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(S.D.)-Wind Cave Elk Being Collared

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 02/07/2013 08:45 AM

HOT SPRINGS, S.D. (AP) - A contracted helicopter crew is snagging and collaring elk at Wind Cave National Park in southwestern South Dakota as part of an effort to study the movement of the animals.

Officials want to add 36 collared elk to the 40 already wearing tracking collars. They had reached 26 elk by the end of Wednesday.

It takes only a matter of minutes for the crew to fire a net over an elk from the air, collar it and take a blood sample on the ground, and release the animal. Pilot Jim Pope says concern for the animals' safety is paramount.

Officials plan to push hundreds of elk outside the park boundaries to reduce a bloated herd. Tracking the collared elk will help officials determine how successful that plan is.

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