



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

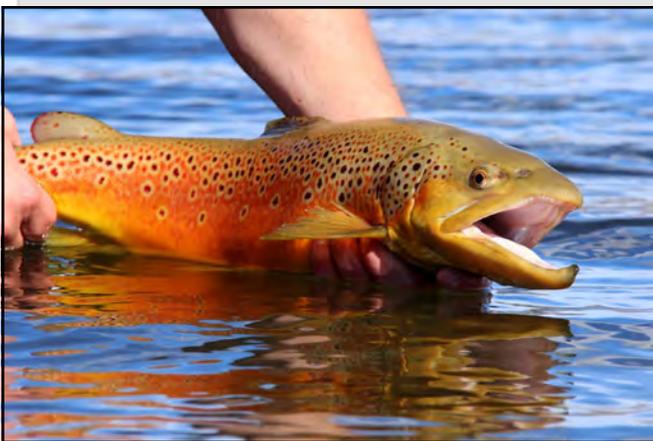
Pinedale Region

November 2015 Newsletter



Soda Lake Brooks and Browns

The Pinedale Fish crew and public volunteers sampled trout populations in Soda Lake. The largest brown trout captured was 24 inches long and weighed 5.8 pounds. The largest brook trout was 18.4 inches long and weighed three pounds. Trout appear to be more numerous now than in the fall of 2014. A population estimate could not be calculated for brown trout, because not enough

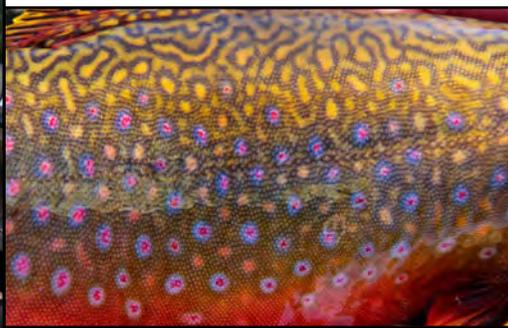


(Above) A load of fish is transferred from the hoop net to the live well for weighing and measuring. (Below) A brook trout is released back to Soda Lake.

fish were captured on more than one occasion. However, the number of brown trout captured this year was 1.3 times higher than the number captured in 2014. The population estimate for brook trout was also higher this year at 5,170 than what was estimated in 2014 at approximately 2,750 brook trout.

Soda Lake is relatively warm and shallow with unusual water chemistry that allows for rapid growth in fish, but it is also subject to periodic die-offs. Trout declines are likely due to low dissolved oxygen concentrations in the winter, warm summer temperatures and a bacterial disease. Many of the problems are the result of the long-term drought that Wyoming experienced over the past two decades.

(Left) Pinedale Fish Biologist Pete Cavalli measures a hefty brown trout from Soda Lake as Fish Tech Karl Goemer looks on.





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The Warden Page

Pinedale Region Game Wardens Adam Hymas and Jordan Kraft joined Green River Region Game Warden Chris Baird in conducting a deer decoy operation in LaBarge Creek to address problems with hunters illegally shooting deer in the wrong hunt area and/or out of season. Six citations and one warning were issued in less than three hours.

Big Piney game warden Adam Hymas reports a busy month addressing numerous violations including trespassing, tagging violations, overlimits, taking wrong sex, wanton destruction and waste. Unfortunately, Hymas reports there continues to be cases of animals being shot and left because of poor follow-up after the shot and simply bad ethics.

Hymas also reports that the black bear quota was not filled in the Wyoming Range, making it the first time in many years that the fall quota has not been met.



South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft reports good success for antelope and moose hunters this fall. Elk hunting was good early when bulls were still actively bugling, but elk harvest became challenging later in the month with warming temperatures and no precipitation.



Warden Kraft patrolled big game hunters this fall, issuing 18 citations and eight warnings for a variety of violations including failure to properly tag big game, hunting big game in wrong area, shooting from a roadway and taking wrong sex of big game.

Warden Kraft also worked with the U.S. Forest Service, Wyoming State Board of Outfitters Investigator and Sublette County Attorney's Office in an illegal outfitting case. Charges were filed against an individual for two counts of outfitting without a license and another individual for two counts of professional guiding without a license.

