



The Mountain Meadow

A quarterly publication from the
Sublette County Conservation District



Saddling up the ponies and driving home the cattle and field season!!!

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- UW Extension Ag. & Natural Resources Extension Educator

SCCD is hiring 1 position! Head over to our website for job descriptions and application details.

"By working with local people who understand local problems, the best conservation measures can be accomplished."

What We've Been Up To

From the District Manager's Chair

Mike Henn, District Manager



Fall has arrived and snow is in the air. I was up monitoring in the Winds last week and we had everything from rain to snow fall on us. Everyone is getting the last of their summer projects finished up and hopefully planning some hunting or fun activities in our County prior to Old Man Winter shutting down those activities until next spring.

Here at the District, we have been busy working with landowners and partners to get the last of our inventories and projects done. We have been working on some fun projects this summer including a virtual fence pilot project that you will read about later in this newsletter. We are also working on some low-tech mesic structures that you have read about in the previous newsletters and finishing up a large grant we received to implement them. Our water sampling program is working on getting a summary of all our data into a report that will show and talk about trend over the life of the sampling program. Our trail crew cleared over 70 miles of trail this summer associated with the blowdown in the Wind River mountains.

If there is anything you need regarding natural resources associated with your property, feel free to call our team (307-367-2364) and we will do our best to assist you with getting conservation on the ground.



NRCS Update

Bale Grazing

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist



Photo Credit: saskatchewan.ca

Want to save labor feeding in the winter? Make more time for other activities without hiring additional help? Have a site in your pastures that is not productive? Bale Grazing may be a feeding practice you can try. Bale grazing is placing a certain number of bales out in a field at one time and unwrapping them for a cattle buffet. Bales are usually placed, with enough for your herd, every 3 days. Labor and time are saved by not unrolling the bales and not feeding every day. While there may be some additional hay used in this method, producers have cited the increased labor and time savings as far outweighing this concern. Bales are placed at least 30' apart in order to allow for animals to surround each bale. The best spot to put these is in places you would like to improve your hay field – the more marginal soils or places where you would like to see improvement in production or composition. Bale grazing concentrates increased residual and concentrates manure and urine which can eventually increase soil organic matter in these areas. Soil Health principles apply here – if the soil is in poor condition, it will take longer to improve so don't give up after 1 or 2 seasons. While some areas where the bale sat may look barren the next year, other areas will show a marked increase in yield. In Western Montana, three producers have tried these methods after hearing about it at soil health workshops. What they have found is that once people have tried it, they usually like it and continue the practice.

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In summary the benefits of bale grazing include:

- Reduced labor and time
- Building Organic Matter in the Soil which increases soil health
- Increased yield around the bale feeding sites
- Improve areas of low productivity or vegetative composition
- Livestock temperament can improve (reduction on fence pressure)

While initially, cattle may eat more, they acclimate quickly and then eat the same forage content they would if you rolled out a bale to them.

Drawbacks can include:

- Potential for slightly more hay loss
- Weed encroachment in areas of bale grazing
- If hay is weedy, would not recommend using that type in this circumstance.

This is not a practice recommended for feeding on native rangeland, unless you have a poor site that has nothing else to offer such as a rabbitbrush area. Another twist on this is to leave the bales in the field, thereby reducing fuel in transporting them off the field to bring back on again. You would need to use electric fence to just provide the bales you need (depending on the size of your field) and then change the fence in order for them to access the next 3 days worth of feed. Now, we could find fault in this right away with aftermath grazing or our migrating ungulates tearing down fences but you could start small with just a part of a field or a small place to experiment. I always think starting small is a good way to try things out that way you aren't all in if it isn't a good fit for your place. I know of some people that are doing windrow grazing – they aren't even putting their hay in a bale! Saves a lot on fuel and tractors and they select an area where they can best do this, it's not on all their ground, just the piece that works for them.



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What's the harm in trying it? You might gain 4 days a week when you don't have to feed every morning! This might be worth a trial to evaluate what you might be able to accomplish with that extra time in your week.

