



Photo by Stan Harter

Under the water

A surprise



Luke Whelan with his prize rainbow trout from Luckey Pond.

Some fortunate anglers may receive quite a surprise while fishing at Luckey Pond this year. Luke Whelan, an 11 year-old from Hudson, is one of those lucky anglers.

While fishing with his grandfather on March 25, Luke landed a 21.5-inch rainbow trout that probably weighed close to four pounds. The trout even broke his fishing rod before he was finally able to land it!

The fish Luke caught was likely one of 35 brood cull rainbow trout stocked in Luckey Pond in December 2015. The trout ranged from 2.5 to 5.0 pounds when stocked.

Brood culls are fish that reside in a hatchery for a few years to provide eggs before they are stocked. After a few years of spawning the egg quality of these fish decreases, so they are stocked by the Game and Fish in various waters across Wyoming to provide sport fishing opportunities.

Luke's rainbow trout also provided evidence that an aerator installed at Luckey Pond to increase fish survival is working. The aerator was installed in August 2015 because low dissolved oxygen levels caused periodic fish kills, particularly over the winter.

Luckey Pond is located on public land near the Wyoming Life Resource Center and is considered Lander's community fishery. Sport fish found in Luckey Pond include stocked rainbow trout and channel catfish and naturally-reproducing green sunfish/bluegill hybrids.

..see page 6 for more on area fish stocking

Inside: Spotted skunks pg 2, **Education** pg 3, **Big game collaring** pg 4-5, **Fish stocking** pg 6, **Warden files** pg 7, **Field pictures** pg 8

Species spotlight

Spotted skunk



Spotted skunks

Most of us are familiar with that pungent, distinct smell associated with skunks. But many people do not realize Wyoming is home to three different species of skunk. There is the commonly known and widespread striped skunk, but the state also has two species of the more elusive spotted skunk: the eastern and western spotted skunks.

Spotted skunks are much smaller than striped skunks and have distinct markings consisting of many white patches on a black background. Visually, the two species of spotted skunk are indistinguishable from each other. We have limited information on spotted skunk habitat use in Wyoming and can use your help in finding out more (see below). They seem to show a preference for wooded areas with rock outcrops and little canopy cover. Both species are omnivores, eating a variety of foods, including: insects, small mammals, carrion, birds, bird eggs, reptiles and amphibians, and plant material such as fruits and berries.

One of the unique behavioral traits of spotted skunks is their distinctive hand-stand when spraying their odor. But, as with all wildlife, it is best to keep a safe distance so you don't see this performance in person!

For more information on spotted skunks and other nongame wildlife in Wyoming please visit: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Wildlife-in-Wyoming/More-Wildlife/Nongame-Birds>

<u>Western Spotted Skunk</u>		<u>Eastern Spotted Skunk</u>
8 – 11 inches	Head & Body Length	8 – 17 inches
4 ½ - 6 ¼ inches	Tail Length	5 – 11 inches
0.43 – 1.94 lbs	Weight	0.56 – 1.94 lbs



We need your help!

The Game and Fish and the University of Wyoming are initiating a survey of spotted skunks across the state. To help us optimize the search, we are requesting your help. If you have seen a spotted skunk over the past 20 years please let us know. Location and date would be extremely helpful!

Please contact the Nongame Program at WGF-RareAnimal@wyo.gov to report sightings.

About the Education

Education center addition



Local artist and high school student, Kami Deromedi, recently helped update the Lander Region Education Center with her in-painting of a bison. Rather than hanging a shoulder mounted bison against a white wall, Game and Fish decided to commission Kami to paint around the mount to make it appear as if the bison is walking through the sagebrush habitat. Come and visit the Education Center to see this new addition.

Kami says she feels, "This was such a great opportunity and blessing to bring this beautiful animal back to life."

To see more of Kami's work visit: kamideromediart.crevado.com



Above: Kami Deromedi working on painting the bison body. At right: the finished bison on display.

In the schools

Education specialist Rene Schell visited several schools recently. Jupiter, the great horned owl, sat for every 4th and 5th grade class in Lander. This was a rare opportunity for these students to learn about owls in Wyoming and to draw one using Jupiter as their live model. Many teachers and parents have followed up with Rene to say that this opportunity made a big impact with their children.

Rene also visited with second grade students at the Arapahoe School to talk about turtles, eagles and wolves. This fits in with school curriculum for the students as they learn more about animals that are spiritually important for the Shoshone and Arapahoe tribes that reside on the Wind River Reservation.



Jupiter, the great horned owl in art class

In the Field

Collaring with partners



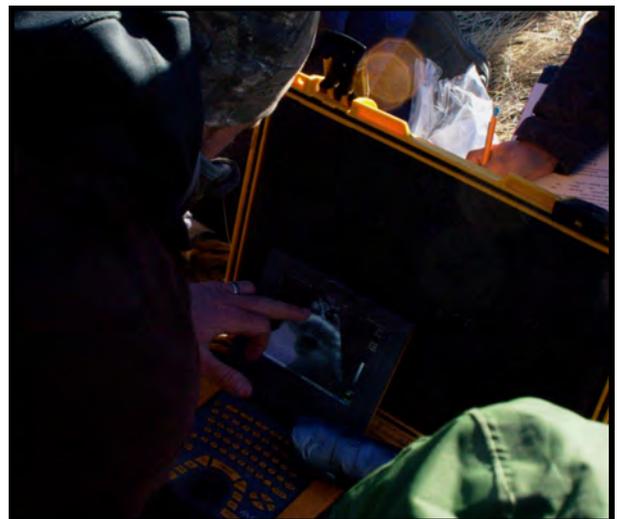
Multiple partners help hold a doe mule deer while an ultrasound is performed.

Lander Region personnel coordinated and participated in mule deer, bighorn sheep, and elk captures and collaring in March. These captures were done in cooperation with the Wyoming Cooperative Research Unit at UW, the Nature Conservancy, the Lander/Green Mountain Mule Deer Working Group, the 10 Country Chapter of the Muley Fanatics Foundation, Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, National Bighorn Sheep Interpretive Center, area landowners, and a host of volunteers.

Mule deer captures were conducted in Dubois (Dubois herd unit) where 15 deer were caught and in Lander (South Wind River herd unit) where 20 deer were caught. They were fitted with satellite based radio collars to learn their migration routes, stopover areas, and habitats they use and when they move between winter and summer ranges.

Thousands of mule deer winter in the upper Wind River basin and we believe they move into the Dubois area to winter from almost every point on the compass. In the Lander area, deer were captured and collared from the North Fork of the Popo Agie to Beaver Rim – a huge geographic area again with thousands of wintering mule deer and though we anticipate the majority of these deer simply move down in elevation off the Wind River mountains, it may be possible they move to and from other areas as well. These collared deer will provide critical information needed to better understand migration routes/corridors used to best manage and conserve these important habitats. Doing so will enable the Game and Fish and our conservation partners to protect important movement bottlenecks, mitigate any migration impediments such as fences and highways, and ensure these migrations paths are maintained across the landscape.

In addition to mule deer, two elk were captured to re-deploy radio collars north of Dubois in a similar effort to better understand migrations of elk in the Wiggin's Fork herd unit.



Ultrasound from a doe deer showing her fetus' heartbeat.



Bighorn sheep on Whiskey Mountain were re-captured as part of the on-going nutritional carrying capacity work initiated last spring. Five sheep in the “Dubois badlands” in Area 22 were captured and collared to assess their movements and disease status as part of statewide bighorn sheep disease monitoring program.

Finally, as part of efforts to better understand the current status of bighorn sheep in the Temple Peak herd unit in the southern Wind River Mountains, two sheep were captured and collared to assess their disease status and to learn whether these sheep use only the North Fork canyon or if they migrate to other parts of the Wind River Mountains during the summer. These sheep are in addition to 12 sheep captured and collared on the Wind River Reservation last month for the same purposes.



Doe mule deer released after being captured and collared .

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Wyoming's Super Tag raffle offers 9 species and 10 chances to win.

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Raffle winners must purchase any applicable licenses and/or stamps before hunting.

Larry Brown 2015 Elk Super Tag Winner

Under the water

Stocking the region and beyond



Fish crew at Bog Lake.

With spring and summer right around the corner, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's ten fish hatcheries and rearing stations have been busy over the past year rearing numerous species of salmonids that will be stocked into Wyoming waters this spring and summer. Here in the Lander Region, the Dubois Fish Hatchery is set to raise and stock over 260,000 fish totaling over 30,000 lbs. The facility is currently rearing four strains of rainbow trout, brook trout, Yellowstone and Snake River cutthroat as well as arctic grayling. Not only does the Dubois Fish Hatchery raise fish for the Lander Region, but they are also scheduled to stock fish in the Cody, Pinedale, Green River and Laramie regions.

Many of Wyoming's lakes and reservoirs benefit from hatchery stocking and here in the Lander Region that holds true as well. In 2016, the Lander Region will receive in excess of 294,000 trout totaling over 42,000lbs. Seven of the Game and Fish's ten hatcheries will visit the region to stock fish in the upcoming months. Species of trout to be stocked include brook, brown, rainbow, golden and tiger trout (brook trout, brown trout hybrid), splake (brook trout, lake trout hybrid), and grayling as well as Snake River and Yellowstone cutthroat.

The Lander Region also benefits from trades the Fish Culture Section makes with other states. The Wyoming Game and Fish will trade eyed eggs as well as catchable size (8"-9") trout in order to import and stock a variety of cool and warm water fish such as bluegill, channel catfish, green sunfish/bluegill hybrid and walleye. In 2016 the Lander Region is scheduled to be stocked with just under 336,000 cool and warm water fishes.

The Game and Fish wild sauger spawning program is also expected to return high numbers of sauger to the Lander Region. Personnel will begin collecting sauger from the Little Wind River in May to spawn. Those fertilized eggs will then be shipped to Garrison Nation Fish Hatchery where they will be hatched out and reared up to approximately two inches in length. The fingerling size sauger will then be transported back to Wyoming and stocked into the Wind River as well as the Little Wind River. In total, 250,000 sauger are scheduled to be stocked the latter part of the summer.

Above and clockwise: eyed eggs, newly hatched Yellowstone fry, fish at Dubois hatchery in circular tanks.



With the wardens

Case files

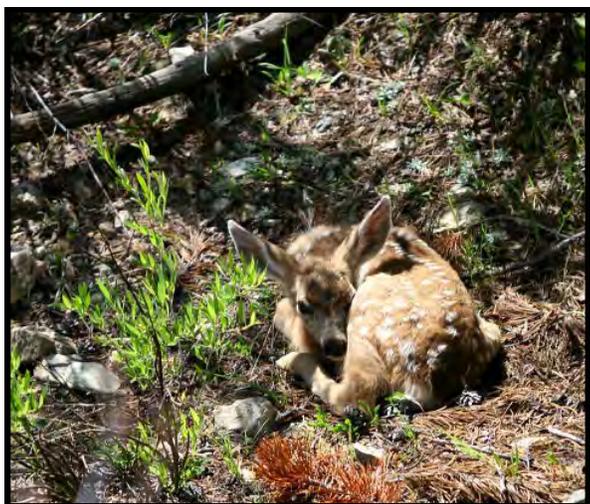


Jessica Beecham responded to a call about a collared mule deer that was hit by a vehicle near Riverton. She initially thought it could have been one of the mule deer that was recently collared as part of the mule deer migration project in the Dubois and Lander areas. Upon further investigation, Jessica found the deer was wearing a florescent orange dog collar that appeared to be custom made. It was apparent the deer had been kept as a pet, which is illegal in the state of Wyoming. The investigation is ongoing.

A local Riverton resident captured a wayward muskrat that had set up residence in her yard. She contacted Warden Beecham, who relocated the muskrat to a more suitable location away from homes and irrigation canals.



Please leave newborn wildlife alone!

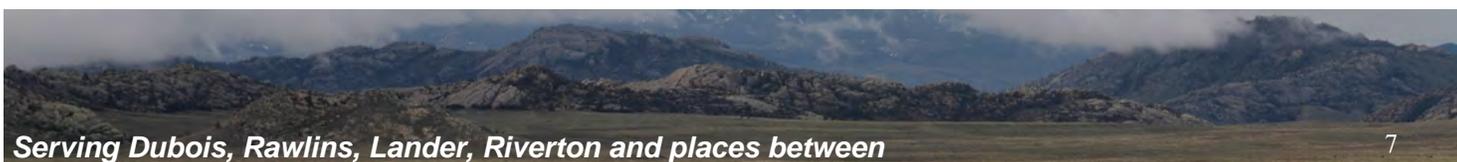


Mule deer fawn waiting for mom to return.

Wyoming Game and Fish urges people who find young animals this spring to leave wildlife newborns alone. Most animal mothers hide their young and return to them periodically to nurse. People finding young animals often assume these newborns have been abandoned, but this is almost never the case. The mother knows where her young are, and will almost certainly return.

State and federal laws forbid possession of game and many nongame animals, so adopting newborn wildlife is illegal. The best solution is to leave the young animals alone. If children bring home a wild "orphan," immediately return it to the exact spot it was found.

If you question whether an animal has been abandoned or in the rare instance when you know the mother to be dead, contact the nearest game warden, biologist, or regional office and do not attempt to capture these animals yourself.



On the back page

Moments from the field



Jessica Beecham observed this red fox hunting in the Wind River Canyon. It was using the rock as a perch to spot and pounce on unsuspecting rodents.

