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CONNECTING PEOPLE
AND PLACE



Sagebrush
Steppe Land Trust
For Generations To Come

FALL 2020

Our mission is to celebrate, connect, protect and enhance natural lands and waters, wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches, community spaces and recreational lands in Southeast Idaho, now and for future generations.

Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust

109 N. Arthur Ave., Suite 300
PO Box 1404
Pocatello, ID 83204
208.240.6045
www.sagebrushlandtrust.org

Mission

To celebrate, connect, protect and enhance natural lands and waters, wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches, community spaces and recreational lands in Southeast Idaho, now and for future generations.

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Mike Larkin, Sarah Jackson,
Duane Dyer, Bill Kessler,
Mike Settel, Cindi Walton,
Greg McReynolds, Matt Lucia,
Kayla Bass, Babette Thorpe

Cover Photo

Peggy Stolworthy and her granddaughters on their conservation easement property.

Remembering RON ROPE

By Babette Thorpe

We lost a good friend this past spring, someone who was a wonderful mentor, conservator and teacher.

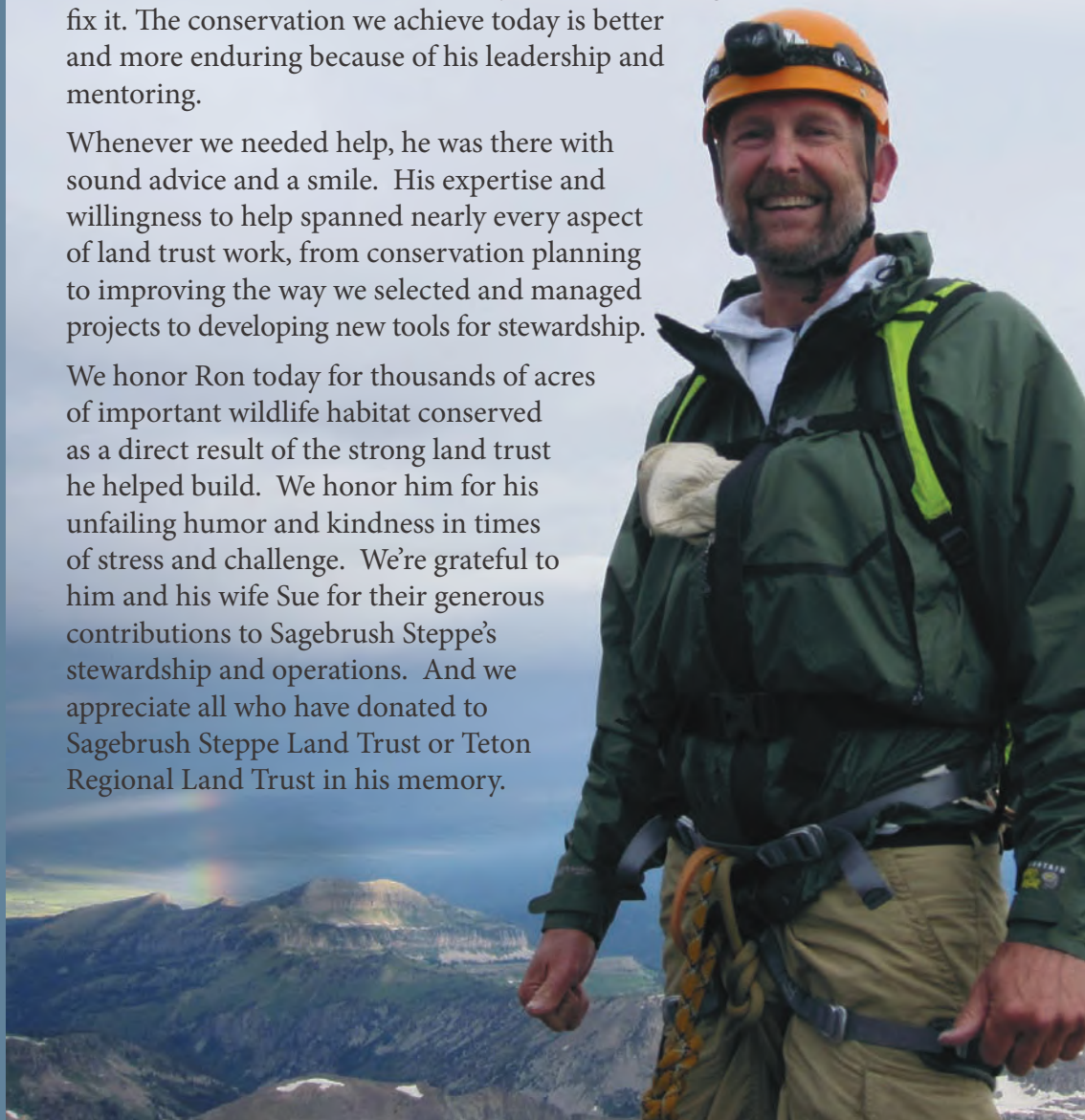
Those of us who work for non-profits often have the privilege of working for outstanding board members – bright, kind, dedicated and generous people who inspire staff and organizations to do their very best. Ron Rope was one of those people. Our time spent with him made us better at what we do – and he did the same for scores of people who worked and served with him during his career and years of community service.

