



SEPTEMBER 2015



“Conserving Wildlife - Serving People”

# Laramie Peak bighorns



## “Awesome sheep season”

Wheatland Wildlife Biologist Martin Hicks says the bighorn sheep population in the Laramie Peak area is doing well and hunters are having a great season.

Corey Hamrick of Sheridan (photo above) harvested an impressive 9.5-year-old ram in hunt area 19 west of Wheatland. The ram sported an ear tag identifying it as a transplant from the Perma-Paradise herd in Montana in 2007.

Forty-two sheep were released in the Laramie Peak area that year. They thrived and have improved the overall genetics and health of the existing herd.

“This sheep population is doing really well, thanks to good lamb production that resulted from the genetics of these Montana sheep. We’re seeing more lambs on the ground in this hunt area,” Hicks said.

Wheatland resident Don Farrier (top right photo) harvested an incredible ram (green score 185 Boone Crocket points), and eighty-three-year-old Roy Gamblin of Wheatland (bottom photo at right) completed his grand slam with a great ram from area 19.

“Its an awesome sheep season,” Hicks said.



## Prescribed burn to improve habitat for elk



Game and Fish assisted the Bureau of Land Management with the Smith Mountain prescribed fire. The 1,000 acre burn took place on the Bell Otte and Mule Creek ranches in northern Albany County.

The area contains mixed mountain shrubs, aspen and encroaching conifer. The burn will improve wildlife habitat, enhance vegetation health, reduce hazardous fuels, and open areas to grasses, forbs and more palatable and nutritious shrubs and aspen, especially for elk.



## Snowy Range moose study

The reproductive success of cow moose is an important part of a research study being conducted in the Snowy Range.

Radio telemetry is used to locate the cows and determine if their calves have survived the first few months of life. In the photo at right, Leigh Taylor of the TA Ranch in Saratoga aims a directional antenna at the strongest radio signal coming from a collar on a cow moose on her ranch, while Graduate Assistant Alex May with the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, searches for a visual sighting. The duo later spotted the healthy cow and calf walking up the valley. Thank you to the TA Ranch for their interest and cooperation on this study.



## Downar Bird Farm changes visitation procedures

Due to disease concerns, the Downar Game Bird Farm is requesting that visitors make an appointment before stopping in for a tour.

The Downar Game Bird Farm is located south of Torrington and is normally open to public visits without an appointment. But a positive case of avian influenza (HPAI) near Cheyenne in the spring of 2015 has game bird farm managers on the offensive. "We want people to enjoy the game bird farm but keeping our game birds healthy is our first concern," said Ben Milner, coordinator at Downar Game Bird Farm. "We are requesting that anyone who wants to visit the game bird farm make an appointment first. We are taking the necessary

precautions to limit potential exposure to disease."

Milner said it is possible that waterfowl hunters could potentially come into contact with infected feces from geese or ducks and then inadvertently contaminate the facility as they stop in for a tour at the game bird farm. "If visitors make an appointment, it will give us time to prepare and will also give us an opportunity to educate them about this disease.

For questions or to arrange a visit to the Downar Game Bird Farm, please call (307) 532-3449. For more information on avian influenza, visit the Game and Fish website at: [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov).

## 2015 pheasant stocking schedule for southeast Wyoming

Pheasant stocking for the 2015 season will be similar to what was done last year, and there should be around 16,000 birds released this year.

Pheasants will be released each day at the Springer/Bump Sullivan Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) during the Springer Special Pheasant Hunt, which runs from Oct. 22 through Nov. 6, and weekly during the regular season. Pheasants will also be stocked at Glendo State Park during that special hunt, and at

Table Mountain WHMA. New this year is the addition of Goshen County Walk-In-Areas #19, which is south of the town of Veteran. Goshen County Walk-In Areas #29 and #63 will be also stocked again this year, as will Laramie County Walk-In-Areas #21 and #34; and Platte County Walk-In-Areas #20 and #23.

Birds will be stocked two times per week most locations during the general season, which begins Nov. 7. Stocking will continue until about mid-December.

