the best that life could offer. She was an active member of the Glen Ellen Historic Society as well as her local book club. Anne was small in stature, but an altogether mighty woman. She ruled her universe right up until the end. She was loved and admired by many for her deep intelligence, wit and infectious laugh.



FISHING WITH B.E.A.R. HANDS

Teller recently partnered with Hamilton High School teacher Birch Fett and B.E.A.R. to give youth the opportunity to learn the art of fly fishing. B.E.A.R. is a local outdoor based mentoring non-profit aimed at inspiring youth to connect to their own potential, their community and the landscape through experiential and outdoor adventure programs. B.E.A.R.'s moto is "because connections make us stronger," and we couldn't agree more! To learn more about B.E.A.R. head to www.bearmt.org. Do you have ideas for Teller partnerships? Let us know!



MOTUS ON TELLER: MPG Ranch has partnered with Teller Refuge in efforts to study movement and migration using Motus technology. Seven Motus stations have been deployed in the Bitterroot Valley, and Teller is currently the southern-most station. This fall MPG Ranch is adding 3 additional stations to the valley south of Teller. MPG Ranch and local research partners have successfully deployed 77 nanotags since collaboration started in September 2018. A total of 11 bats (across 7 different species) and 66 birds (also across 7 species) have been tagged with nanotag units that the Motus stations have been detecting.

The Teller Refuge Motus station has had a few exciting detections this summer. A Turkey Vulture tagged by Raptor View Research Institute in west Missoula was first detected in the valley at Teller Refuge, without being detected first from any of the 5 stations in between Teller and Missoula. A Brown-headed Cowbird was captured and tagged by the University of Montana Bird Ecology Lab at MPG Ranch in June. The bird left the ranch in July and less than an hour later was picked up at Teller.

Fall migration is ramping up, and we hope that most of the tagged individuals will eventually leave the northern Bitterroot and be detected at the Teller Refuge on their way south.

The future plan entails installation of stations in Idaho beginning this fall. As our network continues to grow it will allow us to build a more complete picture to help us understand migration and movement of these species.

HONEYBEE HIGHWAY: TELLER REFUGE'S 10-ACRE POLLINATOR PLOT A BOON FOR BEES

Perry Backus, Ravalli Republic



above: geese take an early morning flight over a blanket of annual sunflower

Honeybees know when they've found a good thing. Researchers learned back in the 1920s that when bees find a good supply nectar, they perform a special kind of dance that shows their fellow bees where to go.

This summer, there must be a lot of dancing bees around the Teller Wildlife Refuge's brand-new 10-acre pollinator plot.

On a recent morning, the place was already buzzing as thousands of bees converged on the blooms of lacy phacelia, annual sunflower, prairie Coneflower and small burnet that were part of the 14 species of grasses and flowering plants seeded with a no-till drill in early spring.

The planting was made possible with financial support from the Natural Resources Conservation Service's program authorized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Bill that's aimed at increasing habitat for honeybees and other pollinators.

Honeybees and other wild bees have been declining

over the last few decades. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, extinction rates for pollinators have been increasing with about 40% of invertebrate pollinators, especially bees and butterflies, facing extinction worldwide.

Teller Executive Director, Sam Lawry, was familiar with the idea behind creating plots filled with nectar-producing flowers and grasses through his previous position with Pheasants Forever. When he heard that NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program had money set aside to help landowners create good places for pollinators to visit, Lawry knew just the spot for one.

"We had this acreage on a field where we normally grow barley that wasn't producing a whole lot," Lawry said. "The soil isn't quite as good there."

Part of Teller's mission is to open the eyes of neighboring landowners about the potential of doing something different that's both good for their land and for the wildlife that uses it.

In the Bitterroot Valley — as in many places in Montana — a lot of landowners have places with a couple of acres who don't do anything but raise weeds on the portion that's not their lawn. Larger agricultural places that



above: lacy phacelia, a honeybee favorite

use pivots to irrigate also often have corners where not much grows.

“There are plenty of places in the Bitterroot where this could work,” Lawry said.