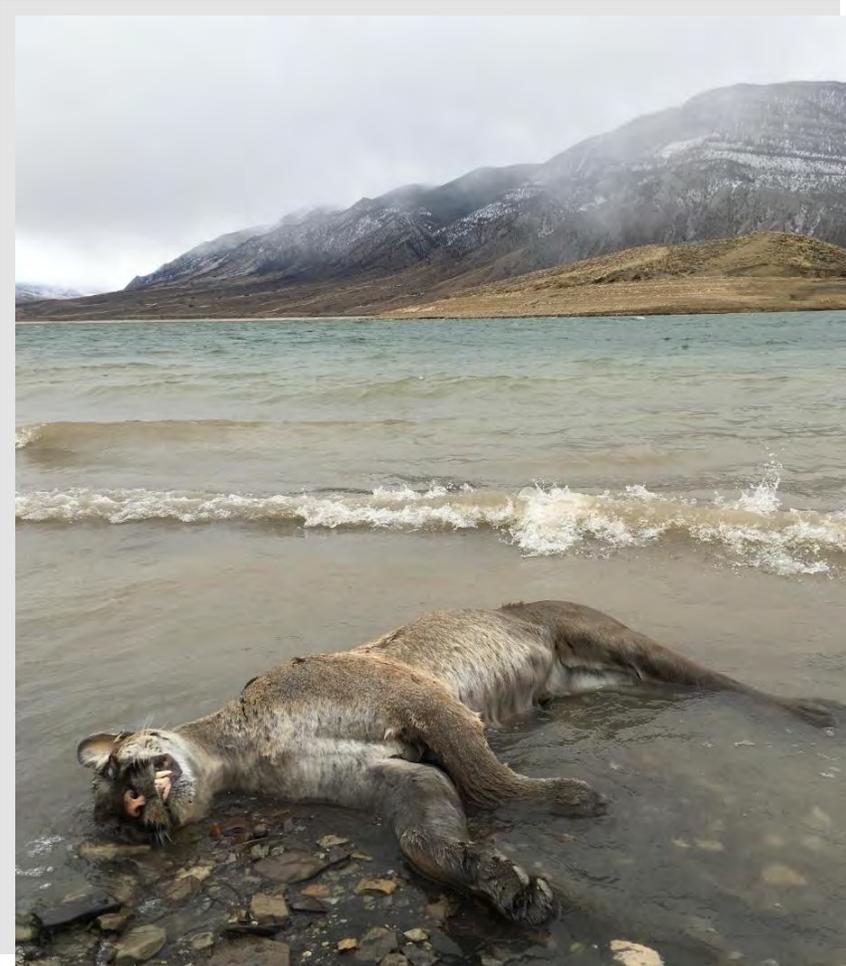


Stan Harter observed many wildlife species toughing out the deep snows of March. Although storms were quick, snow was deep creating struggles for some species during the last bits of winter.



CODY REGION newsletter

Mountain lion mystery



A mountain lion carcass found floating in Buffalo Bill Reservoir last month.

Last month, Game and Fish received a report of a dead mountain lion floating in Buffalo Bill Reservoir west of Cody. The fisherman who reported the incident retrieved the carcass with a small boat and brought it to shore. Upon investigation and a necropsy, South Cody Game Warden Craig Smith found the lion to be in good physical condition and suspects no foul play. Smith said it was most likely a case of natural mortality from drowning.

Inside this month's issue:

On the ground

Bighorn sheep disease surveillance

Sage grouse lek counts

In the water

4-H group learns about Bighorn River trout

Of interest

River cleanup a success

Pheasant hunting with Forever Wild Families



On the ground

Bighorn sheep respiratory disease surveillance and body condition monitoring

Last month, Cody Region personnel, Wildlife Veterinary Research Services laboratory staff and a crew from University of Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit were in the field capturing 33 bighorn sheep for disease research and body condition monitoring. Several northern herds were selected for this research including Whiskey Basin, Jackson and Absaroka. Sixteen of the 33 sheep were captured locally in the North Fork and South Fork of the Shoshone River drainages.

This cooperative project is designed to determine how body condition may influence what species of respiratory pathogens a particular sheep (or herd) may carry. This research involves capturing bighorn ewes twice a year (December and March), sampling for respiratory pathogens, and assessing body condition by measuring their fat depth ultrasonically. This is the second year of this project, and to date, no direct relationship between body condition and pathogen presence has been established.



Above: Laboratory Supervisor Hank Edwards collects samples from a bighorn sheep to detect pathogens that can cause respiratory disease.



Left: Hank Edwards and Disease Biologist Jessica Jennings-Gaines organize equipment used for aerial net gunning of bighorn sheep and deer.



On the ground

Sage grouse lek counts underway



A sage grouse on a lek north of Powell.



Terrestrial Habitat Biologist Jerry Altermatt observes a sage grouse lek.



A large sage grouse lek on Polecat Bench north of Powell.

In April, Game and Fish biologists and wardens conduct sage grouse lek surveys. Throughout the month, specific leks are surveyed three times in good weather conditions, seven to 10 days apart. At each “count” lek, the number of strutting males are counted to help monitor population trends over time.

In the water

4-H group helps collect data on Bighorn River trout

Five members of a Hot Springs County 4-H group lead by Joel Farber helped Game and Fish fisheries biologists collect data on trout in the Bighorn River. The students helped Game and Fish retrieve 15 egg baskets that had been filled with 100 trout eggs and placed in various locations along the river bottom six weeks earlier. Once retrieved, the egg baskets were carefully opened and the number of hatched eggs was recorded. The study is to help biologists determine if there is a significant difference in egg survival of fall verses spring spawning rainbow trout. In May, 15 more egg baskets will be deployed with the spring spawning rainbow trout strain.



Fisheries Biologist Joe Skorupski shows 4-H members how to identify and count the number of hatched eggs in a trout egg basket.



In a impromptu macro invertebrate lesson, Joe Skorupski points out a caddisfly to 4-H members helping collect data.



Trout egg basket.

Of interest

River cleanup a success!

Volunteers from Game and Fish, Trout Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Christ Episcopal Church, Cody Wild West River Fest, Wild West Paddle Club and a variety of local businesses cleared debris and garbage from the Shoshone River corridor last month as part of the annual Shoshone River Cleanup. Several truckloads of debris were removed from the river way and banks between DeMaris Springs and the Corbett Bridge.



Left: Volunteers with a pile of debris collected from the banks of the Shoshone River near Belfry Bridge during the annual Shoshone River Cleanup last month.

Above: Debris cleared from the Shoshone River corridor unloaded at the landfill.



Pheasant hunting

The Williams family of Cody, who participated in the Forever Wild Family program last year, braved the wind and snow last month to go pheasant hunting on a bird farm in Cowley. Greybull Game Warden Bill Robertson and Lovell Game Warden James Hobbs and their dogs assisted. Special thanks to David Rael for allowing access!



~Mountain lion research ~ local personnel working with Large Carnivore Section~



Green River Wildlife Biologist Patrick Burke, Green River Game Warden Andy Roosa, and WGF Large Carnivore Biologists Luke Ellsbury and Justin Clapp have been working south of Rock Springs doing mountain lion research.

“The goal of this project was to evaluate the applicability of using forward-looking infrared from aircraft at night to detect mountain lions, since we currently don't have an effective method to survey for them,” Burke said. “At least, we don't have a way that isn't super labor intensive and expensive, right now. We didn't get enough cats collared this winter to try the technique out, but if we can get a better sample size next winter, that is the plan.”

This nine-year old 130 pound female was fitted with a GPS collar that will allow biologists to track her movements. In addition to fitting her with a GPS collar, biologists collected blood and DNA samples, took body measurements, estimated age from tooth wear, measured vital signs, and marked her with a lip tattoo and ear tags to show that she had been captured after the collar eventually falls off. Efforts to collar more mountain lions in this area are ongoing.

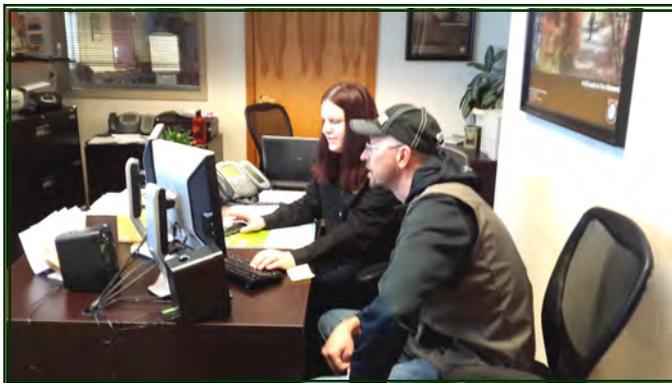
Photos top to bottom:

*Female mountain lion; Justin Clapp (left) Patrick Burke (center) and Luke Ellsbury take biological information; Andy Roosa (left) and Justin Clapp (right) and a close up of the lion's teeth. Tooth condition is an accurate way to determine the age of a mountain lion. *photos compliments of Andy Roosa and Patrick Burke.*

~Bear bait site registrations up in the region ~ Don't forget to pick up the 2016 bear hunting reg's~



Sheila Watts registers a bait site.



Regina Dickson registers a bait site.



A black bear hunter from southwest Wyoming provided this photo he took from his trail camera in 2012.

Office managers Sheila Watts and Regina Dickson were very busy April Fool's Day registering bear baits-no fooling! "We registered roughly 67 people, most of them registering two bait sites, on April 1st, making it about 134 bait sites registered; the most we have had in a couple of years," Watts said.

Bear hunters were waiting in the parking lot as early as 6:30 a.m. and when the doors opened for business at 8 a.m., the crowd gathered at the front counter. Region Information and Education Specialist Lucy Wold sold licenses and Green River Region Wildlife Supervisor Steve DeCecco manned the phone so the bear bait registration could go smoothly and fairly-quickly.

Bear hunters have a preference period of March 1 through March 20 of each year to register the same bait site they had registered in the previous calendar year. There are no bear bait registrations during the period of March 21 through March 31. Beginning April 1, bear baits may be registered on a first come, first served basis.

Black bear hunt areas in the Green River region include areas 9,10, 11, 12, and a portion of 35. There is a spring and fall hunting season and an archery and general season. Hunting seasons close when the season ends or the annual female mortality quota is reached; whichever comes first. Bear hunters are required to call the Black Bear Mortality Limit Hotline at 1-800-264-1280 before going hunting to determine which hunt areas are still open.

The archery season opens April 15 and the general season opens May 1. Bear hunters should pick up a free copy of the 2016 black bear hunting season regulations at any regional office of the Game and Fish or most license vendors.

~Two new game wardens for southwest Wyoming~ Welcome back sage grouse!



The Green River Region is pleased to welcome two new game wardens to southwest Wyoming. Rob Shipe (photo left, on the right) and Justin Dodd (left).

Shipe grew up in southeast Michigan and spent a lot of time fishing and recreating on the many lakes and streams out there. In 2013, he graduated from Oakland University in Rochester, MI, with a degree in biology. Shipe spent two summers working for the Game and Fish as an Aquatic Invasive Species technician, working on Flaming Gorge Reservoir. "In those two summers, I have fallen in love with the state of Wyoming and its fishing and wildlife resources," Shipe said. "I became a game warden to protect those resources for future generations."

Justin Dodd is from Peoria, Arizona. Dodd received a Bachelor's in Forestry/Biology/Wildlife Management and Ecology at Northern Arizona University. Dodd also worked several years as a life-guard and received an Army ROTC Scholarship. He was commissioned into the U.S. Army National Guard as a second lieutenant in May of 2015.

Dodd also worked as a volunteer doing Chronic Wasting Disease sampling in the Kaibab National Forest and radio telemetry locating tortoises. Both Dodd and Shipe received their Basic Peace Officer Certification at the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy in March of 2016.

Dodd and Shipe will be spending a lot of time working on Flaming Gorge Reservoir, doing watercraft and fishing enforcement and watercraft safety outreach and education. In the late summer and fall, their will focus will shift to wildlife regulation enforcement during the hunting seasons. Welcome Justin and Rob!



Photos: Green River Game Warden Andy Roosa.

Green River Region personnel are out and about surveying sage grouse leks throughout April and May. Green River Wildlife Management Coordinator Mark Zornes says in general, bird numbers are up again this year, although the surveys are ongoing. Stay tuned! Please enjoy these majestic grouse from a distance with binoculars and or spotting scope.



Office managers Sheila Watts (left) and Regina Dickson (right) pose next to a new bear trap. The girls have been busy helping bear hunters register bait sites and processing watercraft registrations. They invite you to stop in and pick up your 2016 licenses and Conservation Stamps.

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*~Critter Spotlight~
 Beaver
 By Mark Zornes a.k.a. Leopold*

• **Unquestionably the most valuable furbearer in the history** of both the United States and Canada. Trade in and pursuit of beaver pelts contributed greatly to the formation and exploration of these countries and resulted in significant inter-tribal strife among indigenous peoples. Beaver numbers were greatly reduced due to centuries of fur trade, but have since returned to nearly all their native range and are considered a pest species in some areas. Beaver are very common in much of Wyoming.

• **Among rodents (order Rodentia)**, second only to the South American Capybara in size, adult beavers may weigh in excess of 85 pounds, but most are typically between 50-60 pounds.

• **Semi-aquatic, beaver are tied to water**, which they rely on for food, escape cover, and as a means of locomotion.

• **Beaver are nearly 100% vegetarians**, consuming animal matter only accidentally with vegetation. Those ignorant of the food habits of this species often report they eat fish, which has never been documented. Beaver feed primarily on the inner bark of woody species (like aspen and willows) and on succulent aquatic vegetation, such as cattail.

