



AUGUST 2015



LARAMIE REGION

“Conserving Wildlife - Serving People”

# 2015 Landowner of the Year

Mr. and Mrs. Doug Samuelson have been named the Laramie Region 2015 Landowner of the Year.

The Samuelsons own and manage more than 30,000 acres between Laramie and the eastern edge of the state. They demonstrate a strong wildlife conservation and land stewardship ethic and have allowed several terrestrial habitat restoration and enhancement projects on their land. More than 2,000 acres have been treated by prescribed fires and treatment is planned for 800 more acres this fall.

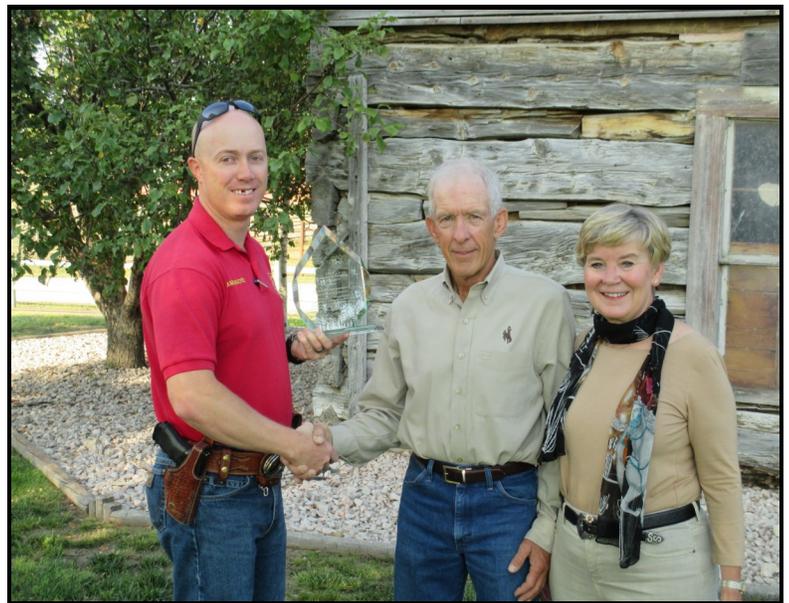
They also encourage and allow ethical hunting on their properties. In 2012 and 2013, the Samuelsons participated in the Iron Mountain Hunter Management Assistant Program to help increase elk harvest. Doug Samuelson and Ranch Manager Dennis Magnusson were incredibly helpful during these hunts, allowing for much better harvest success than anticipated. During these two seasons hunters harvested more than 200 cow and calf elk on their property. This harvest brought the Iron Mountain elk herd closer to its management objective.

The Samuelsons allow a great deal of wildlife and fisheries sampling and classification on their properties. They allowed Game and Fish access to capture bighorn sheep on their property for the past two years for disease surveillance purposes.

As generous philanthropists, the Samuelsons donate money to many conservation projects and hunting events that benefit wildlife and Wyoming's hunting heritage.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department thanks the Samuelsons for all they do for wildlife.

*Thank you!*



Cheyenne Game Warden Shawn Blajszczak presents the Laramie Region's Landowner of the Year Award to Doug and Susan Samuelson.

# LAW ENFORCEMENT



## Escaped pet alligator caught in Wheatland

Game Warden Brooke Weaver holds a four-foot alligator that was captured in Wheatland in August. The alligator escaped from the greenhouse where it lived and neighbors helped catch it and tape its mouth so it could not bite. The alligator's owner denied it was his until he learned that he was not in violation to possess it. Alligators are legal to own in Wyoming.

To learn more about which species of wild animals can be kept as pets, visit the Game and Fish Department website at: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Permits/Possessing-Wildlife>.

## Medicine Bow mule deer poaching case

Early in August Medicine Bow Game Warden Jake Kettley began an investigation into a mule deer fawn that was shot in the town of Medicine Bow.

Witness statements lead to two men that were in town working at the Sinclair Refinery turnaround. After several interviews with individuals who knew about the poaching, enough evidence was gathered for a search warrant.

