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Jackson Wild, PBS partner for Earth Day

Nonprofit will host event as part of national American Spring Live programming.

By Billy Arnold

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Ann Johnson Prum's Emmy award-winning film, "Super Hummingbirds," will be shown during Spring Earth Fest in April.

ANN JOHNSON PRUM/THIRTEENPRODUCTIONS LLC

With off-season just around the corner, people and animals are on the move.

Tourists are starting to trickle out of town, and migratory elk and mule deer are beginning to make their way into the Tetons. But this year, the National Park Service's biologists won't be the only ones tracking migratory patterns (of ungulates, not tourists).

WyomingPBS will be following mule deer for a new episode of its documentary series, "Wyoming Chronicle." The state PBS station is producing that episode in collaboration with WNET, the New York City PBS station that produces the Emmy Award-winning series "Nature." The two stations'

partnership is one of many WNET has set up to celebrate citizen science and the coming of spring as it launches a new documentary series, “American Spring Live,” which will run from April 29 to May 1 on PBS.

In addition to producing the deer-focused episode of “Wyoming Chronicle,” WyomingPBS has joined forces with Jackson Wild to host Spring Earth Fest, a free public event that will take place at the Center for the Arts on Earth Day, April 20.

The event will feature family-friendly activities, screenings of conservation-oriented media and a panel discussion focused on citizen science initiatives. A University of Wyoming-sponsored program to monitor milkweed and the populations of monarch butterfly larvae that eat it will be one of those initiatives.

“We have cutting-edge citizen science in Wyoming and something we want to do with this program is to encourage people to get involved,” said Cindy Harger, Jackson Wild’s community partnerships and events director.

Films screened during Spring Earth Fest will include “Glaciers of the Winds,” WyomingPBS’ film about the effects of Wyoming’s changing glacier pack, and “Super Hummingbirds,” the Emmy Award-winning episode that director Ann Johnson Prum created for “Nature.”

Prum, now the senior producer for American Spring Live, will attend Spring Earth Fest, where she will host a Q&A after the screening of her film and join the panel discussion.

“We’re lucky to have her,” Harger said.

WyomingPBS and Jackson Wild’s partnership is one of 10 in communities across the country that fall under American Spring Live’s umbrella. Those collaborations will be headed by that area’s PBS station, and will feature events focused on promoting citizen science initiatives. All programming will be funded by grants from WNET.

Jennifer Amend, WyomingPBS’ marketing and outreach director, said the decision to partner with a Jackson nonprofit rather than one in a city like Laramie or Cheyenne was a result of existing ties between her station and Jackson Wild.

When WNET opened its request for proposals for American Spring Live partnerships, the two organizations had just finished hosting a showing of “Native America,” a WyomingPBS series exploring the history of Native Americans.

After looking over WNET’s invitation, Amend said, she knew her station would be selected only if it had a “strong partner.”

“We had just come off the heels of that really successful experience working with Jackson Wild, so we felt very confident in them,” she said.

Amend was also confident that Jackson’s environmentally-conscious and -engaged community would be eager to take part in the citizen science initiatives.

“This grant is associated with training citizen scientists, and Jackson’s community was really appealing,” she said. “We knew that there are a lot of folk who are interested in this very thing and they’re going to go out and do these type of things.”

The announcement of Jackson Wild’s partnership with WyomingPBS and American Spring Live came soon after the nonprofit, which was formerly known as the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival, announced it would focus on global partnerships and offload local programming to the Center of Wonder. Harger said this collaboration is consistent with that change.

“This is the type of program that reflects both the new mission of Jackson Wild — to make an impact with national and international partnerships — and the type of programming we hope will carry on in partnerships with other local community organizations,” she said.

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