While the pollinator plots are a boon for bees, they are also great places for song and game birds to hang out. Lawry has spotted ring-necked pheasants and their chicks racing through the undergrowth to feed on the bugs that are the primary source of food for the young birds.

“From a bird’s perspective, it’s a place where they can find a whole smorgasbord of food,” he said.

On a recent morning, Lawry led a tour of the pollinator plot.

With the sound of bees buzzing about, NRCS’ Stacy Welling was happy with what she saw.

A soil scientist by training, Welling said that while the intention of the plot was to attract pollinators, the heavy cover of vegetation will also benefit the soil over time.

“This large diversity of plants and cooler temperatures on the ground level will help the soil biology,” Welling said.

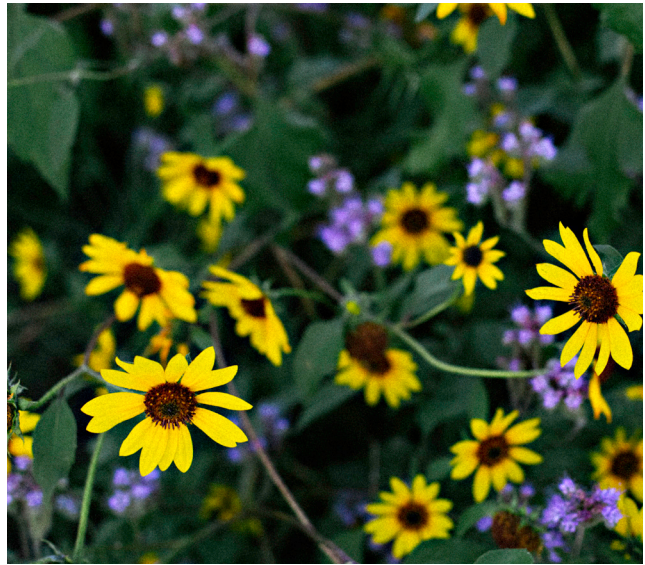
The NRCS’ program is designed to work alongside agricultural producers to help combat future declines of honeybees and other pollinators. The program provides both financial and technical assistance to help participants get their own pollinator plots up and growing.

Welling said, “People have to be willing to show that they are serious in creating a plot that will be successful.”

“It’s really important that people do field preparation,” she said. “Being able to do some irrigation will also help plants get established.”

In the first few years people can expect to see a good number of weeds mixed in with their new crop of grasses and flowering plants. But as time goes on, the weeds should mostly disappear as the pollinator mix gets established.

Welling expects that the size of the plots in the valley will vary. Applications for the program are ranked.



above: 10 species of flowering plants thrive on Teller’s pollinator plot

People’s willingness to do some monitoring will enhance their chances of getting funding.

“We do require that people do successful plantings,” she said. “A lot of people aren’t willing to do the site preparation or irrigate. They like the idea of just getting seed, throwing it out on the ground and seeing what happens.”

That approach probably won’t get any funding from the NRCS.

But for those willing to take that extra step, their reward is the knowledge their efforts are making a difference for honeybees and other pollinators that are so important to the food chain.

Florence’s Loren Stormo is president of the Beekeepers of the Bitterroot.

“This is so amazing,” Stormo said as he looked out across the plot that was just buzzing with bees. “I bet the word is out in the bee community about that this is the place to go.”

“Just stand here and close your eyes and listen,” Lawry said. “This field is alive with insects. The plant and insect diversity is key to healthy wildlife habitat and the aesthetic beauty of the flowering plants is a bonus.”

“This isn’t about getting boots on the ground,” Lawry said. “We’re looking at getting bugs on the ground.”

