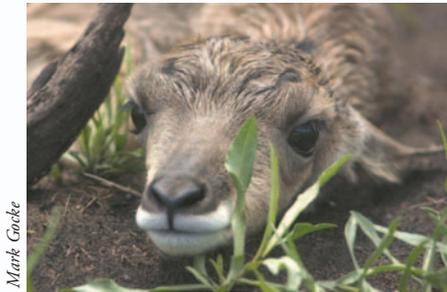


# Wild Times

A Free Publication of the Wyoming Game & Fish Department

Spring 2006

## THE HABITAT CONNECTION: WYOMING IN THE SPRING



Mark Cocker

The green grass of spring hides young wildlife.

Spring brings new life to Wyoming's outdoors. As the snow melts, trees start to grow new leaves. Have you ever noticed the color of new leaves on deciduous trees? Deciduous trees, like aspens or cotton-

woods, lose their leaves in the winter and grow new ones in the spring. Also in the spring, grass starts growing across the prairie. Wildflowers start to bloom in the mountains. And wildlife migrates back into areas where they will spend the summer.

Spring is very important for the growth of forage, or the food that animals eat. Wildlife lives all winter long on the forage that grew last spring and summer. So what grows this spring will feed wildlife for a whole year! That is why it is important that we get enough water to help grasses, shrubs, trees and all other plants to grow.



WGFD

New leaf on an aspen tree.

Springtime in Wyoming also means the young are here! With the warmer weather and a large amount of food available, wildlife have their young. Deer and pronghorn antelope have fawns. Moose have calves. Kids are the young of mountain goats, while bighorn sheep have lambs. Did you know baby fish are called fry? Owls lay eggs, and when they hatch, they are called owlets. What other kinds of wildlife young can you name?

How many things can you count that change in Wyoming's outdoors in the springtime?

Eastern screech owl young are called owlets.



Francis and Janice Bergquist



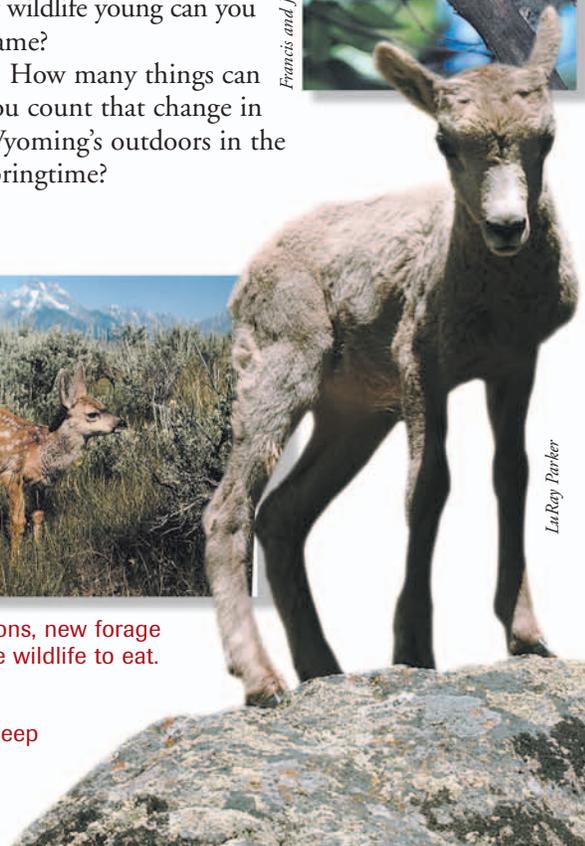
LuRay Parker



WGFD

Near the Tetons, new forage grows for the wildlife to eat.

A bighorn sheep lamb climbs up a cliff.



LuRay Parker

# FIELD Wildlife Journal

Have you ever caught fish? If so, you might want to thank Geoff Klein, aquatic habitat biologist with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. He works hard to make habitat healthy for fish. Remember habitat is food, water, shelter and space all in the right arrangement. What do you think makes good fish habitat?

Biologist Klein says, "Good fish habitat requires clean water and a stream, river or pond that allows fish to feed, spawn, hide and migrate."

You read it right, fish migrate just like elk and birds. But Klein says it is hard to determine what is healthy habitat because it can change for each different kind

The work aquatic habitat biologists do helps fish like this rainbow trout.



of fish, as well as for each stream.

He says, "Streams that are managed properly don't need my help. All the conditions for fish to live have been taken care of, and no changes need to be made for fish to live there."

