

spring 2019

Teller

WILDLIFE REFUGE

to inspire, educate, and demonstrate conservation in action



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ON THE COVER: Western tanagers can be found using Teller’s Cottonwood habitats. While it’s name suggests otherwise, this species actually belongs to the Cardinal family. *Image courtesy of Alex Kearney*

NEW FACES

Teller is happy to welcome a new face to the team. David Whitmoyer joined Teller Wildlife Refuge as Lands Manager in February. A Helena native, David comes to us after a successful career as a rodeo entertainer. The rodeo circuit took him all over the country, attending over 50 rodeos annually. He now calls Corvallis home with his wife, Kelly, and 2 year old daughter, Annabelle.

“I am very excited to start this chapter in my life at Teller Wildlife Refuge and use my skills in a setting that allows me to flourish

and enjoy the outdoors. I plan to use my youth and energy to keep more projects in house. I look forward to combining the efforts of staff and volunteers to tackle the various projects on the refuge. There is a lot of work to be done and I am very happy that I was the one chosen to handle it!”
-David Whitmoyer



it!”



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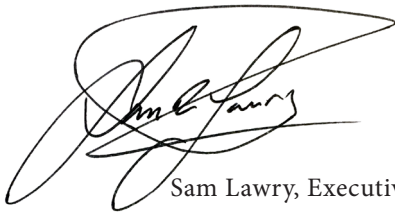
David Whitmoyer, *Lands Manager*

“LOOKING BACK”

a word from the Executive Director

Following advice from several mentors in my life, I have always tried to avoid “reinventing the wheel.” It was that spirit that led me to the Teller basement in search of newsletters from the past. As luck would have it, or some great archiving by Teller volunteers, I located the first edition of Teller’s newsletter dated fall of 1993. Fritz Tossberg was the Chairman of the Board, with Chris Miller serving as Executive Director. While Teller had been in existence for 5 years, it was the wisdom of the Board in 1993 to launch a program known as “Friends of Teller Wildlife Refuge.” Its purpose was twofold. First was to generate income for refuge operations, but more importantly to engage the community in Otto Teller’s vision. That vision reflected a lifetime of promoting wildlife and fisheries management, sustainable agriculture and environmental education. Today, I am pleased we carry on that vision through strong fiscal programs, expanding community and conservation education programs, and enhancement and protection of valuable fish and wildlife habitats.

The perusal of old newsletters left a lasting impression of just how many people have been involved with Teller. I discovered an array of familiar names, all of whom donated countless hours to the success of the organization. As I sit behind the reins as Teller’s Executive Director, I thank each and every one of you who played a key role in Teller’s history and subsequent success. I commit that I will not forget those efforts and will carry on many of the successful programs so many of you had an integral role in creating. That’s a promise!



Sam Lawry, Executive Director



above: Trumpeter swan visits Teller. Check out the Ravalli Republic for the full article on this majestic bird

MILKWEED TRIALS UNDERWAY: Zach Miller, Assistant professor, MSU Ag. Research Center and Monica Pokorny USDA NRCS Plant Specialist partner with Teller to conduct experimental plantings of milkweed seed and root stalk. The focus of the project is to provide landowners with proven results geared at establishing milkweed stands for the benefit of Monarch butterflies who are undergoing significant population declines. This work will complement work performed by Teller's long-standing supporter, Bill Good, who conducted milkweed germination studies using seed stock from Teller to eventually start new stands of milkweed on the refuge.



BIRDATHON MAKES ITS RETURN

Bill Good, Teller Supporter

The Teller Wildlife Refuge Fundraising Bird Count has been resurrected. Initiated in 1992, this annual fundraiser gave birders a great chance to hone their birding skills while providing valuable species trend data for refuge managers. Once again you can spend a mid-June day stalking warblers and flycatchers on the Teller Wildlife Refuge with your birding buddy, trying to get your name inscribed for eternity on the coveted Birdathon trophy, all while raising money to support environmental education for the next generation of birders. This event will take place just before the annual TnT Dinner & Auction. After a day of birding on the refuge, you can join other conservation supporters for Teller's signature fundraising event. Competitors will be making their own pledges of per-species donations and may also ask their friends to support them as well. Bird species occurrence data will become part of the database that the refuge

uses to monitor the effects of their land management efforts. Please contact the Teller Wildlife Refuge to register your team at (406) 961-3507, or heather@tellerwildlife.com.





FOR MORE INFORMATION, RESERVATIONS & SPONSORSHIPS:
406.961.3507 | WWW.TELLERWILDLIFE.ORG



A NEW LOOK: This winter, Teller Wildlife Refuge's website received a face-lift. The new and improved website features beautiful images and design coupled with a more user friendly interface. Visitors are now able to sign up for volunteer projects, buy tickets to our annual fundraiser, register their kids for our year round youth camp opportunities, and more. In addition, you can check out our newsletter and newspaper article archives, and stay in the loop on what's happening at Teller. If you haven't given it a scroll, head to www.tellerwildlife.org to see what's new!

