



*Century Heights
Preserve*

Ecosystem
restoration after
a wildfire





A refuge for mule deer


Century Heights is a 266-acre wildlife preserve located in Pocatello. Sagebrush Steppe Land Trust owns and takes care of the land with the goal of supporting wildlife, especially mule deer that spend winters there.






In June 2024, a wildfire
broke out at
Century Heights Preserve.





Thanks to firefighters
and first responders,
nobody was hurt and
nearby homes were
saved.





But 35 acres burned.
This was the aftermath.



→ 13



FILM NEGATIVE

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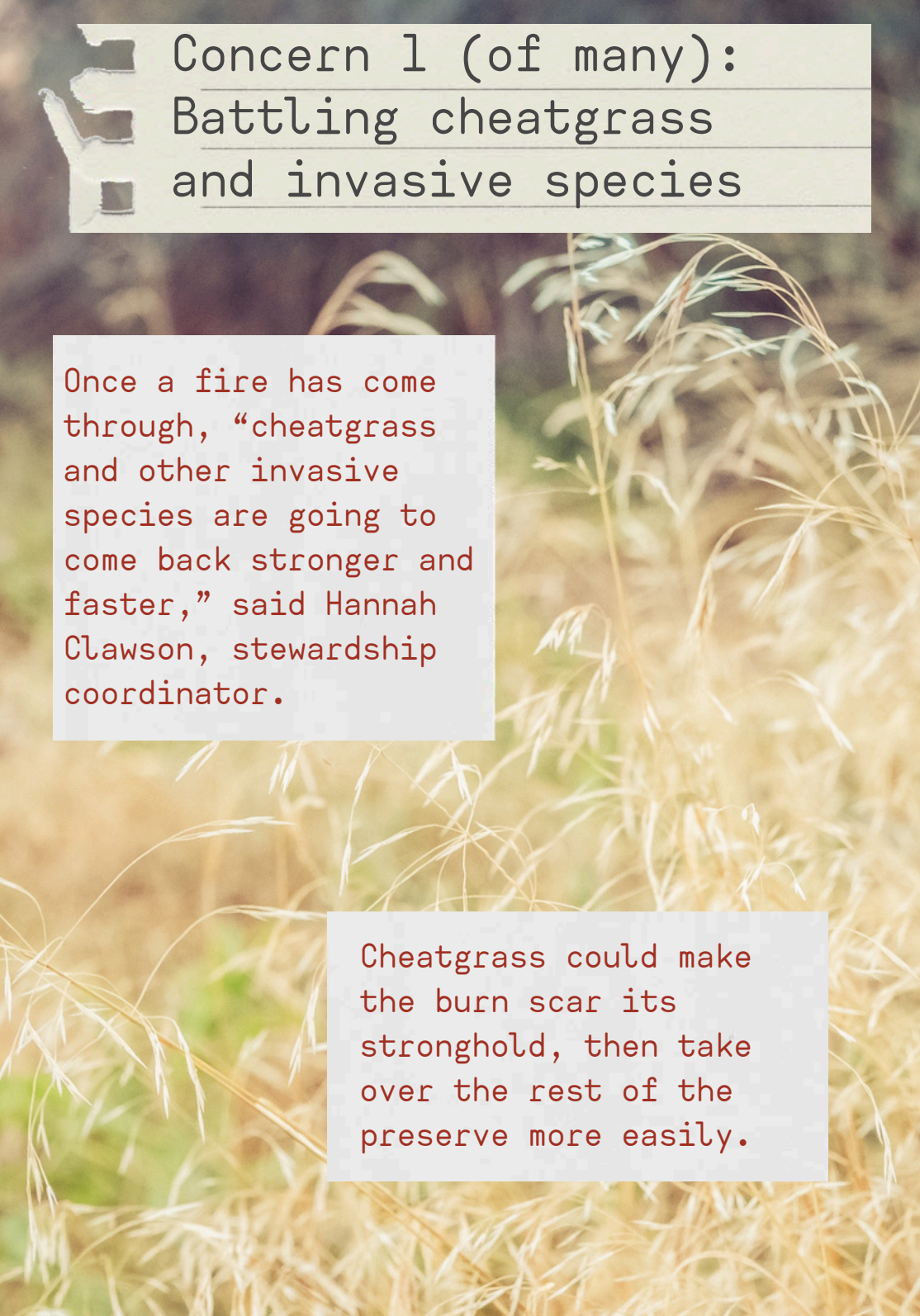
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FILM NEGATIVE

Fires can actually be helpful to ecosystems. But we wanted to step in and help restore the land more quickly and address some concerns.



Concern 1 (of many): Battling cheatgrass and invasive species

Once a fire has come through, “cheatgrass and other invasive species are going to come back stronger and faster,” said Hannah Clawson, stewardship coordinator.

Cheatgrass could make the burn scar its stronghold, then take over the rest of the preserve more easily.