<https://www.beefmagazine.com/beef/bale-grazing-option-easier-winter-feeding>

<https://www.beefresearch.ca/blog/beat-costs-and-boost-yields-with-bale-grazing/>

<https://jeffersonhub.com/bale-grazing-transform-your-landscape-during-winter-feeding/>

Thanks for Montana NRCS for hosting a virtual bale grazing workshop where I learned more about this technique! I also know of at least one operator in this area who is trying it locally.

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist, Pinedale NRCS Field Office



**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Virtual Fencing

Coming Soon to Sublette!

Shari Meeks, Range Program Manager

Conservation innovation at its finest. Virtual fencing has been an up-and-coming technology for at least 10 years. Australia has collared thousands of livestock and now the United States has started to take hold of this for our livestock management as well. Basically, this technology can help livestock managers proactively manage animal health, optimize grazing management in large grazing systems, and reduce overall animal management costs. The potential benefits of this technology are becoming apparent for those who have tried this technology in Colorado and Montana. That's why we are so excited to bring a pilot project for virtual fencing to Sublette County!

SCCD, BLM, WGFD, and 2 Sublette County landowners have partnered together to test out this new technology. This pilot project will collar 550 head of mother cows this winter. Training of the livestock will take place at "home" until the cattle are moved to their summer pastures. These pastures are large and without fences, perfect for testing of the virtual fences for livestock management. Stay in touch as we learn about virtual fencing on the ground right here in Sublette County!

If you are considering virtual fencing for your own property, consider these resources for more information:

<https://eaglecountycd.com/virtual-fencing>

<https://vence.io/>

<https://www.agripulse.com/articles/16544-virtual-fencing-allows-producers-flexibility-for-cattle-grazing>

<http://coloradosun.com/2022/09/21/virtual-fencing-bureau-of-land-management-colorado/>



SCCD's Newest Hire!

Keller Hyde, Rangeland Technician



Hello everyone, my name is Keller Hyde and I am originally from Blackfoot, Idaho. I am enthusiastic to join SCCD as a Range Specialist, explore Sublette County a little more in depth, build positive relationships with landowners, and help in whatever way I can to allow rangelands to flourish. I am currently finishing up my last year of my bachelor's degree at Brigham Young University-Idaho. I expect to graduate with a degree in Range, Wildlife, and Fisheries Management with an emphasis in Range.

I started my natural resource management career with an internship for the Eureka County Conservation District in Eureka, Nevada doing repeat-photo monitoring of rangelands after some clearcutting of Pinyon and Juniper trees on private property. I had a great experience working with local landowners, and it gave me a desire to work on a more local level in my field of work. This led me to seeking out another job with a county conservation district. When deciding where to apply, Sublette County immediately came to mind as an ideal location since I had spent time in Pinedale each summer tagging along with family for various ranching responsibilities. I called the SCCD several times asking about possible summer opportunities, which led to my involvement on a trail crew cleaning trails throughout the Wind River Mountain Range. I was also eager to accept opportunities to help in whatever way I could for the District, which led to some range management practices and meeting and working with several landowners and federal agencies.

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This past summer has confirmed my views that I enjoy working at a local level where I can work with landowners that I can become well acquainted with and where I feel I can support my community. The Sublette County Conservation District provides those exact opportunities and I jumped at the offer to continue working for the District while at school and staying for good after obtaining my degree. I look forward to establishing myself in

such a great community and being involved in what SCCD has to offer.



9 Animal Myths That Might Surprise You

Melanie Purcell, Wildlife & Habitat Program Manager

It's true that animals are amazing in an infinite number of ways! With hummingbirds flying nonstop for 1,300 miles to pronghorn antelope running up to 60 mph to beavers remaining underwater for 15 minutes without coming up for air, there is undoubtedly no shortage of impressive accounts. But sometimes things get exaggerated or are simply just not true. Let's explore a few myths that might leave you scratching your head!

MYTH: Birds will abandon fallen nestlings touched by humans.

How many times have you heard this? But have you ever witnessed it? Birds have a poor sense of smell (vultures are one exception), thus parents don't recognize their babies by smell, nor do they recognize human smell. However, there are a couple key things to keep in mind when finding a baby bird on the ground. If the bird has few or no feathers, you may replace it in the nest if it's safe to do so, or you can call a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. If the nestling already has most of its feathers, it's best to simply leave it alone as the bird is probably learning to fly. On the other hand, human disturbance of a nesting site can certainly cause abandonment so use caution if you want these birds to come back next year.

