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Sage Grouse Initiative teams with area ranches

By ANDY ROCKELMAN

DAILY PRESS WRITER

CRAIG — The old saying goes that birds of a feather flock together, and this week, Northwest Colorado saw an increase in people from all walks of life coming together toward a shared goal.

The Sage Grouse Initiative Tour, which went through Jackson, Grand and Routt counties earlier in the week, came to Moffat on Tuesday with visits to ranches across the county. The tour, scheduled to pass through Rio Blanco County today, provided people an idea of what kind of natural habitat the wildlife of the area calls home, namely the sage grouse.

The bird was identified by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 2010 as "warranted

but precluded" for endangered status, with another review in 2015. Thus began the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Sage Grouse Initiative across the Western states, an effort that has gained support from numerous agencies whose interests in helping preserve nature coincide.

The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust was instrumental in bringing together representatives from state and local groups like the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Colorado Parks and Wildlife and more to observe CCALT's similar efforts in keeping the landscape from changing.

As part of a conservation project with Cross Mountain Ranch, located near Maybell and

Dinosaur National Monument, CCALT was able to partner with the Sage Grouse Initiative in a way that will offer protection to the birds in question as well as the safeguarding of the historic ranch whose land they call home.

Cross Mountain Ranch consists of nearly 26,000 acres, and a conservation easement would run about \$22 million. CCALT seeks to raise an additional \$15 million to make sure this happens, having been able to secure a large portion already from funds provided for the Sage Grouse Initiative as part of the NRCS Farm Bill.

Nearby conservation easements with Tuttle Ranch and Crooked Wash leave the effort with a total acreage of 50,000.

"It's been able to allow us to

See GROUSE on page 4



ANDY ROCKELMAN/DAILY PRESS

RANCHER REX TUTTLE POINTS OUT the geographical features of Cedar Springs Draw to a crowd during the Sage Grouse Initiative Tour on Tuesday afternoon. The event highlighted areas where the birds reside within Moffat County.



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CORRECTION: In Monday's paper it incorrectly stated that the dog rally was the first at the fair. But it has been taking place at the fair since the '70s.

WEATHER



Afternoon storms. High of 78.

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lies in a man's determination. /

- Tommy Lasorda



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■ When: Aug. 17

■ Time: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

■ Where: The Memorial Hospital Medical Clinic, 785 Russell St.

■ Cost: Free

■ Contact: 970-824-9411

Homeschool Association kickoff event is Friday

The Northwest Colorado Homeschool Association will be having a kickoff the school year event at 6 p.m. Friday at 900 Johnson Road. The event is open to members as well anyone interested in homeschooling. For more information, call 970-824-6911.

LOTTERY numbers

East-5:

(Aug. 6) 2-3-5-20-26

Pick 3:

(Aug. 6) 1-4-9

Lotto:

(Aug. 3) 1-5-25-32-35-39

Powerball:

(Aug. 3) 21-24-36-42-45, 15

Mega Millions:

(Aug. 6) 1-11-16-51-55, 41, 3

GROUSE: 2K male birds visit

FROM PAGE 1

think a little bit bigger than your typical conservation easement would do," CCALT Deputy Director Erik Glenn said. "It's currently the single biggest conservation project in the United States for sage grouse habitat."

Cross Mountain Ranch originally was purchased by Ronald Boeddeker in 1992. After he passed away three years ago, his family took over the operation. Boeddeker's daughter Cary Krukowski went on the tour Tuesday to get a greater view of the property that even she hadn't seen in its entirety.

"This is a way for us to preserve the ranch so it's easier to pass down to future generations with the original intent my father had," she said. "It's getting increasingly harder to own ranches, so we have to come up with alternative ways."

About 2,000 male sage grouse frequent Northwest Colorado as estimated from observing their mating grounds, or leks.

This is the largest population of the birds within the state, according to Brian Holmes, of Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

"It's not like the way it was when some of the older ranchers were young and they saw thousands and thousands of them," he said. "This project they've got going now is a great financial incentive to make sure they can preserve the habitat in the condition it's in."

Sasha Nelson, field organizer for Conservation Colorado, also was part of the group, which toured the Cross Mountain Ranch following a trip to ranches in the northern part of Moffat County.

"I think it's really inspiring, seeing all these private landowners with all the agencies and foundations to create projects that are not only good for sage grouse but also good for ranching," she said. "We hear so many bad things about how protecting sage grouse will change how we do everything, but today it's just a win-win."

8/8 ACTIVITIES

Do it Downtown Thursdays

EVERY THURSDAY FROM 4 P.M. - 7 P.M.

• CARELLIS SPECIAL:

\$2 off any Large Pizza or Large Stromboli

• SIDEWALK SPECIAL: Buy 1 burger, get one 50% off!

• GINO'S: Live Music 6-8, drink & appetizer specials

FARMER'S MARKET -Veggies -Crafts