Matt and I first met Ron when we worked for the Teton Regional Land Trust. Ron served on the TRLT Board from 2000 – 2012, a period of great change and progress. Even though he worked full-time with INL for much of that time, he committed time and substantial talents to his board service, and to conservation in eastern Idaho.

He had an unerring ability to spot something that needed improving, point it out in a kind and constructive way and help pull together the resources to fix it. The conservation we achieve today is better and more enduring because of his leadership and mentoring.

Whenever we needed help, he was there with sound advice and a smile. His expertise and willingness to help spanned nearly every aspect of land trust work, from conservation planning to improving the way we selected and managed projects to developing new tools for stewardship.

We honor Ron today for thousands of acres of important wildlife habitat conserved as a direct result of the strong land trust he helped build. We honor him for his unfailing humor and kindness in times of stress and challenge. We're grateful to him and his wife Sue for their generous contributions to Sagebrush Steppe's stewardship and operations. And we appreciate all who have donated to Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust or Teton Regional Land Trust in his memory.



Your Gift Makes A BIG DIFFERENCE THIS YEAR!

Thanks to our wonderful members and supporters, Sagebrush Steppe has launched several new conservation partnerships this year. With your help, we'll conserve more land, restore more habitat and create more recreation opportunities in southeastern Idaho!

Please consider a special year-end gift for one or more of the following:

- To improve our Century Heights property in Pocatello for hikers, bikers, horseback riders and mule deer. Your gift will help us make our property more resilient in the face of wildfire, place trail signs and continue the cleanup.
- To partner with the City of Pocatello and local residents to help fulfill the long-term vision for conserving and restoring open spaces vital to a healthy, prosperous community.
- To conserve more land along the waterways of the Bear River. Your gift will help unlock hundreds of thousands of dollars for conservation in the watershed and protect habitat for wildlife.

SIGN UP OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

Please visit our secure website (<https://sagebrushlandtrust.org/>) and click on the donate button to see membership levels. You can also mail a check to Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust, PO Box 1404, Pocatello, ID 83204.

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

Please consider making a reoccurring donation through our website, or by contacting Development Officer, Babette Thorpe, at babette@sagebrushlandtrust.org.



Volunteers & ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

TIM NORTON



We are excited to announce Tim Norton as our new Artist in Residence! Tim has donated artwork to the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust for years, resulting in thousands of dollars for conservation. He will serve an 18-month term within the land trust, overlapping with Cindi Walton's 18-month residency. Tim has already toured many of

our fee-title and conservation easement properties and has begun his artwork.