MYTH: Touching a frog or toad will give you warts.

I remember my grandma telling me this one time and again! ...maybe she just got tired of me bringing home random animals! Although many frogs and toads have bumps on their skin that look like warts, warts are caused by a human virus. While these wartlike bumps are not contagious, the bumps behind a toad's ears, known as the parotoid glands, can be dangerous. These glands contain a nasty poison meant to irritate the mouths of predators, which can also irritate the skin of humans.



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MYTH: Bats are not all that important, and they all have rabies.

While it's true that bats can carry rabies, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, only 5-6% of bats captured for testing have rabies. As the only flying mammal, bats have been sensationalized to be blood-sucking beasts, yet these important pollinators are responsible for dispersing seeds for over 300 plant species including bananas and avocados. And they act as a natural pest control for plants by chowing down on thousands of insects each night (including those pesky mosquitoes!).

MYTH: Bears hibernate.

What do you mean bears don't hibernate? After all, we've all learned this in school from an early age. They certainly den up each fall and hibernate through the winter, right? In true hibernation an animal lowers its body temperature to nearly match the outside environment all winter long, only to emerge in the spring. Bears enter into what is known as torpor, which involves inactivity along with a short-term reduction in body temperature. Bears are still able to respond to external threats if necessary, so be sure not to poke that sleeping bear!

MYTH: You can charm a snake with music.

We've all seen this, especially if you grew up watching weekend morning cartoons, so that cobra must certainly be hypnotized by that snake charmer playing a wind instrument! Well, without ears snakes are unable to hear music or sounds. Instead, they pick up on vibrations, which is an adaptation that warns them of danger and helps them locate prey.



MYTH: Earwigs will crawl into your ear.

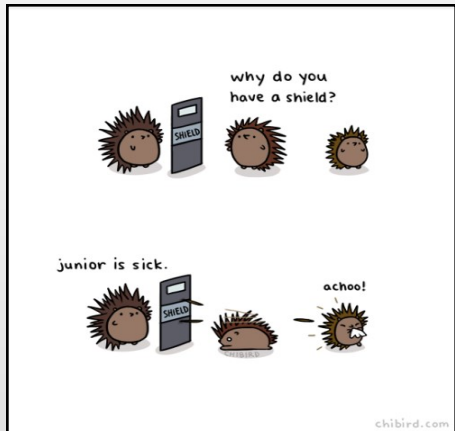
Ok, earwigs... just creepy! These strange little creatures are known to tuck into small, usually moist spaces during the day, but they do not make a habit of hanging out in people's ears. Earwigs are nocturnal feeding insects with aggressive-looking pincers extending from its abdomen, or entomologists might say the ear-like appearance of its hindwings, suggesting that's where the name comes from.

MYTH: Owls can rotate their heads 360 degrees.

If your head is spinning in circles, maybe you've watched *The Exorcist* one too many times. Owls' necks are hidden by a thick layer of feathers, but they do still have necks. Nonetheless, they are extremely mobile necks, that come close to full circle, maxing out at 270 degrees in both directions (that's still $\frac{3}{4}$ of a circle!).

MYTH: Porcupines will shoot their quills at you.

This always produces the image of a porcupine hunkered down ready to shoot – then bang! – quills go projecting through the air puncturing its target. Yes, porcupine quills can detach from their body, but you must be in direct contact with the porcupine to get the painful quills stuck in your skin. I guess those curious dogs we have shouldn't go smelling everything in sight.



MYTH: Spiders come up through the drains and pipes.

There's nothing worse than finding a spider in your shower tub, so it must have come up through the drain. Come to find out spiders actually get stuck on smooth surfaces common to sinks and tubs after they have come down from a wall or ceiling. While spiders give us that eerie feeling, they are quite important for managing pests and generally avoid contact with us.

As peculiar as the natural world is at times, there you have it – 9 myths debunked! How many did you think were true? As a friendly reminder, be careful around wildlife and don't handle them unless it's absolutely necessary.

Sondes Monitor Water Quality Even When No One is Around

Anna Welsh, Range Specialist

There are no days off when it comes to water quality and SCCD makes sure to monitor the watersheds in Sublette County even when the staff aren't on the clock. But when the staff aren't working, who, or what is? It's called a Sonde and there are several varieties of them.