## Warden assists with traffic accident

Elk Mountain Game Warden Ryan Kenneda was patrolling on on Sept. 9 when he came across a vehicle accident at a blind corner.

The accident involved a four-wheeler and a truck. Two people were injured with open fractures and bleeding. Warden Kenneda called for an ambulance and helped stabilize the injured patients. When the ambulance arrived, Kenneda, who is a licensed EMT, helped transport the patients to the hospital.



## Fire ban remains on G&F lands

Hunters are reminded that a fire ban is still in place on all Game and Fish Commission-owned and administered lands within the Laramie Region.

Affected lands include Red Rim-Daley, Red Rim-Grizzly, Pennock, Wick, Cottonwood, Jelm, Thorne/Williams, Forbes, Table Mountain, Springer, Rawhide and Laramie Peak Wildlife Habitat Management Areas, and all Public Access Areas.

For more information call the Laramie Game and Fish office at (307) 745-4046.



## Utah hunter bags first pronghorn

Seth Kelly of Utah killed his first pronghorn antelope on opening day in hunt area 52 west of Saratoga. Photo by Biff Burton

## Law Enforcement

### Poacher abandons wrong sex antelope

Wheatland Game Warden David Ellsworth discovered the abandoned carcass of a yearling buck antelope on Goshen County Walk in Area 59, where pronghorn hunting is only permitted with landowner permission.

Warden Ellsworth discovered tire tracks that went up to the carcass, located where the shooter shot the animal from the road and determined the caliber of the firearm used in the crime. Warden Ellsworth then requested assistance from Torrington Game Warden Rob Hipp.

The wardens located a vehicle with tires that matched the tracks at the scene. When talking with the suspects, one man eventually admitted to shooting the buck from the road. When he realized he had shot a buck on a doe/fawn license, he abandoned the carcass in search of a legal antelope.

Fortunately, he was unable to find and shoot a second pronghorn. Warden Hipp seized the man's rifle and cited him for wanton destruction of a yearling buck antelope. The wardens were able to salvage the meat for donation to a needy family.

### Agencies collaborate during hunting season

Cheyenne Game Warden Shawn Blajszczak and South Laramie Game Warden Bill Brinegar attended two pre-season hunting meetings with law enforcement officers from the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife and the United States Forest Service.

The meetings were held to share sensitive law enforcement intelligence and to review and understand each agency's laws.

Warden Blajszczak said it is crucial to have a working relationship with bordering states and other law enforcement officers within Wyoming in order to protect our wildlife resource and for the safety of our game wardens.

### Thank you for following the rules

Cheyenne Game Warden Shawn Blajszczak said the Lone Tree Creek Hunter Management Area saw a significant number of antelope on it during the month of September.

Hunters who successfully drew permission slips for antelope on the Lone Tree Creek HMA had productive hunts and most said they saw numerous antelope which they could have harvested.

Wardens reported that the majority of hunters on Lone Tree Creek HMA were respectful of the land and the ranch rules. Blajszczak and Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood would like to thank hunters for following the rules and policing themselves.

## Weir removal to benefit trout

The Game and Fish Department teamed up with the U.S. Forest Service, Trout Unlimited and the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust to remove two old weirs from Coon Creek and the East Fork of the Encampment River.

A weir is a low dam built across a stream or river to raise the level of water upstream or regulate its flow. The U.S. Forest Service installed the weirs in the 1980s as part of a watershed study during a nearby timber harvest project.

Laramie Region Aquatic Habitat Biologist Christina Barrineau said years of sediment and downed trees were piled up against the dam, causing passage issues for fish. The weirs also prevented adequate fish movement up and down stream. "The larger fish may be able to jump over them, but most of the fish cannot," Barrineau said. "We also don't want debris flowing down and completely blocking passage for fish. Connectivity of habitat is important," she said. Olson Excavating of Laramie removed the weirs.



## Dipper Lake stocked with Arctic grayling

The Laramie Region Fisheries Management crew stocked more than 5,000 Arctic grayling fry in Dipper Lake.