WOMEN TAKE ON WATERFOWL AT TELLER

This fall Teller partnered with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks and Becoming an Outdoors-Woman to host an exciting weekend of waterfowl education. Participants learned how to identify ducks, headed to the shooting range for firearm safety and shooting practice, and even had the opportunity to head out on the refuge for a hunt. The weekend was a blast and we can't wait for fall of 2019 when we, once again, host Women's Waterfowl Weekend. Stay tuned for more info!



images courtesy of Madyline Braught Photography



TELLER YOUTH CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (TYCLC):

It was a chilly February evening when five local youth gathered in Teller's education room to launch the Teller Youth Conservation Leadership Council. Chaired by 16-year-old Gavin Herbert, the first meeting introduced the concept of the Council as a group of dedicated young conservationists with a desire to expand their knowledge and participate in conservation projects. Spurred by his observation during a Teller volunteer work day, Gavin recognized that most of Teller's volunteers had a grey hair or two. His desire was to form a group of young people ages 14-21 that would take an active role in Bitterroot conservation. This introductory gathering focused on development of a charter and agreement to actively recruit new members. As such, the second meeting held on April 16th was attended by 9 youth with a guest speaker talking about the history of North American wildlife conservation. "We are excited to have Teller's support and hope to continue to grow, recognizing the importance of conservation through learning and hands on projects," said Gavin. The next meeting will be a field project day on June 8th. For more information on how to join the TYCLC, please contact Heather at 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
406.961.3507 | heather@tellerwildlife.org

FARM BILL AIDS CONSERVATION

In December of 2018 the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018, commonly referred to as the Farm Bill, was signed into Law by the President. This act covers a wide array of programs, including the food stamp program, and critical conservation programs benefiting fish, wildlife, soil health and water quality. The Farm Bill is one of the most important pieces of conservation legislation in the U.S. Signing of the 2018 Farm Bill authorizes nearly 30 billion in conservation funding over the next 5 years. So how does this billion dollar program trickle down to benefit private landowners like Teller? Beginning in 2006, Teller entered into partnerships with the U.S. Departments of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) branch to take part in Farm Bill conservation programs. Over the years, Teller has benefitted from the Farm Bill by receiving technical and financial assistance for wetland and riparian restoration, improved irrigation systems and weed control. In 2019, Teller will receive both technical and financial assistance for pollinator planting, improved wildlife friendly farming and potentially permanent protection of wetlands through the establishment of a Wetland Reserve Easement on the recently acquired Jones parcel. From a national perspective, the Farm Bill has had a tremendous impact by establishing programs like the Conservation Reserve Program, which provides incentives to farmers to set aside critical grasslands for wildlife. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program have impacted millions of acres and will continue to incentivize projects on Teller. Given all of the political divisions these days, let's be thankful that this Federal program garners wide support from the American people regardless of political affiliation.

GLOBAL YOUTH SERVICE DAY

AT TELLER: On Friday, April 12th Teller was lucky enough to receive the assistance from a group of conservation-minded students from Corvallis High School. Led by Ian Harris from Montana Conservation Corps and Corvallis High School's Jeff Kaiser, the group took on the large task of removing fence from our many willow exclosures.

According to Youth Service America, Global Youth Service Day celebrates and mobilizes the millions of young people who improve their communities through service.



THE LAST RETRIEVE

Land Tawney, President/CEO Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

I headed north in pursuit of Hungarian partridge and pheasants. With me were three trusted colleagues and my two loyal labs, Gabriel and Turk. We started hunting around 1pm on some new ground. We worked a creek with lots of cover, perfect pheasant habitat. Together we kicked up a few roosters but had no real shots. The brush was thick and the birds were jumpy. So we turned to the foothills in pursuit of Huns.

Then it happened. After working up a hillside, we turned down following a ridge. Eleven-year-old Gabriel's tail started to wag in the familiar way. He'd found a bird's scent and, by the frequency of his wagging tail, it was fresh. A Hun exploded with a squeak, right in front of the old boy's nose. I mounted my Benelli and dropped the bird. The race was on between Gabe and Turk, with Gabe arriving first. Swaggering proudly, he brought the bird back to hand and the symphony was complete. In a moment, Gabe's hunting career and home life flashed before my eyes. His first retrieves, his best retrieves, that bond only understood by those with gun dogs. I didn't know it then, but that was Gabe's last retrieve.

When we arrived home, I cleaned the plump Hun and put the it in salt water to cure for later. Gabe was already showing aches and pains from our day afield. He had arthritis in both hind legs, brought on by hundreds of cold entries and exits from the duck marsh. I gave him some buffered aspirin, a healthy dinner, a bowl full of water and an extra pat on his head. That night he woke me up twice. The pain in his eyes was palpable. Twice I sat with him and told him what a good dog he was. He wagged his tail in acceptance. The next day he worked out his stiffness and looked to have recovered.

