

2023 2nd Quarter Issues for Wyoming Public Media

ISSUE: Environment

Topic: Laramie endured extreme weather events in 2020 and 2021, but researchers have been unable to accurately track small migratory songbirds to see how they are being affected. Recently, researchers from the University of Wyoming began using a new tracking device to learn more about small songbird migration patterns.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/19/23 at 3 pm and 5/21/23 at noon.

Topic: This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Endangered Species Act, a bedrock environmental law in the United States with far reaching impacts.

Time: 9 min

Date: 5/19/23 at 3 pm and 5/21/23 at noon.

Topic: Ticks are actually considered the second most ‘dangerous’ creature in the world when it comes to transmitting disease – only behind mosquitoes. It is not just Bond that has noticed the increase this year, many are saying that anecdotally it is a big tick year in western Wyoming, which is especially of concern in Sublette County, where there is the highest rate of tick fever disease in the country.

Time: 5 min

Date: 6/16/23 at 3 pm and 6/18/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Water

Topic: The Colorado River Basin is a water system that runs from the Rocky Mountains, starting in Wyoming, all the way into the desert of the southwest and Mexico. It provides water for 40 million people, but also for many other things, like agriculture and outdoor recreation. But in recent years, this system has been at record lows, and shortages are expected to get worse. So how can seven states, 30 Native American tribes and northern Mexico learn to live with less? KUNC’s reporter and managing editor Luke Runyon put together a podcast series exploring the issue. It is called ‘Thirst Gap’ and is out now. He spoke with Wyoming Public Radio’s Caitlin Tan.

Time: 9 min

Date: 5/26/23 at 3 pm and 5/28/23 at noon.

Topic: A once in 500-year flood event devastated Yellowstone National Park one year ago this month. A lot of infrastructure was destroyed – roads, bridges and buildings literally were swept into rivers. Researchers have since studied the damage, hoping to learn lessons. This includes a specialized group of scientists who study civil infrastructure immediately in the wake of a disaster. Bret Lingwall, an associate professor at the South Dakota School of Mines and Calvin Tohm, who is a graduate student at the school, were at Yellowstone last year collecting data. They recently spoke with Wyoming Public Radio’s Caitlin Tan.

Time: 10 min

Date: 6/16/23 at 3 pm and 6/18/23 at noon.

ISSUE: State legislature

Topic: Wyoming lawmakers have had some time to rest and reflect on the 2023 legislative session. Several notable things happened this year – there were a lot of new lawmakers, the Republican party had some division between traditional Republicans and a newer, national party called the Freedom Caucus and there was a budget surplus. Wyoming Public Radio spoke with the leaders of both the House and Senate to re-cap. This interview is with WPR’s Caitlin Tan and Speaker of the House Albert Sommers (R-Sublette County). They spoke recently at Sommers’ ranch in Sublette County.

Time: 11 min

Date: 4/7/23 at 3 p.m. and 4/9/23 at noon.

Topic: Wyoming lawmakers have had some time to rest and reflect on the 2023 legislative session. Several notable things happened this year - there were a lot of new lawmakers and the Republican party had some division between traditional Republicans and a newer, national party called the Freedom Caucus and there was a budget surplus rather than dealing with making cuts. Wyoming Public Radio spoke with the leaders of both the House and Senate to re-cap. This interview is with WPR’s Kamila Kudelska and President of the Senate Ogden Driskill (R-Devils Tower). Kudelska started off by asking him how he felt the session went overall.

Time: 11 min

Date: 4/7/23 at 3 p.m. and 4/9/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Agriculture

Topic: This past January, one might've gone to the grocery store looking for eggs but the shelves were empty. And if there were eggs, they may have been costly. Melissa Hemken owns Melissahof Hatchery, a pastured poultry business in Lander. As a result, Hemken said her business saw a huge demand for eggs.