But unfortunately a lot of streams haven't been taken care of. "In poor habitat, I do many things. For example, I determine if a stream needs a riffle and pool. These are important for fish because riffles provide oxygen for the underwater insects that fish eat. Pools provide good hiding places for fish and also let them rest when they are tired from swimming against the current. I then determine if placing things like rocks or logs would help this stream by adding pools and riffles. If these changes would help the habitat, then we start the work. But it is always important to keep the whole watershed in mind before making any changes. Often what causes the poor habitat in the stream is somewhere else in the watershed." Do you know what a watershed is?

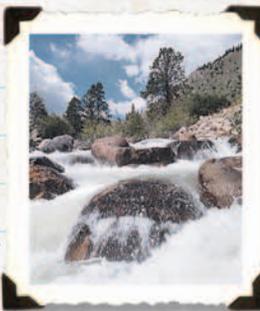
Biologist Klein measures the flow of LaBarge Creek.

Francis and Janice Bergquist



Dragonflies live near the water in marshy areas.

WGFD



High waters during spring runoff help clear dirt from the stream bottom.

Mark Goeke



Aquatic habitat biologists work to place rocks and logs to help fish habitat.

A watershed is an area surrounding and "draining" water into a stream, river, lake or wetland. It is said that a stream is only as healthy as its surrounding watershed. For example, if you live in Casper, you live in the Middle North Platte watershed. Which watershed do you live in? Watersheds can be different sizes. Some are only a few square miles and are drained by small streams, while others can be very large. So when aquatic habitat biologists are trying to help fish habitat, they need to look at everything that is happening in the watershed that may affect the fish.

Another tool an aquatic habitat biologist uses is flushing flows. Biologist Klein says, "Spring is an important time for improving fish habitat. If we can use flushing flows of water (which is large amounts of water rushing down the river caused by opening the dam that creates the reservoir) as well as spring runoff from the snow to clean out the river, then we are helping the fish."

For example, the North Platte River gets flushed every spring near Casper. "High water levels help clean the dirt away from where the fish spawn, or mate. It also increases the number of insects that live in the water, which is what fish eat for food," says Biologist Klein. "We use flushing flows to act like high-water spring runoff on rivers that have dams."

If you see someone in a red shirt wading in the middle of the stream, chances are it is an aquatic habitat biologist with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department taking measurements of the habitat.



Janet Milick

# WILDLIFE PROFILES



LouRay Parker



Greg Bergquist



Francis and Janice Bergquist



WGFD

# WILDLIFE PROFILES

## WESTERN MEADOWLARK

*Sturnella neglecta*

**Size:** about 9 inches, almost the size of a robin

**Eats:** seeds, insects and grain on the ground

**Lives in:** open, grassy areas on Wyoming's prairies

The western meadowlark is Wyoming's state bird. Meadowlarks are very common on the prairies in the spring. You will see them perched, or sitting, on a fence post or sagebrush. Be sure to listen for their cheerful song - *sleep loo lidi lidijuvi*. Does it remind you of Wyoming? Did you know meadowlarks nest on the ground? They make a dome-shaped nest from grass. The grass on the outside of the nest is coarse, but inside they use small, softer grass to lay their eggs on. They lay three to seven eggs. Watch for meadowlarks this spring!

## COLORADO RIVER CUTTHROAT TROUT

*Oncorhynchus clarki pleuriticus*

**Size:** average 12 to 14 inches long, may grow up to 19 inches; average 5 pounds, may grow up to 41 pounds

**Eats:** insects, small fish, occasionally trout eggs, crustaceans, frogs and earthworms

**Lives in:** streams and mountain lakes in water from 55 to 62 degrees Fahrenheit

Cutthroat trout get their name from the red slash marks on each side of their throats. It looks like the throat has been cut. Trout can live as long as 7 years. The cutthroat trout is Wyoming's state fish. Wyoming Game and Fish biologists are concerned about the Colorado River cutthroat trout because the numbers of fish are going down. But biologists are working hard to increase cutthroat numbers by reintroducing them, or putting them back, into the streams and making their habitat healthy to live in.

## WILD TURKEY

*Meleagris gallopavo merriami*

Merriam's Wild Turkey

*Meleagris gallopavo intermedia*

Rio Grande Wild Turkey

**Size:** 36 to 49 inches

**Eats:** nuts, acorns and seed from the ground, but also grains, insects, frogs and lizards

**Lives in:** open forests and forest edges

Wyoming has two kinds of turkeys, Merriam's and the Rio Grande. They live in different habitats. Did you know turkeys have a wingspan of up to six feet? They also have a naked head with no feathers. Wild turkeys nest on the ground. They make their nests with leaves and grasses. They often spend time in flocks, which can be as large as 60 turkeys. Now that's a lot of turkeys! Between 5,000 and 6,000 feathers cover the body of a wild turkey, which help keep it warm. Male turkeys display their tail feathers in a fan and strut around when they are trying to attract females.

