

Subscribe

News

Resources

Search



Home

About Us

Building Partnerships

Strengthening Science

Conserving Habitat

Finding Funding

Also in this issue

Latest Blog Entries

- ▶ [2014 IWJV Conservation Awards Call for Nominations](#)
- ▶ [2014 Farm Bill's Sodsaver Provision a Win for Sage Grouse & Ranching](#)
- ▶ [2014 Farm Bill Makes Its Way to the President for Signature](#)
- ▶ [Sagebrush Birds and Management Workshops](#)
- ▶ [Where Did the Curlew Go? Study Reports Difference in Migratory Patterns](#)
- ▶ [Colorado Ranch Manager Ray Owens Named Wildlife Landowner of the Year](#)
- ▶ [Sage Steppe Partner Forum, Webinar Series](#)
- ▶ [WAFWA Chief Financial Officer Job Announcement](#)
- ▶ [Utah State University's Wetland Gazette](#)
- ▶ [Job Alert: SGI Seeking Range and Wildlife Conservationist in MT](#)
- ▶ [USDA Extends Deadline for Conservation Stewardship Applications](#)
- ▶ [Managing Wet Areas on Agricultural Lands](#)
- ▶ [\\$6 Million Available to Protect Working Lands in California](#)
- ▶ [Garcia Ranch Conservation Easement Completed](#)
- ▶ [Visit the Newly Updated Avian Knowledge Network Webpage](#)
- ▶ [Changes in Capacity Grants Program](#)

Home / Coyte Ranch Conservation Easement, Achievement for Wetlands Conservation and Ranching

Coyte Ranch Conservation Easement, Achievement for Wetlands Conservation and Ranching

By Dave Smith, IWJV Coordinator



Photo courtesy of CCALT

December 17, 2013 (North Park, Colorado) - On a raw spring day in 2010, Josh Vest, IWJV Science Coordinator, and I helped staff of the Ducks Unlimited (DU), Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT), The Nature Conservancy, and other JV partners carry out a North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) site visit to review DU's proposed *North Park Wetlands Conservation Partnership* project.

The proposal sat squarely on the "bubble" between being funded or not, primarily due to the fact that North Park, a high-elevation mountain valley in northern Colorado, was an unknown outpost in the world of continental migratory bird conservation. The wildlife values of this intact landscape hadn't been broadcast much beyond a small circle of wildlife community in Colorado and the Intermountain West, yet the NAWCA proposal was being evaluated against projects from the Atlantic Coast, Mississippi Alluvial Valley, and other

universally appreciated wetland landscapes. To their credit, NAWCA Council Staff wanted to know more about this intriguing place and the unlikely set of allies collaborating to conserve the landscape.

Winter hadn't quite let loose of its grip on North Park but the blue skies cast a spectacular light on its intact wetland and sagebrush complexes. We toured around all day in the howling wind, stopping at each project site to explain the values to waterfowl and other wetland birds, the threats and challenges of keeping North Park intact for future generations, and the value of uncommon partnerships in leveraging funding and working at a scale that matters. Late in the day we made our way into the Coyte Ranch with the intent of circling around the wet meadows proposed for a perpetual conservation easement. The loop was short-stopped by the spectacle of Grizzly Creek overflowing its banks. Snowmelt flooding, a collage of wetland birds, and the sinking sun put an exclamation point on a fine day. That particular episode shaped my thinking about wetlands conservation in the Intermountain West as much as anything in seven years as IWJV Coordinator.

DU's NAWCA grant was subsequently approved, setting in motion the real work of completing the conservation easement and other projects. Yesterday, I got some good news from our friends, Chris West and Carolyn Aspelin of CCALT, about the closing of the Coyte Ranch easement. I can't say it any better than Chris so here's his account of an important benchmark in the conservation of key Intermountain West wetlands:

"I thought that each of you would like to see today's success from North Park. This (Coyte Ranch) project has been quite the adventure for everyone, and in the end it is a tribute to the vision of the late Dave Meyring. Dave saw the value of conservation in preserving working ranches in places like North Park. He also saw the value in partnering with wildlife interests to meet common goals. Unfortunately Dave Meyring never got to see his vision completed. After his tragic death in a horse accident in early 2009, his son Coy took the reins of the ranch, and his father's conservation vision.