Time: 4 min

Date: 5/19/23 at 3 pm and 5/21/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Housing

Topic: About 2,000 people live in Kemmerer, which is in the corner of southwest Wyoming, where the mountains meet the desert. It is known for a few things – the original JCPenney store, ancient fossils and consequently, the fossil fuel industry. But, in late 2021, the company TerraPower, founded by Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates, announced their plans to build a nuclear plant nearby. While there is some push back with the project, the hope is to create 'greener' energy and jobs for former coal workers.

Time: 5 min

Date: 6/9/23 at 3 pm and 6/11/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Energy

Topic: One of the main utility companies in the state is proposing to increase their rates again. This comes after Wyoming customers saw rate hikes just a few months ago. WyoFile's energy reporter Dustin Bleizeffer has followed the issue and spoke with Wyoming Public Radio's Caitlin Tan.

Time: 8 min

Date: 4/28/23 at 3 pm and 4/30/23 at noon.

Topic: A small coal town community in southwest Wyoming was privy to a preview of plans for a proposed, first of its kind nuclear plant. The TerraPower nuclear plant is scheduled to open near Kemmerer by 2030. The event brought several officials to town – including a 'celebrity' appearance. Following this closely is the Casper Star Tribune's energy reporter Nicole Pollack. She spoke with Wyoming Public Radio's Caitlin Tan.

Time: 9 min

Date: 5/19/23 at 3 pm and 5/21/23 at noon.

Topic: The batteries in your cell phone, the glass in solar panels and other important materials all depend on rare earth minerals. That's leading to a new mining rush in the West.

Time: 5 min

Date: 5/26/23 at 3 pm and 5/28/23 at noon.

Topic: U.S. support for nuclear power is the highest it's been in a decade. And there are a number of proposals for new plants in our region. That could mean an uptick in domestic uranium mining.

Time: 5 min

Date: 6/9/23 at 3 pm and 6/11/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Wildlife

Topic: Normally there would be hundreds of antelope this time of year grazing sagebrush and spring grass. But instead, there are piles of dead antelope on top of a blanket of snow. Some are still alive – but barely. This unprecedented wildlife loss in some of the country's largest antelope and mule deer herds is the result of an incredibly harsh winter in southwest Wyoming. It is expected that as many as 50 percent of the animals will die before summer.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/14/23 at 3 pm and 4/16/23 at noon.

Topic: With the arrival of spring, migratory birds are making their way back to Wyoming. However, climate change and urbanization are affecting some species' migration patterns. Wyoming Public Radio's Nicole Dillon spoke with Zach Hutchinson, the Community Science Coordinator with Audubon Rockies, to understand how birds are adjusting to changes in their environment and how Wyominigites can make a difference.

Time: 8 min

Date: 4/14/23 at 3 pm and 4/16/23 at noon.

Topic: When a grizzly was shot and killed on the North Fork of the Shoshone Forest on May 1, this year, Cody wildlife photographer Amy Gerber saw the carcass about thirty yards off the highway that same day. She said she spoke to regional and national news outlets about it. She didn't know why someone would shoot the 530-pound bear.

Time: 6 min

Date: 5/26/23 at 3 pm and 5/28 at noon.

ISSUE: Science

Topic: Tardigrades are microscopic eight-legged animals that have been known to survive extreme conditions. University of Wyoming researchers are now applying their research of tardigrade survival skills to vaccines. Wyoming Public Radio's Sage Montana spoke to Boothby. They started by talking about what a tardigrade is.

Time: 7 min

Date: 5/5/23 at 3 pm and 5/7/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Politics

Topic: Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon now has a podcast. He released the first episode of "The Morning Gather" earlier this month. It focused on the hard winter that wildlife experienced this year. The 30 or so-minute episodes will come out monthly on topics that are important to Wyomingites. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska sat down with Gordon to discuss it.

Time: 9 min

Date: 5/26/23 at 3 pm and 5/28/23 at noon.