The word sonde originates from French meaning "sounding-line." Today, the word is used to describe any type of device that transmits data from an "inaccessible" location. For SCCD, that location is underwater.

The Conservation District uses eight of these devices to collect data every fifteen minutes for six months straight. They are strategically placed in rivers throughout the county. SCCD uses both a larger and a smaller model Sonde. The larger models have four probes that measure conductivity/temperature, pH, turbidity and dissolved oxygen. The smaller one's measure conductivity and temperature.



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And while they are able to collect this data 24/7, they can't do it entirely alone. From April through November the devices are deployed, SCCD staff visit each site every two weeks to download the collected data and perform routine maintenance. This maintenance includes cleaning the Sonde and the heavy plates used to anchor it in the water, as well as calibrating the sensors to keep the probes measuring as accurately as possible.



Cleaning and calibration are the only time these robotic workers ever get a break when deployed. Otherwise, they are constantly storing data that SCCD uses to make sure that the water running in and out of Sublette County is as healthy as it can be.



Stop Moosing Around!

Get the biggest bang for your buck with these tips!

Traci Berg, Administrative Coordinator



Its that crazy time of year when the plants of the county make the transition from growing to dormant. The aspens and cottonwoods in the area will soon start changing colors and losing their leaves. But before the conifers of the

area are full of snow there are still pests we need to be on the watch for!

I'm not referring to pesky insects but instead the hooved variety. Since joining the team here at the Sublette County Conservation District and taking on running the Seedling Tree Program, the biggest question asked is "how do I keep the critters from eating my seedlings?" Ungulates migrating from and to their summer and winter range areas are very hard on trees. As it is either crunch time for them to put on as much fat as they can before the snow covers everything, or spring where they have depleted all their fat reserves. Between traveling deer and pronghorn to year round resident moose it can feel kind of hopeless when it comes to protecting adolescent trees. See a list of 7 options to protect your seedlings from devastation on the next page.

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1. Build a mesh fence around trees. This is often the most effective method.

2. Motion detector sprinklers. This method is harmless to ungulates and can also do some watering! The biggest negative to this method is that it can be costly.

3. Plant ungulate resistant plants. Being prey animals they have a very sensitive sense of smell that can be used against them. This method isn't as effective as the ones mentioned previously.

4. Any and all trees, shrubs, plants that produce fruit or veggies should be harvested as soon as possible. Getting rid of the temptation can help turn them onto finding food elsewhere.

5. Trimming tall grasses and bushes. Again these are prey animals and getting rid of areas of hiding can detour them from entering your yard if hiding places are scarce.

6. Tall hedging or fencing around the property. These species don't enter areas they can't see through in most cases.

7. Lastly try placing items in gardens/around trees that make noises. Prey animals don't usually enter areas where hearing potential threats is made a challenge.



Also as a reminder SCCD's seedling tree sales will open November 1st for seedling orders for spring 2023. Please order online (sublettedcd.com) or stop by the office at 217 Country Club Lane in Pinedale! We are always available for help or questions and can be reached at (307)367-2364.

Sublette County Welcomes

Dagan Montgomery



Hello, my name is Dagan Montgomery. On August 29th, I started as the University of Wyoming's new Ag. and Natural Resources Extension Educator for Sublette County. I am very excited to be here in Sublette County working with the great producers in the area. I grew up on a small ranch in central Kentucky, and my family comes from west Texas, where my grandfather and

great-grandfather managed larger ranches. I have always cared deeply for agriculture and ranching in particular. I got my Bachelor's in Animal Science and a second B.S in Equine Science from the University of Kentucky. I recently received my Master's in Animal Science from Oklahoma State University, where I focused on ruminant nutrition, specifically cow-calf nutrition, on native range grasses. I have interned on several ranches in Montana and Florida, where I gained more experience working and managing cattle on a larger scale than I was able to back home in Kentucky.



