

SPRING 2016

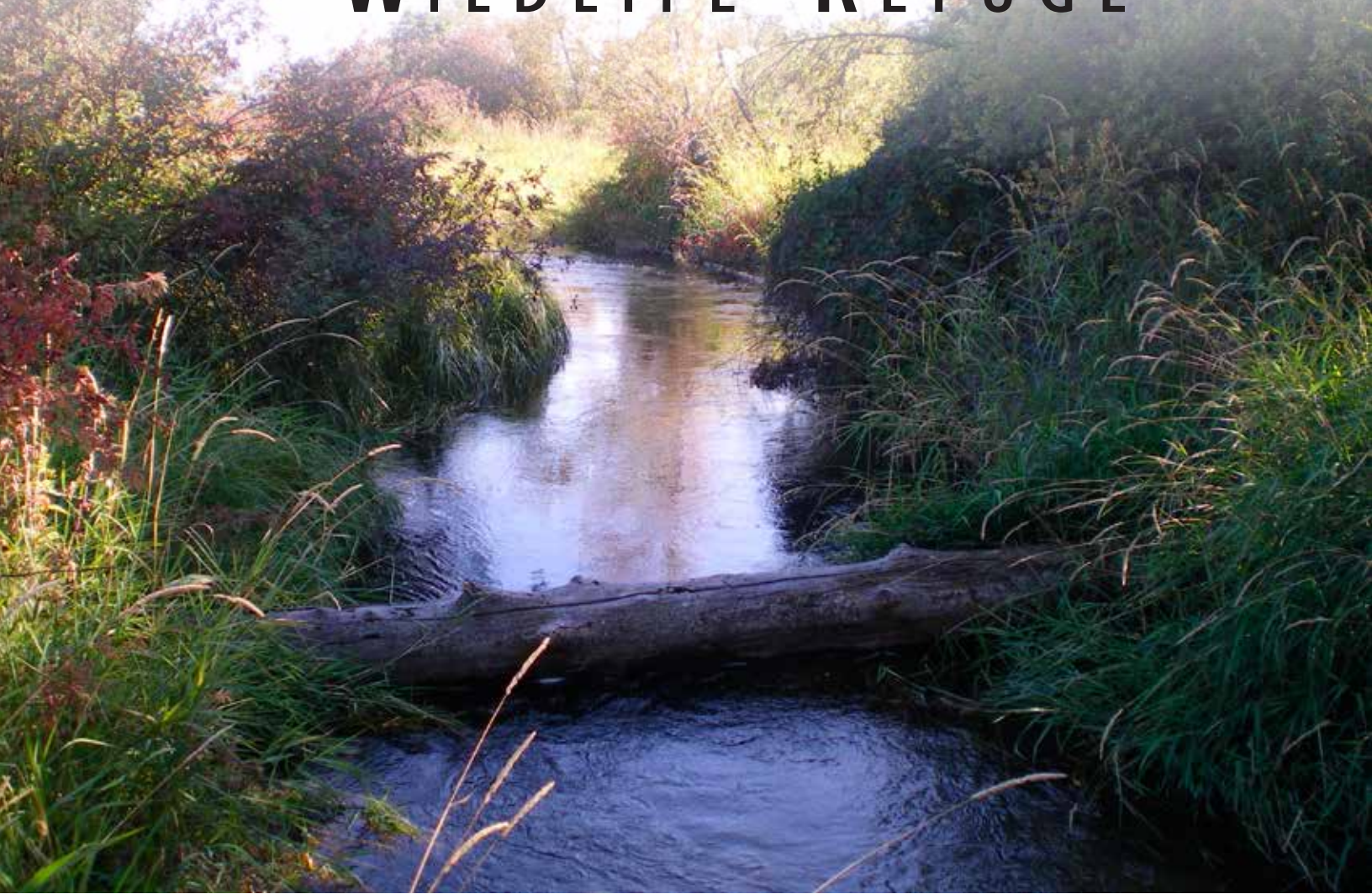
To inspire,  
educate, and  
demonstrate  
conservation  
in action.

# Teller



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## WILDLIFE REFUGE



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To inspire, educate,  
and demonstrate  
conservation in action.

