

# EXPLORE WYOMING

A Guide to  
The Nature Conservancy's Protected Places  
in Wyoming

The Nature  
Conservancy  
Wyoming





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# Connect with Wyoming's Wild and Working Landscapes

Since 1989, The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming has been preserving some of our most coveted natural areas. We're protecting lands and waters, transforming the way we use our valuable natural resources and inspiring Wyomingites to take action for conservation. Along with partners, we've protected more than 1 million acres and 1,500 miles of rivers and streams. Our success relies on collaboration with the people who have long protected Wyoming's cherished places: landowners, government, community and other conservation organizations.

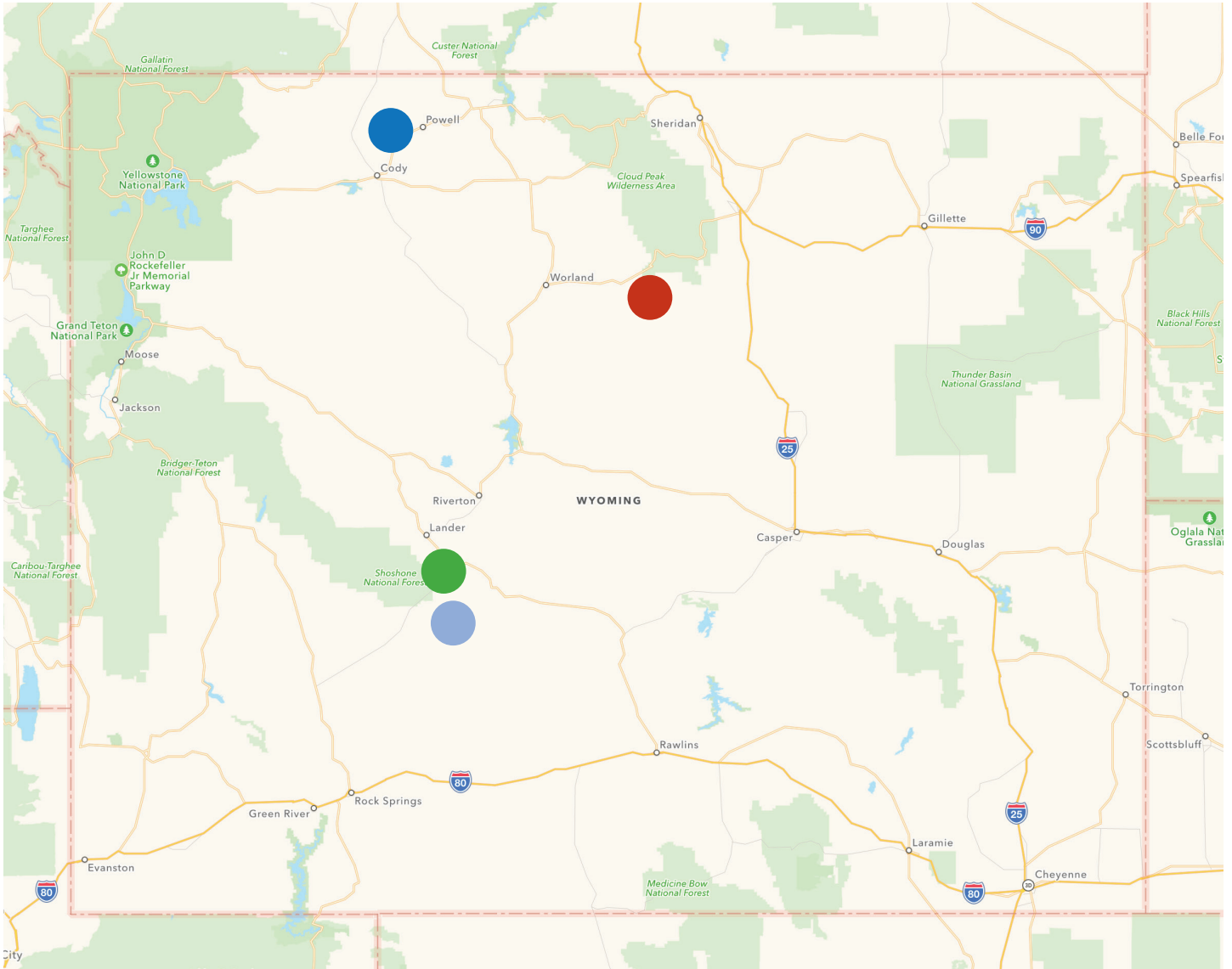
As you explore these pages, you'll get a glimpse of the work we've done to protect areas of the state that are ecologically and culturally important—and provide natural spaces for outreach, research, education and enjoyment.