CINDI WALTON



During her tenure as the Artist in Residence, Cindi has visited most of our conservation easement properties to create a variety of beautiful cards, prints, and paintings to support our organization. Inspired by the sagebrush steppe landscapes of Southeastern Idaho, Cindi has written a song titled Sagebrush Serenade and has created a bandana with original artwork of sagebrush steppe

plant species. We are grateful for all of Cindi's support, hard work, and sharing her creative talents with us!

Mysteriously Beautiful Morning

By Sarah Jackson

This summer, I had the opportunity to join the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust for several monitoring visits to conservation easement properties. I am a participant in the Idaho Master Naturalist (IMN) program sponsored by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. This spring the High Desert Chapter of IMN was invited to participate in volunteer training and then to join SSLT staff for monitoring visits throughout the summer. Each visit presented a special and unique experience. In addition to great company, seeing firsthand these beautiful trust properties seemed like a special gift, each with a diversity of life and landscape.

The most memorable to me was driving to the Croney property early on a Tuesday morning, the first day of September. I knew where we were going, but the morning was quite cold and the fog had set in along the old highway towards Bancroft. When the fog lifted later in the morning, I suddenly realized I had a familiarity of the area but from the seat of a bicycle.

Meeting the landowner was a privilege, knowing that this special person had made the commitment to put this beautiful piece of land into a trust that would last forever. The important time was taken for polite conversation before we started the monitoring visit. Time

just seemed to slow down in this world. Our small group of Master Naturalists under the expertise of our leader, Kayla, started off on foot in the fog on a chilly 34-degree morning. It was mysteriously beautiful as the sun gradually burned through and warmed to fully reveal the beauty of the area.

With Rabbitbrush in bloom, and end of summer remnants of Wyoming Indian Paintbrush and Hoary Aster intermingled, we set out with cameras in hand to document our visit. Someone found remnants of a Meadowhawk covered with droplets of moisture from the fog that was attached to a Bitterbrush. Elk scat

was spotted by someone else. And Sagebrush...everywhere. In the forested area I captured photos of a Downy Woodpecker! Blooming Rabbitbrush did not lack for entertainment. Many bees, including lots of colorful Hunt's Bumble Bees, Western Branded Skippers, Beetles, Darners and Meadowhawks were found and photographed. I would like to have stayed for hours, exploring. The view was glorious with the sun out now. The Portneuf River shown her beauty as it should be.

At the conclusion of our visit we had the surprise meeting with a resident Great Horned Owl perched on the beautiful,

over 100-year-old barn. The landowner told us the history of the barn and we learned that it was constructed of old growth Douglas Fir without a knothole visible. We said our goodbyes as the hummingbirds visited the nearby feeder by a window of the lovely farm house. My hope is that I can go back for a visit again.



My 2020 Summer Experience

By Duane A. Dyer



I am a Certified Idaho Master Naturalist from the class of 2019. Master Naturalists are required to produce a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer time each year in order to stay active.

Because of the constraints necessitated by COVID-19 volunteering in 2020 required me to work outside my comfort

zone. Some previous areas of volunteer opportunities were curtailed or restricted in what volunteers could do. The Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust helped by providing me the opportunity I needed and allowed me to increase my skill knowledge in several areas.

Starting on June 16th with new volunteer training I participated in 12 stewardship monitoring visits throughout the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust area.

Monitoring visits gave me a wonderful opportunity to see parts of Idaho I would not have been able to see otherwise. Although most properties we inspected were in the Bear River/Mink Creek area northeast of Preston and required a long drive by ourselves some were a lot closer. One aspect that would have helped me increase my social abilities and education levels would have been riding to the sites with other volunteers, most of whom were much more knowledgeable in the job. Unfortunately, COVID-19 caused this not to happen.