The two suspects were living in a camper trailer and had moved it to Rawlins. With the help of Game and Fish Department Investigator John Demaree and Game Warden Jason Sherwood, warrants were served on the camper and the pickup used in the incident. Rifles and phones were seized from both individuals.

After further interviews the suspect who was driving the pickup during the poaching confessed. However, the shooter was still tight lipped. Warrants were obtained for data from the suspects' cell phones. Based on further evidence, charges were filed against the men for wanton destruction and taking big game with artificial light.



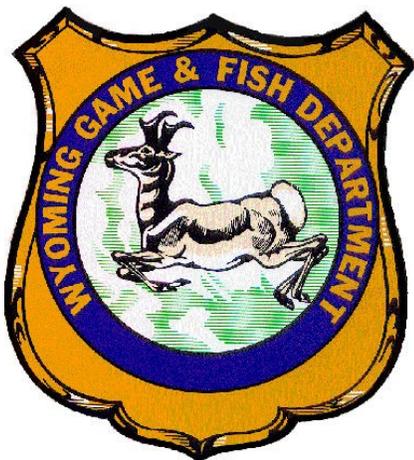
## Mountain lion euthanized after killing sheep

Torrington Game Warden Rob Hipp received a call in the Huntley area stating that a livestock owner had caught a mountain lion in the act of killing one of his lambs. The livestock owner said he shot the lion. Hipp examined the dead lamb, which had suffered bite wounds to the neck and throat.

The mountain lion, a young male, died inside the pasture fence within a few yards of the sheep. Hipp examined the rest of the sheep in the pasture and found no additional dead or wounded animals.

The landowner said he heard his fence screeching against the steel posts and investigated with a flashlight. He said the lion must have been trying to exit the pasture with the dead sheep. Hipp estimated the lion to be 90 pounds and 1-2 years old.

Wyoming statutes permit landowners to take mountain lions caught in the act of killing livestock.





Above, Wildlife Law Enforcement Coordinator Aaron Kerr plays taps for a memorial ceremony honoring murdered game wardens Don Simpson and Bill Lakanen. Below, Casper Game Warden Daniel Beach salutes. All photos by Jim O'Reilly.



## Slain game wardens remembered

The Wyoming Game Wardens Association conducted a ceremony to honor the service and sacrifice of game wardens Bill Lakanen and Don Simpson at Jack Creek Park on the Medicine Bow National Forest west of Saratoga on August 8.

Lakanen and Simpson were murdered by John Malten, a German immigrant, at his cabin on Jim Creek on October 31, 1945. Approximately 60 people attended the memorial service and heard accounts of the incident by Bill Robertson, president of the Wyoming Game Wardens Association and Greybull Game Warden, and Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton.

The Wyoming Game Wardens Association Honor Guard also gave a 21-gun salute and played taps for the solemn occasion.



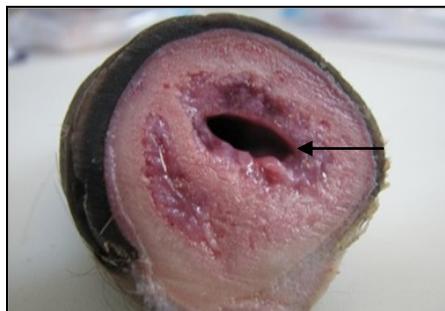
## Bighorn Sheep Sinus Tumors

Veterinary Services has recently initiated an effort to survey for nasal tumors in the state's bighorn sheep herds. Collection kits were distributed to several taxidermists with a request that they save the capped skulls so biologists can examine them for evidence of nasal tumors.

These tumors grow within the skull sinuses of the horns, forehead, and above the teeth. Biologists are interested in them because of their ability to cause skull and horn deformities, as well as their potential to contribute to respiratory disease. In order to detect nasal tumors, the skull must be sectioned with a band saw. Last year we detected the first nasal tumor in the Absaroka herd unit near Cody.



Sinus tumor in the forehead



In the horn



Above the teeth

## Landowner helps install Walk-In signs

Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood worked on placing and maintaining signs on Private Lands/Public Wildlife access areas in August.