Gabriel lived to hunt. It was the apex of decades of breeding and thousands of hours in the field. The next morning I again headed north, this time in pursuit of waterfowl. Gabe stayed home and six-year-old Turk made the trip, a changing of the guard that didn't sit well with the elder statesmen. We had a great day with Turk making a 200-yard retrieve on a mallard and a triple blind retrieve

on the last three widgeon we shot. The latter was the culmination of a summer's work on the command "BACK" – a victory in its own right.

When we arrived home, Gabe sniffed us with disgusted interest, having not recovered from the insult of being left behind in the early hours. As I cleaned the birds, Gabe hung around but seemed to eye me in a different way. "Really Boss, this is what it has come to?" The look was painful, but true.

Last fall, I put down my best friend. I've been holding on to Gabe's ashes, not wanting to let him go and will return him to the field just after the first of the year. I'll take him back to where we hunted many a time, Teller Wildlife Refuge, and he will find his resting place next to where my father's ashes were laid just over two decades ago. I wrote this story a couple years back, and I wanted to print it now that I can finally talk about him without crying. In honor of Gabriel and all great gun dogs, I wanted to share my memory of his last retrieve. But I know he'll be there with me in the duck blind and pheasant brush, so long as my own legs can still carry me out there.

EDITORS NOTE: Land was able to return to Teller this winter to scatter Gabe's ashes next to his father's rock.



above: Land, his daughter, and dogs Gabe and Turk

CONNECTIONS

NATURE

CAMP

This year at camp we will learn about many different critters that call Teller home and enjoy a mixture of outdoor learning, games, and art!

AGES 10-11: 6/24-6/27

AGES 8-9: 7/8-7/11

AGES 10-11: 7/15-7/18

MON - THURS
12:30 - 4:30

\$6

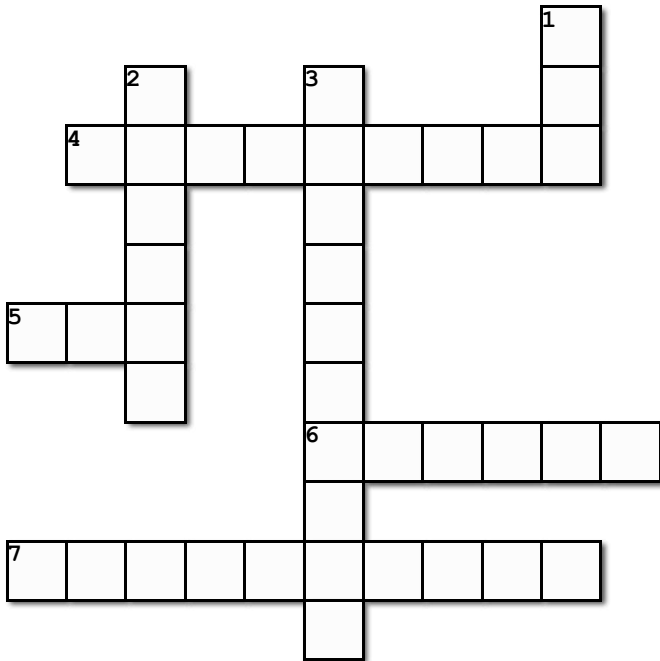
for more info and to register online, visit tellerwildlife.org/camp or call 406.9613507



WITH SNOW LEVELS RISING and temperatures dropping 18 hardy boys and girls gathered at Teller's Slack barn to spend the morning investigating winter habitat of the Bitterroot's wildlife. Our campers learned about animal adaptations creatures use to camouflage, find food, and keep themselves warm through the cold winters in Montana. Inside activities included making animal track casts, and creating fun felted animals. Time spent outside was limited by single digit temps but a game of tag showed them how difficult it can be for animals to run through heavy snow to escape a predator and smearing shortening on one hand and not the other demonstrated how a good layer of fat keeps an animal warm.

The Teller Wildlife Winter Ecology Camp, made possible through grants from Cinnabar Foundation, Lucy's Fund supporters, and other generous donations, marks the first seasonal addition to our annual Nature's Connections summer program. The Spring Ecology Camp will concentrate on avian activity and a fall camp is under construction as well.

kids corner



Across

- 4. Monarch is a type of _____
- 5. black and yellow pollinating insect
- 6. Trees get these in the spring
- 7. Montana's state flower

Down

- 1. April showers bring _____ flowers
- 2. The season that comes after spring
- 3. Montana's state bird



SIGNS OF SPRING

It's fun to explore in spring! See if you can see, hear, smell, or touch the items listed below.

- new plants or leaves starting to grow
- birds singing
- an insect crawling
- a flower blooming

what does spring smell like?

what colors do you see?



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www.tellerwildlife.org

below: volunteers Tucker and Paul Belanger prep an enclosure for shrub planting



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!