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I hope to be able to use my education and experience to help producers in the county, but most importantly, I plan to continue gaining experience from the people that know the area best. Previously, the extension educator was a range-focused position. I will still help with any range matters, but now I will cover anything and everything agriculture-related, from range management and livestock nutrition to horticulture issues and farming. Lately, I have been helping collect hay and soil samples for testing, and I'm eager to continue helping the ranchers, farmers, and other community members of Sublette County as much as I can!

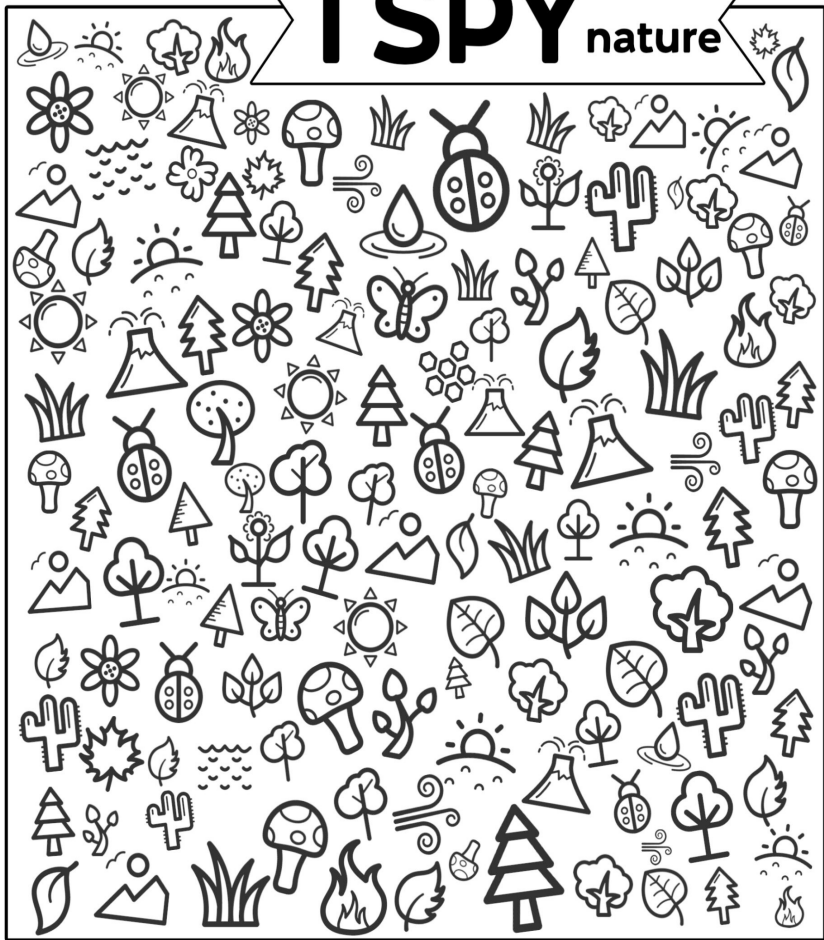
Please reach out for any agriculture-related questions you may have or any time you need a hand! I can be reached at (307) 367-4380 or my email dmontgo8@uwyo.edu. You can also stop by the office on Highway 191 anytime from 8 to 5, Monday through Friday. On October 18th, we will have an open house here at the office for anyone interested in learning more about extension in Sublette County. Feel free to stop by anytime from 5 pm to 7:30. Coffee and snacks will be provided! I look forward to continuing to build relationships with the producers in Sublette County as I gain more insight into this wonderful area.



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Kid's Corner

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Who Are We?

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Darrell Walker-Vice Chairman

Dave Pape-Sec/Treasurer

Meghann Smith

Milford Lockwood

Sublette County Conservation District Staff

Michael Henn, District Manager

Traci Berg, Administrative Coordinator

Melanie Purcell, Wildlife & Habitat Program Manager

Shari Meeks, Range Program Manager

Anna Welsh, Range Specialist

Drew Keller, Natural Resource Technician, Senior

Keller Hyde, Rangeland Technician

Partners: USDA / NRCS Staff

Jennifer Hayward, District Conservationist

Shirleena King, Administrative Assistant

Karen Clause, Multi-County Range Management Specialist

Bryan Christensen, Ecological Site Specialist

Dillon Gray, Autumn Boxum, Taylor Kepley, Jenna Platt-Soil Survey Team

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's Target Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. The USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider, Employer and Lender.



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