• **Beavers are the engineers of the animal kingdom**, famed for their dam building skills. Much more importantly, at least among biologists and others, they are renowned for their contribution to riparian habitat health, meadow creation, and forest composition influence. Many other wildlife species, both aquatic and terrestrial, rely on beaver influenced habitats to make a living.

• **Beaver build large huts or lodges of sticks, logs, other vegetation**, and mud or dig bank dens, both of which have entrances only reached under the water. This provides some level of protection for pairs, their yearling, and their newborn young. Beavers live in family groups that usually have both yearlings and newborns in the lodge. A beaver family complex tends to include five to eight individuals. Young males disperse farther afield when they leave the group, while females tend to occupy an adjacent home range. Dispersal can lead to increased rates of predation by bears, mountain lions, and coyotes.

• **Easily recognized by most people**, the beaver is covered in lush brownish-red fur, has large dark webbed feet and sports a large "hairless" flattened black tail used for propulsion, mud work, and as a signal to others of its species. People that spend time near beaver colonies often hear the warning slap of a swimming beaver, a sound much like that made by throwing a cinder block in a pond.



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Jackson Region

April 2016 Newsletter



Bald Eagle and Trumpeter Flight

Jackson Nongame Biologist Susan Patla completed the annual bald eagle occupancy aerial survey flight for the Jackson and Pinedale regions on March 26. Of the 69 known nesting territories checked, 87% were occupied and 80% were incubating. Two new nesting territories were also found. The location data will be provided to partner agencies for management and protection of nesting eagles.

In addition, Patla documented a total of 385 Trumpeter Swans during the spring flight, including some residents already on territories (some pairs sitting on frozen ponds) as well as flocks of Canadian migrants that have not yet left Wyoming.



At left, is an aerial photo Patla snapped of the Game & Fish's South Park Wildlife Habitat Management Area ponds (left) adjacent to the Jackson water treatment facility ponds.

Although hard to see, a total of 121 trumpeter swans were counted, mostly on the ice, in the lower pond which has become one of the most important wetlands for both migrant and resident swans during the spring thaw period. Pre-nesting habitat has been identified as one of

the critical limiting factors for this swan population.

Patla also started planning habitat improvement work to address flooding issues at swan nest sites and made a site visit to a ranch owner in Big Piney who is eager to develop wetland habitat for swans.



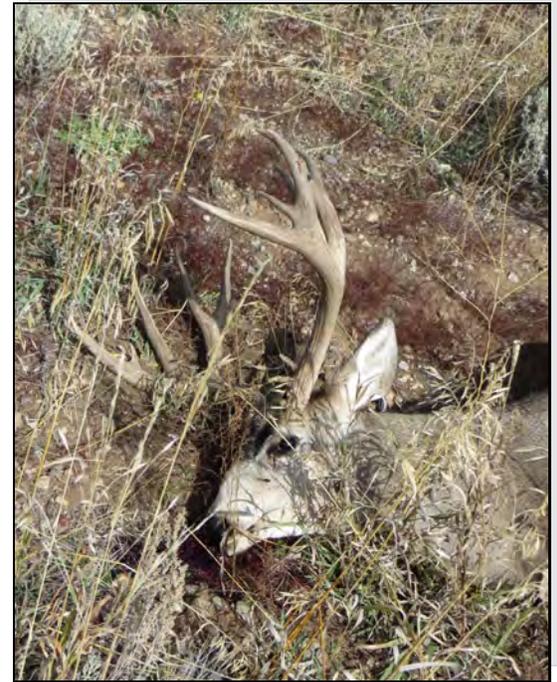


Mule Deer Poacher Convicted

A Jackson man was recently convicted of charges relating to the illegal shooting and abandoning of a trophy mule deer buck on private land north of Jackson last fall.

Travis Gros pled guilty to illegally shooting a mule deer on private land without permission, failure to tag big game and wanton waste of the animal.

Teton County Circuit Court Judge James Radda handed down a sentence of \$1,320 in fines, loss of hunting privileges for two years and ordered Gros to again complete his hunter safety certification. A 180 day jail sentence was suspended while he serves probation and 60 hours of community service.



On October 7, 2015, North Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens received a trespass complaint from a landowner near the airport north of Jackson. Warden Stephens responded to the scene and found the large mule deer buck that had been shot and left. When the reporting party provided a description of the individual, it matched that of a hunter Stephens had checked in the area several hours earlier that day. When Warden Stephens confronted Gros about the crime, he admitted to having shot and killed the deer on private land without permission, claiming he had initially wounded the animal on property he did have permission on.

“This is a good example of how a concerned citizen stepping forward with information on a wrongdoing can make a big difference,” said Stephens. Stephens also commended the work of Judge James

Radda. “I think the sentence sends a strong message that wildlife is a treasured resource in Teton County and such wildlife crimes will not be tolerated.”



New Antler Hunt Rules for the Refuge

New this year, the National Elk Refuge will not be allowing vehicles to line up on the refuge road (left) prior to the May 1 opener for antler hunting on adjacent forest service lands. Antler hunters are being directed to park at the fairgrounds in the town of Jackson. Also new this year, the refuge will be opening the refuge road at midnight, the morning of May 1, but there will be no accessing the refuge from the Gros Ventre road at “Kelly Cliffs.”



Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

April 2016

Managing Elk Damage

Elk damage issues picked up in and amongst subdivisions and agriculture lands north of Jackson in early April with the ending of supplemental elk feeding on the National Elk Refuge. Always looking for new ways to keep elk off of hay crops, Jackson region personnel deployed two 20-foot “Wacky Inflatable Guys” on a ranch north of town. The two units are mounted on small utility trailers, and are powered by generators, to allow for easy relocation. The overall size, motion and noise of the unit has proven effective at deterring elk thus far.



Day on the Ice

South Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash checked this group of anglers on Phelps Lake in Grand Teton National Park. The fishing was slow that day, but the anglers had no complaints about the scenery.

Herding Goats

South Jackson Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick also spent time trying to haze mountain goats away from WY Hwy 89 through the Snake River Canyon near Alpine to avoid vehicle collisions. Mountain goats were first introduced in the Snake River Range by the Idaho Fish & Game Department over a three-year period from 1969-1971. Since that time, the goats have slowly, but steadily, expanded their range into Wyoming. An aerial survey completed in 1996 noted 24 goats in Wyoming. The latest survey completed in August of 2014 recorded 165. The goats have not only increased in number, but also their distribution, with animals now being sighted in the Wyoming, Salt River and Teton mountain ranges. Wyoming Game & Fish offers 12 licenses for this hunt area.





Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

April 2016



Elk Rescue

On March 16th, Warden Lash received a call regarding an elk that had fallen into a deep mud hole on the National Elk Refuge. Warden Lash, with the help from refuge enforcement officer Bryan Yetter was able to get a rope around the elk and pull her safely out of the hole. Access to the mud hole has since been blocked to prevent it from happening again.

Collaring Forest Park Elk

The last of the elk captures on winter feedgrounds were completed by Jackson & Pinedale Brucellosis-Feedgrounds-Habitat crew for this winter, with the final three GPS collars being deployed on elk at the Forest Park feedground some 30 miles up the Greys River drainage southeast of Alpine.

The GPS tracking collars will further define their seasonal movements. Blood samples also were collected to contribute to a long term database looking at brucellosis prevalence in elk.

In all, over 560 elk were handled by Game and Fish brucellosis biologists in both the Jackson and Pinedale regions this winter. This included capturing 498 animals in corral traps at Greys (Alpine), Dell, Fish, Scab and Muddy Creek feedgrounds. An additional 62 elk were darted on other state feedgrounds and the National Elk Refuge. A total of 51 GPS collars and 17 VITs were deployed and 337 blood samples were collected for brucellosis testing, which is currently being done at the Wyoming Game & Fish Vet Lab in Laramie.



Wyoming State Senator Don Dockstader (left) and Meagan Haberberger, daughter of Forest Park elk feeder Tim Haberberger, steady a tranquilized elk while waiting for the reversal drug to take effect.



Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

April 2016



“Do you know what you’d do if you found yourself face to face with a bear or mountain lion?”

If not, you should attend the...

“Staying Safe in Large Carnivore Country”

Seminar

When: Thursday, May 12, 2016, 5:30 – 7:30 PM

Where: Teton County Library Auditorium

Cost: FREE!

For more information please call the Jackson Game and Fish office at 733-2321 or 800-423-4113

Talking Brucellosis Management

The brucellosis crew have been busy drafting the 5-year updates to the Brucellosis Management Action Plans (BMAPs). After meetings with potentially affected ranchers, public meetings were held to gather feedback on 10 brucellosis management options in addition to what the Game & Fish is already doing to battle the disease. Development and periodic updating of the BMAPs was the top recommendation of the Governor’s Brucellosis Coordination Team.



At left, Brucellosis biologists Ben Wise (left) and Eric Maichak address interested members of the public at their meeting in Jackson.



Circling Back on a Banded Goose

On March 31, Jackson Nongame Biologist Susan Patla observed a banded Canada goose on the Jackson Interagency Visitor Center lawn and was able to read the identification number with binoculars. After a little research, it was determined it was a female banded on July 1, 2008 (Photos below) as a juvenile on the National Elk Refuge (NER) as part of the Avian Influenza surveillance effort that year. Nate Huck, statewide migratory game bird biologist, noted that of the 43 birds that were captured that year: 16 were reported shot or hit by a car, and another seven (including this bird) were read by sight back at the NER (also one at a private pond south of Jackson). This is a very high proportion of plain banded birds to be resighted.



Photos: (Far Left) Former Jackson Game warden Bill Long discusses how to handle captured geese with former Fisheries Technician Dan De-Sorcy. (Left) Young volunteer Emmie Gocke carries a newly banded goose for release. (Below) Former Statewide Migratory Game Bird Biologist Larry Roberts bands a goose in 2008.



Curlews Head Back to Wyoming

Jackson Nongame Biologist Susan Patla is happy to report that the first long-billed curlew tagged with a satellite transmitter in Wyoming in 2014 on the National Elk Refuge (see photos) began her spring migration return flight in late March. From her wintering grounds south of Mazatlan, Mexico, "AJ" flew to New Mexico similar to what she did last spring. From there, she moved over to Texas. Next month, we will have reports on her return date to Jackson and data from the other tagged curlews which began moving north in early April.



April 2016



Veterinary Services Staff

Branch Supervisor/Wildlife Veterinarian: Dr. Mary Wood

Laboratory Supervisor:
Hank Edwards

Senior Lab Scientist:
Hally Killion

Senior Lab Scientist:
Jessica Jennings-Gaines

Brucellosis Lab Assistant:
Kylie Sinclair

Wildlife Disease Specialist:
Terry Creekmore

TWRC Manager:
Matt Huizenga

Wildlife Biologist:
Cole Hansen

Biologist: Sam Lockwood



Veterinary Services Newsletter

Wildlife Health Laboratory

Respiratory Disease Surveillance and Body Condition Monitoring of Bighorn Sheep

Once again the laboratory staff and a crew from University of Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit was in field this March capturing 33 bighorn sheep for disease research and body condition monitoring. This cooperative project is designed to determine how body condition may influence what species of respiratory pathogens a particular sheep (or herd) may carry. This research involves capturing bighorn ewes twice a year (December and March), sampling for respiratory pathogens, and assessing body condition by measuring their fat depth ultrasonically. Several northern herds were selected for this research including Whiskey Basin, Jackson and Absaroka. This is the second year of this project, and to date, no direct relationship between body condition and pathogen presence has been established.



Hank Edwards collects samples from a bighorn sheep to detect pathogens that can cause respiratory disease.

Elk Movement Study in the Bighorn Mountains

A large elk movement study began in the Bighorn Mountains this spring to better understand movement patterns of elk and the potential impact of brucellosis in the bighorns. A total of 58 elk were collared this year and unfortunately two elk were blood test positive for brucellosis. The ramifications of this disease becoming established in the Bighorn Mountains are very serious, and therefore the decision was made to remove the two positives. In addition to removing the potentially infected animals from the population, this provided an opportunity of collect lymph nodes for culture of the organism. Obtaining a *B. abortus* culture from at least one of the positive elk would allow genetic analysis that would likely determine which infected source population that elk may have originated from; thereby shedding some light on how this disease may have arrived in the Bighorn Mountains.

Unfortunately, after culturing ten tissues from each animal and one fetus, we were unable to isolate *B. abortus* from any of the culture plates. This bug can be difficult to culture, with only about half of all blood-test positive animals being culture positive as well.



*Culturing tissues for Brucellosis (*Brucella abortus*).*

Wildlife Necropsy Summary

Twenty-seven wildlife cases were submitted for diagnostics in March.

Species	Date Received	County	Diagnosis
Mule Deer	3/8/2016	Fremont	Bovicola tibialis
Elk	3/10/2016	Converse	Chronic Wasting Disease
Moose	3/9/2016	Carbon	Pending
Skunk	3/10/2016	Fremont	Pending
Pronghorn	3/9/2016	Platte	Pending
Mule Deer	3/10/2016	Fremont	Adenovirus negative
Bighorn Sheep	3/10/2016	Niobrara	Pending
Mule Deer (2)	3/10/2016	Fremont	Pending
Mule Deer	3/16/2016	Sheridan	Emaciation
White-tailed Deer	3/16/2016	Sheridan	Malignant catarrhal fever
Mule Deer	3/17/2016	Natrona	Pending
Pronghorn	3/17/2016	Sheridan	Pending
Bat	3/18/2016	Fremont	Rabies negative
Mule Deer (2)	3/18/2016	Fremont	Pending
Bighorn Sheep	3/18/2016	Fremont	Pending
Mule Deer	3/18/2016	Park	Truperella lymphadenitis
Mule Deer	3/18/2016	Park	Parasitic pneumonia
Magpie	3/21/2016	Park	Pending
Mule Deer	3/21/2016	Bighorn	Pending
Pronghorn	3/21/2016	Campbell	Pneumonia, pancreatitis
Moose	3/22/2016	Fremont	Pending
Mule Deer (4)	3/28/2016	Carbon	Pending

Case of the month

Wyoming Game and Fish Warden Brady Frude responded to a call of a sick mule deer fawn near Lander, where a homeowner reported the deer had been acting odd for three or four days and wouldn't flee when approached. The deer was euthanized and submitted to the lab for diagnostic testing. Necropsy revealed an emaciated deer with hair loss on the neck, ears and between the hind legs. Thousands of small brown lice (*Bovicola tibialis*)

were observed in the hair.