Taking in the view © Zachary Mason

COVER: Red Canyon Ranch © Scott Copeland

# EXPLORE

Schedule a visit to one of our nature preserves to get up close and personal with nature and our work.



- **Red Canyon Ranch and Preserve**  
The Popo Agie River winds through this working ranch, a landscape of green meadows and red rock cliffs. Near Lander.
- **Heart Mountain Ranch Preserve**  
The preserve supports one of the greatest concentrations of rare plants ever discovered on private property in Wyoming. Near Cody.

- **Tensleep Preserve**  
Explore the local geology, examine western flowers, watch for wildlife and soak in expansive views of spectacular canyon country.
- **Sweetwater Preserve**  
Hike the high desert country, fish the banks of the Sweetwater River or paddle down a stretch, keeping an eye out for wildlife.

Tell us about your visit! Email a story or photo to [wyoaming@tnc.org](mailto:wyoaming@tnc.org).





Heart Mountain © Kinley Bollinger

# Heart Mountain Ranch Preserve

Boasting an unusual limestone cap, Heart Mountain stands alone amid a vast sagebrush valley. While much of its origins and geological history remain a puzzle, the mountain is one of few identifiable features on the maps Lewis and Clark created, serving as a landmark for early travelers.

TNC established the 13,000-acre Heart Mountain Ranch Preserve in 1999 on the mountain's northern and eastern slopes. Today, the preserve supports wildlife such as elk, mule deer and pronghorn and boasts one of the greatest concentrations of rare plants ever discovered on private property in Wyoming.



## What You Can Do

Hikers can traverse the rugged, four-mile trail to Heart Mountain's summit, while horseback riders can enjoy the lower trails and take in the preserve's wide-open vistas. At the base of the mountain, the Heart Mountain Trailhead Interpretive Cabin offers information about the geology, cultural significance and ecology of Heart Mountain and the surrounding landscape.

## What You Can See

Shoshone Indians called this area "Home of the Birds"—golden eagles, sage thrashers, peregrine falcons and sage-grouse thrive here. Native wildlife such as elk, mule deer and pronghorn can be seen, and common predators such as mountain lion, bobcat, coyote and black bears roam nearby. Rare plant species live in great concentrations on the preserve, such as Howard's forget-me-not, Snake River cat's eye, aromatic pussytoes, Absaroka goldenweed and more.



Heart Mountain hikers © Lori Mathews/TNC



## Things to Know

- Heart Mountain Ranch Preserve is available for non-motorized travel and field trips.
- While the risk of an encounter is low, Heart Mountain is in bear country. To be fully prepared, visitors must carry and know how to use bear spray. Hiking in groups is recommended.
- The hike to Heart Mountain's summit is approximately eight miles round trip and is fairly strenuous on the upper end.
- Bring plenty of food, water and supplies—medical assistance is not readily available and cell phone service on the mountain is limited.
- Please abide by posted ranch rules and leave your dogs at home.

## Hours & Contact

- Preserve Hours: The preserve is open to non-scheduled visits: First Sunday in June – September 30, December 31 – March 1.
- Heart Mountain Ranch is located in northwest Wyoming, north of Cody. Please contact the preserve manager(s) prior to visiting for more information or for group visits during the seasonal closure.

### Heart Mountain Ranch

1357 Road 22 Powell, WY 82435

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Emily Buckles, *Heart Mountain Ranch Manager*

[nature.org/heartmountain](http://nature.org/heartmountain)





Red Canyon hiker © Timothy Rockhold

# Red Canyon Ranch

The Little Popo Agie River cuts through the geology of the southern Wind River Mountains before running through slopes of wildflowers and down to the grassy plains at Red Canyon Ranch. Purchased in 1993, the ranch consists of roughly 5,000 acres of deeded land and 50,000 acres of federal-and state-leased land.