Warden Kraft also apprehended two antelope hunters from Jackson, Wyoming, who were in the process of packing antelope into coolers but had committed multiple violations including failing to properly tag antelope, taking an over limit of antelope, transfer of license and taking antelope without a license. Several antelope were seized and the citations totaled more than \$2,000.

North Pinedale Game Warden Bubba Haley, Pinedale Wildlife Supervisor John Lund and Large Carnivore Biologist Zach Turnbull investigated a hunter-grizzly encounter which resulted in the death of the grizzly bear. The investigative report has been forwarded to the USFWS.



Warden Haley also investigated three separate cases of possible waste of edible portions of bighorn sheep. In two cases, virtually no meat was retrieved. In the third case, less than half of the required meat was packed out. Charges are pending on three suspects, which includes one professional guide.



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Talk of the Town...

The 'Talk' this month is one of mixed emotions. It is with an air of sadness we offer our best wishes for success to Pinedale Office Manager Layna Jones and her family. She, her husband Dallon and sons Keaton and Colton, are setting off on life's next great adventure in the southern Utah area where they will be going into business.



Departing Office Manager Layna Jones (Center) and Lori Johnson cheerfully greet the public decked out in their Halloween costumes in 2014. Sadly, Layna and her family have decided to follow a family business to Utah. Her fun and pleasant demeanor will be missed at the Pinedale front desk.



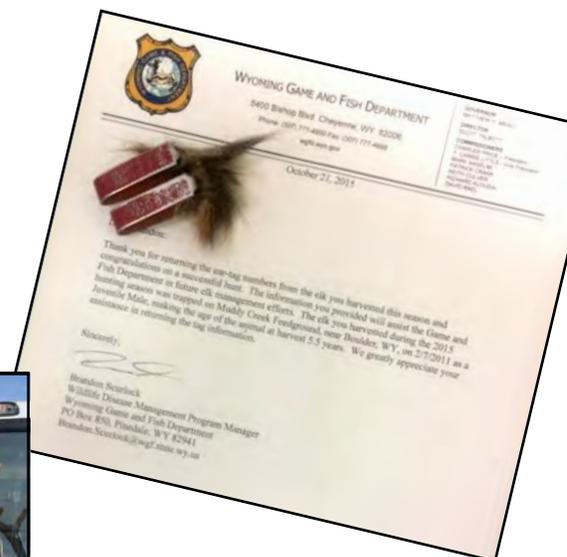
Layna has been an integral part of the Pinedale office for nearly two years. In that brief time she has endeared herself to coworkers and customers alike. Her knowledge of the Pinedale area has assisted many hunters toward successful hunts. Her dedication, cooperative attitude and knowledge and experience in all things electronic will leave a distinct gap in the work-a-day

world at the Pinedale Game & Fish office.

Congratulations Layna and all our best for happiness and success! You will be missed.

Check Stations

The Brucellosis crew ran the LaBarge check station several Sundays during October, assisting mangers by collecting harvest data and pulling CWD samples from deer, elk and moose. Numerous eartags from hunter-harvested elk were reported that were captured during brucellosis surveillance and research efforts on feedgrounds. The hunters were contacted via email, phone or mail and provided information on their animal.





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Mtn King Ranch

Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall organized an interagency work day at the Mountain King Ranch southwest of Daniel to plant shrubs for wildlife. A total of

260 shrubs were planted, including chokecherry, serviceberry, bitterbrush and elderberry. The shrubs were protected from early browsing with welded wire fence or plastic tubes to allow establishment. A total of 15 people joined the fun, including people from the Mountain King

Ranch, Sublette County Weed and Pest, Sublette County Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management and the WY Game and Fish Department.



Rejuvenating the Range

The Wyoming Game and Fish Habitat & Access crew have been operating the Lawson aerator (below) as part of the Wyoming Range Mule Deer project. This was part of year two of implementation on this multi-year project. The

aerator portion included 2520 acres completed in the Little Colorado Desert between Chapel and Figure Four Canyons on mule deer crucial winter range. Objectives include 1) improving the herbaceous diversity and production through seeding and 2) improve sagebrush age class diversity and annual production by thinning old, decadent even-age stands of sagebrush. This was in addition to the 770 acres of mowing in Deer Hills.