As a Master Naturalist and a contributor to iNaturalist I became one of the two people who helped Kayla identify plants, animals, and insects as part of the official report. This included looking for invasive and noxious weeds. I can now put on my resume that I can identify White Bryony at 100 yards as well as several other plants that I had never seen before.

Being a monitor also gave me the opportunity to see how people not only take care of the land but also their animals. How well they control noxious plants, follow certain laws, reduce overgrazing, or make sure fences are kept repaired. All part of protecting the land for the future.

And yes I did get to see a rattlesnake.

My First Year With The Land Trust

By Bill Kessler

I cannot say enough about the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trusts' staff and management. Matt, Kayla and Christian make you feel welcome and go the extra mile to make sure you are comfortable with your new surroundings. Matt just radiates his passion for the mission of SSLT and you cannot help to want to be a part of it.

The tailgate meetings always brought new and insightful information and history, be it about the days monitoring project, what was on the horizon or other projects the SSLT is involved in. Getting the chance to meet and kibitz with fellow volunteers and learning from their varied fields of expertise also added to the overall enjoyment.

The properties that we had the opportunity to monitor were just amazing, each one had its own charter and charm. By far my favorite was Barber Mink Creek, nestled at the end of a canyon, the cultivated land seamlessly faded into the existing trees and hill sides.

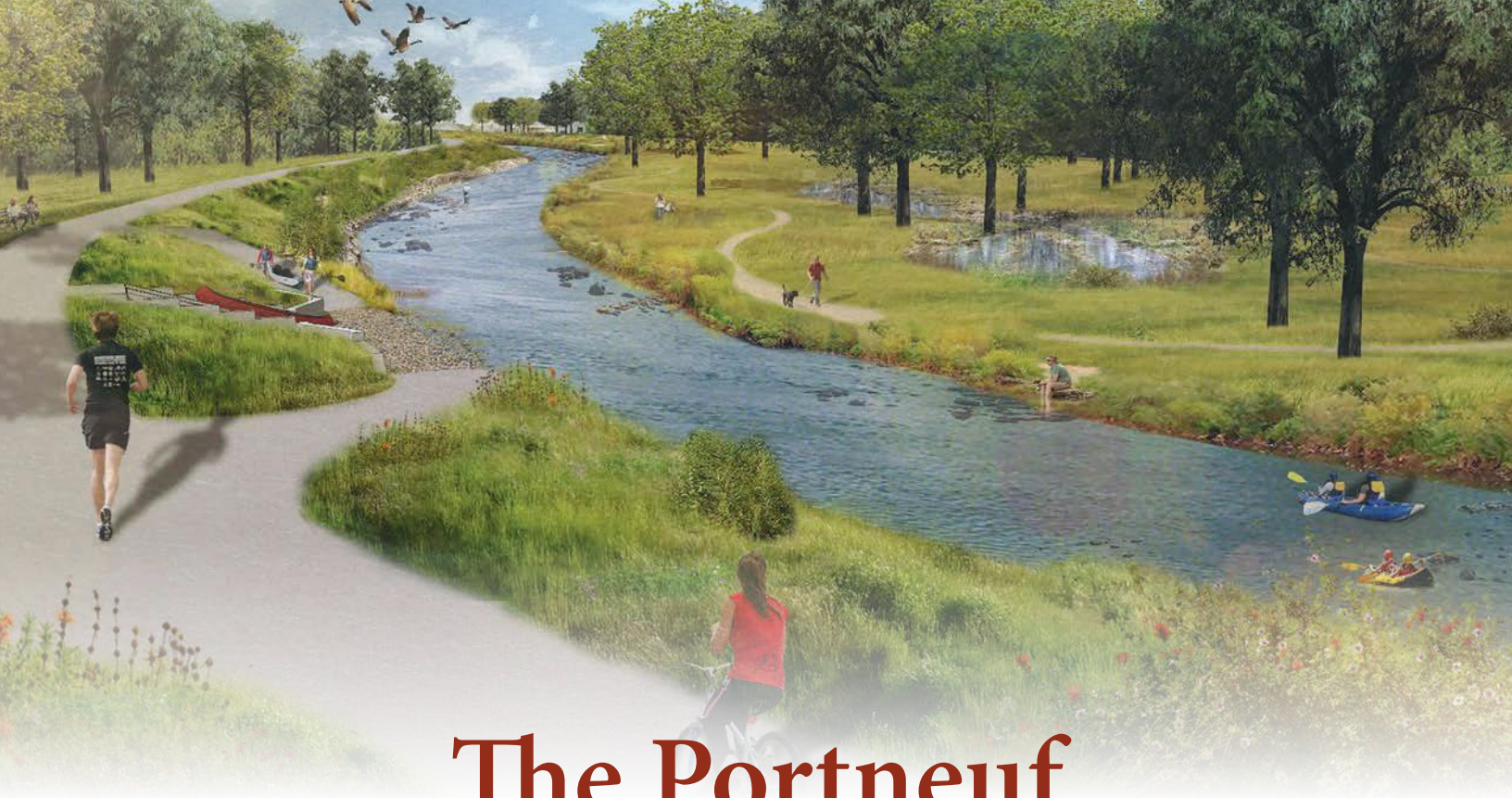
The different riparian areas again had many exciting and distinctive features and habitat. From a variety of birds and waterfowl to fresh cuttings by the beavers, Duane's rattlesnake and tracks from big game animals that had passed through earlier, and streams of pristine water, where I am sure were harboring some unbelievable sized fish.