"One of my favorite days in this business came in 2010 when we brought IWJV and NAWCA reviewers to the Coyte Ranch on a cold day in mid-May. Grizzly Creek, which crosses the ranch for about two miles, was overflowing its banks into the hay meadows that are the heart of the ranch. I distinctly recall sitting on the bluff overlooking the creek with about a dozen wildlife biologists, each of whom kept saying "this is what it is all about". I was excited about the water naturally

- ▶ [Progressing Towards a Farm Bill](#)
- ▶ [Regal \(Almost\) Eagle of the Grasslands: Ferruginous Hawk](#)
- ▶ [Applications for Conservation Stewardship Program Due Jan. 17](#)
- ▶ [Job Alert: Sage Grouse Initiative Seeking Rangeland Ecologist in Utah](#)
- ▶ [Ranching Rebooted: At Matador Ranch, what's good for the prairie is good for its people](#)
- ▶ [Job Alert: Ducks Unlimited Hiring Regional Biologist](#)
- ▶ [Did you see the IWJV Fall E-Newsletter?](#)
- ▶ ["Mark a Mile" Campaign Launched in Pinedale, Wyoming](#)
- ▶ [Farm Bill Conference Begins with Members Eager to Get the Job Done](#)
- ▶ [National Wildlife Refuge Friends Grant Program](#)
- ▶ [Job Alert: Shortgrass Prairie Coordinating Wildlife Biologist](#)
- ▶ [Early Removal of Invasive Conifers Essential to Habitat Restoration for Sage Grouse](#)
- ▶ [Deadline Extended for Neotropical Migratory Birds Proposals, Dec. 3](#)
- ▶ [Farm Bill Deliberations Begin October 28](#)
- ▶ [Small Grant Deadline Extended for Wetland Conservation Proposals, Nov. 7](#)
- ▶ [Profile Your Project!](#)
- ▶ [Sage Grouse Initiative Field Staff Earn Top Awards From Pheasants Forever](#)
- ▶ [Saving Sage Grouse from the Trees: New Study Shows Benefits of Targeted Tree Removal to Declining Birds](#)
- ▶ [Partnership Funding Achieved to Map Range-Wide Conifer Removal for Sage Grouse Conservation](#)
- ▶ [Farm Bill is Critical to Farmers, Ranchers and Birds](#)
- ▶ [SGI Launches New Website](#)
- ▶ [2013 NAWCA Small Grants Deadline](#)

irrigating the grass that would be next winters' hay. The biologists were looking at the nesting teal, Wilson's Phalaropes, and Sandhill cranes, not to mention the sagebrush hillsides that surrounded us that provide valuable habitat for greater sage-grouse. We were excited about that moment because it showed that it all works: agriculture and wildlife can and do thrive together in the intermountain west. The completion of this ranch conservation project is one more example that our shared vision works."

The IWJV circled back to the Coyte Ranch in September as part of our 2013 Fall Management Board Meeting tour. On the banks of Grizzly Creek, Coy Meyring, owner of Coyte Ranch, talked from the heart about his family's multi-generational commitment to natural resource conservation, the value of wildlife habitat in today's ranch economics, and his appreciation for the help the family has received from such a wide array of conservation interests. New IWJV Management Board member, Jim Stone, a rancher from Montana, eloquently commented that the conservation work of Coy and the partnership transcends North Park at so many levels; their accomplishments exemplify a vision for the future of the West.

Today 6,278 acres, over 85% of this ranch, have been protected. The next generations of the Meyring family will continue operating these working lands as they have since Ralph Coyte originally homesteaded a portion of it in the 1880's.

The closing of this conservation easement this week is a landmark achievement. It is a story of vision, tragedy, persistence, and optimism for the future of the great places of the Intermountain West. Congrats to all of our Colorado partners and thanks to the Meyring family for this extraordinary accomplishment!



Photo by Ali Duvall

Coy Meyring participates in an IWJV field tour in northern Colorado.