Topic: In Laramie, the city government approves its own budget every two years. That budget details all the money it takes in, like taxes or utility fees, and all the money it spends, like building roads or having a fire department. City and town budgets look different from community to community, but there are some elements common to all of them. Wyoming Public Radio's Jeff Victor spoke with City Manager Janine Jordan and Administrative Services Director Jenn Wade about why citizens should pay attention to their city's budget process, and how those same citizens can get involved and make their voices heard.

Time: 8 min

Date: 6/9/23 at 3 pm and 6/11/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Community issues

Topic: As real acts of mass violence become a more common reality in this country, hoax reports of shootings are plaguing schools.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/14/23 at 3 pm and 4/16/23 at noon.

Topic: The Campbell County Lodging Tax Joint Powers Board and the Campbell County Convention and Visitors Bureau are moving ahead with plans that will implement geofencing technology for this year's National High School Finals Rodeo in July in Gillette. It comes after some residents spoke out against these plans at two public meetings, voicing concerns about violations of privacy, constitutionality, and the necessity of them.

Time: 6 min

Date: 4/28/23 at 3 pm and 4/30/23 at noon.

Topic: Yellowstone National Park's east entrance just opened. It is a lifeline for the gateway community of Cody, and after three years of continually being tested by the pandemic and historic flooding, Superintendent Cam Sholly is really hoping this summer will be quiet. But as he told Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska, the heavy snow from the winter is already adding more work.

Time: 10 min

Date: 5/5/23 at 3 pm and 5/7/23 at noon.

Time: With fentanyl-related deaths in Wyoming rising, all ten of the Wyoming Highway Patrol's narcotic detection dogs are nationally certified to detect fentanyl in hopes of fighting the ongoing crisis.

Time: 6 min

Date: 5/5/23 at 3 pm and 5/7/23 at noon.

Topic: The Gillette City Council is currently debating whether or not to adopt a hate crime ordinance. It's passed two of three readings since being introduced late last month. And it's proven to be a hot topic. The council chamber is filled with residents earlier this month waiting

to voice their opinions on the second reading of the hate crime ordinance. They've had to wait as the council conducted its regular business before hearing public comment on the issue. When they finally had the chance to speak--some of the comments were heated.

Time: 7 min

Date: 5/26/23 at 3 pm and 5/28/23 at noon.

Topic: At first when the idea for this training started to come to fruition about a year ago, it was only going to involve the Park County first responders – EMS, the fire departments, ER doctors, Sheriff's and police departments. It came out to about 100 people. But Martin said pretty soon after they started planning the National Guard reached out.

Time: 6 min

Date: 6/16/23 at 3 pm and 6/18/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Native American issues

Topic: An article in the journal Science provides new research that Indigenous people were using horses in the American West much earlier than previously thought. The research has major contributions from a University of Wyoming (UW) graduate's own research. Cassidee Thornhill earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in anthropology from UW. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska spoke with Thornhill about her research.

Time: 10 min

Date: 4/28/23 at 3 pm and 4/30/23 at noon.

Topic: You may have witnessed a popular way that the American public is attempting to reckon with its history of genocide of Indigenous people: before a public event, someone recites a list of the original peoples from the area. But what do Indigenous leaders and history keepers really think of these land acknowledgments? We decided to ask. Wyoming Public Radio's podcast The Modern West is currently releasing the series Mending the Hoop, which takes a look at the history of the Plains Indian Wars from the perspective of tribes. Host and producer Melodie Edwards assembled this collection of Indigenous voices.

Time: 6 min

Date: 6/9/23 at 3 pm and 6/11/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Health

Topic: Rural hospitals in Wyoming are a lifeline for small communities throughout the state. But staying afloat can be challenging. Some say Medicaid expansion could help with financial woes but the Wyoming legislature failed to pass it this year. So rural hospitals are finding ways to survive.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/7/23 at 3 p.m. and 4/9/23 at noon.