The chance to meet some of the landowners and seeing their zest and commitment to preserving their properties and improving habitat for the native fish and wintering grounds for big game.

I am so looking forward to next year and the new adventures.



To become a volunteer, or for more information on volunteer opportunities, please contact Executive Assistant, Kayla Bass, at kayla@sagebrushlandtrust.org or by calling 208.240.6045.



The Portneuf RIVER VISION

By Greg McReynolds

The Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust is excited to partner with the City of Pocatello and the community as we develop plans and strategies to begin implementing the Portneuf River Vision. The shared community vision for the Portneuf River is to restore the river corridor with a focus on ecological, recreational, and economic opportunities while increasing community pride, connectivity, and quality of life. This fits squarely with the Land Trusts mission, “To celebrate, connect, protect and enhance natural lands and waters, wildlife habitat, working farms and ranches, community spaces and recreational lands in Southeast Idaho, now and for future generations” (SSLT Mission and Vision 2025).

Our community has an ambitious vision to recover and restore the Portneuf River through the Pocatello Valley.

By creating engaging community spaces, removing the concrete channel in Old Town, and connecting the River to its historic floodplain, we envision a community with direct access to the River and trails, a thriving recreational economy, enhanced wildlife habitat, and open space for people to connect with each other and nature.

This is our community’s most important river campaign in a generation.

The Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust will play a leadership role in coordinating local groups to raise awareness and develop fundraising

strategies for restoration efforts. The

Land Trust will work to build a diverse partnership that supports Pocatello’s vision for the Portneuf River.

For more information on the Portneuf River Vision Study, please visit <https://river.pocatello.us/>



The Bear River WATERSHED

By Matt Lucia

A CRITICAL LINK IN THE LANDSCAPE

From alpine tundra in the High Uintas Wilderness to the estuary delta of the Great Salt Lake, the 4.8 million-acre Bear River Watershed is a diverse, closed-basin landscape. The Watershed connects the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem to the Wasatch and Uinta Mountains and is the ecological link between the Northern and Southern Rocky Mountain Ecosystems.

It is a Watershed that supports more than 270 species of birds and is of continental significance for many species of migratory birds within the Central and Pacific Flyways. It is home to a variety of conservation priority species including greater sage-grouse and Bonneville cutthroat trout, and contains crucial summer habitat, winter range, and migration corridors for iconic species such as moose, elk, deer, and pronghorn.

