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(S.D.)-Elk Moved From Wind Cave National Park Into Custer State Park



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 03/18/2013 09:05 AM

(WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK, S.D.)—Nearly 400 elk from Wind Cave National Park were recently moved into Custer State Park as part of a plan to reduce the herd size in the national park while increasing population numbers in the state park.

Helicopters chartered by the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

Department (GFP) and paid for with funding from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation worked for two days to round up and push elk north across the parks' shared boundary. Sections of fence that normally restrict animal movement between the parks had been lowered or had drop-down gates installed to facilitate the transfer.

"This is just another example of the strong partnership we have with Custer State Park, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation," said Wind Cave park superintendent Vidal Davila.

"Twenty-seven of the 391 animals transferred were wearing tracking collars, which will allow us to monitor their movements and gauge the success of the operation."

The parks signed a Memorandum of Understanding last spring that benefits both parks by allowing managers the tools needed to adaptively manage their respective elk populations.

"This successful elk transfer demonstrates that when government entities work together cooperatively, good things result," said GFP Secretary Jeff Vonk. "This effort is a win-win for both parks by helping both entities achieve their management objectives."

Wind Cave's Elk Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, completed in 2009, calls for an elk population of 232 to 475. There was an estimated 950 elk in Wind Cave National Park this winter.

--National Park Service