After a fire,
cheatgrass spreads
quickly and can take
over.



Sagebrush, on the other
hand, grows slowly and
can take decades to
mature.



Concern 2 (of many):
The charred landscape
meant a loss of native
plants, food, and
habitat for creatures
big and small



mule deer



sagebrush lizard



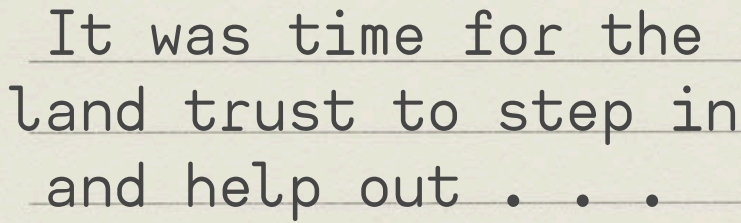
cottontail rabbit



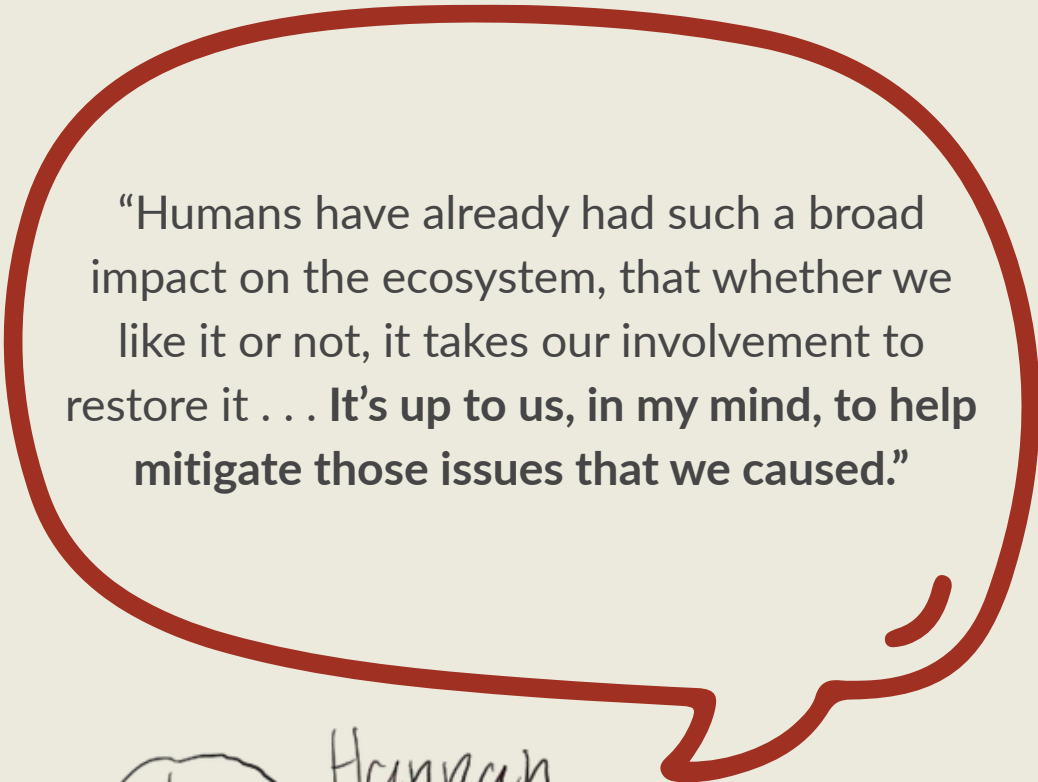
Sagebrush Steppe

These animals are just some of the many that live in the sagebrush steppe ecosystem, a habitat unique to the West. It is made up of large areas of sagebrush mixed with grasses, wildflowers, shrubs like bitterbrush and rabbitbrush, and occasional juniper trees.





It was time for the
land trust to step in
and help out . . .



“Humans have already had such a broad impact on the ecosystem, that whether we like it or not, it takes our involvement to restore it . . . It’s up to us, in my mind, to help mitigate those issues that we caused.”

Hannah



Hannah Clawson
Stewardship Coordinator

With the help of volunteers and partners, the land trust began working to restore the ecosystem.



Part of that involved gathering native seeds . . .



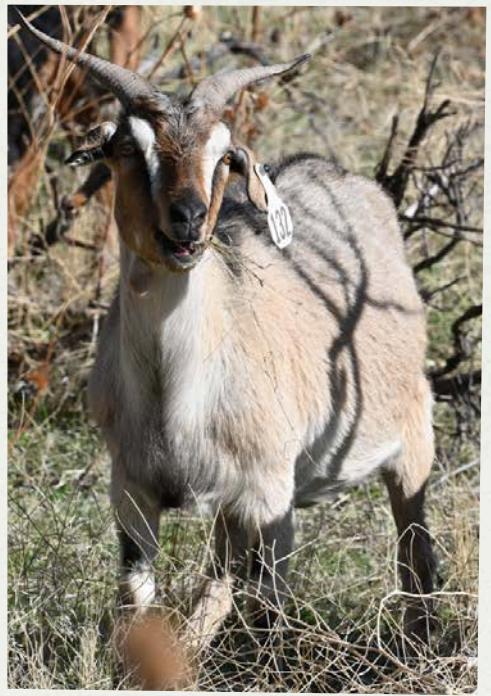
And broadcasting, or strewing them, at Century Heights Preserve.