It is a Watershed of rich heritage with native occupation dating back 12,000 years to the recent settlements of immigrants, explorers, trappers, and pioneers.



PRIVATE LANDS

At the heart of the watershed lies the 500-mile long Bear River which winds its way through portions of 3 states (Utah, Wyoming, and Idaho) before emptying into the Great Salt Lake. The River serves as the life-line for wildlife and the agricultural, recreation, and industrial economies of the region.

Over 85% of the lands immediately adjacent to the Bear River are privately owned and contain some of the most valuable wetland and wet-meadow habitat in the entire Watershed. In 2013, the US Fish & Wildlife Service recognized the important role of these private lands for wildlife and designated the entire Watershed a conservation priority area.



Photo by USFWS



Photo by Kirk Dable

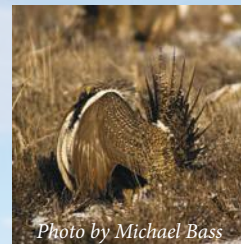


Photo by Michael Bass

CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS

We believe in the power of working together to build lasting conservation impacts on the landscape. Through collaborative public-private partnerships, we are raising capital to conserve more private land, create more conservation options for landowners, and add capacity to meet the growing needs of our rural communities. Together, we are making a difference.

Partners in the Bear River Watershed include:

Private Landowners, Bear River Land Conservancy, Intermountain West Joint Venture, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Utah Mule Deer Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Bear River Environmental Coordination Committee and others.

To learn more about the Bear River partnerships and how you can get involved, please contact Matt Lucia.

Idaho State University

SCIENCE ON CENTURY HEIGHTS

- Dr. Joshua Grinath, Assistant Professor in Community and Global Change Ecology at ISU, is conducting a study on thatch ants on the Century Heights property and in the greater Pocatello area to understand how changes in atmospheric nitrogen and climate impact plant-animal communities and ecosystem function.
- Dr. Charles Peterson, Professor of Herpetology at ISU, created an iNaturalist project for Century Heights that will help the Land Trust better understand plant and animal communities and distributions across the property. The Land Trust encourages citizen science data collection and sharing on iNaturalist.
- Student's in Idaho State University's Unmanned Aerial Systems Program are conducting drone flights with new multispectral cameras. This new technology will provide the Land Trust with a vegetation health analysis to help inform management decisions.
- Dr. Kathryn Turner, Assistant Professor in Ecological Genomics and Invasion Biology, is studying cheatgrass germination utilizing seeds from the Land Trust property and many others.

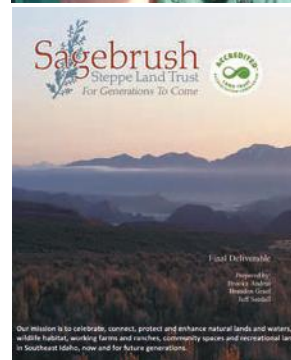
CAREER PATH INTERN PROGRAM WITH IDAHO STATE UNIVERSITY

Each year, the Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust is responsible for monitoring every property in which it holds a conservation easement to ensure that the terms of the agreements are being upheld. Over the past 2 years, Idaho State University has partnered with the Land Trust through their Career Path Internship program. This program provides qualified students with on-the-ground training and experience while providing the Land Trust with valuable capacity to monitor and steward our conservation properties. Christian Powell, our current CPI, has managed a successful monitoring season and assisted with a spring creek restoration project. Thank you to ISU, and Christian Powell!



ISU STUDENT PROJECTS

A very special thank you to Idaho State University's College of Business! Teams of highly skilled students are assisting SSLT with plans and strategies to raise awareness, grow the Land Trust's engagement within the community, and increase the organizations conservation impact on the landscape under the tutelage of Dr.'s Neil Tocher and Dan Cravens (Mission and Vision 2025). Thank you ISU!



