



the wyoming game & fish department

CASPER REGION newsletter

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May Hunting Black Hills Wild Turkeys

Spring turkey season in the Black Hills has been quiet this year. “While wild turkey numbers are down a bit, everywhere I went I saw a few birds,” reported Sundance Game Warden Chris Teter. “It seems like the weather has kept hunter participation down as well, but those hunters who are getting out have been successful.”

Wildlife Biologist Joe Sandrini agreed, “Our turkey numbers are probably a little better than half of what they were when we peaked five or six years ago, but poult production the past two years has helped us begin to rebound.”



Hunter harvest data, which is one of the main ways Game and Fish tracks turkey populations, indicates participation in spring turkey hunting declined about 25% between 2010 and 2014, as a tough winter and several years of poor reproduction caused turkey numbers to drop statewide.

The change was even more notable in the Black Hills, where spring hunter numbers decreased in the face of a 60% dip in the wild turkey population, according to Sandrini.

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“Bird hunters sort of regulate themselves,” Sandrini stated. “When the numbers of wild turkeys decline, fewer hunters show up to hunt; but it takes about a year or so for hunter numbers to tick up or down as the bird population fluctuates. The state has seen an overall change in the direction wild turkey populations are headed, and I am expecting a few more hunters to show up this year,” Sandrini said.



Game wardens and biologists hiked the backcountry during wild turkey season

May Fishing

Update on Seminoe Reservoir

Walleye in Seminoe Reservoir have been increasing in abundance, overall, since the regulation was reduced from 20 to 6 fish in 2002. The size structure of the population increased for several years after the regulation change and basically stabilized where it is today. Currently, we see large numbers of young walleye produced every two or three years. Since walleyes grow so slow in this reservoir, it takes them on average five years to reach 15 inches. Angler harvest has been sufficient to crop the numbers as their growth approaches 18 inches. While the numbers are reduced, enough survive to reach large sizes that we retain a trophy component to the population, (25-32 inches) but numbers of mid-sized walleyes (18-25 inches) are not so high that they have a significant negative impact on the trout population. Given the walleye present, the Department now has to stock large trout (9-inches) to get sufficient survival of trout to provide a fishery, but without large numbers of walleye larger than 18 inches we have not had to adjust trout stocking rates.





Game and Fish conducted a walleye focused creel survey at Seminoe Reservoir during the month of July in 2015. Based on creel interviews from 245 anglers indicating they were targeting walleye, the average catch rate was 0.60 walleye per hour (0.50 fish/hour is generally considered good fishing by fish managers). Anglers report harvesting 53% of the walleye caught with the average length of 14.4 inches.

On the Ground

Sagebrush Seedlings, Sage-Grouse Update

Douglas Wildlife Biologist Willow Steen, along the Habitat Protection Biologists Amanda Withroder and Scott Gamo, are members of the Douglas Sage-grouse Core Area Restoration Team, a multi-stakeholder team formed to facilitate large-scale habitat improvement and restoration efforts. The team is lead by Chesapeake Energy through a management plan approved by the state in 2013. Combined Game and Fish and Restoration Team efforts have resulted in 50,000 sagebrush seedlings planted in the Douglas Core Area with an additional 50,000 more planned for planting in 2016. Hopefully, these plantings will regenerate habitat that was lost to a large wildlife, and will help off-set the impacts to sage-grouse from intensive energy development.



50,000 sagebrush seedling are scheduled to be planted in 2016, in addition to the 50,000 planted in 2015 near Douglas





Sage-Grouse Update

Wildlife managers conducted sage-grouse lek surveys during the early morning hours of April. Game and Fish personnel and volunteers counted birds at their leks, or courtship grounds, where they return to every spring. Biologists also conducted aerial surveys by plane to search for new leks and check known leks in difficult to access areas.

While some sage-grouse leks were difficult to survey due to spring snow and mud, overall bird counts appear to be up again in 2016. Many leks had a higher number of male birds this spring compared to last spring, even though numbers had improved in 2015 as well. Overall, the average number of male sage

grouse counted on leks hit a low in 2013, and have been increasing ever since. Final totals still need to be tallied by biologists in the Casper Region, but preliminary data indicate bird numbers are continuing to increase this spring.

Behind the Badge

Boating Safety and Fishing Regulations, Dead Wild Turkeys

Wyoming's boating season will soon be in full swing, and the Game and Fish reminds boaters to make sure watercraft regulations are being followed to ensure a safe boating season on Wyoming's waters.

According to Game and Fish, most boating violations occur from not having required safety equipment on board.

In most years, the most common violations include failure to provide life jackets, failure to have an approved throwable flotation device on board, and failure to provide a fire extinguisher for those boats needing this equipment.



Game Wardens Adam Parks and Cody Bish began boating season by place warning buoys on Alcova Reservoir

Approved throwable safety equipment includes buoyant cushions and ring buoys. Watercraft that are 16 feet long or over must have one of these devices on the boat. In addition, a separate life jacket is required for each person on board. A section on personal flotation devices is found on page 23 of the boating regulations. Certain boats are required to have fire extinguishers on board. A description of types of boats requiring fire extinguishers can be found on page 37 of the boating regulations pamphlet.

Boaters with questions on boating laws, registrations, safety equipment etc. can contact the Casper Region office at (307) 473-3400.



A day of boat safety and fishing regulation checks on Pathfinder Reservoir with Game Wardens Adam Parks, Teal Joseph and Dillon Herman and Dylan Bergman. Compliance was excellent, with a handful of people on boats and many people fishing from shore. Fishing was slow for trout.



Dead Wild Turkeys

Game wardens Brady Vandenberg and Adam Parks responded to a residence in east Casper following a report of up to a dozen dead turkeys. When they arrived, several dead turkeys were observed scattered throughout the yard, as well as a few other live turkeys exhibiting unusual behavior. The homeowner stated that they heard a few of the turkeys fall directly out of the roosting tree and land on their roof. Wardens Vandenberg and Parks collected a total of 18 dead turkeys from the area, and samples from these wild turkeys were sent to the wildlife laboratory in Laramie to determine cause of death. Results are pending, although prairie dog poison is the suspected culprit.



In the Water

Channel Cats for Wyoming

Recently, the Game and Fish swapped 14,000 fingerlings and 10,000 catchable rainbow trout with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. In return, they provided Wyoming with 75,000 channel catfish. In the Casper Region, Texaco Reservoir, JBarU, Glendo Wetlands and the North Platte River above Glendo received various numbers of catfish. These fish were also distributed to other areas across the state for angler's enjoyment!



Fisheries Biologists Matt Hahn (Casper) and Andrew Nikirk (Sheridan) assist fish culturists sorting catfish before stocking them into Wyoming waters