## DWARF SHREW

*Sorex nanus*

**Size:** about 2 1/2 inches with a 1 3/4 inch tail, about the length of a matchstick

**Eats:** mainly insects

**Lives in:** alpine areas to forests to prairies

Shrews are among the smallest mammals in the world. Do you know what a mammal is? Mammals are animals that have hair and produce milk. Since shrews eat mainly insects, they are called insectivores. They are active day and night, needing to eat. Some shrews eat more food in a day than they weigh! Can you imagine eating your weight in food every day? Whew, that's a lot of food! They nest in stumps and logs. They make their nests from dry grass and leaves. Did you know some kinds of shrews have red teeth? Do research on the Internet or in your school library to find out why.

# OUR Wildlife Heritage

## TURKEYS, TURKEYS, TURKEYS...

Native Americans once used wild turkeys for a lot of things. They depended upon turkeys for a food source. But Native Americans also used them as a source of clothing, weapons and decoration. Early settlers from Europe relied on turkeys, too. But, in Wyoming, wild turkeys are not native. That means turkeys were brought into Wyoming, but they weren't originally here. Turkeys were first brought to the Laramie Peak area outside of Wheatland. People then moved some of these turkeys to the Black Hills area around Newcastle in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Now we have turkeys all around the state. Have you seen them where you live?

## WHAT IF THERE WERE NO GOBBLE?

Did you know that in the 1930s, wild turkeys were close to extinction? Extinction is when all the animals of one kind die. But people worked hard to help the wild turkey make a comeback. Turkeys were restocked around the country, and their numbers grew. We now have lots of turkeys and even two kinds in Wyoming — the Rio Grande and Merriam's! We have these two species, or types, of wild turkeys, because they live in different habitats.

A Wyoming Game and Fish biologist gets help releasing a turkey.

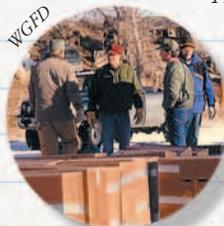


WGFD



WGFD

When transplanting turkeys, biologists use nets to capture them.



WGFD

Wild turkeys are placed in boxes to be moved to their new homes.

## OUR GRANDFATHERS CHERISHED IT, NOW WE MUST TAKE CARE OF IT

BY ALISA FROHBIETER  
*Shoshoni High School, WY*

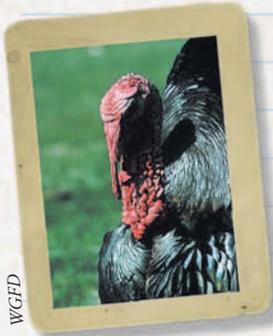
Long, long ago, before my time,  
The natives loved it here,  
Where rivers rushed, the plants were lush,  
And the hills were filled with deer.  
They provided for the land,  
And the land for them in turn,  
With the meat, and berries sweet,  
And other things well earned.

When the white man first arrived,  
Quite a sight met their eyes,  
They had never seen such beauty,  
As Wyoming's mountains and skies.  
Nothing matched the wild life,  
No, nothing ever will,  
Nothing can match the beauty,  
Of the elk, eagle, or wolf pack at the kill.  
In a land of such beauty,  
Who can but resist,  
To make their world go round about,  
This living form of bliss.

The hunting and the fishing,  
To just sit by a quiet stream,  
These became our pastimes,  
The Wyoming dream,  
Now many years have come and gone,  
Since the natives freely roamed,  
Since the trappers scaled the hills,  
And the mountain men called this their home,

But of this age one thing remains,  
Unchanged and still complete,  
Our love for the wild things,  
The beauty that can't be beat.  
If we want to keep this way of life,  
That means so much to us,  
The sports and ways our fathers taught,  
Just one thing is a must.  
We must keep caring for the land,  
Like our ancestors knew,  
For it's our heritage, our future,  
And our way of living true.

# Around Wyoming



WGFD

Turkeys have no feathers on their heads.