The Story of KACKLEY SPRINGS

By Kayla Bass

Over the years, we have watched the transformation of Kackley Springs unfold. From a spring creek once disconnected and riddled with non-native Russian Olive trees, to a productive spawning tributary for Bonneville cutthroat trout, and a blank canvas ready for the next phase of restoration. Step by step, the conservation community has worked together to create a better space for wildlife and people. Public access for non-motorized use provides opportunities for fishing, hunting, bird-watching and enjoying time in nature with family or just having a beautiful and peaceful escape from the hum drum of everyday life.

Together, we have done something amazing. With everyone's hard work and dedication, Kackley Springs is well on its way to recovery! Thank you for helping us make Kackley Springs a sanctuary for wildlife and people.

We encourage everyone to take a trip out to Kackley Springs and we would love it if you could share your experiences with us. For more information on how to get to Kackley Springs, please contact kayla@sagebrushlandtrust.org.

Thank you to our Volunteers!





Protection and Restoration in Southeast Idaho: The Habitat Improvement Team

The Habitat Improvement Team (HIT) is composed of tribal, state, and federal agency representatives who are responsible for allocating the Itafos Conda, LLC Habitat Mitigation Fund to benefit wildlife in Southeastern Idaho. To date, the HIT has awarded \$1,214,746 to projects that conserve and restore wildlife habitat. These funds have leveraged an additional \$3,541,631 in grants and contributions, totaling \$4,756,377 for wildlife habitat conservation and restoration in Southeast Idaho! The bulk of this funding is for restoration work in the Upper Blackfoot watershed.

The following projects were selected for the 2020 funding cycle:

The Idaho Department of Fish and Game was funded for Phase III of their Blackfoot River Watershed Restoration Project. The major focus of this project is to encourage aspen regeneration in the uplands and improve stream habitat and ecological function to benefit wildlife and increase Yellowstone cutthroat trout production, survival, and connectivity on 6 miles of the Upper Blackfoot River.

Trout Unlimited was funded to restore 5.4 miles of North Fork Tincup Creek using process-based restoration techniques. The project will encourage beaver colonization to help improve water quality, increase habitat complexity, store and scour sediment, and re-connect the stream to its floodplain to benefit the

riparian and stream ecosystem and the wildlife species that inhabit them, including Yellowstone cutthroat trout.

The USDA Forest Service was awarded funds for two aspen regeneration projects to improve wildlife habitat diversity. Encroaching conifers in and around existing aspen stands will be removed through mechanical and prescribed burns that will open up the forest floor for aspen expansion.

Trout Unlimited was funded to improve aquatic resources on lower Stauffer Creek to benefit resident and migratory Bonneville cutthroat trout and other species dependent on aquatic and riparian habitat. Aquatic improvements will focus on restoring fish passage and stream connectivity in conjunction with restoring stream channel, floodplain, and wet meadow condition and function.

Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust was awarded funds to help with acquisition and long-term monitoring for a 943-acre perpetual conservation easement on private land that borders public lands managed by BLM and the US Forest Service. Conservation easements are legal documents that remove development rights on a property forever. Removing the development rights from this property ensures the protection of important transition and winter range habitat for mule deer and elk for generations to come.



Beaver in WORKING LANDSCAPES

By Mike Larkin

When we think of beaver, we usually think of a beaver dam with a pond of water behind it, gnawed and damaged trees nearby. We think of blocked irrigation canals and plugged road culverts causing floods in unwanted places. Recently, however, we are starting to see and think of beavers as ecosystem engineers, working to heal degraded streams and keep water in local landscapes.

About 200 years ago, beaver inhabited nearly every watershed in Idaho and are believed to have stored more water than all of Idaho's current reservoirs combined in ponds and underground floodplains. Think of a floodplain as an underground pond that stores and slowly releases water back into the stream channel over time. Beaver dams back up water, giving it time to seep through the soil and fill these underground ponds. This no small feat of engineering!

