



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
National Elk Refuge

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43RD ANNUAL ANTLER AUCTION HELD IN JACKSON, WYOMING

The 43rd annual Boy Scout Elk Antler Auction was held in Jackson, Wyoming on Saturday, May 22, the premier ElkFest weekend event that showcases shed antlers collected from the National Elk Refuge. The antler auction takes place each year on the Saturday before Memorial Day weekend.

This year, 5,564 pounds of antlers were sold at the auction, at an average price of \$8.12 per pound. "Both those numbers were down this year," explained Refuge Spokesperson Lori Iverson. "Our 10-year average is 8,302 pounds of antlers selling for \$9.59 per pound." The combination of fewer antlers and a lower average price per pound brought down the auction total dollars this year, with Saturday's sale bringing in \$46,272, or 42% below the 10-year average. "In 2009, the average price was \$8.52 per pound, so the bids this year were only down by about 5%," Iverson said. "We just had fewer antlers to offer." The number of antlers available for sale this past weekend was not the lowest in recent history; in 2007, only 5,379 pounds were sold at the auction.

The lower number of antlers collected this year is likely due to a milder winter that kept elk more dispersed. As many as 10% of radio collared elk that typically winter on the National Elk Refuge spent the season in other areas, including adjacent Federal and private lands. Also, spring conditions led to a number of bulls leaving the Refuge prior to dropping their antlers, an annual cycle that typically begins in early March and continues throughout May. "We just weren't finding the number of antlers we normally do on or adjacent to the areas where we distribute supplemental feed in the winter," Iverson said. "We had to concentrate our efforts further to the north this year."

The majority of proceeds from the auction (80%) are donated to the National Elk Refuge, which maintains approximately 25,000 acres as winter range for the Jackson Elk Herd. The funding is used for habitat enhancement projects on the Refuge such as seeding, irrigating, and purchasing necessary equipment to carry out the work. The remaining 20% of the proceeds from the auction goes to the Jackson District Scouts to pay for their annual dues and expenses. Last year, the Scouts and their leaders volunteered 1,847 hours to prepare for and conduct the sale.

Next year's antler auction is set for Saturday, May 21. However, single antlers are available for sale throughout the year at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center, located at 532 North Cache Street in Jackson.