## GOBBLE GOBBLE

BY JAKE HOHL

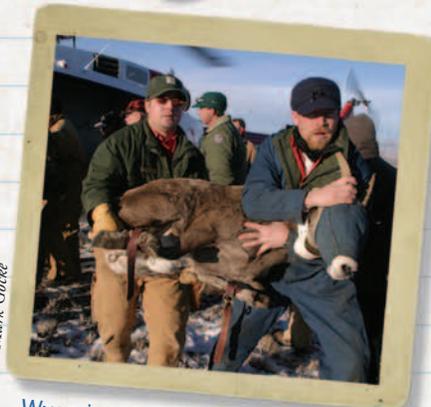
*Wyoming Game and Fish Conservation Education Specialist*

Spring is the time for male wild turkeys, called toms or gobblers, to strut and gobble in order to attract females, or hens, to breed. These courting males will drop their wing tips, fan their tails, and fluff their breast feathers, giving them a larger-than-life appearance. This strutting, along with gobbling, attracts hens for courtship and breeding. Gobblers will fight, but birds are seldom severely injured. In Wyoming, this breeding ritual usually begins in March and may last into June. Hens can begin laying eggs as early as mid-April. Incubation, or hatching time, for turkey eggs is about twenty-eight days, with the peak of the hatch occurring in late May and early June. After their eggs hatch, hens move their broods of young turkeys, called poults, to vegetation along streambeds and wet meadows. For the first two weeks of their lives, these poults need protein-rich diets. The best source of this protein is insects, which are abundant in these moist areas in the spring. Without this rich protein diet, poult survival will be poor. Until poults are able to fly, which isn't until they are two to three weeks old, hens and their poults roost on the ground. As soon as poults can fly, they begin to roost in trees.

Mark Gocke



A biologist prepares radio collars to place on the bighorn sheep so biologists can track their movements.



Mark Gocke

Wyoming Game and Fish biologists move bighorn sheep from the truck to the release site.

In an effort to put bighorn sheep back into the mountain range named after them, the Big Horn Mountains, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department trapped and released, or transplanted, bighorn sheep from Whiskey Basin near Dubois to Devil's Canyon in the Big Horn Mountains near Lovell. This occurred 32 years ago. But unfortu-

nately, the transplant was not very successful.

So starting in 2004, biologists started transplanting bighorn sheep into Devil's Canyon again, only this time they got 20 bighorn sheep from Oregon, and this time it is working! The Oregon sheep live at low elevations, like their new home in Devil's Canyon. They do not migrate, and they give birth to their young in late April and early May, a month earlier

than most Wyoming bighorns. Both of these adaptations should be beneficial to future transplants into similar low-elevation habitat.

The bighorns were captured using a helicopter in Oregon and brought to Wyoming in special trailers called "ewe hauls" pulled behind pickup trucks. When they got to Wyoming, they were fitted with radio collars and released at a site on the rim of Devil's Canyon. The sheep are now living in their new home!

The second part of the Devil's Canyon project calls for transplanting 20 more sheep this year. Oregon was not able to

provide the bighorn sheep, so the Wyoming Game and Fish Department asked Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and they agreed. The transplant happened on January 19, 2006. Watch for updates on how the herd is doing in the newspaper and on TV!

Mark Gocke

## Bighorns for the Big Horns

BY DENNIE HAMMER

*Wyoming Game and Fish Cody Information and Education Specialist*

Bighorn sheep are native to Wyoming and used to live in many places throughout the state. But when bighorn sheep become infected with parasites like lungworm, they are more likely to get pneumonia, and they die. This happened in Wyoming, and today bighorn sheep live in only a few places.



# Outdoor Classroom

## ARE THE BIRDS COMING BACK?

Not long ago we learned about how some birds fly south for the winter, or migrate. But have you ever thought of how the birds get back here? Well, they fly back. That's right, migratory birds make the round trip every year! Springtime is when they start to return. Are you seeing different birds in your neighborhood or on the playground that weren't there over the winter? Each day, count the different kinds of birds you see, and write them down. Do the different kinds of birds increase?



LutRay Parker

## PLANT A GARDEN FOR WILDLIFE

Spring is also the time of year to plant gardens. Many people complain about the deer eating their gardens, but have you ever thought about planting a garden for the deer to eat? First you want to research what plants deer like to eat. Deer eat a lot a different plants, and even different parts of

plants in all seasons. The leaves of growing plants are eaten in the spring and summer, while fruits and seeds are eaten as they become available. The buds of woody plants are important to their winter diet. After you have chosen the plants, prepare the ground and plant the seeds. Make sure the seeds get plenty of water and watch them grow!