Landowner Ellen Lemaster rode along one hot afternoon to help place signs on their Walk-In Area. The extra cooperation will hopefully help prevent damage to the sign posts by ensuring they do not interfere with the operation of their farm equipment.



At left, landowner Ellen Lemaster helped install signs at the Walk-In Area on her land. Game and Fish thanks the Lemaster family for opening their land to hunting access. Photos by Jason Sherwood.

## New mapping technology

Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood worked with the personnel at Camp Guernsey and Game and Fish Drafting Section personnel to use the Broom Creek Hunter Management Area as a test site for new mapping technology.



The webpage for the HMA now includes data and instructions to load a “GeoPDF” map onto hunters’ smart phones. The map, in concert with a free “app” on GPS-enabled phones, should allow users to pinpoint their location on the HMA and help identify open roads and the various training areas in the HMA. To access the site visit: <https://wgfoapps.wyo.gov/plpwhmprogram/frmHunterManagementDetail.aspx>.

### Access to Wick during construction

Hunters and anglers may still access the Wick Wildlife Habitat Management Area at the Wagonhound exit off Interstate 80 (exit 267) despite construction and road closed signs in the area.

However, please note that access to the Wagonhound rest area facilities remain closed during this time.



### New outhouse at Leazenby

Anglers who fish at the Leazenby Public Access Area will find a new comfort station during their next visit.

Laramie Region Habitat and Access personnel installed the comfort station outhouse in August. The Leazenby Public Access Area is located about 8 miles south of Laramie along U.S. 287.

## Fire ban continues on WGFD properties and Public Access Areas

Prolonged dry conditions have prompted the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to ban open fires on all Game and Fish Commission-owned and administered lands within the Laramie Region.

Affected lands include Red Rim Daley and Grizzly, Pennock, Wick, Cottonwood, Jelm, Thorne/Williams, Forbes, Table Mountain, Springer, Rawhide, and Laramie Peak Wildlife Habitat Management Areas, and all Public Access Areas within the Laramie Region. The following acts are prohibited until further notice: Building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, camp-fire charcoal grill, coal or wood burning stove.

## Swainson's hawks in the news

Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton said a pair of Swainson's hawks quietly raised their young for three years in a nest at a remote corner of Veteran's Island, a Saratoga town park.

This Spring the town installed a foot bridge and opened a walking path very near the nest. Conflicts with humans arose in August as the young hawks learned to fly, a process called fledging. The adult hawks attempted to protect their young from humans with alarming warning calls and flying swoops. The young birds were often "rescued" by well-meaning people and Warden Burton returned them to their home.

In Laramie, Game Warden Bill Brinegar said Swainson's hawks have adapted almost too well to the city life.

Young hawks that are learning to fly don't have the muscle tone or experience to fly like the adults. As a result, they often end up sitting on sidewalks or in the middle of the street.

On most occasions these birds are easily coaxed into flying, but often end up crash landing in a nearby tree.

If you ever want a break from the norm, just take a few minutes to watch these intriguing creatures in the sky.



## Black bear, moose relocated from Wheatland

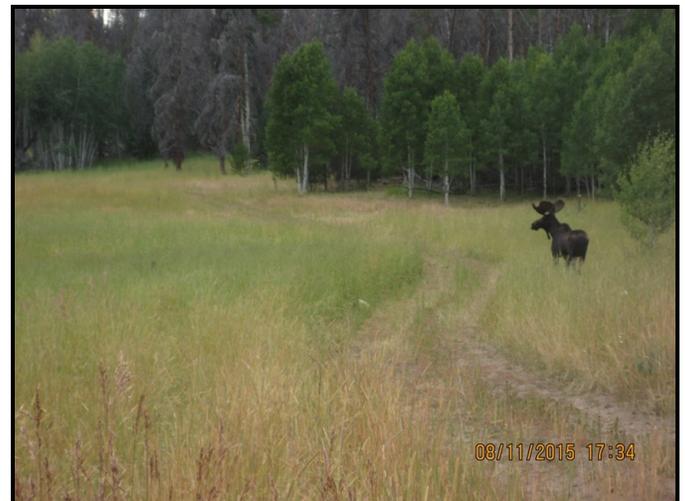
There were several bear reports around Wheatland in August. A young bear that had been removed from Camp Grace near Wheatland at the end of July made its way back to the camp on Aug. 19 and received more food rewards from a trash can. The bear was ultimately euthanized because of its increasing aggression. Bears that have learned to associate humans with food will never "unlearn" the behavior and become a risk to human safety as they continue to look for food around humans.

