

Time-lapse project still collecting images

Written by Gothenburg Times

Friday, 11 May 2012 13:31 - Last Updated Friday, 11 May 2012 13:32

LINCOLN—From waterfowl and wildlife to its floods and droughts, the “flat water” that played a significant role in the westward expansion of the United States has a story to tell.

The Platte River Basin Time-lapse project (plattebasintimelapse.com) seeks to shed some light on what really happens on this system that provides water for people and for crops that feed the world.

A team led by photographer Michael Forsberg and NET Television’s Michael Farrell will finish installing the remainder of 45 customized digital SLR remote cameras at fixed locations along the basin this spring. Jeff Dale of TRLcam.com has provided technical assistance in setting up the cameras.

Protected by the elements in specialized cases, the remote-control cameras capture a single photo an hour in every daylight hour of every day. The team’s goal is to capture the ebb and flow of the river, showcasing how natural and manmade events change it over time.

“We want to be able to show people how the complex story of the Platte River unfolds over days, months and even years,” Forsberg said.

It was when Forsberg and Farrell were shooting a documentary for NET/PBS based on Forsberg’s book, “Great Plains: America’s Lingering Wild,” that they started talking about creating the time-lapse of the entire ecosystem—from its Rocky Mountain starting points to its run across Nebraska and into the Missouri River.

The team already has thousands of images collected and would like the project to continue for at least a wet to dry cycle but hopes maybe it could last for a couple of decades, depending on if it continues to receive funding.

Both Farrell and Forsberg have personal connections to the Platte, both having photographed it for years.

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“We think this project can be extremely educational for people who don’t know much about where water comes from,” Farrell said. “Whether ag, recreation, municipalities or wildlife, the processes that go into where our water comes from are not very well understood, so we think this has great value for education and the general public.”

Forsberg and Farrell are also assistant professors of practice at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

This project received financial support from the university’s Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, the Cooper Foundation and Nikon Camera.

Learn more about the Platte Basin Time-lapse project in IANR’s new “Growing a Healthy Future” magazine at <http://ianrhome.unl.edu/growing>.