



June 2015

the wyoming game & fish department

CASPER REGION newsletter

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June Fishing

20th Annual Kids' Fishing Day

The Casper Recreation Foundation and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department hosted the 20th Annual Kids' Fishing Day at Yesness Pond.

There were 328 kids that registered on June 6th and each kid received a free rod and reel combo and ice cream treat from the North



Platte Walleye Unlimited Club. Sportsman's Warehouse and Rocky Mountain Discount Sports provided free bait to all. Wyoming Fly Casters and Grey Reef Trout Unlimited provided hands-on assistance for anglers. When finished each new angler received a bag full of prizes and information from Game and Fish and the City of Casper Recreation Center. Game and Fish cleaned over 190 fish for new anglers to keep and cook. Thanks to all who made this day possible.



Inside This Month's Issue:

In the Water
Stocking Waters

On the Ground
Shepherd Fire Re-growth,
Sage-grouse Surveys

In the News
Black Bear, Raccoons

In the Water

Stocking Waters, Glendo Check Station

Adam Leiferman, Statewide Response Specialist, worked with a group of local volunteers, ages 10 to 60, to mountain bike and then hike fish into Otter Creek Ponds. This remote set of beaver ponds poses many challenges to fish biologists and fish culturists, but Adam and volunteers seem to have found the best way to stock it. They biked 2.5 miles and then hiked the fish the remaining 0.5 mile. The ponds received over 450 brook trout in June, all of which survived the bike/hike to their new home.



Fisheries Biologist Matt Hahn was also busy moving fish. Bryan Stock Trail Reservoir in Casper received 330 crappie and J Bar U, just outside of Kaycee, received 238 crappie that were transplanted from Keyhole Reservoir. If the crappie spawn successfully, they should provide additional opportunity for anglers at the reservoirs. Hahn also transplanted 633 golden shiners into J Bar U to bolster forage fish availability.

Casper Region fish biologists assisted wardens with a check station at Glendo Reservoir the end of June. The weather was hot, fishing was slow and only about 160 interviews were conducted. Game and Fish normally conducts between 200 to 300 interviews at our check stations. These check stations are critical to collect scientific data from anglers to measure the success of the management of the fisheries.



On the Ground

Shepherd Fire Re-growth, Sage-grouse Surveys

Casper Wildlife Biologist Heather O'Brien spent some of the drier days in June evaluating habitat conditions around the region. Shrubs and aspen are recovering rapidly on the east side of Casper Mountain following the Shepherd Fire in 2012. Aspen re-growth at Ponderosa Park has been incredible thanks to excellent moisture in both 2014 and 2015.



Wildlife Biologist O'Brien has also been collecting data on habitat treatments in the Bates Hole region south of Casper. Habitat Biologist Keith Schoup performed some mechanical treatments on dense stands of sagebrush in the fall of 2014. Starting this year, differences in plant composition are being measured on these treatments. It is hoped that these areas become more lush with grasses and forbs for mule deer and other big game species and sage-grouse broods, while untreated areas still provide security cover for big game and sage-grouse.



June also saw completion of data entry for the Northeast Wyoming Sage-Grouse Local Working Group. This group helps oversee management of the grouse populations in the Thunder Basin, east front of the Bighorn Mountains and extreme northeast Wyoming. The 2015 monitoring effort checked 337 of 402 occupied leks (84%) and found an average male attendance of 16 males per occupied lek. This compares to 10 males per occupied lek in 2014, and was the highest since 18 males per occupied lek were observed in 2008. Lek status was confirmed for 281 leks, with 67% being active and 33% inactive. This compared 56% active and 44% inactive in 2014. Thanks to all within and outside the Wyoming Game and Fish who did the good work in getting the monitoring survey completed and data entered.

While this spring's sage-grouse lek counts showed improved numbers, local managers are now concerned that the cool wet weather experienced since mid-April may have seriously limited chick hatching and survival. Conditions that benefit one species can negatively impact others.

Summer has begun in the Thunder Basin with more than double the average amount of spring rainfall. This has made for a carpet of green grass and forbs that have barely even begun to dry out, and filled the dams and ponds – even ones that have been dry for years. The wet weather is also resulting in excellent growth of shrubs and there is plenty of food around for the recovering herds of pronghorn and mule deer. The blessing of two relatively mild winters followed by excellent forage production has yielded very good overwinter survival, large numbers of big healthy fawns, and big game populations bouncing back from the recently experienced lows. This was especially evident as personnel completed line transect surveys for pronghorn, with a noticeable improvement in herd numbers being found and a fair number of deer spotted along the way.



In the News

Black Bear, Raccoons

Casper recently had some excitement with a yearling black bear. Wildlife biologist first had reports of a black bear just off Elkhorn Creek on the east side of town. Twelve hours later, the tired, young bear was immobilized and safely relocated in the northern Laramie Range. Biologists believe the bear traveled down Elkhorn Creek from Casper Mountain in search of a new home after being kicked out of his territory by his mother.



The Casper Game and Fish office experienced a bit of wildlife in their own backyard, or rather inside it. The office had a raccoon family nest in the attic, which required many interesting days of trapping efforts. The raccoons were finally located in the library. The parents and six kits were safely relocated into the wild...a long way from town and any human structures.

