



Teton Science Schools

People • Nature • Place • Education

History of Teton Science Schools

Teton Science Schools have six key program areas which accomplish its mission of connecting people, nature, place and education. Our 40th anniversary finds us to be a recognized leader in place-based education for not only our own community and its region, but on national and international levels as well.

The original Teton Science Schools' Kelly Campus provides a venue for the Graduate Program as well as residential education for schools and other summer programs. Located one mile west of town, the Jackson Campus serves as the organization's administrative home and houses the Pre-K through 12th grade Journeys School, Teacher Learning Center and the Conservation Research Center. Many residential educational opportunities are also offered here. Further south, on Highway 89, Wildlife Expeditions provides year-round, wildlife observation and natural history adventures. Our Wilson Campus provides much needed staff housing. That "s" at the end of the organization's name has truly been earned and wasn't there in the beginning.

Origins

People have inhabited the Jackson Hole region for the last 11,000 years. From the early tribes of the Shoshone, to the settlers and prospectors who followed them, to the ranchers who still run herds in the valley, the Hole has provided a rich tapestry of nature's finest accomplishments. When Grant Shinkle staked his circa-1900 claim to the land we now know as Teton Science Schools' Kelly Campus, he became the leader in a long line of modern-era land stewards who recognized the unique beauty of the area. The land passed through a number of owners' hands—Ransom "Mickey" Adams, D.H. Miller, Adams again—before becoming the site of a dude ranch known as the Flying V, established in 1928 by Jack and Dolly Woodsman.

The Woodsmans managed an 11-room main lodge and additional heated cabins and floored tents that served as sleeping quarters until fire destroyed the main lodge in 1932. That tragedy, coupled with a depressed economy, prompted Woodsman to sell the property to Gustav Koven and Paul Petzoldt in 1935 for the princely sum of \$5000. Koven and Petzoldt planned to run the place as a dude ranch, hunting camp and climbing school, but Petzoldt pulled out within two years time. Koven worked to restore the main lodge, but the property remained idle until 1941, when he finished what he called the Ramshorn.

Another change of ownership in 1946, to Greer Sugden, David Alleman and Robert Irwin, brought a measure success to the site. The Ramshorn Ranch, as it was known, served as a dude ranch in summer, hunting lodge in fall and a ski retreat in the winter and spring. Electricity was installed in 1947, and over the next few years, a succession of partners led to another ownership change in 1953. Alvin Adams took the helm, and with a glimmer of what this remarkable property might eventually become, hosted the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Adams eventually sold the Ramshorn to the federal government in 1956 for \$68,000, and the ranch became part of Grand Teton National Park.



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The future of Teton Science Schools really began to evolve when Katy Starratt leased this area of the Park to start up a re-sited version of her Elbo Ranch (a tourist facility originally situated on Cottonwood and Taggart Creeks). Her friendship with Ted and Joan Major led to many talks about establishing Teton Science Schools in Kelly.

Ted had come to believe in outdoor education. He held a firm belief in exposing students to new educational and living experiences through the study of ecological concepts in relatively undisturbed ecosystems. In such a setting, he felt students could better understand the relationships of the natural world and the interconnection and interdependence of life forms. He and his brother Jack were both versed in the natural sciences, and Ted had traveled the country teaching, from Alaska to Colorado. When he and Joan finally settled in Jackson in 1966, Ted took a teaching position as a seventh-grade life science teacher in the local public school. With the Tetons outside his window and Yellowstone less than an hour away, Ted's dream of establishing a lasting outdoor classroom seemed almost within reach.

Ted settled on a school site, at the Haines Ranch on the Moose-Wilson Road, establishing a classroom there in 1969. A six-week field course continued for four years at this location, and Jack Major signed on to teach a two-week field ecology college course through the University of California at Davis. A fifth grade environmental awareness program, Living in the Field Environment, was incorporated into the curriculum in 1971 through a federal grant, a program that survives to this day, taught in cooperation with Teton County School District.

But Ted's dream was bigger than a few weeks instruction could provide. He hoped to establish a year-round school in Grand Teton National Park and made application to the National Park Service in 1973. Katy Starratt's unexpected death during surgery in 1974 left the Majors with heartache, but a renewed sense of purpose, and with the Elbo Ranch at a standstill, the Park agreed to move the school there. On the basis of a special use permit, then, fledgling Teton Science School opened its doors in April, 1974. Known as the Grand Teton Environmental Education Center, the site was dedicated on August 24th in front of a gathering of some of two hundred guests, including Wyoming Senator Cliff Hansen, Laurence Rockefeller and Teton Science School Board member Mardy Murie. The keynote address was provided by Nathaniel Reed, Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

Growth

Over the next 20 years, Teton Science Schools grew with the addition of year-round programming, its own endowment and scholarships and an outreach program. The physical specimens collected by Olaus Murie, his wife Mardy and brother Adolph, such as skeletons, scat and plaster track casts, were acquired to become the Murie Collection, and Louise Murie donated her herbarium specimens to the collection already compiled by Jack Major. A graduate program began in 1994, allowing aspiring educators to engage in academic classes while gaining valuable field and classroom teaching experience. The Journeys Curriculum, established in 1997, evolved into Journeys School, an independent school that strives to integrate ecology, culture and community to ensure academic excellence and personal success for its students in grades PreK – 12. Great Plains Wildlife Institute



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was acquired in 1999. Renamed Wildlife Expeditions, this eco-tourism program of the Schools educates short-term visitor and residents by promoting ethical viewing of wildlife. The Mad Dog Ranch on Moose-Wilson Road was purchased in 2001 and was used to house staff and provide temporary shelter for the nascent Journeys School.

In March of 2004, Teton Science Schools acquired 880 acres one mile west of Jackson. Construction created the Jackson Campus, a complex of buildings that house Journeys School and the Teacher Learning Center, the latter providing educators a wide variety of professional development opportunities centered on innovation, excellence and place. The campus also houses most of the Schools' administrative offices, outfitting and storage, residential buildings for visiting students and teachers and a number of indoor educational spaces. Ninety-eight percent of the 880-acre parcel is preserved as open space, including swan ponds, tree-line/prairie interface and elk migration paths—a true outdoor classroom!

Established in November 2003, the Conservation Research Center is yet another piece of Teton Science Schools, serving as the research and stewardship branch of Teton Science Schools. It is sited on the south end of the property and improves and monitors the property as a living lab. The Center supports ecological stewardship through research and educational outreach.

Throughout its history, Teton Science Schools have set the standard in environmental education, scientific research, innovative pedagogy and curriculum development. With Journeys School, Teacher Learning Center, Wildlife Expeditions, Conservation Research Center, the Graduate Program and all other educational programs, the Schools continue to reach a diverse and growing audience. And through its partnership with Grand Teton National Park and Bridger-Teton National Forest, Teton Science Schools work hard to ensure that the dynamic qualities that so many have come to appreciate remain in place for the generations to come. Teton Science Schools, connecting people, nature, place and education.