Red Canyon is a working ranch that serves as a testing ground for best conservation grazing practices and helps protect this land from development, which fragments habitat, affects migration routes for wildlife and disturbs rare plants. An outdoor laboratory, nature preserve and working ranch in one, the Ranch helps safeguard Wyoming's ranching heritage, benefit its economy and protect a critical segment of the state's land, water, wildlife and way of life.



## What You Can Do

Visitors looking to hike or fish the ranch will encounter a wide array of diverse plant and animal life, including edible and medicinal plants and hundreds of cattle that graze here. In the spring, TNC offers outreach events and volunteer work days. We also host school groups for tours and conservation activities.

## What You Can See

Five species of large game animals—moose, bighorn sheep, elk, mule deer and pronghorn—find forage and cover here. Miles of streams and river foster robust trout populations, and large predators such as mountain lion, black bear and a variety of birds of prey attest to the vitality of this working ranch.



Child with tiger salamander © John Coffman/TNC



## Things to Know

- Red Canyon Ranch is available by advance reservation for hiking, fishing and field trips.
- Please abide by posted ranch rules and leave your dogs at home.

## Hours & Contact

- Red Canyon Ranch is located 13 miles south of Lander, in south-central Wyoming. Please contact the preserve manager prior to visiting.

## Red Canyon Ranch

350 Red Canyon Road  
Lander, WY 82520

PHONE: (307) 332-3388

EMAIL: [jcoffman@tnc.org](mailto:jcoffman@tnc.org)

John Coffman, *Western WY  
Stewardship Director*

Info and reservations at  
[nature.org/redcanyonranch](http://nature.org/redcanyonranch)





Upper Sweetwater River © Randy Craft/TNC

# Sweetwater River Preserve

The Sweetwater River Preserve encompasses 6 miles of the historic, free-flowing Sweetwater River and stands as one of Wyoming's most extensive and intact high desert, streamside landscapes. Native willows line the riverbanks and provide cover for a variety of wildlife and birds, while dry grasslands populated with big sagebrush extend for miles upland.

In addition to significant natural habitat, the 2,305-acre preserve contains portions of the historic Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer and Pony Express Trails. TNC's work in the region began in 1991 to prevent habitat fragmentation, support sustainable grazing practices and protect the area's rich diversity of native plants and animals.



## What You Can Do

Visitors can hike the preserve, fish the banks of the Sweetwater River or paddle down a stretch, keeping an eye out for wildlife. Rustic cabins are available for those who would like to stay overnight and enjoy some stargazing.

## What You Can See

Streamside willow and other plant communities dominate the area and support an abundance of native plants, including the rare meadow pussytoes. Meadows transition to Wyoming big sagebrush and mountain big sagebrush communities in the uplands, where visitors can catch sight of pronghorn. Moose, mule deer, elk, porcupine and beaver can be found along the river and white-tailed prairie dogs can also be seen here. Sage-grouse, white pelicans, sandhill cranes, great blue herons, killdeer and mountain bluebirds make the area their summer home.



Mule Deer buck © Scott Copeland



## Things to Know

- Sweetwater River Preserve is available by advance reservation for fishing and overnight stays.
- Please abide by posted ranch rules and leave your dogs at home.

## Hours & Contact

- Preserve Hours: Sweetwater River Preserve is open daily, from sunrise to sunset.
- Sweetwater River Preserve is located in Central Wyoming, near Lander. Please contact the preserve manager(s) prior to visiting.

## Sweetwater River Preserve

4407 State Highway 789  
Lander, WY 82520

PHONE: (307) 332-3388  
(307) 714-3388 cell

EMAIL: [jcoffman@tnc.org](mailto:jcoffman@tnc.org)  
John Coffman, *Western WY*  
Stewardship Director

[nature.org/sweetwaterriverpreserve](http://nature.org/sweetwaterriverpreserve)





Tensleep arch © Dewey Vanderhoff

# Tensleep Preserve

A rugged collection of canyons, uplands and forests, the heart of Tensleep Preserve is a 12-mile stretch of Canyon Creek that crosses the southwestern flanks of the Bighorn Mountains. Ancient pictographs and Native American gathering sites highlight the long history between people and the land that continues today. This vibrant landscape is home to 120 bird species, plus abundant plant and wildlife species.