Wheatland Game Warden

David Ellsworth requested assistance from local Platte County Sheriff Deputies, Biologist Martin Hicks and Sybille Research Staff Sam Lockwood and Cole Hanson after a moose was spotted near Wheatland.

The moose evaded capture for several hours,

traveling through fields, around hay stacks and nearing corn fields staying just out of dart range. Eventually, the Sybille staff was able to dart the moose just south of Hightower Road. The moose was successfully relocated into the Sierra Madre Mountains.





**Aquatic habitat projects provide homes for fish**

Laramie Aquatic Habitat Biologist Christina Barrineau worked with Instream Flow Biologist Mike Robertson to monitor cross-sections at the Encampment River – Richardson Bank Stabilization project (top left photo). Cross-sections will be monitored immediately post-construction as well as for several years following stabilization. They will help determine project success, along with photo points of the project.

Barrineau also attended the national American Fisheries Society (AFS) meeting in Portland through a travel grant from the Colorado/Wyoming chapter of AFS. She presented information about the Encampment River – Richardson Bank Stabilization project and learned more about riparian habitat, dam removals, beaver restoration, and much more.

Barrineau also spent a day with a Bureau of Land Management hydrologist and range specialist conducting Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) on riparian habitats in a Cedar Creek drainage grazing allotment. She said it was beneficial to learn about the process, as well as to explore a different area of the Laramie Region.

Fisheries Technician Betsy Morgan tried out a new GoPro by taking underwater video of toewood structures on the Encampment River. Morgan recorded juvenile trout using the woody debris cover (see picture lower left). Toewood is often used to help stabilize eroding banks and provide improved cover for fish.



**Fishing around Wheatland**

Wheatland Game Warden David Ellsworth reports that fishing continued to be slow around the Platte County area due to warm water temperatures throughout the month of August.

However, lucky anglers were catching a few bass and drum from the banks of Grayrocks Reservoir. Anglers are also reporting catching nice catfish at Festo and Wheatland 1.

Warden Ellsworth said water levels have significantly dropped around Wheatland 1 and Glendo Reservoir, but Grayrocks has maintained a relatively high water level.

Camping and recreational boating crowds are expected to diminish now that the Labor Day holiday is behind us. This is good news for anglers because there is still plenty of good fishing weather remaining as summer comes to an end.

Fall is a great time of year to enjoy Wyoming's excellent fishing resources with smaller crowds and cooler weather.

**Electrofishing on Rock Creek**



South Laramie Game Warden Bill Brinegar helped the Laramie Fisheries crew sample Rock Creek, south of Arlington.

Brinegar said nothing gives you a bird's eye view of what's going on under the surface like electro-fishing.

"We as fisherman tend to target the older larger age class of fish. If you are a fish biologist, your goal is to sample all ages/sizes of fish to get a deeper understanding of the true health of that body of water," he said.

It's a snapshot in time that tells us what impacts past events such as drought or extreme run-off may have had on reproductive success.

Brinegar said joint efforts between divisions are a great opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge of the resource that can then be passed on to anglers.

## Teaching the next generation of hunters



Torrington Game Warden Rob Hipp taught a hunter safety class in Torrington at Eastern Wyoming College in August.

Twenty students signed up for the class, and 19 passed the exam and attended a range day that Saturday. The students completed a practical firearms handling course and participated in a live fire with .22 rifles.

Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood coordinated a hunter education class in Laramie and worked with Game Warden Jordan Winter to help him become a certified instructor.

For information about upcoming hunter education classes visit the Game and Fish website at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov).