Dipper Lake is in Carbon County, north of Highway 130 in the Medicine Bow National Forest. The road to the lake is accessible by 4-wheel-drive vehicle only. Fish biologists Mike Snigg and Lee McDonald used ATVs to haul the fish to the lake. They strapped a large modified cooler to the back of an ATV and fitted an oxygen pump inside. At the lake they used a dip net to scoop the fish from the cooler and carefully dumped them into the lake.

Due to slow growth at such a high elevation (10,847 feet), these fish will grow slowly. However, fisheries crew recently sampled Dipper Lake and were happy with the numbers and sizes of fish they caught.



## Hog Park Reservoir fish sampling

Hog Park Reservoir is known as a good place to go fishing. To help it keep that reputation, the Laramie Region Fisheries Management crew sampled fish populations at the reservoir in early September.

Hog Park Reservoir is sampled every third year and the results are usually pretty consistent. "Things change slowly at these high elevation lakes," said Mike Snigg, Laramie Region fisheries supervisor. "The water is cold and the growing season is short. So, Hog Park Reservoir is not managed for large fish." Still, the results are good for anglers. Biologists report good populations of 8-12 inch rainbow trout and plenty of splake over 12 inches.

One of the splake was 16.1 inches and weighed 1.5 pounds. There were also nice brook trout around 11 to 12 inches. Each year Hog Park Reservoir is stocked with 25,000 fingerling rainbow trout (3-4-inch fish). Splake now reproduce naturally in the lake, and the brook trout find their way into the reservoir through small tributary streams that enter the reservoir.



## Dying tree removed from Springer WHMA parking lot



Nobody likes to cut down a tree. However, an aging cottonwood in the main parking lot of the Springer Wildlife Habitat Management Area was starting to lean over and expose its roots. Biologists took a core sample and determined the tree was rotting on the inside. When a tree becomes hollow in the middle, it can become a hazard because it can easily fall over at any time, especially during strong winds. So, the decision was made to remove the tree to prevent any possible harm to the public. While the loss of this tree is sad, there are plans to plant new trees around the parking lot in the near future.

## Black-footed ferret surveys

Non-game biologists surveyed black-footed ferret populations in the Shirley Basin area during August and September.

Because black-footed ferrets are nocturnal, Game and Fish personnel used spotlights at night to locate ferrets. Surveying took place over 18 nights and biologists recorded 77 ferret sightings. Twenty six ferrets were captured, documented, tested for disease and released.

All the captured ferrets were negative for sylvatic plague. Biologists observed several litters of three to four kits, suggesting that reproduction is ongoing and new ferrets are being introduced to the population.



## Checking forage production

Each year at the end of the growing season Game and Fish Department personnel monitor the productivity of the vegetation that serves as forage for big game on transition and winter ranges.

Due to adequate amounts of precipitation this year, the growth of shrubs and grasses was exceptional in the Upper Platte River Valley. The ample amount of vegetation should send big game into winter in good physical condition. This is great news for big game populations and for the hunters who pursue them. The healthier the animal is at the beginning of winter, the better chance it has of surviving until spring.

In the photo at left, Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton measures leader growth on Wyoming big sagebrush in critical winter range in the Cedar Hills.

# Bears, mountain lions keep crews busy



Black bears and mountain lions did their best to keep Laramie Region Wildlife Division personnel busy in September.

Wheatland Game Warden David Ellsworth responded to a report of a young mountain lion hanging out near a cabin at Fletcher Park. The young female was reportedly chasing chickens and was unafraid of humans. At one point, the lion ran within five feet of the homeowner while chasing a turkey. The lion would not leave despite attempts to scare it away and continued to hang out around the back door of the cabin. The decision was made to euthanize the lion due to its lack of fear of humans.

Preliminary examination at the vet lab indicated that the young lion still had some body fat, most likely from its mother's milk, which indicates that it had recently been separated from its mother and was struggling to find food. Unfortunately, it had learned to associate houses with food and had become habituated to humans.

There were also several black bear/human conflict reports around Wheatland, with bears coming into residential properties seeking food. The lower left photo shows a black bear at the same

property as the mountain lion mentioned above.