This is an exotic louse that has been identified as a significant cause of fawn mortality in Washington State, but infections in WY have been sporadic. This is the first confirmed case in Fremont County and only the eighth case from the state. In addition to the lice, ear ticks were found in the ear canals and this animal had numerous tapeworms in the intestines.

The effects of seasonal malnutrition often become evident during the late winter. The mixed parasite burden of lice, tapeworms, and ear ticks coupled with the stresses of winter all contributed to the emaciated condition of this mule deer fawn.



Tapeworms visible through the intestinal wall. (Note the lack of fat on the intestines).



Chewing lice (*Bovicola tibialis*)

Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center

Sheep Handling Facility.....Done!

Wait...did that just say done? March/April at the Thorne/Williams Research Facility found the crew on a month long dash to finish up the last bits of remaining work on the Bighorn sheep handling facility. All of the catch pens and alleys were buttoned up as well as a funnel into the building complete with 8' walls and a catwalk for working sheep. Plastic paneling was finished on the walls and ceiling creating a watertight room for cleaning and disinfecting. The interior electrical was finished and the room heater and hot water heater were installed. We installed a stainless steel sink and counter tops along one wall and a built-in scale was installed and calibrated in the alley. After two long years of work, the facility is now complete. Next step is to start working sheep to see how well it works!



Funnel for herding sheep into the handling building.



Chute system inside the handling building.



Catwalk on the back side of the funnel for working sheep into the handling building.

CWD Elk Study

While the majority of the month was spent on finishing up the handling facility, we still managed to vaccinate the 11 remaining elk in our CWD vaccine study. This will be the last year they are vaccinated and the study is coming to a close. We plan to continue to follow the remaining elk over time to see if genetic differences in the elk affect the outcome; however, we are preparing to publish our current data in the coming year. While the vaccine did not prove to be effective, this study is still a step forward in the search for tools to manage chronic wasting disease. Every piece of information we can gather on this disease is useful in helping to direct future research.

Lemmy Gets a Trim

Amongst all of the chaos, we also found the time to trim hooves and give an annual exam to our hand-reared bighorn sheep, Lemmy. She is the only lamb we've been able to successfully rear out of a group of chronically ill bighorn ewes. While she is not a research sheep, her presence at our facility helps to remind us what we are working towards: finding ways to improve the health of our wild bighorn sheep populations in the face of respiratory disease.



Lemmy with her elk buddies and Matt after getting a trim.



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Wildlife Investigative Unit

April, 2016

- Worked on a case involving the illegal taking of a 230" non-typical mule deer. The deer was taken and tagged with a white-tailed deer only license. The case report and affidavit were prepared and reviewed with the county attorney and charges of 23-3-102(d) were filed. The suspect is scheduled to appear for arraignment on April 11, 2016.
- Provided assistance to district game wardens on false oath investigations, wasted waterfowl, taking elk without a license and landowner coupon violations.
- Worked with Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture & Game Commission officers to obtain taxidermy records in the investigation of a non-resident outfitter and former guide who may have killed a cow elk without a license, and facilitated the tagging of that cow elk by an unsuccessful non-resident hunter. The former guide is also suspected of taking a bull elk without a license.
- Assisted the west Rawlins game warden with interviews of witnesses and suspects in a case involving the illegal take of cottontail rabbits and sage grouse out of season, by artificial light, from a vehicle and shooting from a public road.
- Assisted investigators and wardens from several other states with wildlife violations with mutual interest in Wyoming. These states included Arizona, Minnesota and the Yukon. Investigators also assisted wardens with various internet searches.
- Assisted the Meeteetse game warden with an elk waste case. A man from Washington killed an elk west of Meeteetse and left it on the ground overnight in grizzly occupied territory. Three other men were with him the afternoon he killed and quartered his elk. The group had time to get the elk the short distance to camp, but they did not. A grizzly bear was feeding on the elk quarters the next day and they were not able to recover the elk. The man then placed a video on YouTube about the hunt and the investigator captured it as evidence. After the man had been questioned he removed it from YouTube. He has since posted bond for waste of an elk.
- Responded to a request from the attorney of a Kentucky man who was convicted of killing a mule deer buck without a license in 2014. The attorney sent a letter to the investigator requesting the cape from the deer be returned to his client. In the letter the attorney claimed that the cape was not part of any plea agreement and that his client should have his property returned. The investigator contacted the attorney to let him know that his client would not be receiving the cape from the deer.
- Continued assisting the Sheridan County Attorney's Office with information for a brief for the Sheridan District Court regarding *Tribal Hunting Rights vs. States Rights to Enforce Wildlife Regulations* within the state of Wyoming. In March the brief was completed and transferred to the district court judge. The court's decision to hear the case or remand it back to circuit court will be decided after both the state and defense briefs are reviewed.
- Assisted the south Gillette warden with a case involving multiple non-resident licenses being purchased illegally where big game and small game animals were taken without a license and hunted without an archery license within the state of Wyoming. In March 2016, the suspects were interviewed in Gillette and the state of Oklahoma. The case is moving forward with suspects admitting to the violations. Additional follow-up will occur in the state of Tennessee with two individuals who also hunted in Wyoming illegally and were involved with the same hunting party in the Gillette area.
- Traveled to the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservations in the state of Montana while working with a USFWS agent and a Bureau of Indian Affairs officer. Two suspects were cited for wildlife violations involving the illegal taking of a buck deer and the illegal take of a bull elk in Wyoming.
- Attempted to locate the kill site of an illegal elk hunt during an aerial flight. Photos were posted on the internet. At least two bull elk were taken. The case involves two non-resident hunters. The case continues.
- Assisted the Glenrock warden with a case involving an illegal taxidermist. After interviews and an inspection of his residence, the man was cited for performing taxidermy work without a license.

Law Enforcement Coordinator

Aaron Kerr

- Provided training to basic peace officer students at the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy, including five new game wardens. The training included a basic overview of the Department's law enforcement program, the duties and responsibilities of game wardens, information regarding common wildlife violations and how officers from the Department and other agencies can benefit each other in their daily work.
- Responded to a poaching call in north Casper near the baseball fields. A local resident heard gunshots and witnessed three individuals walking along the North Platte River with shotguns. He believed they were attempting to shoot geese out of season. Kerr interviewed two men in the area. Both had been in the area for awhile and had not seen anyone else around or heard gunshots. No suspects could be located or identified.
- Inventoried forfeited firearms from poaching cases stored at the Casper office and worked with regional CMS coordinators to inventory forfeited firearms stored in other regions. Compiled forfeiture paperwork for these firearms to make sure files were up to date.
- Compared the list of individuals with suspended license privileges from failing to pay child support to the Department license database. Identified several individuals who purchased licenses while possibly under suspension. Further investigation will be conducted in the coming months.
- Completed and reviewed several drafts of the 2015 Department Annual Law Enforcement Report. The report will be finalized and released to the public in the next few weeks.

April, 2016



WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

LARAMIE REGION newsletter

APRIL 2016



Prescribed fire at Springer WHMA

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department burned 280 acres at Springer Wildlife Habitat Management Area in March to improve habitat for pheasants and other wildlife.

The burn will provide opportunity for forbs (wildflowers) to flourish. The Game and Fish Department's Habitat Access Maintenance crews will be following up the burn with some light disking and interseeding of forbs to help increase diversity this spring.

The area that was burned provides nesting cover for wild pheasants and migratory waterfowl. The prescribed burn will help set back succession and remove years of accumulated plant litter, allowing more diversity of plant life for these and other species.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department extends its gratitude to several volunteer fire departments in Goshen County that assisted with the burn.



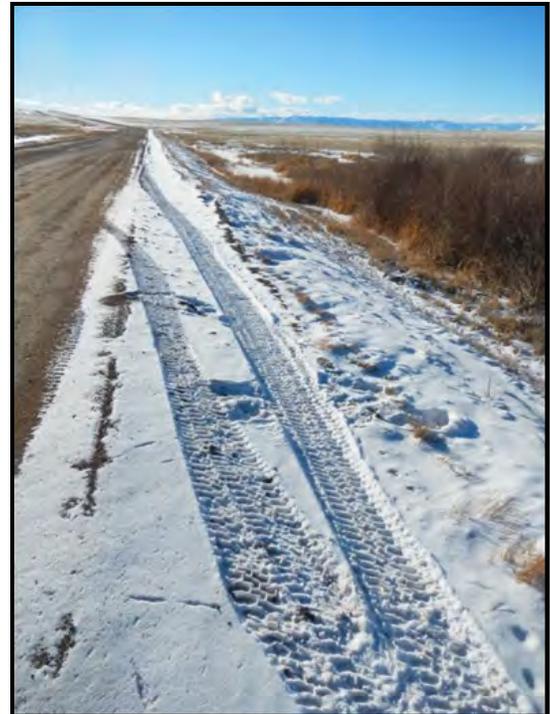
Man charged with taking a pheasant from the road

Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood completed reports and submitted information for discovery regarding an unusual case in February in which a man turned himself in for having “accidentally” shot a rooster pheasant that he claimed he had misidentified as a jackrabbit as it crouched under a rock on a state section of land.

When Wardens Sherwood and Bill Brinegar tracked the suspect back to the scene, they found the pheasant and another animal were both illegally shot from different locations on the Sand Creek Road south of Laramie.

The pheasant, likely the product of a licensed bird farm nearby, had been in a stand of willows, not under a rock, and the suspect had not even made it to the state section he had described.

The suspect eventually pleaded guilty to shooting from a public road and will pay \$220 in fines and his hunting privileges are suspended for six months.



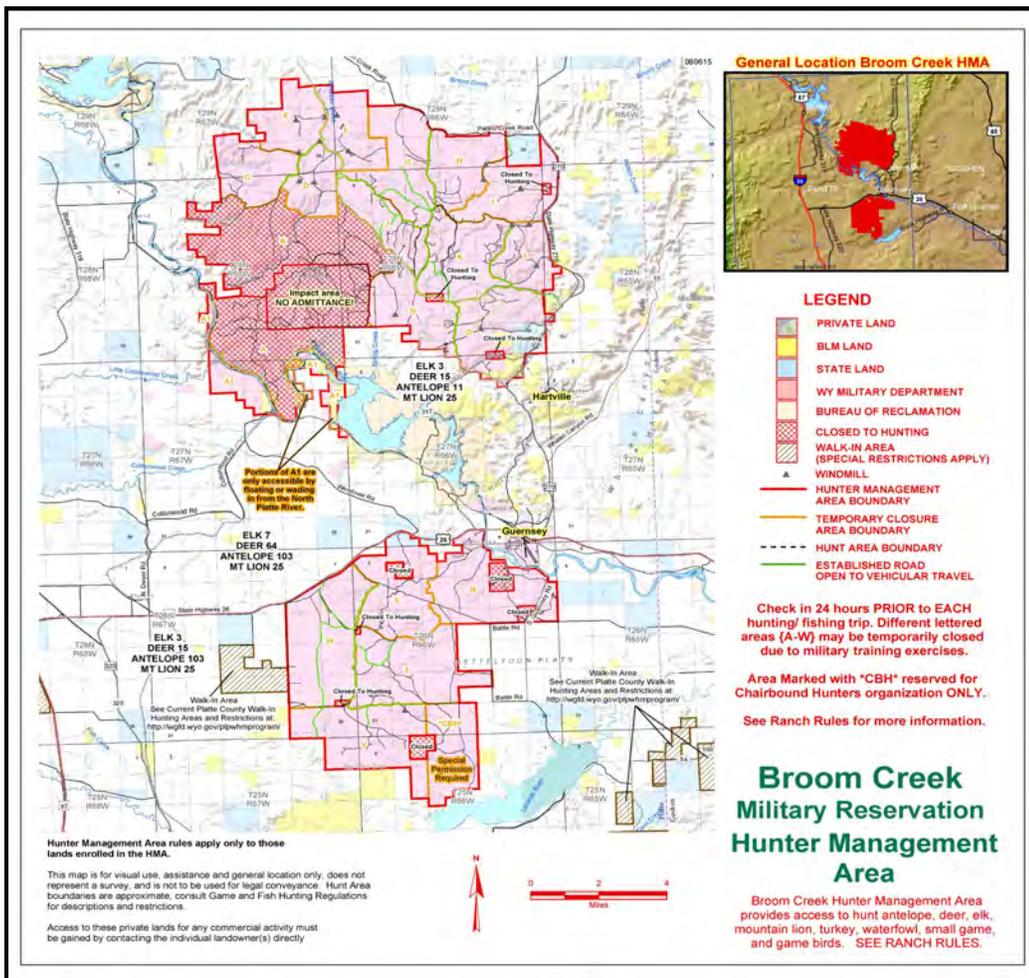
Changes at Broom Creek HMA

Hunters should note significant change at The Broom Creek HMA (Camp Guernsey/Wyoming Military Department) for this fall.