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*All photos Teller file photos  
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## SPRING CHANGES AT TELLER

As I write this, I'm looking out my window at a beautiful spring day in the Bitterroot Valley. Leaves are budding, spring flowers are blooming, and across the road from my office, Teller's farmer is hard at work preparing a field for planting. With the newness of spring comes change on Teller's board, too. John Talia has been our board chair for the past year. His term ended recently, and our board elected Herb Depp as its new chair. Herb has been a Teller board member since 2014, and will continue steering us in the right direction. But don't worry, John isn't going anywhere! He is again serving as our vice chair/treasurer, and we are fortunate to have his expertise and leadership on our board. I am grateful for all of our board members and volunteers, as their love of Teller is reflected in the service they provide to our organization.

*Kim Vietz, Executive Director*

## A SPECIAL NOTE FROM TELLER'S NEW BOARD CHAIR

It is truly an honor to be selected as the new Chairman of the Teller Wildlife Refuge Board of Trustees. The beauty is that we retain the tremendous knowledge and background of John Talia as vice chair and treasurer, clearly an important volunteer position at Teller. Teller represents the best of outdoor Montana with the beauty of the area, the varied species of fish and game available and the stewardship of providing a learning experience for the next generation. It is the combination of all three that makes Teller a unique piece of property to share with others. As we prepare for our annual fundraising event, the TnT Dinner and Auction, on June 18, please save the date, enjoy the evening and be as generous as you can so we can continue the legacy of providing a living laboratory in the Bitterroot Valley called Teller Wildlife Refuge. Thank you for your support!

*Herb Depp, Chair, Board of Trustees*

# EARTH DAY & STEWARDSHIP DAY ACTIVITIES

The world celebrated Earth Day on Friday, April 22. Here at Teller, Boy Scout Troop 1115 & Girl Scout Troops 3669 & 3750 celebrated Earth Day by collecting litter along the public Teller Trail and sections of Quast & Chaffin Lanes adjacent to our historic homes. Way to go, kids, parents & leaders, for giving back to your community!



On Saturday, April 23, volunteers extended the celebration and gathered for Teller's Stewardship Day to tackle important stewardship projects on Teller property. Thanks to Hamilton's Marketplace, which provided juice and fresh doughnuts, the group started off the morning with a real treat. Thanks to our enthusiastic volunteers, including a group from our friends at B.E.A.R, perennial debris was raked, pulled and piled around our historic homes, the noxious weed, houndstongue, was eradicated along ditches and creeks, and old dilapidated fencing was safely removed from the property. Our friend, Bill Good, also planted 90+ native Prairie Junegrass plants in the native grass garden on Teller to add to its diversity.



All the volunteers who devoted their time improving wildlife habitat and lending a hand for Teller projects are truly appreciated!



*Do you enjoy making a difference?*

If you would like to volunteer at Teller, please visit [tellerwildlife.org/Volunteer](http://tellerwildlife.org/Volunteer) or contact Lauren at [lauren@tellerwildlife.org](mailto:lauren@tellerwildlife.org) or (406) 961-3507 for a 2016 Volunteer Calendar.



# CONSERVATION CONVERSATION

*Migratory Bird Treaty Centennial 1916-2016*

*(excerpt adapted from [www.fws.gov/birds](http://www.fws.gov/birds))*

This year marks the centennial of the Convention between the United States and Great Britain (for Canada) for the Protection of Migratory Birds, also called the Migratory Bird Treaty, which was signed on Aug. 16, 1916. This Migratory Bird Treaty, and three others that followed, form the cornerstones of efforts to conserve birds that migrate across international borders.

The treaty connects federal & state governments with private partners, like Teller Wildlife Refuge, as well as non-government, tribal, and international partners who all share a long, successful history of conserving, protecting, and managing migratory bird populations and their habitats. Celebrating the centennial of the first treaty brings together those who have contributed to its success, and galvanizes efforts to protect migratory birds for generations to come.

## *Migratory birds:*

- Connect people with nature and add beauty, sound and color to our world. They provide countless opportunities for enjoyment by birders, hunters, and outdoor enthusiasts, and they have cultural and spiritual importance.
- Contribute environmental benefits, including pollination, insect and rodent control, and seed dispersal.
- Are good indicators of environmental health because they are so visible and are relatively easy to study. Studying birds can give us a picture of what is going on in the natural world.
- Play a key role in the U.S. economy, supporting recreational opportunities that create jobs and generate billions of dollars in revenue.

