



the wyoming game & fish department

CASPER REGION newsletter

October Hunting Bighorn Sheep

Ethan Pull, of Casper, harvested this 9-year old ram in the Wood River drainage in Area 5 in early October.

While there are always lots of successful sheep hunters in Area 5, this one is a little unusual in the fact that Ethan is only 12 years old! Yes, Ethan drew a sheep license in the very first year his father put him in for it.

His father, Joel Pull, tried to explain to his son about just how lucky he was, but he's not sure if it's quite sunk in with Ethan. Ethan dropped the ram in one shot, and his dad, along with four of his uncles were all there to celebrate and help pack it out. What a great way to start a young hunting career! Nice work Ethan.



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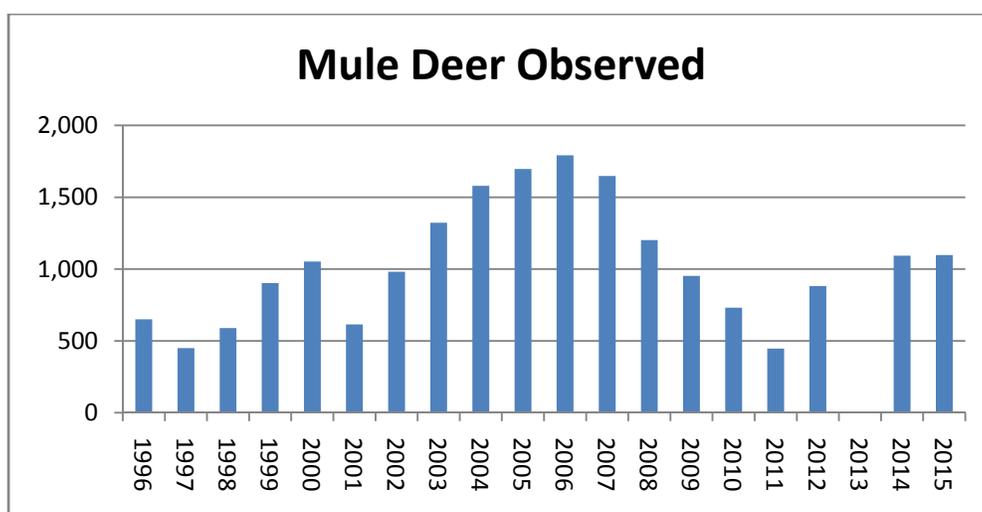
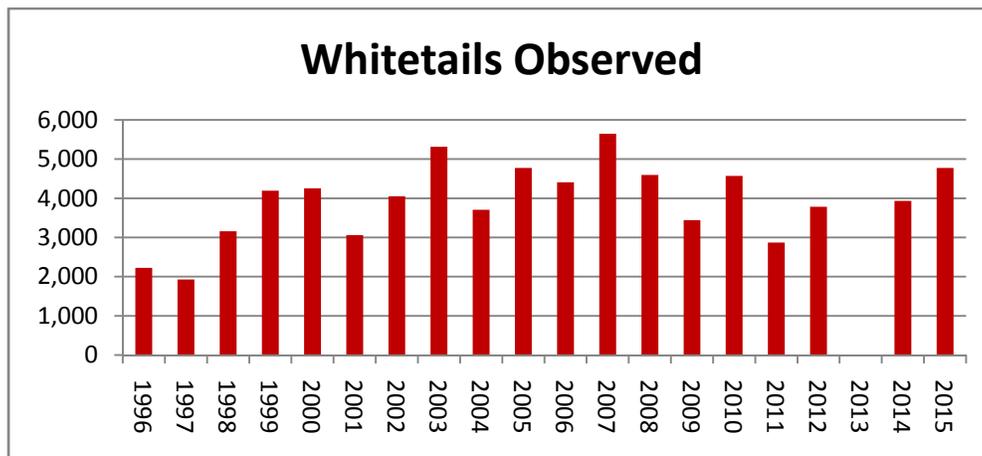
October, in Photos