Instead of having permission slips during the deer season only valid for the deer season only valid for two- or three-day periods, this year there will be 50 slips valid for the first week and 50 more valid for the second week.

As always, hunters are required to call in the day prior to each hunting trip. No more than 35 hunters will be allowed on base at any one time, with limitations to distribute everyone across the portions of the base which are open for that day's hunt.

More information on the Broom Creek HMA can be found online at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/>





Wayward bighorn sheep

A young bighorn sheep ram wandered into Chugwater and paid a visit to the Mary Queen of Heaven Catholic Church. As per Department protocol, the young ram was euthanized. Necropsy results showed he had severe nasal tumors and was shot at some point with a larger caliber bullet.



Necropsy to be performed on study moose

Elk Mountain Game Warden Ryan Kenneda observed an emaciated cow moose along Pass Creek between Elk Mountain and Code Mountain in early March. The moose was wearing a collar marked #15 and was unfortunately not moving.

Warden Kenneda informed the biologists who are heading the Snowy Range moose study. The following day the biologists decided to euthanize the moose to gather biological data. Warden Kenneda met with Wildlife Disease Specialist Terry Creekmore at Pass Creek where the moose was last seen and discovered that the moose had already died. The moose was taken to the lab for necropsy to determine its cause of death.



Studying bighorn sheep diseases

The wildlife disease laboratory staff joined the University of Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit in March to capture 33 bighorn sheep for disease research and body condition monitoring.

This cooperative project is designed to determine how body condition may influence which species of respiratory pathogens a particular sheep (or herd) may carry. This research involves capturing bighorn ewes twice a year (December and March), sampling for respiratory pathogens, and assessing body condition by measuring their fat depth ultrasonically.

Several northern herds were selected for this research including Whiskey Basin, Jackson and Absaroka. This is the second year of this project, and to date, no direct relationship between body condition and pathogen presence has been established.



Hank Edwards collects samples from a bighorn sheep to detect pathogens that can cause respiratory disease.



Chute system inside the handling building.

Sheep handling facility complete



Funnel for herding sheep into the handling building

The crew at the Thorne/Williams Research Facility is proud to announce the completion of the bighorn sheep handling facility.

The catch pens, alleys and a funnel into the building were completed with 8' walls and a catwalk for working sheep. Plastic paneling was finished on the walls and ceiling creating a watertight room for cleaning and disinfecting.

The interior electrical was finished and the room heater and hot water heater were installed. We installed a stainless steel sink and counter tops along one wall and a built-in scale was installed and calibrated in the alley.



Catwalk on the back side of the funnel

Positive changes at Grayrocks Public Access Area

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department wants anglers and other sportsmen to be aware of some changes at Grayrocks Reservoir Public Access Area (PAA).

Outdoor enthusiasts should note that all off-road recreational vehicle use will be prohibited on the Grayrocks PAA. Personnel with the Game and Fish Department and Basin Electric expressed concern about risks to public safety from having off-road vehicles on the small access area. "We have seen a sharp rise in the use of off-road vehi-

cles on the access area and we feel there is a real risk to public safety if we don't do something," said Rick King, Regional Wildlife Supervisor in Laramie.

The limit for camping will be also reduced from 14 days to seven days to address overcrowding issues. Grayrocks Reservoir PAA has become popular for campers, especially around holidays. The changes went into effect on March 31. Two new boat docks will be installed and improvements will be made to the parking lot.



The Laramie Region Habitat and Access crew has been busy installing boat ramps for the summer boating season. Shown are the West dock at Grayrocks Reservoir (at left) and the boat dock at Lake Hattie.

Photos by Mark Worth



Free fishing workshop in Wheatland

If you need some fishing tips and ideas, join employees from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department at a workshop called “Tacklin’ the Basics of Fishing” on Saturday, April 30 in Wheatland. The workshop will begin at 10 a.m. at the Platte Valley Bank, 200 16th Street, and will later move to Wheatland Reservoir #1 for an afternoon of fishing.

Laramie Region Fish Biologist Steve Gale will present a slide-show to help anglers learn about the local fishing spots around Wheatland; the history of fish stocking in these water bodies; common angling tactics for various fish species; best times of year to fish and more.

Following the slide show, join WGFD personnel for a few hours of fishing at Wheatland Reservoir #1. Poles, tackle and bait will be available for use at no charge. All anglers over age 14 are reminded to purchase a 2016 fishing license and conservation stamp. For more information call Robin Kepple at (307) 777-4523.

Fishing regulations meeting

Anglers are invited to attend a public meeting to discuss proposals for the 2017 fishing and watercraft regulations. The meeting will be at 6 p.m. Wednesday, April 20 at the Game and Fish Department Headquarters, 5400 Bishop Blvd in Cheyenne. Learn about:

- A proposal to add Wheatland Reservoir #1 in Platte County to the list of waters managed for the Special Winter Ice Fishing Provision.
- A proposal to eliminate the special size limit on bass at Rock Lake.
- Other proposed changes across the state

Video will help black bear hunters during spring season

With spring black bear season upon us, bear hunters are encouraged to check out an online video that will help them distinguish between male and female black bears.

“It is often very difficult to determine the gender of a black bear,” said Robin Kepple, public information specialist in the Laramie Region. “And when the female quota is reached in a bear hunt area, the season closes for that area.”

There are several ways to help a hunter distinguish male and female black bears and to selectively hunt mature male bears. Tracks, differences in body size and shape, group size, and certain behavioral characteristics all provide evidence of sex.

Adult male bears are usually larger than females. A large male bear often weighs between 200-250 pounds but they can grow to over 300 pounds. Adult females are typically 130 to 150 pounds.

Females appear smaller and leaner looking, appearing as long as they are tall, while mature males have more blocky and rectangular bodies. Because they are larger overall, adult male bears usually have larger feet than female bears.

The front foot tracks offer the best clues as to whether the bear is male or female. Adult male tracks are usually wider than 4.5 inches, but females are usually less than 4.5 inches wide.

But size alone is not enough to determine if a bear is male or female. Hunters can learn more about distinguishing the sex of a black bear by watching the entire video online at: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regional-Offices/Laramie-Region>.

Remember, black bear gender cannot always be determined easily or with certainty while in the field.





“Meet a Warden” was a success

Cheyenne Game Warden Shawn Blajszczak worked with Dan Baker, the store manager at Sportsman’s Warehouse, to set up a “Meet a Warden Day” at the store on March 19.

Game Warden Kelly Todd was recruited to assist Blajszczak for the event. Wardens Blajszczak and Todd said the event went well and they were able to answer questions from many people.

Warden Blajszczak is planning on doing more Meet a Warden events at Sportsman’s Warehouse thru July. A special thank you goes to Sportsman’s Warehouse and Dan Baker for allowing us to hold this event at their store.

Meeting with local landowners

Wildlife personnel with the Laramie Region attended the elk Area 6 landowner meeting in Horse Creek in early March.

Several landowners attended the meeting and were able to talk with Game and Fish biologist and wardens about big game management including elk, deer, antelope, moose and bighorn sheep.

Meetings such as these also allow landowners to visit with one another about wildlife on their lands. The Game and Fish Department holds these meetings periodically to get landowners’ perspectives on various wildlife topics. March is a busy time of the year for the landowners because of calving season and the overall cooperation is a true testament to how well Wyoming Game and Fish personnel and landowners work together to cooperatively address big game management. A special thank you goes out to landowner Dave Berry for allowing us to hold the meeting in his house. Photo by Kelly Todd.

Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Initiative Meeting

A meeting for the Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Initiative will be at 6:00 p.m. Thursday, April 28, at the Berry Biodiversity Conservation Center room #227. The Berry Center is located at the corner of 10th Street and Lewis Street on the University of Wyoming campus.

WE SUPPLY THE
TROPHIES
YOU MAKE THE
MEMORIES

Wyoming’s
Super Tag raffle
offers 9 species
and 10 chances
to win.



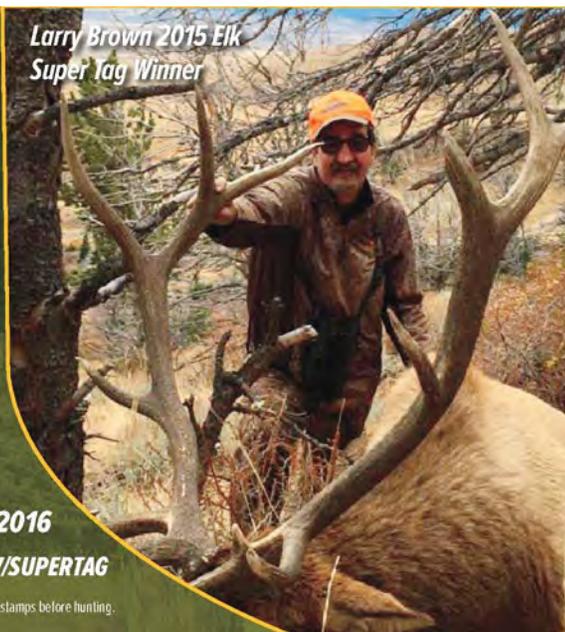
THE ULTIMATE WESTERN
HUNTING ADVENTURE

Super Tag tickets: \$10
Super Tag Trifecta: \$30

Deadline to apply is July 1, 2016

APPLY ONLINE: WGFD.WYO.GOV/SUPERTAG

Raffle winners must purchase any applicable licenses and/or stamps before hunting.





Congratulations to new game warden graduates!

Five new game wardens completed their initial law enforcement training at the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy in Douglas in April.

Game Warden Kristen DaVanon, who is assigned to the Laramie Region, received a merit award for academic achievement after finishing in the top 5 of her class of 35 students. Good job, Warden DaVanon!

Graduate Mitchell Renteria, also assigned to the Laramie Region, will join DaVanon on Glendo Reservoir this summer where they will work to enforce watercraft safety and fishing regulations.

The Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy is the only law enforcement training facility in the state, ensuring that officers have consistency in all areas of training.

Jerry Cowles Jr. leads Laramie Habitat and Access crew

For the past several months, Jerry Cowles Jr. has been leading the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Habitat and Access crew in the Laramie Region.

In this role, Cowles is responsible for managing 11 Wildlife Habitat Management Areas and more than 25 Public Access Areas throughout the Laramie Region, which includes Platte, Goshen, Laramie, Albany and Carbon counties. Three full-time employees and two seasonal employees help him maintain the properties. The crew has a variety of duties, including public safety, installing fencing, maintenance of facilities, habitat treatments, irrigation, planting and maintaining food plots, and many other tasks that are necessary to provide habitat for wildlife and recreation for humans.

Cowles says the job is a good fit. Growing up on a farm near Cody, he wanted to be a game warden when he was a boy. It was on the farm where he learned to irrigate, install fence, cut hay and various other chores that are a part of farm life. Pursuing his goal of becoming a game warden, he received an Associate's Degree in General Science from Laramie County Community College in 2010 and pursued a Bachelor's Degree in Wildlife Biology from South Dakota State University.

In 2009 he was hired as a seasonal Habitat and Access biologist in Laramie, He was offered a permanent position on the statewide Habitat and Access crew in Lander in 2010. He moved into the habitat biologist position in Yoder in 2013, and into his current role as Habitat and Access Supervisor in August 2015.

As an avid hunter, angler and wildlife photographer, Cowles says the best part of his job is working with NGOs (non-government agencies) to obtain more public access. "I enjoy providing new areas for Wyoming sportsmen to hunt, fish and explore," he said.

Cowles lives in Laramie with his wife, Luann, and their four children.



Jerry Cowles, Jr., today and at age 7.



Lemmy gets a hoof trim

Although it was a busy time at the Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center at Sybille, biologists still found the time to trim hooves and give an annual exam to our hand-reared bighorn sheep, Lemmy. She is the only lamb we've been able to successfully rear out of a group of chronically ill bighorn ewes.

While she is not a research sheep, her presence at our facility helps to remind us what we are working towards: finding ways to improve the health of our wild bighorn sheep populations in the face of respiratory disease.



Large Carnivore Workshop

Twenty-seven people attended the "Living in Large Carnivore" workshop in Saratoga on April 2.

The participants learned how to react if confronted by a bear, mountain lion or wolf. There were presentations on bear and mountain lion food habits, where one would expect to encounter a bear, mountain lion or wolf, food storage regulations, understanding large carnivore behavior and what to do in an encounter. In the photo at left, Laramie Region Information Specialist Robin Kepple demonstrates how to properly use bear spray. Photo by Dan Thompson.

Personnel training

Game Wardens David Ellsworth, Rob Hipp and Cody Bish attended a watercraft accident investigation course taught by National Association of State Boating Law Administrators. This course concentrated on the physical characteristics of watercraft crashes, the unique behavior of colliding watercraft, and how to conduct in-depth investigations of crashes.

Game warden Shawn Blajszczak trained with Wyoming State Parks law enforcement and attended the legal updates class (new case law). Blajszczak and Warden Kelly Todd also gave a boating safety and regulations presentation to Wyoming State Parks officers. Blajszczak then assisted Wyoming State Parks officers with simunitons training.