## *LODGING AT TELLER WILDLIFE REFUGE*

*Teller's historic farm houses and rustic fishing cabins are booking fast for the 2016 season!*

*There are plenty of great dates remaining, but the time to reserve is now.*

*For rates, details, calendars and online booking, please visit:*

***[www.bitterrootcabins.com/teller-wildlife-refuge](http://www.bitterrootcabins.com/teller-wildlife-refuge)***

*Teller Lodging is proudly managed by:*

*Bitterroot Cabins, LLC*

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# A PARTNERSHIP FOR THE BIRDS

Teller volunteers and a local Boy Scout troop partnered this spring in an effort to expand the wood duck population on Teller. Led by volunteers, Jim Hamilton and Paul Hayes, a plan was put in place with Louis Zielinski, a member of Boy Scout Troop 1115, to earn his Eagle Scout award. Louis would like to become a wildlife biologist or veterinarian. Louis raised the funds to purchase the materials for five new cedar wood duck boxes and gathered the rest of his troop, family and Teller volunteers for assembly. Many thanks to Teller volunteer, Mark Dickerson, for helping and allowing the use of his wood shop to build the new boxes. All then met the following weekend to replace irreparable old boxes with the new ones, for a total of 17 wood duck nesting boxes on Teller. Wood duck pairs have been sighted near the boxes as nesting season nears. Stay tuned to find out how many of the boxes were used by the wood ducks!

*“Dear Teller Wildlife, Thank you for accepting me to do this wonderful project. I have learned a whole lot. This project has been a great experience.*

*Thank you, Louis Zielinski”*

Photo by Michael Howell



## BITTERROOT BARN WEDDING

AT TELLER WILDLIFE REFUGE



**CONTACT BITTERROOT CABINS** Call Sherrie at 406-363-2258 [sherrie@bitterrootcabins.com](mailto:sherrie@bitterrootcabins.com)  
[bitterrootcabins.com/bitterroot-barn-wedding](http://bitterrootcabins.com/bitterroot-barn-wedding)  
[facebook.com/bitterrootbarnwedding](https://www.facebook.com/bitterrootbarnwedding)

### 2016 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 with volleyball, horseshoes and croquet
- New tables and chairs for 200
- Assorted wooden benches, tables, chairs and stands
- Dance floor
- Trash removal
- Indoor restroom facilities

**Package Cost - \$3,999**

(Paid in 3 installments)



*There is a new plaque at the Woodside Fishing Access Site on the Bitterroot River west of Corvallis honoring Otto Teller, the landowner who donated the land to the state in 1989 establishing river access there for the public in perpetuity. The plaque says: "For generations to come, we will share in and benefit from Otto Teller's generous contribution in conserving wild trout fisheries. Otto set the example for all of us by being sensitive to land use and nurturing a healthy environment. We thank Otto Teller for his donation of land and the invaluable contributions he has made to Montana's natural heritage."*

# OTTO TELLER HONORED AT WOODSIDE FAS

*By Michael Howell of the Bitterroot Star, March 8, 2016  
Reprinted by permission of the Bitterroot Star*

A dedication ceremony was held at the Woodside Fishing Access Site (FAS) on Thursday, March 3, in celebration of the erection of a new memorial plaque honoring Otto Teller who generously donated the land for the FAS in 1989. Creation of the new memorial plaque was spearheaded by Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks River Ranger Clint Hultberg who noticed the dilapidated condition of the previous memorial plaque. He and FWP River Ranger Ben Schmidt teamed up with folks at the Teller Wildlife Refuge to make the new memorial plaque a reality.

The fishing access site has a concrete boat launch that was installed by the Bitterroot Chapter of Trout Unlimited. At the north end of the FAS is the entrance to the Teller Trail, a one-mile loop trail that allows the public to access about 40 acres of riparian habitat in the river bottom. This river bottom area is part of the 1,200-acre Teller Wildlife Refuge and has been designated as a National Audubon Important Bird Area and is home to over 145 species of birds, not to mention the other wildlife that enjoy the area such as moose, deer and mountain lions.