## Habitat and Access crew maintains more than habitat



The primary duties of personnel in the Habitat and Access section is to provide places for wildlife to live and hunters and anglers to recreate.

But these employees also maintain buildings that belong to the Game and Fish Department. Yoder Habitat and Access Biologist Dericke Lavoine replaced damaged windows in our Yoder shop and Saratoga Habitat and Access Biologist Mark Cufaude installed a water line into the Saratoga shop.



## Welcome to the Laramie Region

### New coordinator at Downar Bird Farm

The Laramie Region welcomes Ben Milner as the new bird farm coordinator at the Downar Bird Farm.

Milner began caring for pheasants at the Sheridan Bird Farm as a temporary employee in 1998. He received a permanent position at the Tillett Springs Fish Rearing Station in 2003. He moved to Ten Sleep Hatchery in 2006 and was named the senior fish culturist at Boulder Fish Rearing Station in 2012.

Milner is a Wyoming native and attended the University of Wyoming and earned a bachelor's degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology and Management in 2000.

He is excited by the new challenge of keeping the bird farm running smoothly. "My primary goal is to keep the bird farm disease free," he said. He lives at the Downar Bird Farm with his wife, Teresa, and their three-year-old daughter, Emily.



### New Habitat & Access biologist in Yoder

The Laramie Region welcomes Dericke Lavoine as the new Habitat and Access biologist in Yoder.

Lavoine comes to the department from Indiana. He was born in Indianapolis and grew up in a military family and has lived in many places, including Amsterdam, Netherlands, where he completed a semester of college. He later graduated from the University of Southern Indiana with a bachelor's degree in biology.

In his new position he will care for the Springer/Bump Sullivan and Table Mountain Wildlife Management Habitat Areas, as well as Grayrocks, Packer Lake and Mac's 40 Public Access Areas. He is currently working on a water improvement plan at Table Mountain that will help provide forage for dabbling ducks by controlling water levels and allowing for the growth of emergent vegetation.

Lavoine and his wife Robin reside near Yoder.



## Porcupines don't "throw" quills

Warden Kelly Todd received a call about a porcupine in a yard in Laramie. He responded to the residence and learned the homeowner's dog had gotten a bit too close to the porcupine. The homeowner asked how far a porcupine can throw its quills. Warden Todd told her that it was only a wives tail that porcupine throw their quills. They do not throw their quills, but when they snap their tails (when something is trying to attack them) sometimes loose quills from their body will get dislodged and fly through the air.

Warden Todd caught the porcupine and released it on Pole Mountain.



## Landowner provides home for bald eagle

Game Warden Kelly Todd was checking on elk damage on a private ranch when he saw a bald eagle that was trying to catch a meal by the shoreline of a reservoir next to the Esterbrook Road.

This was the first time he saw a bald eagle along this road. He mentioned it to the landowner who told him the eagle sometimes eats a few of his fish but he doesn't mind. Warden Todd said this was a nice reminder that when landowners are good stewards of the land they can supply a lot of food and cover for a number of species of wildlife. Many landowners enjoy the wildlife and do not mind feeding a few of them.

## Wardens complete firearms training

Medicine Bow Game Warden Jake Kettley and Cheyenne Game Warden Shawn Blajszczak attended training at the Cheyenne Police Department shooting range in August. The training was sponsored by HIVIZ Shooting Systems and included rifle and pistol training, as well as tactics training and safety demonstrations.

Other sponsors include Kel-Tec, Hornady, The Safariland Group, Magpul Industries Corporation and several other companies. Blajszczak and Kettley would like to thank all the sponsors for the training.

## Large carnivore training

Wildlife Division personnel from the Laramie and Lander regions completed a class on trophy game incidents in August.

Large Carnivore Conflict Coordinator Brian DeBolt and Large Carnivore Management Section Supervisor Dan Thompson provided instruction on identification of the cause of depredation, investigation of human interaction, and trapping techniques.

The Laramie Region has seen plenty of black bear activity this summer, with bears relocated from several communities across the region.

Photos: Above, Brian DeBolt shows how to set a bear trap. Below, Dan Thompson demonstrates how to catch a bear in a snare.



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