**Wyoming Game and Fish Dept.
Laramie Region Office
528 S. Adams St.
Laramie, WY 82070
(307) 745-4046**





Wyoming Game and Fish Department Large Carnivore Section Newsletter -April 2016-



With the changing of the seasons, so goes the awakening of black and grizzly bears. This time of year male bears are becoming more active, emerging from their dens and in search of an easy meal such as winterkilled ungulates or whatever else may be handy. Bears are extremely opportunistic when it comes to filling their omnivorous stomachs. In preparation for den emergence our Section has been busy traveling the state providing workshops to the public informing them about large carnivores in order to preemptively deal with potential conflict situations. We continually say that the best way to manage conflicts between carnivores and people is to be proactive and try to prevent them from happening by doing things such as securing attractants. The workshops are meant to stress awareness when enjoying the great landscapes that Wyoming has to offer. Bears have been in the spotlight lately with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's release of a proposal to delist the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem grizzly bear population. This is a historic moment for the field of wildlife management and conservation and a true success story to bring a population back from the brink of extirpation to that of a fully recovered population. The Department revised our Grizzly Bear Management and also took it on tour across the state starting in late March to converse with the public about grizzly bears and how a recovered population would be managed by the State.

Section Personnel:

Cody:

Luke Ellsbury
Dusty Lasseter

Lander:

Dan Bjornlie
Justin Clapp
Brian Debolt
Dan Thompson

Pinedale:

Zach Turnbull
Ken Mills

Jackson:

Mike Boyce



Mountain Lion Management

The majority of mountain lion hunt area seasons closed March 31 and this represents the final year of the current 3-year cycle to manage mountain lions by the Department. Large Carnivore Biologist Justin Clapp is analyzing harvest and population data in order to bring it to the public. Black bears and mountain lions are managed in these 3-year increments as it allows for an evaluation and assessment of population trend and management objectives. Public Information Gathering Meetings will be held throughout the state over the course of the next month to discuss mountain lion management. In addition, our crew was able to successfully capture and collar an adult female mountain lion in the Green River region as part of additional mountain lion monitoring efforts. Data provided from this and other animals will allow further assessment of our management strategies and also provide insight into mountain lion population dynamics in the southwestern part of the state, and also provides a great opportunity for LCS personnel to work with regional Wildlife personnel.



Chapter 42 (Mountain Lion Regulations) Public Meeting Dates and Times

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Location</u>
April 25, 2016	6:00 p.m.	Sundance	Crook County Courthouse
April 27, 2016	6:00 p.m.	Casper	Game and Fish Office
May 4, 2016	6:00 p.m.	Cody	Bighorn Federal Bank
May 9, 2016	6:00 p.m.	Pinedale	Game and Fish Office
May 10, 2016	7:00 p.m.	Sheridan	Game and Fish Office
May 12, 2016	6:00 p.m.	Riverton	Fremont County Library
May 17, 2016	7:00 p.m.	Green River	Game and Fish Office
May 18, 2016	6:00 p.m.	Wheatland	Platte County Library
May 19, 2016	6:00 p.m.	Laramie	UW Biodiversity Institute - Berry Center
May 24, 2016	6:00 p.m.	Jackson	Virginian Lodge



Bear Wise Wyoming Program

Our “*Living in Large Carnivore Country*” workshops began in March. These annual workshops provide information on the ecology and management of black bears, grizzly bears, mountain lions and wolves, and stress the importance of awareness when enjoying the splendors of Wyoming. We attempt to provide information in a proactive fashion on all matter of conflict resolution when it comes to these animals from food storage to tracking and identification.

Workshops build on the overall concept of *Conserving Wildlife and Serving People* that is the basis for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. With the valuable assistance of regional Information and Education Specialists, our personnel cover the spectrum of the subject related to recreating and living in areas that have bears, wolves, and mountain lions. This year we reached out to several smaller communities such as Baggs and Saratoga with great turnouts and rousing discussions related to large carnivores. The public is very engaged in learning about these animals and what they can do to reduce the potential for conflicts. The Section provided hunter education for students attending Wyoming Catholic College in Lander, WY; building on the general curriculum of the vital hunter education program and giving students a chance to ask questions and learn about what they may encounter while hunting in Wyoming.

*Dusty Lasseter and Zach Turnbull
interacting with the public*





BE BEAR AWARE

As stated earlier, many bears have emerged from their dens at the time you are reading this, meaning we have already been busy working on “Bear Aware” programs throughout the state and reminding people to be cognizant of what they can do to reduce the likelihood of having an unfortunate dealing with a bear. Springtime bears are sometimes observed at lower elevations, depending on snowpack, searching out quick and easy



nutrients and working out the kinks of a long winter’s sleep. Make sure to report any grizzly bear sign and/or activity to someone from the Large Carnivore Section and spread the word of awareness. We thank the public for letting us know about bear activities and conflicts between bears and people!

Notable LCS Accomplishments and Briefs for March 2016

- LCS personnel presented on bear safety and ecology to the Cody Culture Club, Lander Kiwanis, and Dubois Hunter Education Class.
- Verified one wolf injured calf on private lands in the Cody Region.
- Assisted with wolverine and bighorn sheep monitoring programs.
- Assisted with wolf, mule deer, and bighorn sheep capture efforts.
- Documented wolf and elk interactions on elk winter feedgrounds and native winter range.
- Presented information and testimony at a damage claim arbitration hearing.
- Presented trophy game conflict summary information to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission in Rawlins, WY.
- Worked with the National Outdoor Leadership School on bear spray training.
- Worked on grant applications for the Animal Damage Management Board.



- Captured and removed an older male black bear that was food conditioned and persistently seeking garbage in the Jackson Region.
- Removed several ungulate carcasses from residential areas in the Jackson Region.
- Worked with the Teton Conservation District and Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation on bear resistant trash can purchase and a fruit tree replacement program.
- Worked with Targhee National Forest and Treasure Mountain Boy Scout Camp on developing a bear safety protocol for their camp in Teton Canyon.
- Gave an invited presentation to the Nebraska Chapter of The Wildlife Society about large carnivore recovery and expansion on the landscape.
- Conducted multiple media (radio, print, television) interviews regarding large carnivore ecology and management.
- Attended season setting meetings in the Black Hills to address potential questions regarding mountain lions by members of the public.





Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Sheridan Region

April 2016 Newsletter

Sheridan Region

Regional Wildlife Supervisor:

Joe Gilbert

Regional Fisheries Supervisor:

Paul Mavrakis

Office Managers:

Lori Roe
Kathy Boyles

Clerical Specialists:

Wendy Balkenbush
Stephanie Bomar

Game Wardens:

Dayton: Dustin Shorma
Sheridan: Bruce Scigliano
Buffalo: Jim Seeman
Kaycee: Grant Gerharter
N. Gillette: Vacant
S. Gillette: Dustin Kirsch
Moorcroft: J.D. Davis
Investigator: Scott Adell
Damage Tech: Vacant

Public Information Specialist:

Bud Stewart

Wildlife Biologists :

Wildlife Management Coordinator:
Lynn Jahnke
Sheridan: Tim Thomas
Buffalo: Dan Thiele
Gillette: Erika Peckham
Terrestrial Habitat: Todd Caltrider

PLPW Program Coordinator:

Troy Tobiasson

Fish Biologists:

Bill Bradshaw
Andrew Nikirk
Aquatic Habitat: Travis Cundy

Habitat and Access Coordinator:

Seth Roseberry

Aquatic Invasive Species:

Mike Locatelli

Story Fish Hatchery:

Superintendent: Steve Diekema
Senior Fish Culturist: Brad Hughes
Culturist: Jennifer Meineke

Sheridan Bird Farm:

Supervisor: Darrell Meineke
Biologist: Nate Brown
Technician: Kurt Heiser

New AIS Specialist in Sheridan Region



Mike Locatelli became the new Sheridan Region Aquatic Invasive Species Specialist in March.

Mike Locatelli joined the Sheridan Region on March 1 to take the position of Aquatic Invasive Species Specialist. Locatelli was born and raised in Wisconsin. After a couple years at the University of Minnesota and the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, Locatelli transferred to the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. While in Tennessee, he enrolled in an exchange program and attended Washington State University and the University of Maine for one semester each and also worked as a whitewater raft guide during his five summers in the Smoky Mountains. In 2009, Locatelli graduated from the University of Tennessee with a Bachelors of Science Degree in Wildlife & Fisheries Management. Since then, he has worked for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as a Wildlife Technician and Conservation Biologist, for Louisiana State University and Clemson University on wildlife research projects, for The Nature Conservancy in Kentucky and in March 2015 started with the Wyoming Game & Fish Department as an AIS Specialist in Casper. In his free time, Locatelli can be found paddling rivers, hiking with his two mastiffs or being a diehard Green Bay Packers fan.



Sheridan Region Monthly Newsletter

April 2016

Hunting Season Setting Meetings

During March wildlife managers in the Sheridan Region held five open houses or public meetings to present the proposed 2016 hunting seasons. Initial open houses/public meetings were held in Gillette, Sheridan, Buffalo and Kaycee. A final public meeting to address the comments received during the initial events was held in Sheridan on March 21. The finalized proposed seasons were then forwarded to the Wildlife Division Administration in the Cheyenne G&F office for one more round of approval before they are submitted to the G&F Commission for final approval and consideration at the April 21 Commission meeting.

The Sheridan Open House drew about 50 people, the largest crowd of any of the events in the Sheridan G&F Region. The larger crowd was due to some significant changes that were being proposed to the hunting season structure for deer and elk in some hunt areas to the west of Sheridan.



The Sheridan Public Season Setting open house drew over 50 people (photo at left). Sheridan Game Warden Bruce Scigliano (far table on left side, back to us), Dayton Game Warden Dustin Shorma (kneeling at right end of far table on left) and Sheridan Wildlife Biologist Tim Thomas (on far end of table on right) discuss issues with some of the hunters that attended the meeting.

The Buffalo Public Season Setting open house (photo on right) was attended by 13 people. Buffalo Game Warden Jim Seeman (green jacket on right side of near table), Buffalo Wildlife Biologist Dan Thiele (red shirt on right side near table) and Lynn Jahnke (red shirt at far table) visit with some of the hunters that attended the Buffalo Open House.



The Kaycee Public Season Setting meeting attracted five hunters/landowners. Buffalo Wildlife Biologist Dan Thiele (third from left), Terrestrial Habitat Biologist Todd Caltrider (fourth from left), Kaycee Game Warden Grant Gerharter (standing in back) and Sheridan Wildlife Supervisor Joe Gilbert (on right in back) listen as Kaycee area landowner Wayne Graves discusses protein content in livestock and wildlife forage.



Sheridan Region Monthly Newsletter

April 2016

Just Passing Through



Moorcroft Game Warden John Davis reported that toward the end of March nine turkeys passed through Moorcroft. They appeared in town after a very high wind. After roosting in trees in Moorcroft for one night the turkeys moved on. While turkeys are common in the Black Hills east and north of Moorcroft they are not regularly observed within the town.



The two photos show the turkeys that passed through Moorcroft at the end of March.

Game & Fish has booth at Wyoming Sportsman's Group Banquet



Game & Fish Commissioner Keith Culver (far left) discusses issues with Sheridan Fish Management Supervisor Paul Mavrakis (blue shirt) as Terrestrial Habitat Biologist Todd Caltrider looks on. Gillette Wildlife Biologist Erika Peckham (behind table on left) and South Gillette Game Warden Dustin Kirsch (behind table on right) help some children identify the furs on the table.

The Wyoming Sportsman's Group (WSG) held their fund raising banquet at the Complex in Gillette in early March. In the short time the WSG has been in existence they have contributed significantly to several projects Game and Fish has been involved with. WSG had a trap/transport trailer built and donated it to Game and Fish for use in the Gillette area. In addition, WAG has contributed funds to finish a wheelchair accessible fishing pier in Newcastle, treat weeds after a fire near Dayton and help with a wildlife habitat improvement project in Campbell County. Game and Fish set up a booth displaying photos of the various projects WSG has been involved with and had the trap/transport trailer at the banquet.



Sheridan Region Monthly Newsletter

April 2016

Happenings at the Story Fish Hatchery



Story Fish Hatchery Fish Culturist Jennifer Meineke and Hatchery Superintendent Steve Diekema collect milt from an Eagle Lake rainbow trout for a milt storage study the hatchery will be conducting.

With the mild weather in March, over 350 people visited the Story Hatchery.

The Eagle Lake rainbow trout spawning operation began in March and 250,000 eggs were collected.

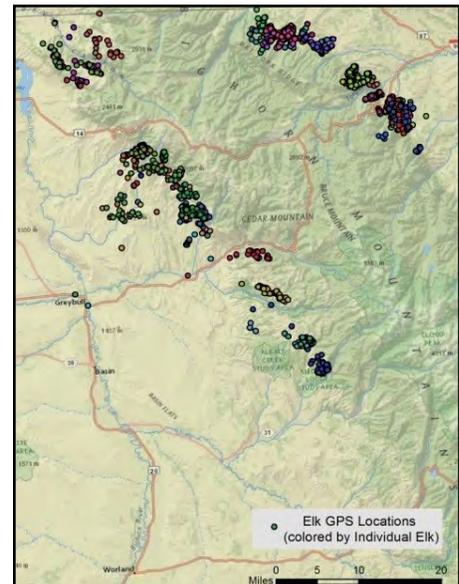
The Wigwam Rearing Station near Tensleep shipped 77,000 Bear River cutthroat trout green eggs to the Story hatchery for incubation to the “eyed egg” stage. Once the eggs reach that stage they will be shipped to other G&F fish hatcheries for hatching and rearing of the fingerling cutthroats.

Story Hatchery started the pre-collection of milt for a study to determine the success of storing of milt using the Storfish product. Being able to store fish milt would more easily allow for the infusion of wild genes into captive brood stocks when milt availability may be decreased toward the end of a spawning run.

Collared Elk Doing Well



Trail cam photo of cow elk wearing one of the collars one month after it was placed on the elk.