Topic: Wyoming now has a clinic that provides surgical abortions. The Casper reproductive health clinic opened its doors last week, but its opening was delayed by about 11 months because it was torched by an arsonist one month before its planned opening.

Time: 5 min

Date: 4/28/23 at 3 pm and 4/30/23 at noon.

Topic: Synthetic opioids like fentanyl are increasing nonfatal and fatal drug overdoses nationwide. In 2022, Wyoming reported that 93 people died from a drug overdose. Forty-eight of those involved fentanyl. After months of investigations, requesting data, and coming up dry, WyoFile reporter Madelyn Beck has come out with a four part series on what data the state collects and how that data is lacking. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska asked what was the question that started it all.

Time: 10 min

Date: 6/9/23 at 3 pm and 6/11/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Business and industry

Topic: The Wyoming Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation and the University of Wyoming's Honors College are offering a three-week course beginning next month to give those with creativity a chance to turn those ideas into reality. This includes opportunities for artists, scientists, activists, and entrepreneurs, among others. Wyoming Public Radio's Hugh Cook spoke with Dr. Penelope Shihab, the center's director, about this opportunity.

Time: 8 min

Date: 4/14/23 at 3 pm and 4/16/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Education

Topic: National Public Radio (NPR) has been in the news a lot. Elon Musk labeled NPR's Twitter page as "state-affiliated media." He has since removed that labeling and NPR has stopped using their Twitter pages. At Wyoming Public Media, we felt that it brought up a legitimate question. How is public radio funded and are we controlled by any entities? So Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska spoke with Wyoming Public Media's general manager Christina Kuzmych.

Time: 13 min

Date: 5/5/23 at 3 pm and 5/7/23 at noon.

Topic: June is Alzheimer's Awareness Month. A Sheridan-based organization is helping those with various forms of dementia, their families, and communities to better understand and cope with memory loss. Wyoming Public Radio's Hugh Cook spoke with Heather Comstock of Dementia Friendly Wyoming about what they're doing.

Time: 10 min

Date: 6/16/23 at 3 pm and 6/18/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Sports

Topic: Baseball has been played in communities large and small since its inception in the 19th century. Wyoming Public Radio's Hugh Cook spoke with Tim Hagerty, a minor league baseball broadcaster who once called games in the state. Hagerty recently released a book of his stories and memories called "Tales from the Dugout: 1001 Humorous, Inspirational & Wild Anecdotes from Minor League Baseball."

Time: 8 min

Date: 5/19/23 at 3 pm and 5/21/23 at noon.

Topic: The Visit Casper Marathon celebrated its 20th anniversary this year with runners participating in a 10K, half marathon, marathon, and marathon relay on June 4. A 5K run sponsored by the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center was held the day before, as was a .262-mile beer run sponsored by Gruner Brothers Brewing.

Time: 6 min

Date: 6/9/23 at 3 pm and 6/11/23 at noon.

Topic: Pickleball, often described as a cross between tennis and ping pong, is a smash in the Mountain West. New courts and playing clubs – and some controversies – are popping up throughout the region.

Time: 5 min

Date: 6/16/23 at 3 pm and 6/18/23 at noon.

ISSUE: Art

Topic: Last year, a group of Wyoming women passionate about art came together and formed the Wyoming Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. By creating this committee, the group is able to nominate one upcoming Wyoming artist to the 2024 Women to Watch exhibit at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington D.C. Sarah Ortegon High Walking will be that artist. Wyoming Public Radio's Kamila Kudelska spoke with Ortegon High Walking on what this nomination means to her and what her art hopes to express.

Time: 9 min

Date: 4/14/23 at 3 pm and 4/14/23 at noon.

Topic: The allure of American Cowboys attracts many people to our area to visit. But it turns out that cowboys do not only exist in the West. Known as the Butteri in Italy, some say the Italian tradition goes back centuries and has a surprising connection to Buffalo Bill Cody.

Time: 6 min

Date: 5/19/23 at 3 pm and 5/21/23 at noon.