

THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT MEMORIAL RANCH

What is it?

Where is it?

And why does the Club own a ranch?

By Luke Coccoli

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Program Manager

I could begin this essay out by telling you that the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch (TRMR) is a 6,060-acre working cattle ranch located in Montana on the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains just south of Glacier National Park. But it is more than that. So much more, in fact, that the Club bought this parcel of land in a very unique place for a very unique reason.

The TRMR is truly a small gem nestled in the brim of the Crown of the Continent, an area that contains 18 million acres of intact ecosystem spanning Alberta, British Columbia, and Montana in which all species of flora and fauna identified by Lewis and Clark still exist, including Canada lynx, grizzly bears, gray wolves, and other wildlife species listed as threatened elsewhere.

In 1987 the Club purchased “The Ranch” as part of its centennial celebration. It was named in honor of the founding father of the Club and for his vision and work to establish North American conservation. The Ranch is situated on a transitional zone often referred to as “where the horizontal grasslands and the vertical limestone cliffs collide” assumed the name it carries today. The Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch sign soon met visitors at the entrance of the property, replacing the old “Triple Divide Ranch” sign that once hung under the ranch archway.

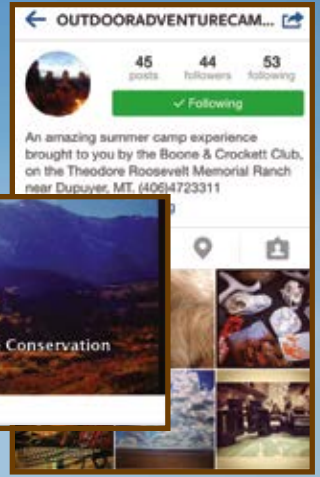
The Ranch did not get its name due to TR spending weeks on it riding for the brand or hunting its various big game species, which include elk, moose, whitetail and mule deer, cougar, black bear and grizzlies, and occasionally bighorn sheep, mountain goats, and pronghorn. The Ranch is also not a playground or vacation destination for its members, actually quite the contrary. Regular and professional member are not permitted to hunt the ranch.

TRMR is a place where winds that blow out of the adjacent Bob Marshall Wilderness frequently gust to reach over 100 mph in the fall and winter months. It’s a place where -40°F wind chills can make vehicles and heavy equipment congeal in a matter of moments. It’s a place where over 2,000 migratory mule deer call home for their winter ground. It has and always will be a place where the grizzly bears roam free.

And yet it is more. The TRMR also embodies the Club’s Elmer E. Rasmuson Wildlife Conservation Center (RWCC), a 5,000 square foot place-based conservation education facility



Stay up to date with what is going on at TRMR. Follow Luke on Facebook and Instagram @Outdooradventurecamps.



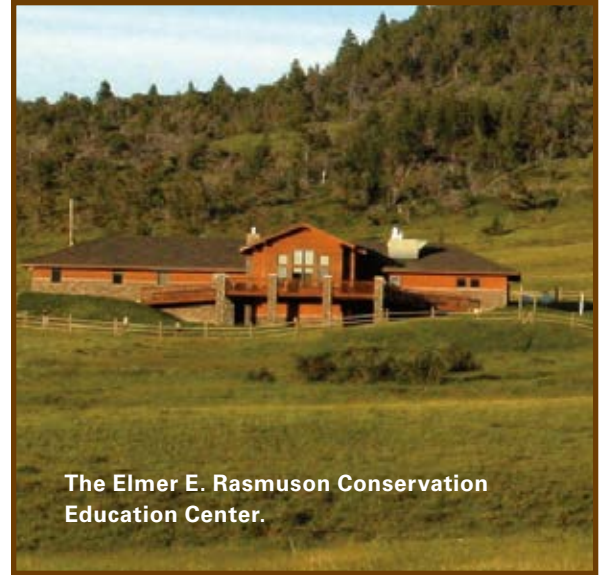
constructed in 2001. On average, the RWCC welcomes about 2,000 visitors each year during peak season—April through September. Visitors range from students and teachers participating in the K-12 conservation education program, to scouts and leaders participating in the nationally accredited Boy Scouts of America Montana High Adventure Base (MOHAB) camp, to 6-18 year-olds attending multiple residential summertime Outdoor Adventure Camps (OAC) or ladies that come to attend the annual women's hunter education program each August. Others welcome include local and state agencies, NGOs and private entities that wish to retreat to the TRMR and RWCC for solitude and focus while working on team-building, strategic planning or just for a chance to get away from it all and experience the natural processes that surround them.

If you ask Ranch Manager Mike Briggs about the TRMR, he will tell you, "The prettier a ranch is, the more difficult it will be to manage." And he is right. Cell phone service is spotty, fiber-optic internet cables are just now finding their way to our modems, and it's a 75-mile roundtrip in order to obtain groceries and access most other modern amenities, including the hospital. And we haven't even begun talking about work yet.

Mike manages the 220 cow-calf (and growing) herd plus keeps an eye on the 8-10 bulls and handful of horses on the ranch, with his wife and four children by his side to lend a helping hand. We cut our own hay, chop our own firewood and plow ourselves out whenever a February blizzard strikes and inhibits the school bus from making the hour-long commute to and from town. TRMR is open to public hunting under the state's Block Management Program and Mike is up long before daylight checking in hunters throughout the fall and can be found in the hayfields working long after sunset during the spring and summer.

And if you asked either of us why we love our job, we probably wouldn't have to say a word. From the reflection in our eyes, you would see we have no cubicle. An average day is not typical. We have been charged with the mission of the Boone and Crockett Club. Through conservation research, demonstration and education, we plan to show the public that conservation works, wildlife and livestock do co-exist, and more.

So much more. ■



The Elmer E. Rasmuson Conservation Education Center.

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