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New Fork Lakers

Pinedale Fish Biologist Pete Cavalli and Pinedale's Fisheries Technicians set trammel nets and trap nets in New Fork Lake in an effort to determine whether burbot have been illegally introduced to this water. Fortunately, no burbot were captured, but several large lake trout were handled.

Pinedale Fisheries Technicians Karl Goemer and Cindy Nau hold a couple hefty lake trout caught in New Fork Lake.



Cindy Nau, fisheries technician, with burbot caught in the Green River.

Tracking Burbot in the Green

Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea completed burbot netting on the Green River. Burbot, not native to the Green River, were illegally introduced, likely forever altering this renowned river system. Burbot are a voracious predator feeding almost exclusively on other fish or crayfish. Flaming Gorge, Fontenelle, and Big Sandy reservoirs have seen dramatic declines in some fish populations, especially small-mouth bass. Native populations of some imperiled fish species also saw drastic changes, such as bluehead and flannelmouth suckers, as burbot became established. Data collected in 2013 shows that burbot have now become established in the Green River just below the town of Daniel. Game and Fish biologists will continue to monitor and implement control actions.

Daniel Hatchery

An interesting occurrence this month, The Daniel Hatchery staff found a mule deer doe and two fawns dead behind the hatchery near the effluent pipe on Forty Rod Creek. There was no apparent foul play, as all three deer were found intact and absent of any wounds. It is suspected the deer all died from a lightning strike during an October 1st storm.

Kris Holmes manned the Sheep Creek Kokanee salmon spawning camp for three days and transported the eggs to the Boulder Rearing Station for incubation.

The Daniel Hatchery crew also helped stock marked Colorado River cutthroat to Labarge Creek with University of Wyoming graduate student Alex LeCheminant and the Pinedale Fisheries crew.





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Helping Mule Deer

The WY Game and Fish Habitat & Access crew completed a large sagebrush mowing project in Irish Canyon southeast of Boulder. The project proved difficult with an abundance of boulders to dodge throughout area! The project included about 100 acres of mowing in transitional range along the noted Red Desert to

Hoback mule deer migration corridor. This project is part of the Sublette Mule Deer Initiative and aims to improve quality and quantity of spring herbaceous forage and improve fall shrub conditions, including

bitterbrush. This area also has high potential for cheatgrass invasion and improving overall rangeland condition increases resistance to cheatgrass and will help critters well beyond mule deer.



Deer are on the move as part of their fall migration. Here a doe white-tailed deer was seen migrating along with a group of mule deer south of Pinedale. *Photo by Jordan Kraft*



Soda Lake Fence Extension

Brucellosis personnel assisted the Habitat & Access crew with the building of fence, a several hundred foot wing on a corner of the 26 mile long Soda Lake elk fence. The new wing will facilitate moving elk from private lands along the west side of the fence to the public lands and Soda Lake elk feedground on the east side of the fence. The new fence included three new gates and was completed in about two and a half days.



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Mule Deer Migration Signage

Pinedale Wildlife Biologist Dean Clause and Public Info Specialist Mark Gocke worked with a local inter-agency group to create signs raising awareness of the mule deer migration north of Pinedale. Signs, such as this one at the CCC Ponds parking lot, were placed along the recreation trail between Fremont Lake and the town of Pinedale to curb disturbance to migrating deer.



Boulder Hatchery News



The fall rainbow trout spawning operation began with the first take on October 6 (left). The timing this year is running in the neighborhood of two weeks behind prior runs. Green eggs taken and shipped to incubators thus far total 675,000.

The Boulder Isolation Unit received 443,000 green Kokanee eggs from the Statewide Spawning Crews' efforts at Flaming Gorge.



(Left) Emmie Gocke, 16, of Jackson harvested her first big game animal in Hunt Area 88 southwest of Daniel.

(Right) A group of pronghorn make their way safely over Highway 191 west of Pinedale on October 28, 2015.

