

In brief

FROM STAFF & WIRE REPORTS

Trust installs deer friendly fences

PINEDALE — The Wyoming Land Trust has launched a new phase of an effort to help protect mule deer and other big game along a key migration route at the foot of the Wind River Mountains.

The Land Trust and others are working with landowners to modify or construct more than 200 miles of fence along a migration route for mule deer.

The modified fencing allow mule deer and other wildlife to pass safely through the fence. Landowners don't have to pay for the fencing.

The Wyoming Land Trust launched the Corridor Conservation Campaign in 2008.

It seeks to modify or reconstruct 500 miles of fencing in key western Wyoming wildlife migration routes. To date, 104 miles of fencing has been installed. The project is scheduled to be completed by 2013.

Officer dies in SW Montana crash

POWELL — The Powell police department has identified the victim of a one-vehicle rollover on Interstate 90 in southwestern Montana as one of the city's police officers.

Police Chief Tim Feathers said that the victim was 38-year-old Sgt. Mike Chretien, who had been with the department for four years.

The Montana Highway Patrol says a pickup pulling a camper began to fishtail Wednesday afternoon, causing a rollover crash about 38 miles east of Butte. Feathers said Chretien's wife, Claudette, and three children suffered bumps and bruises.

Feathers said the family was returning from a vacation at the time of the crash.

Forbes ranks UW as 10th best buy

The University of Wyoming is once again being ranked among the most affordable colleges in the nation by Forbes magazine.

UW is ranked 10th on the list for 2011, its second appearance in the top 10 in three years. The school ranked as the best deal nationwide is the United States Military Academy at West Point, which is free.

The list says a Wyoming resident pays about \$16,500 to attend UW for a year. Out-of-state students pay less than \$25,000.

The university's associate admissions director, Robert Dennis, said the school has been able to keep tuition relatively low because the university hasn't been as affected by inflation and funding cuts as other schools.

Snake River bridge work resumes

JACKSON — Work to prepare the way for a new bridge over the Snake River near Hoback Junction has resumed.

Construction stopped in May because the Snake River was running too high to allow for work on the river's bank. A huge landslide also closed U.S. Highways 26 and 89 through Snake River Canyon to the south for several weeks.

The Wyoming Department of Transportation said Thursday that work has resumed on foundational work for the new bridge.

It will be built just south of the existing bridge. The old span is set to be torn down next summer.

Crews are also continuing to build a new roundabout to replace the "Y" intersection at Hoback Junction. It's set to open in September.

UW sets private fundraising record

State's only four-year university receives \$43.1M in 2011 fiscal year

By **BOB MOEN**
The Associated Press

CHEYENNE — The University of Wyoming set a record for annual private contributions when it received \$43.1 million for the fiscal year ending June 30, the college announced Friday.

It was just the second time in the school's 125-

year history that giving has surpassed the \$40 million mark. The previous record was \$43 million in 2008.

The university received about 24,000 contributions over the year that included money from alumni, corporations and individuals, said University of Wyoming Foundation President Ben Blalock.

Some major gifts totaled \$1 million or more, but smaller gifts were the backbone of the fundraising.

"We always try to emphasize that major gifts are clearly critical to the success of the university, but having a broad base of contributors is how you really build a very strong fundraising program long term," Blalock said.

It helps that UW is the only state-supported, four-year university in Wyoming, which means it benefits from "the passion and com-

mitment of our alumni and friends," he said.

In addition, Wyoming has avoided the worst of the recession, Blalock said.

The university received \$12.5 million in new bequest pledges during the year. Its endowment now totals more than \$303 million.

Blalock noted that other universities around the country are doing OK with private fundraising, but not many are as successful as Wyoming.

"We feel very fortunate

where we are," he said.

UW President Tom Buchanan said the financial support is extraordinary.

"I can't overstate my appreciation for the continued generosity of our public and private donors," Buchanan said in a statement. "Their contributions strengthen the very foundation of the university, and it would be impossible for us to be one of the best public land-grant universities in the nation if not for their ongoing support."



CASEY PAGE | BILLINGS GAZETTE

A band of wild horses is herded by helicopter to the corrals at the southern end of the Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range on Sept. 3, 2009, near Lovell.

BLM proposes wild horse gather in Pryor Mountains

By **BRETT FRENCH**
The Billings Gazette

A portion of the wild horse herd in the Pryor Mountains would be trapped and removed next year under a proposal being considered by the Bureau of Land Management's Billings Field Office.

The agency is seeking information or analysis through Aug. 30 from the public to help develop the proposal's environmental assessment.