Established in 1988, Teller Wildlife Refuge is a private, non-profit conservation organization. The refuge stretches along a five-mile section of the Bitterroot River. It is made up of diverse habitats, including streams, spring creeks, irrigation ditches, emergent and open water wetlands, and agricultural fields.

The Teller Wildlife Refuge exists because of the foresight of two conservation legends, Otto "Mose" Teller and Phil Tawney. The two joined together in the early 1980s to work for the conservation of Montana's natural resources.

Teller was an avid fly fisherman and waterfowl hunter, conservationist and summer resident of the Bitterroot Valley for more than 50 years. He became increasingly concerned about the fragmentation of habitat in the Bitterroot, and began purchasing river bottom and farmland properties. He combined 18 smaller properties near Corvallis to recreate what had been the Chaffin and Slack family homesteads.

With the help of attorney Phil Tawney, Teller consolidated and placed the 1,200 acres into conservation easements, assuring that the land would remain forever undeveloped. Teller remodeled some of the homes and barns on the properties to serve as guest houses for visitors and as a meeting place for conservation gatherings and forums.

Otto Teller passed away on December 1, 1998 but the legacy that he and his wife Anne left will benefit the public and the wildlife in the Bitterroot Valley for generations to come.

"It feels good to have a decent sign honoring Otto for all the things he's done," said Hultberg.



*"Autumn Antlers"*  
reprinted by permission  
of artist,  
Jan Martin McGuire

# 22<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL TnT DINNER & AUCTION

*Saturday, June 18, 2016*

Overlook 800 acres of Teller and the Bitterroot Mountains beyond, as we celebrate 22 years of our annual gathering behind the historic Slack Barn. The TnT Dinner & Auction is Teller's signature fundraising event, consisting of gourmet hors d'oeuvres and a sit-down dinner, as well as split-the-pot, live, silent, and sealed bid auctions and raffles.

*Individual Dinner Tickets: \$75 | Event Sponsor: \$500 | Wildlife Table: \$2,500*

## ***Become a TnT Sponsor***

### ***\$500 Event Sponsor Benefits***

- Charitable gift in support of Teller's mission
- Two (2) dinner tickets
- Reserved parking pass near event location
- Sponsor recognition at the event, in the Ravalli Republic newspaper and Teller's newsletter, e-newsletter, Facebook page and website
- Raffle Item – Drawing for a one *night* stay at the historic Slack House (accommodates up to 8 guests) or one *day* rental at the Slack Barn (accommodates up to 200 people)\*

### ***\$2,500 Wildlife Table Sponsor Benefits***

- Charitable gift in support of Teller's mission
- Eight (8) dinner tickets
- Reserved parking pass near event location
- Sponsor recognition at the event, in the Ravalli Republic newspaper and Teller's newsletter, e-newsletter, Facebook page and website
- Raffle Item - Drawing for half-day birding, fly fishing or waterfowl hunt for two people on Teller\*

*\*Subject to availability. Must use by April 2017.*

Visit our TnT Event webpage for a running list of auction items at [www.tellerwildlife.org](http://www.tellerwildlife.org).

**PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS ONLINE!** For sponsorships, tickets or donations call (406) 961-3507 or visit our website at [www.tellerwildlife.org](http://www.tellerwildlife.org).

## A Note from our High School Intern, Keelie O'Brien



Keelie color-coded our reorganized Education Resource Library (above) and bagged seeded out Houndstongue weed (right).



### *Hello everyone!*

My name is Keelie O'Brien, and I have had the wonderful opportunity to intern here at Teller Wildlife Refuge for the past few months. I was drawn to Teller through a school-to-career program given at Hamilton High School.

With my love for the outdoors, and interest in wildlife biology and conservation science, I decided that Teller would be the perfect place to gain insight into what a career in conservation is like.

I have learned so much from my time here at Teller. I have been able to work around the property with maintenance, as well as lend a hand behind the scenes, gaining insight to the workings of a non-profit.

With my senior year quickly coming to a close, I will soon be headed off to the University of Montana's College of Forestry and Conservation to pursue a career protecting the wild places we all love and enjoy. My time as an intern here has been such a rewarding experience, and I am beyond grateful for Lauren Rennaker and the rest of the Teller crew for taking me under their wing. And thank you to everyone who has helped make Teller Wildlife Refuge the amazing organization that it is.