September was also a busy month for bears in the Elk Mountain district. Game Warden Ryan Kenneda (photo at top left) said a bear broke into a cabin at the White Rock Estates on two occasions. The cabin owner keeps a clean house and puts potential food rewards out of the reach of bears. Despite these efforts, the bear broke into the breezeway via a window and took some dog food.

The same bear also fed on a hanging deer carcass (top right photo) at a camp not far from the cabin. Warden Kenneda trapped and euthanized the bear because of its willingness to break into occupied homes.

A second bear was rummaging through trash bins in the town of Elk Mountain. This bear was relocated to a remote location.

A third bear damaged a vehicle on a ranch in its attempt to get food. This bear was also trapped and moved to a remote location.

Residents are asked to keep trash and other attractants out of the reach of bears as they try to fatten up for the winter.



# Trout Unlimited helps install sign at Meeboer Lake



The Laramie Region Fisheries Management crew would like to thank the Laramie Valley Trout Unlimited Chapter for helping install a sign at Meeboer Lake in September.

The sign informs anglers of an aeration system that was installed in 2013 to provide oxygen to prevent fish winterkill in the lake. Trout Unlimited donated \$35,000 to help pay for the aeration system and electricity to the site. The aeration system helps trout survive the winter and provides opportunities for anglers to catch more and bigger fish. The Game and Fish Department is grateful for the donation of time and money.

## Forever Wild Families pronghorn hunt

Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood and Laramie Game Warden Bill Brinegar assisted the Threewitt family of Cheyenne on a pronghorn hunt. The family members learned a lot about hunting, including visiting with a landowner to get permission to hunt and how to glass an areas to find game. They also learned “Murphy’s Law” of hunting: the herd they snuck up on was a bachelor herd of bucks and all they had were doe/fawn licenses! Hopefully, they will learn the skills of harvesting game animals on their next hunt.



## Elk shows no signs of leaving area

On Sept. 7, North Laramie Game Warden Kelly Todd responded to a call about a young bull elk that was trapped behind a high electrical fence. The elk seemed to be content with his predicament and the landowner said the electric fence was turned off and that all the gates were open on the east side of the ranch, so the elk had an escape route. However, the landowner said the elk apparently did not want to leave the area.

Warden Todd continued to watch the bull elk throughout the month and noticed it would disappear for a while then return. The bull would occasionally be spotted running around with a group of pronghorn, but it would eventually return to the same pasture to eat and rest.

## Students learn about wildlife

Laramie Game Warden Kelly Todd teaches students from Rock River School about wildlife in Wyoming. The students traveled to the Notch Creek Ranch in the Laramie Peak area for the lesson.



## Blind work

Yoder Habitat and Access Biologist Dericke Lavoine assisted the Game and Fish Department’s waterfowl biologist with maintenance of shooting blinds around Bump-Sullivan and Springer WHMAs. The blinds are available for public use.





## Goshen County fires

A grass fire broke out southeast of Guernsey on Sept. 4 and burned a few thousand acres to the southeast, catching the eastern edge of Goshen County Walk-In Area 75. Most of the Walk-In area was unharmed. Local fire departments contained the blaze near the confluence of Little Deer and Deer Creek southwest of Fort Laramie. On Sept. 11, another fire started in the same area just north of the Laramie River and consumed approximately one thousand acres.

## Road-killed black bear was 21 years old

Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton responded to a road-killed black bear on the Snowy Range in September.

Warden Burton and Saratoga Wildlife Biologist Will Schultz aged the sow, which turned out to be 21 years old. As the picture demonstrates, her teeth were worn out. Black bears can live to about 25 years old.



## Sign maintenance



This 4'x5' sign was installed in October 2014 and was destroyed by shooters less than 10 months later. It will cost \$720 to replace, not including employee time and labor. The Game and Fish Department spends more than \$30,000 a year replacing signs that have been destroyed by shooters.



Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood and Game Warden Brooke Weaver tended to sign maintenance on Walk-In and Hunter Management Areas around the region in September. A vandal had moved a number of signs from the Nimmo HMA and placed them on various other private ranches. Tampering with any department signs is a misdemeanor and hunters are urged to call the Stop Poaching hotline at 1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847) whenever they see any violations of Game and Fish regulations.

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