The 38,000-acre Pryor Mountain Wild Horse Range, located near the Wyoming-Montana state line north of Lovell, is home to about 150 horses and 17 foals. Under the BLM's management plan for the range, horse numbers should be kept between 90 and 120, excluding the current year foals, to ensure there is enough forage, although that number has been challenged by wild horse advocates as too low to sustain the herd's genetic viability.

"The position of the Cloud Foundation is we don't think any removals are going to be needed," said Ginger Kathrens, founder of the advocacy group.

Kathrens said a reversible one-year birth control vaccine given to mares should be given time to work.

"We support that only because it is reversible and selective," she said. "I think the BLM is jumping the gun without giving these less-invasive techniques a chance."

The number of horses that would be removed to meet the BLM's goal will depend on how many horses are on the range next year, said Kristen Lenhardt, BLM spokeswoman.

"The population can change in a year's time," she said.

The request for public comment is the initial stage in developing an EA for the removal of horses. In 2009, the BLM removed 57 horses from the range after a controversial helicopter roundup. Most of those animals were adopted out.

A lawsuit was filed last year challenging the BLM's roundups and the fencing of the horse range's boundary with the Custer National Forest. That suit has still not been resolved.

Kathrens' group is a party to the lawsuit and sees the fence as another way to limit the size of the herd.

"That additional [forest] land would provide enough range for a larger, genetically viable herd," she said.

Heavy snows this winter meant it was a tough season for the wild herd, and five mares died, Lenhardt said. Only patches of snow remain in the high country now.

Lori Graham, director of the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Center in Lovell said the horses seem to be using water guzzlers that were installed on the lower reaches of the mountains last year to spread horses out across the range.

"That could be a big help," she said.

To remove the horses in 2012, the BLM is proposing to trap the animals by using one-way gated entrances to fenced-off bait or water, or by herding the animals. Since bait trapping can occur year-round, the horses could be trapped at any time in 2012. The last time the agency used bait stations was in 2006, when 22 horses were removed.

Information for development of an environmental assessment can be submitted in writing to: Jim Sparks, Field Manager, BLM Billings Field Office, 5001 Southgate Drive, Billings, MT 59101; or by fax at 896-5281.

Officials arrest Evansville man for alleged child porn

By the Star-Tribune staff

A state and federal investigation into alleged child pornography led officials to arrest an Evansville man this week.

Authorities took Donald A. Meeks, 54, into custody Wednesday.

The case began late last month when U.S. Magistrate Scott Skavdahl signed a federal warrant authorizing law enforcement to search the Evansville trailer where Meeks lives, according to court documents.

The warrant request stemmed from agents with the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement allegedly observing a computer in Meeks home sharing child pornography, according to court documents.

On Wednesday, agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Wyoming Division of



DONALD MEEKS

Criminal Investigation, the FBI and the Casper Police Department executed the search warrant.

Meeks was not present at the time, but authorities found a Hewlett Packard computer in a back bedroom. They located numerous files consistent with child pornography, according to court documents.

Authorities also found

several compact discs with images of child pornography on them, according to court documents.

Later that day Meeks, after being located via a traffic stop, agreed to an interview with authorities.

"Meeks admitted that for the last 15 months or so, [he] has downloaded child pornography from the Internet," according to an arrest affidavit. "Meeks could not estimate the number of child pornography files on his computer, stating that he hoped it was not a lot."

He was arrested on charges of sexual exploitation of children and possession of child pornography.

Meeks' arrest was not related to an international investigation into child pornography announced Wednesday that resulted in charges being filed against 72 people in the U.S. and nine other countries.

Casper man pleads guilty after bomb threat

By **WILLIAM BROWNING**
Star-Tribune staff writer

A Casper man has been sentenced to six months in jail after walking into Parkway Plaza Hotel & Convention Centre and telling a front desk clerk he was going to "blow the hotel up."

Natrona County Circuit Judge Steve Brown, however, left open the possibility of a sentence review for William Willoughby.

The 44-year-old pleaded guilty Friday to a misdemeanor charge of breach of peace.

The charge came after a clerk at the West E Street hotel told police Willoughby walked into the business Thursday afternoon and approached the front counter. Asked if he needed help, he said he was going to blast the building.



WILLIAM WILLOUGHBY

A clerk said that making comments like that was not appropriate, police say.

Willoughby, who was dressed in a camouflage jacket, replied, "I am not joking. I am going to blow up the building in a few minutes," according to an

Please see **BOMB**, A4