## LANDS UPDATE

By Pete Lindbergh

Spring chores at the Teller Wildlife Refuge have been a breeze this year! Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of our loyal supporters we have replaced "Old Yeller" (our 1960s Ford backhoe) with "Blue," our brand new, 65-horsepower New Holland tractor. With a full arsenal of quick attach accessories, we can clear ditches, load pallets, pound posts, move round bales, dig up buried mainline overdue for repairs and haul topsoil and gravel.



Teller Lands Manager, Pete Lindbergh, stands with our brand new tractor thanks to funds raised through last year's Fund the Need at the TnT Dinner & Auction.



Cheat grass is a thing of the past when Al's your pal: Allen Bjergo, Teller Board member, mows fields of cheatgrass on Teller before it has a chance to seed.

Enjoyable as it is to tackle work with the help of our new tractor, I am periodically compelled to leave "Blue" in the warm shop and address other pressing work. Recently, while lugging straw, a ladder and baling twine (standard nesting gear for the Teller goose platforms every spring), I stumbled into a bevy of California

quail. The pudgy little birds chirped and fluttered through the brush all around me for a moment before suddenly taking flight – a veritable cloud of at least 40 birds clattering off to forage elsewhere, leaving me to ponder the subtle changes we have witnessed here at Teller over the past few years.

California quail numbers have increased markedly, as have Eurasian collared doves and wild turkeys. It is fascinating to observe the changes in Teller's inhabitants each year.





*Ron Plakke spent 56 hours buying materials and constructing and staining the shed for Teller's new recycling program at Otto's Cabins. Many thanks to him and Teller Board Emeritus member Grant Parker, who helped with construction.*

## MEET A FRIEND OF TELLER

*Ron Plakke retired from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley after a 29-year career as a zoology professor. He is an avid outdoorsman who lives with his wife in Stevensville, Montana.*

### *What is the motivation for your giving in general?*

I am motivated to volunteer for environmental projects where I can give back to nature which has nurtured me both professionally and personally. As a past professor of zoology, with training also in the fields of wildlife and botany, I volunteered and managed a restoration project of an endangered habitat in Florida and also worked with a friend to help him establish and develop his conservation easement. The conservation easement is a concept that I find especially appealing and understand the need for volunteers to help a professional staff develop and keep these easements viable. It is also a great way to meet other dedicated people, who share your values and interest in the environment. I especially like the emphasis Teller Wildlife Refuge plays with the introduction of nature and interaction with it for young people.

### *What projects have you worked on/are you working on at Teller?*

I have worked on a series of projects including fence removal and repair, and trash removal. Environmental projects include shrub planting and weed digging. Wildlife projects include the wood duck project and goose platforms. Other activities have included clearing beetle-killed trees, weed control/mulching at the Teller garden, duck blind refurbishing and helping with fundraising events. My current project is building a recycle storage shed for Otto's Cabins.

### *How long have you been involved with Teller?*

This is my sixth year volunteering for Teller.

*"While I have never scientifically evaluated the outdoor experience with electrodes, it has long been my position that the outdoor experience is candy for the soul and clarity for the brain. Early in our marriage and in college, my wife and I would head to the Colorado Mountains, throw our sleeping bags next to a stream and spend*

*the weekend recharging. Later, during the summer, we would climb a peak-a-week along the Front Range, with our two young sons. In our fifties, my family built a cabin at 9,000 feet and we would spend weekends and summers, cutting firewood, building and repairing fences, hiking and meditating while watching abundant wildlife, flowers and clouds. We each had a personal rock,*

*The "last child in the woods" may well come from an experience at Teller.*

*prominence or ledge that bore our name, where we would go for solitude. Of course, we hunted and fished as well. During late spring semester, we would have 20 to 30 upperclassmen and graduate students, all biology students, up for a weekend barbecue, which usually included a lamb or pig and chicken. It was time to let*

*them relax before finals. We had a turn off about 30 miles from the cabin after which we could not talk about work and not again until we passed it on the way home.*

*Now at 80, I am not so curious about the other side of the mountain but draw my energy from working and hunting at Teller and the Valley. It is truly a great place to live. The "last child in the woods" may well come from an experience at Teller. Thank you for bringing these memories and thoughts to the fore."*

**Ron Plakke**



### *Yellow-headed Blackbird*

A while ago, I didn't have many options. I had to compete for insects and space at a few wetlands. Sometimes I had to move on. Now I have 150 acres of wetlands to choose from. The ducks and geese may not like my singing (some say I screech), but I sing to my heart's content while swaying on the cattails. Sway and screech. Oops, I mean sway and sing!