**TELLER YOUTH
CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP
COUNCIL GET THEIR HANDS**

DIRTY: Not only did the members of the Teller Youth Conservation Leadership Council (TYCLC), knock it out of the park with their involvement in this year's TNT, but they put their youthful energy to work removing nearly ¼ mile of barbed wire fence. The fence, a hazard to humans and wildlife, was a part of the inner boundary fence connecting the recently purchased Jones parcel with the main property. Equipped with fencing pliers, gloves and a "can do" spirit, the fence was removed in less than 4 hours. "It's just nice to get outside and do something for wildlife" said Gavin Herbert the president of the TYCLC. "We saw areas where it looked like deer had been caught up in the fence, and now they have safe passage across Teller." Gavin added. The goal of the TYCLC is to engage youth ages 14 to 20 to get involved with Teller and our conservation mission. The group meets every other month to work on a field project or listen to an invited conservation speaker. TYCLC is interested in adding additional members. For more information on how to join or contribute, contact Heather at 961- 3507 or heather@tellerwildlife.org

THE
BARN
AT TELLER WILDLIFE REFUGE



2020 Wedding Package

Our wedding package includes use of the historic Slack Barn and acres of surrounding grounds for an entire weekend, along with lodging for 14 people at our heritage homes.

Host a rehearsal dinner, ceremony, reception and your family or friends all in one place!

Also included in the package:

- park-like grounds -
- volleyball court and croquet -
- new tables and chairs for 200 -
- assorted wooden benches, tables, chairs and stands -
- dance floor -
- trash removal -
- indoor restroom facilities -

*\$4,500
(paid in 3 installments)*

CONTACT TELLER WILDLIFE REFUGE
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SUMMER CAMP AND BEYOND

This year Teller added something new to the Nature Connections Camp program. With Amanda Bestor at the helm we are now offering one-day, seasonal camps. Last February, Winter Ecology camp landed on one of the coldest days of the year. Did we cancel? NO WAY! Did we keep the kids indoors? NO WAY! We did what all non-hibernating animals do that hang out in the Bitterroot for the winter--we bundled up and went outside. Campers then explored the different challenges wildlife face during the winter like the difficulty of running through the snow, how insulation and different kinds of shelter are essential to keeping warm, and what kind of food sources are available at that time of year. Ok, but honestly, we are humans and luckily we have the option of escaping the freezing temperatures and retreating to the warmth of the barn for hot cocoa and crafts.

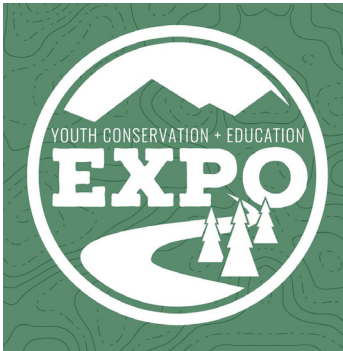
Spring Ecology Camp in May offered campers the chance to learn about many of the bird species that had recently arrived back at Teller from their northern migration. The Ed Room was filled with the sounds of bird calls while the group created a diverse selection of bird nests. Out on the refuge, our Teller campers spotted the birds using binoculars and listening for the songs belonging to different species.

Summer Nature Connections Camps took place in June and July. The warm weather and afternoon camp hours made stepping into the creeks to check for aquatic insects, catch minnows, and think like a beaver not quite so chilly! This is important because when we asked the kids at the close of each four day camp to write down their favorite thing about camp, 95% of them answered, “Exploring the pond and creek!” Beyond the pond and creek, the campers’ day is filled with games and crafts that teach them about wildlife, riding their bikes on the refuge, making new friends, and participating in some real-life wildlife projects. This summer, Teller continued to band mourning doves. Campers in the last camp gathered around Sam and listened while he told them about why we band doves and chose one of the kids to hold the dove while he placed the tiny band on its leg. After the band was securely in place, the boy remarked to Sam, “Now he has two bands!” Yes sir! This bird had been banded last year right here on the refuge. Oops, banding protocols dictate one band per bird. Rather than attempting to remove the previous band, Sam chuckled at the mistake that the youngster pointed out and recorded both bands. That taught Sam a valuable lesson: A bird in hand might already have band. One thing is for sure, he will be easy to recognize next year!



EYES ON THE TARGET

In partnership with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, Teller hosted an adult archery certification class. The day was spent with a combination of classroom time, and field training. Learning tricks like “hidden neighbor” and using a string to perfect form before picking up a bow gave participants the tools they’ll need to engage youth in the world of archery. Upon completion, of the course instructors will be able to utilize Teller’s Youth Outreach Trailer to instruct youth across the state of Montana.