Locations of cow elk collared on the east and west side of the Bighorn Mountains in mid-February.

In mid-February GPS collars were placed on cow elk on the east and west side of the Bighorn Mountains as part of a brucellosis research project to better understand the movement and distribution of elk in the northern Bighorns. Several trail cam photos have shown the collared cows to be doing well while wearing the tracking collars.



the wyoming game & fish department

CASPER REGION newsletter

April Fishing Goldeneye is Back!

Goldeneye Reservoir, located 20 miles West of Casper, is an incredibly productive trout fishery that grows trophy sized trout. Unfortunately, Goldeneye is susceptible to winterkill during periods of low water since it



Cutthroat trout in Goldeneye Reservoir from spring 2016 survey

is a shallow lake (20 feet deep when full). Winterkill happens when the lake is frozen and decaying vegetation under the ice uses up the oxygen in the water. The 2013/2014 winter resulted in a near total winterkill for trout since the water level was low going into the winter. Our sampling right after ice-out in April 2014 showed the trout population had declined by more than 95%. Luckily, ample spring moisture resulted in the filling of this reservoir and we were able to restock it in fall 2014. We stocked more fish in spring 2015 and it was recently stocked again this spring. The fishery was sampled in early April 2016 and the trout population is back up and running. The rainbow trout stocked in the fall of 2014 were averaging 18 inches and nearly three pounds after only 1.5 years in the reservoir. Of the trout stocked in spring 2015, the rainbows and Snake River cutthroats were averaging 16 inches and two pounds, while the brook trout were 14 inches and 1.5 pounds. With the high growth rates in this reservoir, rainbow trout should be hitting 20 inches by July and we expect five pound fish available for ice anglers by December.

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Of Interest

Sandhill Cranes, Wild Turkey Relocation

April Hunting

Season Setting Commission Meeting

The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission will hold their annual April meeting in Casper to hear season setting recommendations for the 2016 hunting seasons. Once season dates and license allocations are finalized they can be found on the website at <http://wyo.wgdf.gov>. The application deadline to apply is May 31. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at (307) 473-3400.

On the Ground

Winter Turns to Spring, Wild Turkey Season

After a warm February and early March, a snowstorm brought much needed relief to the Casper Area with several inches of moisture received. The moisture should bode well for spring forage. Overall mild conditions quickly returned to the area.

Biologists hope mild conditions persist through incubation and hatch of game birds and fawning of big game. In the Black Hills,

Wildlife Biologist Joe Sandrini noted that the mild conditions seem to have deer and antelope moving back towards spring and summer range a bit earlier this year; and he added, "We are seeing improved numbers of deer and antelope migrating this spring, with most looking to be in very good shape. There are a lot of coming yearlings too; suggesting over-winter survival was very good again this year; something the herds in this part of the state can really use, as they build back up after sinking so low a couple years ago."



Pronghorn antelope finding forage after over one foot of snowfall south of Casper



Mule deer leaving winter range following recent snow



Wildlife biologists and game wardens have been preparing for wild turkey seasons across the Casper Region. The Black Hills wild turkey seasons are extremely popular during the spring hunt. These turkeys pictured (left) were finding some dry land after the storm in late March dropped over a foot of snow in Converse County.



Behind the Badge

Elk Hunt Area 19



East Casper Game Warden Cody Bish recently closed a case involving two bull elk. These two elk were killed illegally in elk Hunt Area 19. After an investigation matching DNA and ballistics, two individuals were charged with over limit and waste. The bull elk and rifle were seized and forfeited. The individual primarily responsible lost three years of hunting and trapping privileges and had to pay restitution.



In the Water

Burbot in Seminoe Reservoir?

Since early spring 2015, the Casper fish management crew has had four separate instances of anglers reporting what may be burbot caught in Seminoe Reservoir.

While burbot are a native species in the Wind/Bighorn, Tongue and Powder River drainages in Wyoming, they are not native to the North Platte River, have never been stocked in the drainage and their presence would indicate an illegal introduction. The fisheries crew is concerned about this possibility as burbot are voracious predators that could have negative impacts on the excellent trout and walleye fisheries in the drainage.



Burbot are a freshwater member of the cod family. They are a predatory species and are unique in that they become more active the colder the water gets. They are prolific spawners and are able to spawn in both lake and river habitats. Spawning takes place in the winter, under the ice and a large female burbot can lay as many as 1,000,000 eggs, allowing them to quickly expand in numbers. While they are an important native species in some parts of the state, illegal introductions of burbot into the Green River drainage in the late 1990's have shown this species is able to quickly expand in numbers and cause ecological harm outside their native range. Seminoe Reservoir is a high elevation, relatively unproductive reservoir, and the presence of burbot would undoubtedly have a negative impact on the excellent walleye fishery through direct competition for forage. Burbot have also been shown to prey on trout and their presence would hamper our ability to provide a quality trout fishery in Seminoe. Of course burbot would not stay in the reservoir, but would spread upstream and downstream and could threaten the world class wild trout fisheries present in the North Platte River above and below Seminoe.



We have been attempting to verify the presence of burbot in Seminoe Reservoir. While we annually sample the trout and walleye populations with gillnets, burbot are not susceptible to capture in gillnets due to their long, slender shape. Trotlines were set in September and came up empty. Set lines were deployed through the ice in January which also came up empty. We took water samples from the North Platte and Medicine Bow Rivers in February to look for traces of burbot DNA through a relatively new technique known as eDNA sampling. Analysis of those samples is pending. We will now attempt netting with a special net called a trammel net which has been proven effective at capturing burbot.

In the meantime, we have proposed a regulation similar to what has been enacted in the Green River drainage where burbot will be listed as a non-game species that must be killed if caught in the North Platte River drainage.

If you have caught a burbot, or know of someone catching a burbot anywhere in the North Platte Drainage, we would like to know about it. You should report any burbot catches to the Casper Fisheries Management Crew at 307-473-3405. If possible, keep and freeze the fish for us, otherwise snap a photo for species verification.



Of Interest

Sandhill Cranes, Douglas Wild Turkey Trapping



Flights of geese and sandhill cranes have been a steady and raucous sight in the sky most of the month. Sandhill cranes and geese stage in high numbers across the Central Flyways on their migration north. The local birds are also returning from their winter grounds, and our game wardens and biologists report what appear to be good numbers of game and nongame birds as they begin their annual sage-grouse surveys. Stay tuned for more reports on sage-grouse numbers next month.



Volunteers helped capture wild turkeys

A group of 24 turkeys took up residence in a subdivision within the city of Douglas this past fall. After putting up with turkeys for several months, some home owners grew increasingly frustrated with the constant noise and mess that resulted. Given there was a large field adjacent to these homes, Casper Region employees set up a large drop net that was donated by the National Wild Turkey Federation for turkey transplants and captures. With

the help of various Game and Fish personnel and local volunteers, we were able to trap 17 of the 24 turkeys much to the delight of the homeowners. The birds were hauled over north of Lusk where an anxious landowner asked to have the turkeys released on his ranch. Hopefully these birds will survive and reproduce in a more wild setting, and eventually result in some good turkey hunting in the coming years!



Wild turkeys released north of Lusk





Statewide Wildlife and Habitat Management

Monthly Summary - April 2016

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HARVEST SURVEY PROGRAM

GAIL SHERIDAN

Harvest Survey Coordinator Gail Sheridan completed the 2015 Fall Turkey Harvest Report. The final 2015 Elk Harvest Report was received on schedule from Tetra Tech. Both have been distributed and posted on the WGFD website at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Hunting/Harvest-Reports/>.

Most of March focuses on the second phase of the 2015 Small Game, Upland Game Bird and Migratory Game Bird Harvest Survey. Hard copy surveys were mailed to 12,733 license holders who had not yet responded to the first mailing. Thank you to Robin Ahrndt, Barb Fryman, Julie Federer and Brock Anderson who have helped immensely in the tedious task of data entry of the thousands of hard copies received from hunters. At the time of this writing, we have a 38% response overall. This survey will run through the third or fourth week in April. Preparations are being made to launch mountain lion on April 29, furbearer/trapper on May 3 and spring turkey on May 20.

Bob Lanka, SWaHM supervisor, and Gail met with Melanie Arnett and Gary Beauvais to review progress and make some final decisions related to moving the Department's Wildlife Observation System to the new database being developed by the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database (WYNDD).

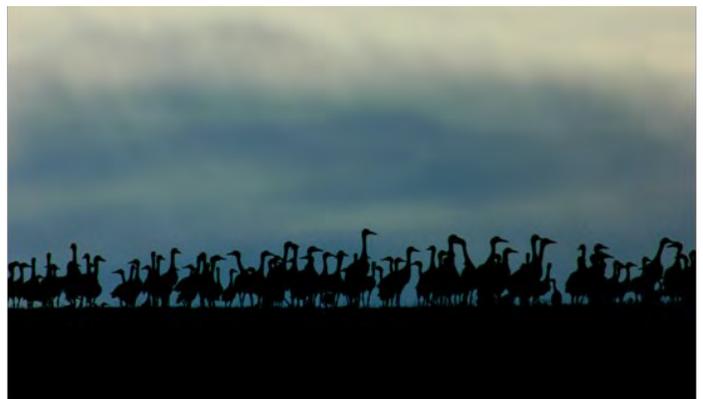
MIGRATORY GAME BIRD PROGRAM

NATE HUCK

Migratory Game Bird Biologist Nate Huck attended the Central Flyway Waterfowl Technical Committee meeting held March 1-3 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Members of the committee received briefings from the USFWS and Canadian Wildlife Service. The future of waterfowl hunting season frameworks and hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation issues were discussed. A presentation was given on the use of drones to study nesting snow geese.



Nate also conducted the mid-continent sandhill crane survey at Table Mountain WHMA. Several thousand sandhill cranes stage at Table Mountain WHMA on their way north to breeding grounds in arctic and subarctic Alaska, Canada, and Russia. The survey is conducted annually on or about the 4th Tuesday in March in Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming. Wyoming has participated each of the last three years. This year, Nate counted 4,200 sandhill cranes, the highest number recorded over the four years we have participated.



NONGAME BIRD & MAMMAL PROGRAM

ZACK WALKER, SUSAN PATLA, ANDREA ORABONA, NICHOLE BJORNLI

Nongame Bird Biologist Andrea Orabona attended the annual meeting of the Utah Chapter of The Wildlife Society in her current role as Central Mountains and Plains Section President-Elect. The meeting was well attended by both professional biologists and wildlife students from several universities in Utah. Andrea was excited to share information about the Central Mountains and Plains Section and the benefits of becoming a member of The Wildlife Society.



Bald eagle nest site found in the Snake River Canyon.

Nongame Biologist Susan Patla completed the annual bald eagle occupancy aerial survey flight for the Jackson and Pinedale regions on March 26. Of the 69 known nesting territories checked, 87% were occupied and 80% were incubating. Two new nesting territories were

also found. Data will be provided to agencies for management and protection of nesting eagles. In addition, Susan documented a total of 385 Trumpeter Swans, including some residents already on territory (pairs sitting on frozen ponds) and flocks of Canadian migrants that have not yet left Wyoming.



South Park WHMA wetland habitat ponds adjacent to the Jackson Treatment ponds. A total of 121 Trumpeter Swans were counted in the lower Habitat Pond which has become one of the most important wetlands for migrant and resident swans in the spring thaw period. Pre-nesting habitat has been identified as one of the critical limiting factors for this population.

STATEWIDE HABITAT PROGRAM

IAN TATOR, RYAN AMUNDSON, RACHEL NUSS

Ryan Amundson, Statewide Habitat Biologist, completed the Springer WHMA prescribed burn with assistance from Goshen County's Volunteer Fire Departments. Over 40 firefighters were on site and received valuable training. Prior to burning, numerous permits and clearances were obtained. In the 280 acre treatment area, interseeding of wildflower forb mixes, planting of small grain food plots, and dense nesting cover grasses will be completed in the next month by habitat and access personnel.



Spring WHMA prescribed burn.

Prescribed burn planning continues for the Limestone Rim area on Iron Mountain Ranch. Once spring decides to show up, the 700+/- acre prescribed burn will be attempted by BLM/USFS/WGFD personnel.

Statewide Terrestrial Habitat Manager Ian Tator presented information on cheatgrass control to the Sage-grouse implementation team in Lander.

WGFD personnel met with Camp Guernsey staff in late March to discuss Hunt Management Area rules and permit numbers, and also toured the property and provided recommendations on habitat improvement options, techniques and cost estimates for potential project work.

Office Manager Rachel Nuss participated in an education committee to discuss outreach/education planning for the Department.

SWAHM STAFF BIOLOGISTS

STEVE TESSMANN & GRANT FROST

Senior Wildlife Biologist Grant Frost reviewed pronghorn hunting season justifications and Staff Biologist Steve Tessmann reviewed elk hunting season justifications, and Statewide Terrestrial Habitat manager Ian Tator reviewed Mule Deer hunting season justifications submitted by the regions in preparation for the annual season setting meeting of the Wildlife Division. This process is completed annually to assist Wildlife Administration with reviewing and discussing season proposals at the March supervision meeting. Grant completed the Big Game Management Information Summary used by the Commission each year during the approval process for annual hunting regulations. Grant returned old waterfowl bands to the bird banding lab, ordered new bands, and entered the new band inventory in the Bandit program.