We also planted seedlings, or small plants, and caged them to protect them from hungry mule deer until they got big enough to survive being a snack.



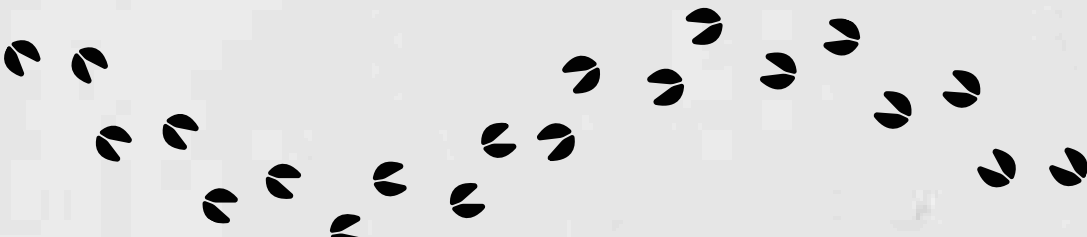
We even brought out a herd of goats to help us get rid of cheatgrass so we could reduce the use of chemicals like herbicide.



Goat hooves also help tear up the dirt, which makes it easier for seeds to grow. And their manure acts as a natural fertilizer.

That's what we call a . . .

WIN WIN



Those are just some of the many efforts taken to restore the preserve after wildfire. So far, the hard work has paid off.

Without restoration efforts, we would just expect to see more invasive species that are going to reduce biodiversity and ecosystem health and just perpetuate bigger fires in the future . . . **We've helped mitigate those negative impacts, and then we helped improve the local habitat.**



Eric

Eric Pankau
Stewardship Manager

See for yourself! Here's the preserve before and after restoration work . . .

BEFORE

2024



AFTER

2025



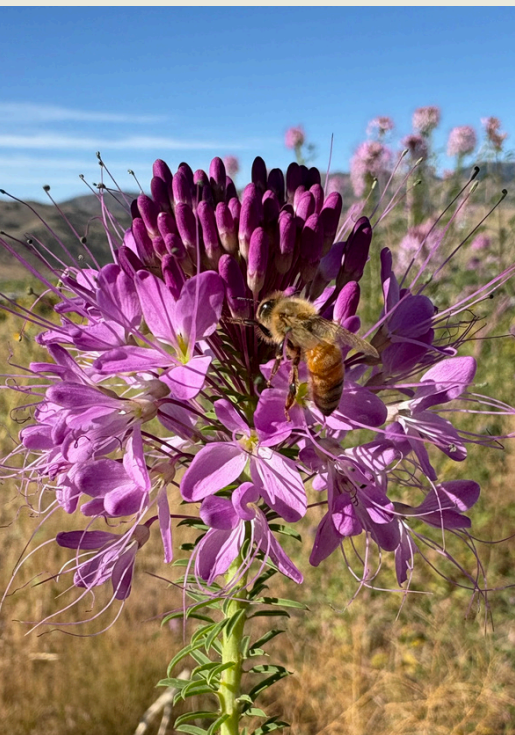
But the work isn't done yet. Restoration is a long-term project that will take decades.

“The most challenging part of restoration efforts is having patience. **A fire takes seconds to destroy something, but it takes years of hard work and dedication to restore the habitat, especially with native species . . . it's just being patient enough to realize that your work matters, and you will eventually see results.**”

Hannah



For now, plenty of new
life is springing up
already at Century
Heights.



**Rocky Mountain
bee plant**



Woolly plantain



Rushpinks



**Plains prickly
pear cactus**

And beauty abounds . . .



Charles R. Peterson

Thanks for checking out our zine!

There are plenty of ways you can help your environment, too. Here are some ideas:

- Use less water
- When you can, walk or bike instead of drive
- Plant native plants in your yard
- Reduce herbicide use
- Use tools like iNaturalist to document plants and wildlife you see
- Pick up trash you see outside

What other ways can you help protect wildlife habitat and ecosystems? We'd love to hear your ideas!



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Credits

Photos by:

- Sarah Jackson
- Chuck Peterson
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- Carly Flandro
- Pocatello Fire Department

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- Izzy Pankau

Special thanks to our partners

Idaho Fish & Game

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

**High Desert Chapter of the Idaho Master
Naturalists**



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Learn more about
Century Heights
Preserve



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