A special thank you for the continued support from Youth Expo’s fantastic sponsors. Your generosity puts smiles on the faces of youth as they experience the outdoors at the many amazing camps available in Montana. Stay tuned for more information on the 2020 Youth Conservation + Education Expo!



A WARM SEND OFF: After 8 years serving on the Teller Board, including a term as Board Chairman, Nader Shooshtari

stepped down this fall to spend more time with his family and his profession as a University of Montana professor in the College of Business. “Nader brought tremendous talent and business acumen to the Teller board. He will be missed, but his impacts to the refuge will be around for years to come,” said Teller Chairman of the Board, Herb Depp. From all of us in the Teller circle, we wish Nader and his wife Nancy the best of luck, and thank you both for all of your support!

kids corner

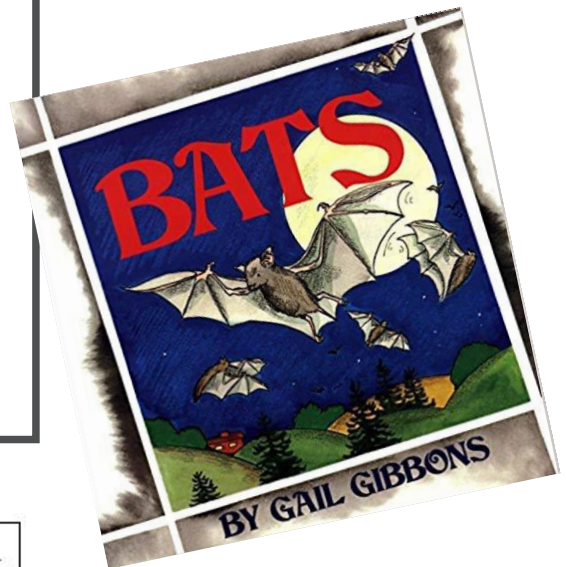
GO BATTY THIS FALL



FUN FACTS ABOUT BATS!

- Baby bats are called pups
- Every night bats can eat thousands of insects
- There are over 1300 species of bats worldwide
- Bats are the only mammals that fly
- Some bats can live over 20 years

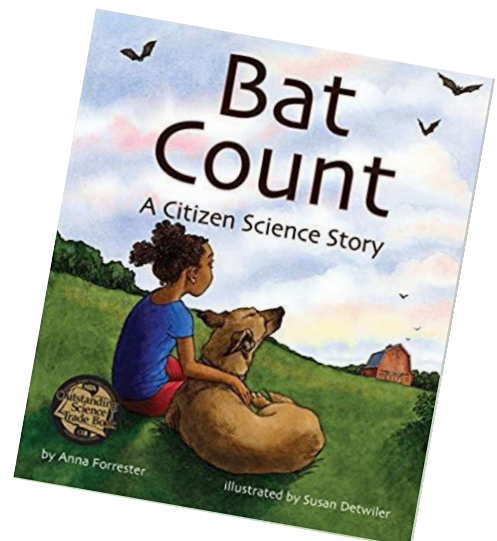
read all about it!



WORD SEARCH

- Bat
- Mammal
- Radar
- Cave
- Pup
- Roost
- Flying
- Night
- Wings

P	F	S	L	A	M	M	A	M	R
D	U	T	I	B	X	V	E	Z	A
E	E	X	Y	A	M	L	P	V	D
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K	T	M	Z	P	C	N	W	L	R
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Y	C	P	J	H	W	Q	N	O	N
V	W	X	M	L	F	C	G	O	Q
P	F	L	Y	I	N	G	S	S	O
X	A	G	P	C	A	V	E	T	N





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below: a Kingbird sits perched on a branch, preparing for it's upcoming migration



want to learn more?

E-mail Heather at heather@tellerwildlife.com to sign up for Teller's E-newsletters, volunteer opportunities and upcoming Teller happenings!