This 9,000-acre preserve was TNC's first nature preserve in Wyoming, acquired in 1991. Today, its ecological richness draws visitors from across the state and beyond to discover the magic of the Bighorn Mountain foothills—and the plants and animals that make this region unique.

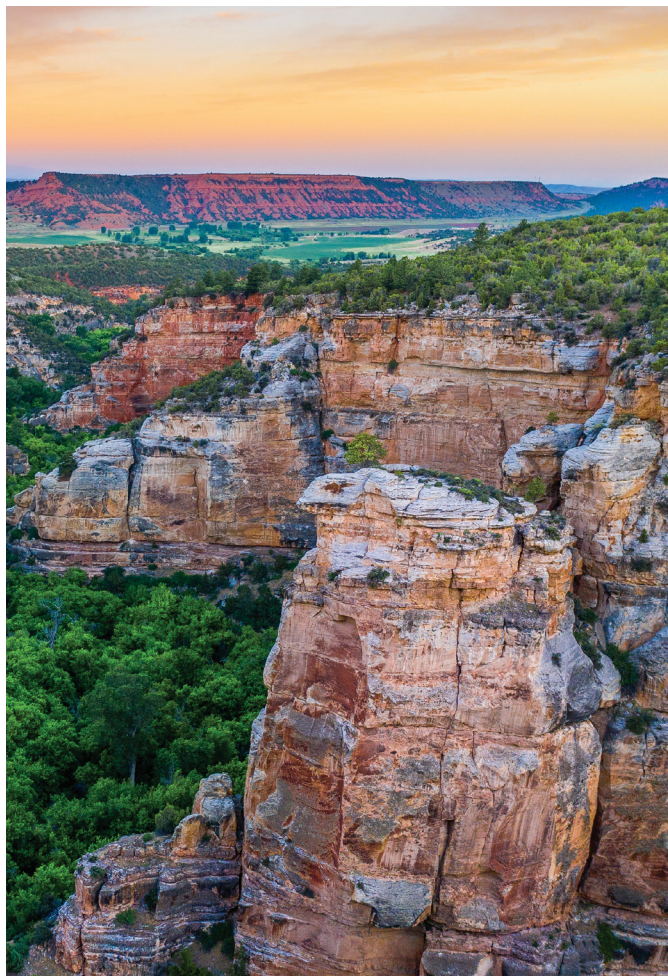


## What You Can Do

Explore the local geology, examine western flowers, watch for wildlife and soak in expansive views of spectacular canyon country. The preserve's tent camp provides an opportunity to enjoy the area's rugged and majestic ponderosa pine woodlands, lush cottonwood forests nestled in the bottom of deep canyons, open meadows with expansive views and spectacular canyon overlooks.

## What You Can See

The preserve is home to eight plant communities and more than 120 bird species, as well as mountain lion, black bear, elk, beaver and the remarkable spotted bat. Several rare plants—some found only in the Bighorns—also inhabit this unique landscape. Additionally, mule deer, pronghorn and coyotes can be found here, as can many birds of prey.



Canyon sunset © Chip Carroon



## Things to Know

- Tensleep Preserve is available by advance reservation for field trips, research, group stays and hiking.
- The preserve's learning center, tent camp and trail system offer a rare opportunity to enjoy the ecological wonders of the Bighorn region.
- Please abide by posted ranch rules and leave your dogs at home.

## Hours & Contact

- Preserve Hours: Tensleep Preserve is open to the public Thursday through Sunday from May to mid-October, weather permitting, but access is limited to protect its unique features. Please contact the preserve manager prior to visiting.
- Tensleep Preserve is located in north-central Wyoming on the southern edge of the Bighorn National Forest.

## Tensleep Preserve

101 Rome Hill Rd.

Tensleep, WY 82442

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Trey Davis, *Eastern WY Stewardship Director*

[nature.org/tensleep](http://nature.org/tensleep)



The mission of  
The Nature Conservancy  
is to protect the lands and waters on  
which all life depends.

Visit [nature.org/preserves](https://www.nature.org/preserves) for detailed visitor  
information on these locations and other places we protect.

If you visited one of our Wyoming preserves,  
share a story or photo with us at [wyoming@tnc.org](mailto:wyo@tnc.org)



The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming  
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Lander, WY 82510

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