Steve organized and conducted the annual meeting of the Wyoming Bird Habitat Conservation Partnership held in Casper on March 15-16. Major outcomes of the meeting included a consensus endorsement of projects for funding from the Duke Energy Settlement that was deposited on Wyoming's behalf in the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) fund. The settlement includes a total of \$355,000 earmarked for wetland projects in Wyoming. The Partnership endorsed the SE Wyoming Standard NAWCA grant application (submitted by Ducks Unlimited) for \$1 million. The Duke funds may be used to fund the SE Wyoming project in part. The group also recommended holding back \$75,000 to fund one small NAWCA grant application. At the close of the meeting, Steve was recognized for his service as chair of the Wyoming Partnership since 2007, and vice chair Brian Jensen (NRCS) was elected to serve as the incoming chair. Statewide Terrestrial Habitat Manager Ian Tator was elected to serve as the new vice chair.



SAGE-GROUSE PROGRAM

TOM CHRISTIANSEN & NYSSA WHITFORD



Sage-Grouse GIS Analyst, Nyssa Whitford attended and presented at the Wyoming Geospatial Professional Organization, or WyGeo, meeting in Buffalo. Nyssa presented the spatial analysis side of her Master of

GIS project on the relationship between energy development and sage-grouse in the central Powder River Basin. She also watched presentations on cheatgrass mapping and automated hydrology reporting.

Nyssa and Sage-Grouse Coordinator Tom Christiansen spent considerable time planning the 30th WAFWA Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Technical Committee Workshop to be held in Lander June 13-16. Wyoming hosts this meeting once every 20 years. We anticipate 175-200 attendees from around the west (and beyond). Abstracts from 63 papers were submitted, but there is time for only about 43 presentations. Registration is now open. Registration and additional information about the workshop can be seen at: http://www.wafwa.org/workshops/sage_and_sharp-tailed_grouse/



Sage-grouse leks are again active and preliminary reports from the field are mostly positive. This photo shows the generally circular pattern of a male sage-grouse tracks made while strutting.

Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*)

By Ryan Amundson

With recent major snowstorms hitting Wyoming, it doesn't really feel like Spring does it? When the snows begin to melt in April, mule deer will be actively searching for green groceries. Early green-up grasses such as Sandberg bluegrass will be important to help deer recover body condition quickly after a long, hard winter. Fawning is just a couple months away, and to prepare does for the nutritional demands of fawn rearing milk production, plants with very high nutritional levels will be sought out. Grasses have their highest levels of crude protein and other key nutrients in the earliest stages of their annual growth cycle. As grasses mature and develop seed stalks, nutritional levels begin to slowly drop, and rapid loss of nutrients occurs between the flowering and mature seed stage.



Sandberg Bluegrass Facts

- **Crude Protein % (CP) in April:** 20%
- **Pros:** High CP, Greens up early
- **Cons:** Less Foliage produced than larger statured plants

Crude protein levels of grasses in April will likely exceed 20%, allowing animals to put on weight, and quickly re-build energy reserves. By mid to late June, crude protein levels will hover around 9% and stay in the single digits until early fall moisture events and cooler temperatures allow for grasses to green up again prior to dormancy for the winter. Summer months are critical times for does and bucks alike, and they will actively search for succulent, palatable forages that exceed crude protein levels of 12% to meet the nutritional demands of lactation (does with fawns at side) and antler development (bucks). Crude protein level intake of 6% is needed to meet basic body maintenance requirements, but levels need to be much higher for maximum performance. It's a relatively short window of time where many of the plants on our landscape exceed this figure, so mule deer need to efficiently intake and digest plants. As deer move through transition ranges to summer ranges and parturition areas, they "chase the green" as snow levels recede.

Sandberg bluegrass, a native perennial bunchgrass, is probably the most common native bluegrass species in the Intermountain West, and is found in a wide variety of habitat types including riparian, sagebrush steppe, mountain shrub and occasionally alpine habitats. Sandberg bluegrass grows in small tufts, usually less than 12 inches tall. It is not known for being a big forage producer, but more for its early green up characteristics and availability when mule deer really need a boost nutritionally. Bluegrasses have extensive, but somewhat shallow, coarse, fibrous roots that make them quite drought tolerant and resistant to grazing and trampling effects from livestock and wildlife. The grass receives fairly high grazing pressure from wild and domestic ungulates in early spring due to the fact it is an early green-up species. Competition between livestock and mule deer is likely highest at this time of the year, as both are seeking plants with high nutritional reward and for their ease of digestion. Livestock grazing management plans that allow for periodic growing season rest or deferment are advantageous to mule deer. Sandberg bluegrass plants are smaller statured and have less foliage compared to plants like Bluebunch wheatgrass. Its tolerance to shade and grazing is moderate, and populations usually increase following fire. It is adapted to a wide variety of soils, but does best on those of medium texture. It tolerates cold and performs fairly well during drought.

You've likely heard the saying, "April showers bring May flowers." May flowers help fulfill dietary requirements of mule deer. We'll discuss their benefits next month.



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

April 2016 Newsletter



Trapper's Point Interpretive Site Celebration

Pinedale Wildlife Biologist Dean Clause and Public Information Specialist Mark Gocke recently joined several other partners, members of the public and local media in celebrating the completion of a new interpretive site for the Trapper's Point pronghorn migration project. In 2012, a 9.7 million dollar state-of-the-art highway project was completed that involved 13 miles of fencing, two overpasses and six under passes to provide the safe passage of pronghorn, mule deer and other wildlife across highway 191 west of Pinedale. The project has been huge success reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions in the area by over 81 percent. The inter-



pretive site was installed to not only celebrate the amazing annual big game migration corridor, but also explain to travelers the purpose of the large overpasses they are passing under, the first of their kind in Wyoming. Also part of the interpretive project is web camera mounted on top of the overpass for live viewing of animals as they make the crossing. The live web camera can be accessed at: www.trapperspoint.com. Pronghorn are currently still using the overpass as part of their spring migration.



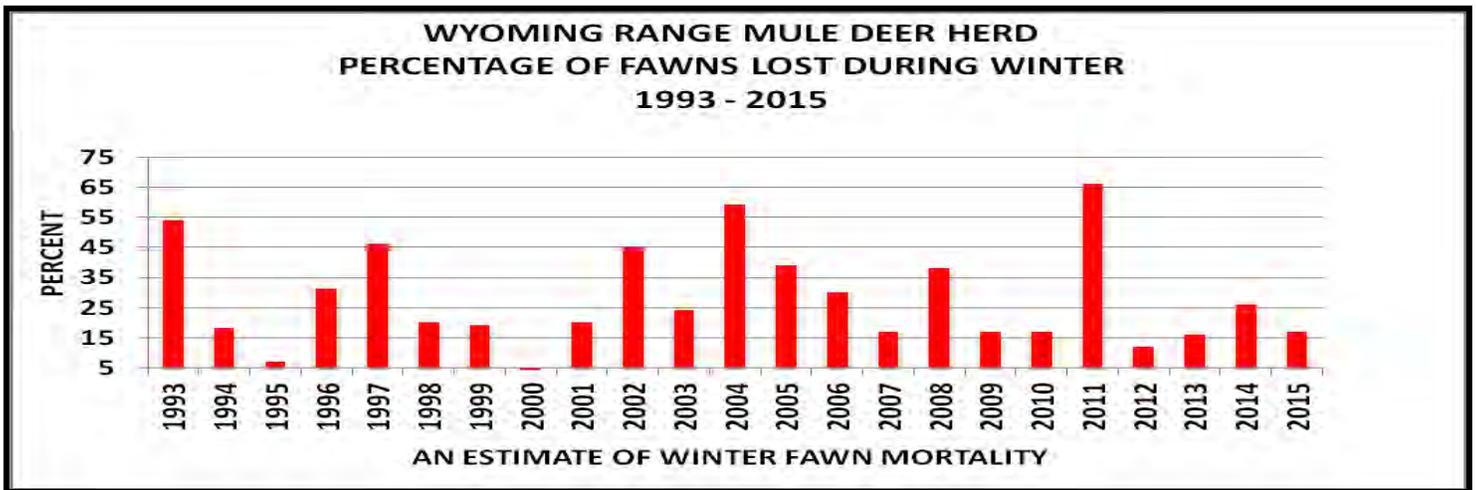
Photos: (Above) The final installation and recent ribbon-cutting celebration. (Below) A view of the Trapper's Point wildlife overpass over highway 191 at sunset. (Right) A herd of pronghorn crossing the overpass captured by remote monitoring cameras installed by West, Inc wildlife consultants.





Mule Deer Winter Survival

Game wardens and wildlife biologists in the Pinedale region spent considerable time monitoring deer and other big game on winter ranges. Each year, wardens and biologists count the number of mule deer fawns they see in relation to adult does, both at the beginning of winter and again at the end, to determine the percentage loss. Fawns are counted because they are typically the age class that is hit hardest by winter. There is always a portion of fawns that is lost over winter, but it does vary quite a lot from one year to the next. Tracking fawn mortality gives managers an idea of what to expect for herd growth in the coming years. This year, winter mortality was about average for all age classes across the board. The table below shows the over-winter fawn loss in the Wyoming Range deer herd.



Percent change-in-ratio (minimum fawn loss) for the winters of 1992-93 through 2015-16 in the Wyoming Range deer herd.

Mule Deer Research Continues

At right, Game & Fish Commissioner Charles Price helps wildlife researchers haul a doe deer to the handling station for processing. Several Pinedale Region personnel assisted with the ongoing WY Range deer study. The collared deer were recaptured in early March to monitor fetal rates, body condition, and replace GPS collars.





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Antler Hunters Cited

All three Pinedale region game wardens have spent a considerable amount of time patrolling big game winter ranges and educating the public about the shed antler hunting regulation currently in place. Wardens have received several complaints and calls of potential antler hunting violations. Fortunately, most reports of suspicious activity were determined legal and not associated with antler hunting. However, two notable violations were detected on big game winter ranges.

There were two separate incidents of individuals illegally accessing elk feedgrounds during the seasonal winter closure in search of antlers. One was at the Fall Creek Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) and the other at the Soda Lake WHMA. Both individuals were apprehended and cited for violating the shed antler collection regulation and the big game seasonal closure.

South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft also assisted the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) with violations of the crucial big game winter

range vehicle closure on the Pinedale Mesa and successfully apprehended an individual who was four-wheeling in the wildlife closure area. The case was referred to the BLM Ranger for appropriate enforcement action.

An Old Bull Checks Out

South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft investigated the carcass of a dead bull elk near Farson. Kraft determined that the mortality was not associated with tumbleweed shield lichen poisoning as possibly suspected, but rather due to the fact that the bull was simply very old and in very poor condition. The bull elk had extensive tooth wear to the incisors and was suffering from a high parasite load.



Keeping Tabs on Trappers

Warden Kraft also monitored trappers through the end of the bobcat trapping season and discovered one trap that was not removed after the close of the season. The trapper was contacted and had inadvertently left a trap set in the field for several months without being checked. The trapper was cited for failing to check traps within the required time period and received a warning for trapping during a closed season. The individual was encouraged to use a GPS or a trap log to prevent

traps from being inadvertently left in the field in the future.



Snow Goose Waste Case

Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas investigated a case involving Utah hunters who had traveled to Torrington, WY, to hunt snow geese and then while on a snowmobiling trip north of Big Piney the



following week, they decided to dump the snow geese they had shot in the trailhead parking lot. No meat had been taken and all had been wasted. Warden Hymas expressed thanks to a local resident who picked up the geese and a snowmobile helmet that had been left behind. Without the individual's help, the case may have never have been made.

Sage Grouse Strut

It's that thrilling time of year when sage grouse are gathering to perform their annual spring mating ritual on area strutting grounds, called leks, and Pinedale Game & Fish personnel have been busy counting the birds. Despite a long term population decline, the number of birds on leks was up last spring and managers are expecting the same strong numbers this year.

Each fall, hunters deposit wings from harvested birds in "wing barrels" for biologists to analyze and determine a chick:hen ratio. In 2015, this data showed a ratio of 1.6 chicks per hen, which was the highest recorded for this area in recent years. This level of productivity is typically associated with a stable to increasing population. These numbers were consistent with the statewide 2015 lek data, which indicated a 66% increase in the average numbers of males on leks. Hopefully, numbers continue on this trend.





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Elk Feeding Ends Early

The Brucellosis-Feedgrounds-Habitat crew spent time in the field monitoring elk distributions near feedgrounds in an effort to end feeding where possible. With the relatively mild winter, managers were able to end feeding in February at several Pinedale area feedgrounds including Bench Corral, Soda Lake, Fall Creek, and Scab Creek feedgrounds. Additionally, feeding ended in March at Green River Lakes and Muddy Creek feedgrounds.

Brucellosis is transmitted primarily through infected aborted fetuses, which is also the characteristic symptom of the disease. Research by the WGFD has found that the rate of elk abortion due to brucellosis on feedgrounds peaks in March, April and May, so the earlier in spring that managers can encourage elk to free range, the less the chance for elk to become exposed to the disease on a crowded feedground. However, to end feeding as early as possible, there must be sufficient native forage available for the elk so they remain in good health and the risk of elk causing damage to stored crops or co-mingling with cattle must be very low.

In additional research, the brucellosis crew finished deploying pig fetuses and pork shoulder chunks on several feedgrounds to assist the United States Geological Survey (USGS) with a pilot project of fetal scavenging rates in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem and assess whether porcine parts can be substituted for elk fetuses. If scavenging rates are similar for each, the USGS will conduct a broader-scale assessment of fetal scavenging rates throughout the GYE to determine if fetal persistence might provide some explanation for the recent increases in brucellosis prevalence trend among elk utilizing native winter ranges in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.



A remote camera captured this photo of a golden eagle grabbing a chunk of pork shoulder put out as part of a fetal scavenging rate study at the Black Butte elk feedground.