

Elk ivory, tumble weeds, chipmunk, habitat piles, buck and rails

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By Jeff Clarke



More than an inch of rain soaked the ranch this week. Rain morphed to snow above 5,000 feet.





I almost missed this sneaky old gal who was bedded a few yards from the Top House.





Every year, the elk traverse the steep river banks and cause great disturbance; invasive weeds fill the slopes as a result.





I approached this wild rice patch like a ninja in hopes to photograph feeding ducks. As soon as I determined that the patch was duck-free, 12 mallards burst from its cover.







I watched this chipmunk feed on what I thought was a plant root. Upon closer inspection, dried earthworm was on the menu!



We erected this buck and rail fence around a cluster of aspens and snowberries three years ago. The plants within thrived and filled the enclosure. Last week a tree fell on the fence and created a pile of debris. We decided to leave the fence and tree where they lay. The fence served its purpose and is now part of a habitat pile.





An aspen sucker grows in the path of next spring's river channel.





Coyotes traversed through a quarter mile of beaver activity without touching the ground; notice their sandy paw marks on the beaver laid trees.





The Northern Floodplain only has a few young pines. Most saplings that have managed to survive are browsed and show signs of ungulate rub. We will continue to protect these vulnerable trees!





A hunter wounded this elk across the river and it perished in the North Floodplain; scavengers gorged.







An elk's canines are called ivories. It's believed that elk ancestors had much longer ivories that they used for battle.



Last winter I made piles of old fenceposts all over the landscape. Every pile has new residents this year.





This chipmunk posed for a photo on its new fencepost pile home.





The horses finally realized that they're not welcome on the lower part of the ranch.





Buck and rail fences also serve as tumbleweed stoppers.