## MONTHLY GIFTS *Want to sustain and improve wildlife habitat?*

Join other Teller supporters by signing up for our Wildlife Sustainer monthly giving program. Your automatic monthly gift will help provide Teller with the financial resources to maintain healthy wildlife habitat. Each year Teller spends nearly **\$40,000** on conservation-related expenses on its 1,200 acres. Wildlife-

friendly farming and weed management are the largest of these expenses.

Donors like you have improved our wildlife habitat, and monthly giving is the easiest and most efficient way to support Teller. You can make your donation to Teller in monthly

installments via a credit card. You can easily start, change or stop your gift at any time.

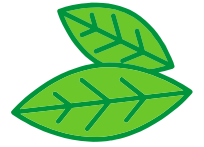
***Can you help the yellow-headed blackbird and other wildlife by returning the included slip today? Thank you for your vital support!***



## NEVER STOP LEARNING AT TELLER

Thanks to volunteers, JoAnne Gibbons, Parnelli Sharp, Keelie O'Brien and Amanda Bestor, our education library has been sorted, reorganized and cataloged. Field trip trunks and notebooks, field guides, nets, insect collection and viewing tools, children and adult's books and binoculars are just a few of the resources available to check out for free. Whether you're just curious about learning more about the natural world or are planning a youth field trip to Teller, we have everything you might need. Contact Karin for a complete list of materials and topics or stop by our office at 1288 Eastside Hwy.

# Nature Connections Camp AT TELLER WILDLIFE REFUGE



*Amanda Bestor, Camp Director*

**CAMP FEE:** \$40 per child (entering 3rd through 6th grade)

**CAMP DATES:** 3rd & 4th graders July 25–28

3rd & 4th graders August 1–4

5th & 6th graders August 8–11

**FULL**

**CAMP**

**SCHEDULE:** Monday – Thursday 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Join us to connect with a very special place in the Bitterroot Valley while we explore naturalist skills, create art, invent and engineer, and learn about some critters. We will bike, hike, and wade through nature as we explore Connections within the beautiful Teller Wildlife Refuge. Each day focuses on a mixture of observation, play, creative craft, with facts and fun mixed in about adaptations of living things. The goal of each day is for the students to have fun and look forward to coming out to Teller for another day.

Students will be outside for the majority of the day and should come dressed for the weather. We will get wet some days and water shoes or old tennis shoes, a change of clothes, sunscreen, water, and layers are important. The ability to bike on a gravel road for up to 1 mile is essential to enjoy the camp to its fullest. Reasonable accommodations can be made for students with special needs. This is our 3rd year and we can't wait to meet our new nature explorers!



**About the Camp Director:** Amanda Bestor grew up in Wisconsin where she received her B.S. in Natural Resource Management with an emphasis in Environmental Education and Interpretation. She attended the University of Montana to receive her teaching degree and M.S in Curriculum and Instruction. After college she spent some years working as an outdoor educator with students Pre-K-12. Amanda and her husband moved to Montana in 2003 and fell in love with the Bitterroot Valley. She can't believe she gets to live in a place where people vacation. Amanda has worked as a teacher in Corvallis for the past 9 years. She currently teaches 5th grade and enjoys getting her students out to the Teller Wildlife Refuge for many outdoor adventures.



For more information, please visit [www.tellerwildlife.org/Summer\\_Camp](http://www.tellerwildlife.org/Summer_Camp) or please call Teller's office at 406.961.3507



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## TELLER TRACKS

Sign up for the Teller Tracks e-newsletter!  
E-mail Lauren at [lauren@tellerwildlife.org](mailto:lauren@tellerwildlife.org)

