



Boy Scouts line up with bundles of antlers as they prepare to show them off to bidders Saturday at the Jackson Hole Boy Scout Elk Antler Auction on Town Square.



Cub Scout Henry Berezay, 8, smiles at his older counterparts as they wait to show off more antlers at Saturday's auction.



Scouts Dillon Weiss and Tyson Danby carry a beetle-cleaned elk skull with an impressive rack as it goes up for sale Saturday at the Jackson Hole Boy Scout Elk Antler Auction during ElkFest.



Darrell Miller cruises the square on his antler-laden trike Saturday, drawing many a stare from vendors, Boy Scouts, buyers and passersby.

ElkFest *action*

Scouts show off outdoor skills, sell antlers in annual celebration.

Story by Jennifer Dorsey
Photographs by Price Chambers

Saturday was all about celebrating Boy Scouts, the National Elk Refuge and the Jackson Hole community as residents and out-of-towners gathered on and around Town Square for ElkFest. The centerpiece of the day, the Boy Scout Elk Antler Auction, started at midmorning, but the fun, including a concert by the Jackson Hole Community Band, got under way early.

Near the southeast corner of the square, Scouts practiced their lashing skills by erecting a tower of rope and pine logs for people to climb.

"It's just to show a cool aspect of Scouting," said Dusty Perrin, 17, an Eagle Scout.

Scouts built a rope bridge in the southwest area of the square, and kids lined up to take turns traversing it. Carter Selleck, 5, of Moose, was among the first to wobble across, spotted by two boys just a little older.

"It was 'awesome,'" he said. "I want to do it again."

On Delaney Avenue, people browsed antlers and other items in a sale sponsored by Rotary Club. Among those who had traveled to Jackson for ElkFest was 13-year-old Hunter Jacobson, who wore a white wolf pelt around his shoulders as he hung out with his dad, Nathan, of Utah-based Alpine Antlers.

Carol Boyce, of Wapiti, shopped with her husband on Delaney for antlers to craft into decorative items

and furniture. "We just built a new house," she said.

Anti-abortion activists in red "Jesus is the Standard" T-shirts read from the Bible and passed out pamphlets, while a Jackson Hole resident held a "Let's Go Mets" sign as a humorous counterpoint. Valley residents attending ElkFest included numerous members of the grassroots group Jackson Hole United, sporting blue shirts and buttons reading "Civility, Compassion, Love" in an organized nonconfrontational response to the protesters.

Toward the center of the square, Wilsonite Nancy Seaton, whose sons Cole, 7, and Kendall, 9, are Scouts, worked with family and friends to slice birthday cakes from Albertsons to celebrate the National Elk Refuge's 100th birthday, coming up Aug. 10.

The refuge and regional Scouts have a longstanding friendship cemented by elk antlers. Scouts are allowed to collect sheds on the refuge, and they donate 80 percent of their auction proceeds for refuge habitat projects, keeping the other 20 percent for the Jackson district's Friends of Scouting dues.

The auction action kicked off at 10 a.m. with a Scout color guard and a recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Breakfast burritos and grilled hot dogs, being sold by Jackson Youth Baseball, scented the air around the stage on Center Street as bidding began.

Eli Rammell and Ryan Dunne, both 8, and Christopher Galbraith, 12, were among the Scouts who queued up next to the stage waiting their turns to display to buyers a bunch of antlers or a single rack.

Christopher said this was his sixth auction.

"It's a fun thing Scouts get to do," he said.



A cape buffalo skull, one of many unusual finds on display at ElkFest, sits for sale among the private vendors' inventory.

Antler collections this year were affected by mild weather that allowed bull elk to migrate off the refuge with their antlers intact.

In the end, 7,398 pounds of antlers sold, compared with the 10-year average of 8,369 pounds. Bidders paid an average of \$12.15 per pound, well above the 10-year average of \$9.34. The sale yielded \$90,469, up from the \$76,941 average of the past 10 years.

"It is welcome news, after we expected things to be down because of lower quantities of antler collected this year because of the early melt-off and concern over protesters affecting the auction," auction co-organizer Cliff Kirkpatrick said. "We are very thankful."



Wading through a sea of shed antlers Saturday, horn aficionados examine the massive collection of animal parts on Town Square during ElkFest.