On the Ground

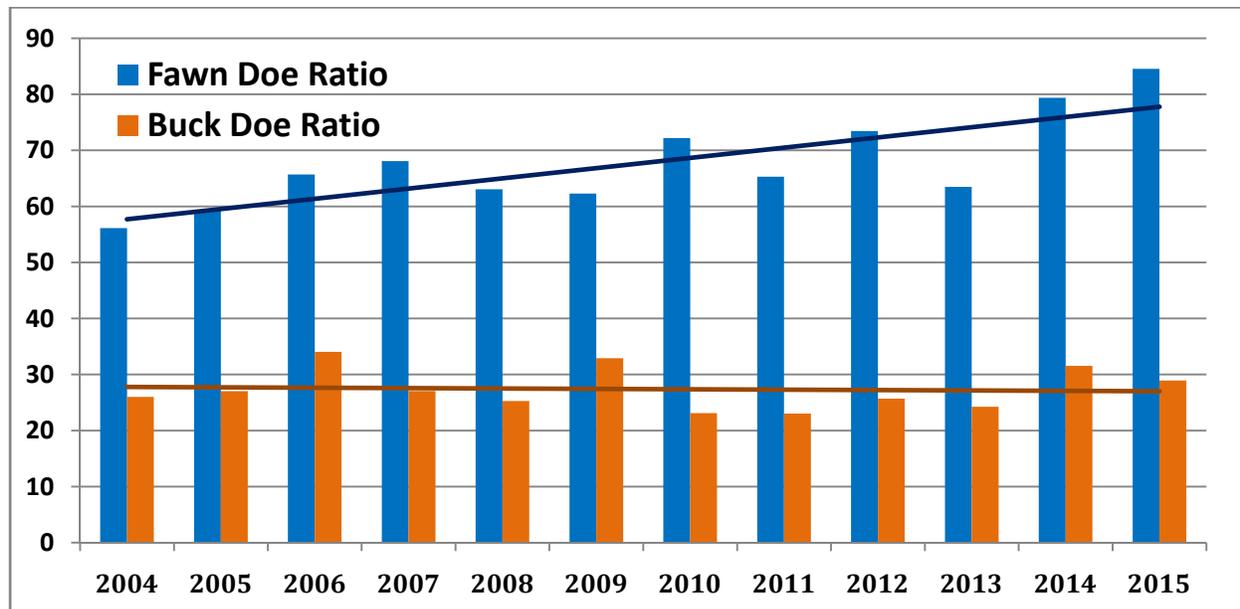
Black Hills Deer Survey

Continuing a 40+ year tradition, both Casper and Sheridan Region WGFD personnel in the Black Hills completed annual preseason classifications and trend counts of white-tailed and mule deer in the Black Hills. Classifications and counts are conducted along set routes throughout the Black Hills, and are completed in the late evening and then after dark using spotlights. This annual project spans most of the second half of October, requiring about 100 man-hours of work and many miles driven.

After a general decline in numbers of both mule deer and whitetails between about 2007 and 2013, the populations of these species began to rebound in 2014, with the trend continuing this year. Total numbers of whitetails observed increased this year, while the number of mule deer detected remained in line with last year's efforts. However, area biologists and game wardens felt the warm and dry conditions present this October limited the number of deer seen, and the actual trend in numbers of both deer species is up about 25% or more from last year. We anticipate these deer herds will be very close to management objectives after the hunters go home this fall.



Another bright spot is that the observed fawn:doe ratio of the whitetails was one of the highest on record at 85 per 100. A figure that well surpassed last year's mark of 79 per 100. Anecdotal observations of mule deer suggest their fawn production was very good as well, but we'll know more in a month, after we classify mule deer from the air.



There is good news in the buck department as well. Although visibility of bucks varies greatly from year to year, the 29 whitetail bucks per 100 does witnessed this October is just under the highest of 32 per 100 we found last year – buck numbers which we have not seen since total deer counts last peaked. It should also be noted that because we classify bucks outside the rut, long term data suggests we do not see about a third of the bucks out there; and our preseason buck:doe ratio is running about 40:100.

If the coming winter is not too tough, and we dodge the disease bullet – it looks like a return to the traditional season dates and license issuance in the Black Hills is at hand for 2016.

Behind the Badge

Off Road/Road Hunting

Unfortunately, driving off established roads continues to be an issue on public lands, especially during fall hunting seasons. We have a lot of concerns whenever hunters drive off of established roads. In many instances, just one person driving off-road can create a road in perpetuity. After tracks are observed through grass, others will often then drive on the same tracks once they see them. In these cases, we have a new road. Unfortunately, as road densities increase, hunting quality usually suffers. When road densities are too high, animals do not have enough secure areas to hide in, and therefore often just leave the area. In this picture, these hunters were simply driving everywhere just searching for animals, and had not even harvested anything. Game and Fish strongly encourages people to stay on established roads at all times. It's not only good for the land, but is also good for keeping animals in the area...especially when hunting our public lands.



In the Water

Population Estimates

The Casper Region fisheries management crew completed three trout population estimates on the North Platte River: Cardwell below Pathfinder Reservoir, Robertson Road in Casper and Big Muddy between Casper and Glenrock. Cardwell will continue to provide excellent fishing. With the extremely low flow and high water temperatures during May



and June below Gray Reef Reservoir, we had concerns about the trout population in and below Casper. Numbers of trout per mile appeared lower in both reaches; however, we are happy to report a collapse in the fishery did not happen. We expect good to excellent fishing to continue from Casper to Glenrock.



The low flows and sediment loading that occurred upstream of Casper this spring resulted in dismal spawning success in the North Platte River. Gray Reef Reservoir was drained in 2013 and the sediment released from the reservoir caused an extremely weak year class in 2013. A significant decline in the population was expected with the two missing year classes. In May, when Game and Fish was notified by the Bureau of Reclamation that flows were being dropped, Casper fisheries managers worked with the fish culture section to help mitigate the loss. 256,628 trout were stocked upstream of Casper, thanks to everyone that had a hand in the effort.





In the ninth year of the Platte River Revival, the in-river habitat improvement work has begun on the North Platte River. The City of Casper is leading Revival and has nine agencies with 21 businesses and organizations involved in the project. Morad Park, just downstream of the Casper Game and Fish office, is the first phase of the in-river work. Game and Fish electrofishing data will be used as baseline information to evaluate response of trout to the habitat improvement work.

October, in Photos

The Casper Region has enjoyed a great fall hunting season. People are seeing both pronghorn antelope and mule deer numbers rebounding from previous years, making for many happy hunters. Field personnel encountered many youth hunters experiencing first hunts, good weather and great harvests.