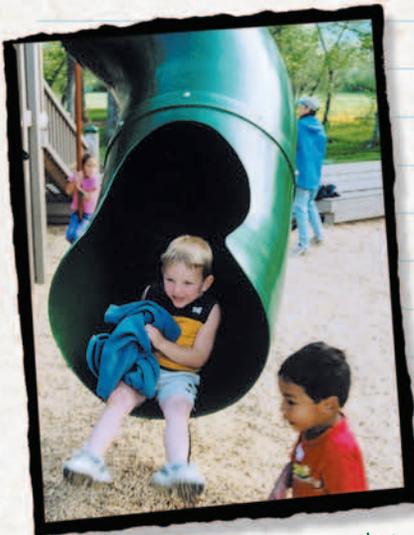
## AROUND THE PLAYGROUND

We talked about the changes that happen in nature when spring comes. The flowers start to bloom, trees grow leaves and grasses sprout. Observe the changes in your playground. When you notice the frigid temperatures starting to warm up, write down all

the changes you see on

Observe the changes in your playground when it starts to warm up.

the playground. Is there snow left? Where did the snow go when it melted? Do the clouds look different in the spring than in the winter?



Plant a garden for the mule deer to eat.



LutRay Parker

# ▶ TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ◀

## MATCHING

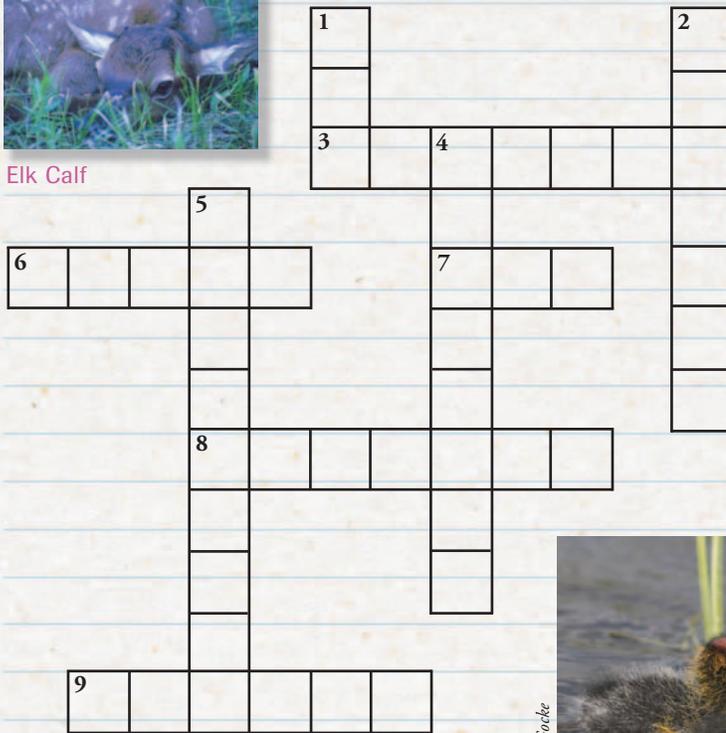
- |           |                   |
|-----------|-------------------|
| 1. kid    | A. trumpeter swan |
| 2. lamb   | B. wolf           |
| 3. cub    | C. mountain goat  |
| 4. pup    | D. rainbow trout  |
| 5. fry    | E. bighorn sheep  |
| 6. cygnet | F. grizzly bear   |



Answer:  
1=C, 2=F, 3=E,  
4=B, 5=D, 6=A



Elk Calf



Trumpeter Swan

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE

### ACROSS

- A young frog is called a...
- A young wild turkey is called a...
- A young mountain lion is called a...
- A young goose is called a...
- A young eagle is called a...

### DOWN

- A young beaver is called a...
- A young sage grouse is called a...
- A young duck is called a...
- A young bird is called a...



Coots

ACROSS 3. Tadpole 6. Pout 7. Cub 8. Gosling 9. Eaglet  
DOWN 1. Kit 2. Cheep 4. Duckling 5. fledgling

# ▶ LEARNING LINKS ◀

### WEB SITES:

Know what watershed you live in? If not, look here to find out. <http://www.epa.gov/surf/>

Want to learn more about wild turkeys? Check out this Web site for kids. <http://www.nwtf.org/jakes/games.html>

Find out some facts about bighorn sheep at:

[http://www.montanakids.com/db\\_engine/presentations/presentation.asp?pid=390&sub=Bighorn+Sheep](http://www.montanakids.com/db_engine/presentations/presentation.asp?pid=390&sub=Bighorn+Sheep)

### EXPLORE THE LIBRARY

Do some exploring in the nature section of your school or public library. A whole world is there at your fingertips, waiting to be discovered in the pages of books.



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