This slow release of water creates a healthy stream that provides clean and cool water to support native fish populations like cutthroat trout. It also supports green meadows throughout the year, providing forage for livestock and wildlife species. Though it is true that beaver ponds breed large populations of insects, they also support natural predators like bats, birds, and fish whom feed on these critters.

Living with beavers can be a challenge. They will cut down your favorite apple tree, flood a road, and cause other problems, but we as human beings have come up with a variety of solutions. Given a chance, beavers

are good neighbors, providing property owners with cleaner, cooler and more abundant water, improved late summer stream flows, more abundant plant growth, plus the benefits of watching one of nature's hardest working engineers.

Myth:

Beaver ponds are a source of fine sediment.

Fact:

Beaver ponds retain significant amounts of fine sediments. Research has found that beaver dams store between 46 and 8,502 cubic yards of sediment.



For more information on beaver ecology, please visit <https://watershedguardians.org>



Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable organization incorporated in 2004, and a “qualified organization” within the meaning of section 170(h)(3) of the IRS Code. Federal Tax Identification Number: 82-6092501.

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Auction & Membership Drive To Replace Holiday Event

DATES: NOVEMBER 30TH – DECEMBER 14TH

For more information, please visit our website (<https://sagebrushlandtrust.org/>)

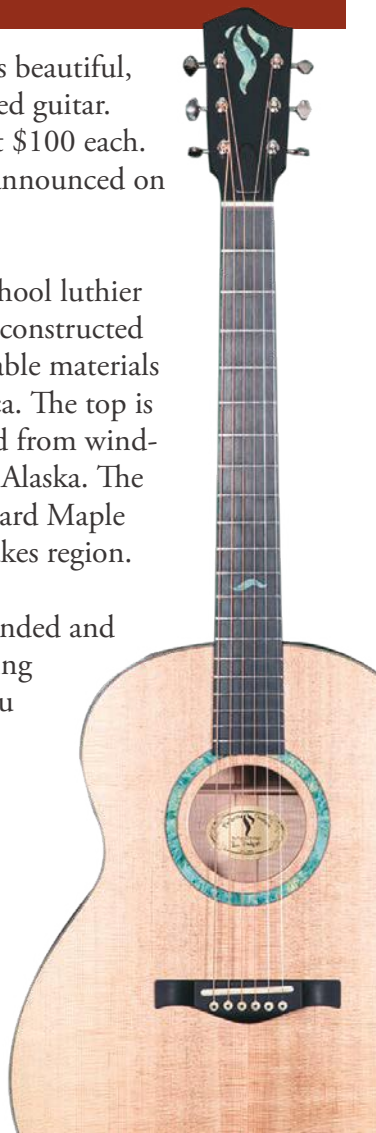
Only Two More Tickets Left!

Buy a chance to win this beautiful, brand new, hand-crafted guitar. We are selling 20 tickets at \$100 each. The lucky winner will be announced on December 14, 2020.

Handmade by Galloup School luthier Ben Padgett, this guitar is constructed from salvaged and sustainable materials all native to North America. The top is old-growth spruce salvaged from wind-fallen trees in Whale Pass, Alaska. The back and sides are curly Hard Maple sourced from the Great Lakes region.

The sound is full, well-rounded and deep – perfect for serenading someone or some place you love.

The proceeds from this raffle will help conserve land in southeastern Idaho. To purchase a ticket, email babette@sagebrushlandtrust.org



Into The Junipers

Buy a chance to win this stunning painting of Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust's Century Heights property. We are selling 12 tickets at \$50 each. The lucky winner will be announced December 14, 2020.

'Into the Junipers' was created by Pocatello artist, and SSLT Artist in Residence, Tim Norton. The painting is oil based on canvas with dimensions of 19.5" X 25".

The proceeds from this raffle will help conserve land in Southeastern Idaho. To purchase a ticket, email babette@sagebrushlandtrust.org