

# Wild Times

A Free Publication of the Wyoming Game & Fish Department

Spring 2008

## THE HABITAT CONNECTION: MULE DEER

**M**ule deer live in different habitats. You can find them in mountains and foothills, prairies and forests. And sometimes your own backyard! Even though they seem to be everywhere, Wyoming Game and Fish biologists are finding that numbers are declining, or going down, for several reasons. Some of these reasons are understood, but other reasons need to be studied by biologists. So Wyoming Game and Fish Department biologists are going to start studying mule deer very closely to see why numbers are declining.

One of the things biologists know is that mule deer are sensitive to changes in their habitat, or their homes. Like all living things, they depend on food,

water, shelter and space to survive. So changes in things like the weather cause changes in their habitat. For example, if it snows less in the winter that means less water. Water, or moisture, is important for growing the food that mule deer eat. If they don't have

good forage, or food, then they won't have enough to eat.

Other things that affect where mule deer live are new developments in Wyoming. Developments are new things that people are building. For example, building new houses is develop-



LuRoy Parker

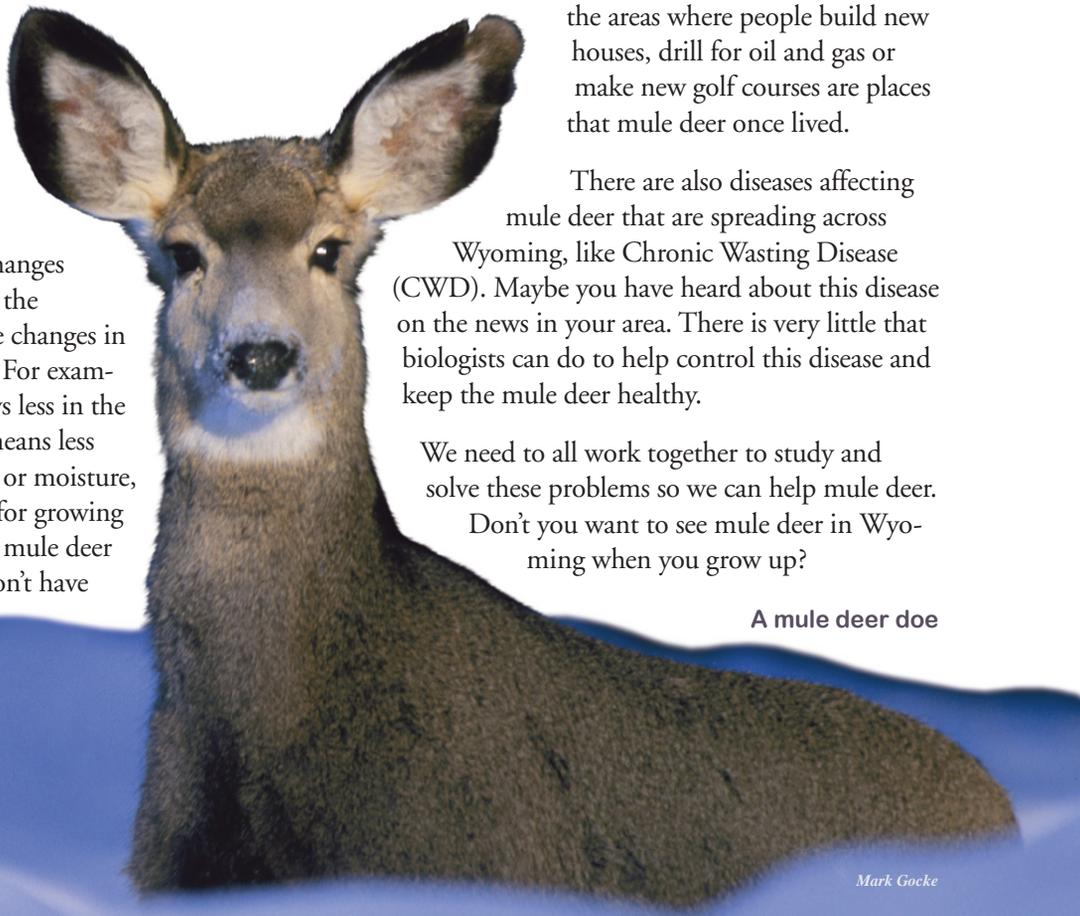
ment. Some of the areas where people build new houses, drill for oil and gas or make new golf courses are places that mule deer once lived.

There are also diseases affecting mule deer that are spreading across Wyoming, like Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Maybe you have heard about this disease on the news in your area. There is very little that biologists can do to help control this disease and keep the mule deer healthy.

We need to all work together to study and solve these problems so we can help mule deer.

Don't you want to see mule deer in Wyoming when you grow up?

A mule deer doe



Mark Gocke



Mark Gocke

# FIELD Wildlife Journal

## Dave Baum, Habitat and Access Crew Leader

Did you know there are people in the Wyoming Game and Fish Department who get to use heavy equipment like tractors, backhoes and loaders? They do! Dave Baum, Habitat and Access Crew Leader, is one of the Game and Fish employees who uses heavy equipment to help habitat. The Habitat and Access Crew works hard to make sure the habitat is in good shape for the wildlife.

“There are many areas where the habitat isn’t in good shape for wildlife due to the drought, so we have started projects like the food plot program,” says Crew Leader Baum. “This project provides cover for birds as well as a food source in the winter for big game, like mule deer. We go into an area and plow the land, plant seeds, like sunflowers and millet, irrigate the land and watch it grow! This food is critical for many animals throughout the winter.”

The Habitat and Access Crew also helps biologists on many projects like aspen regeneration. Aspen trees are very important for many species, or kinds, of wildlife around the state. Beavers, elk and mule deer are just a few. “We go into an aspen clone, or an aspen forest, and cut down the conifer trees.”



Working to improve habitat.

Conifer trees are pine trees, or trees that don’t lose their leaves in the winter. “Along with prescribed burns, this helps the aspens grow,” says Crew Leader Baum.



“The great thing about being a Habitat and Access Crew Leader is the variety of things you do on the job. One day I can ride into remote areas on horseback to repair fences, the next I am building roads into areas for people to hunt, fish and watch wildlife on lands owned by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission. There is never a dull moment on our crew!”

Dave Baum sometimes rides a horse to work.



# WILDLIFE PROFILES

JupiterImages



Mark Gocke



Mark Gocke



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



# WILDLIFE PROFILES

## Trumpeter Swan

**Size:** Weighs 20 to 28 pounds and stands anywhere from 52 to 62 inches tall.

**Eats:** Water plants, like cattails.

**Lives:** In shallow marshes, ponds, lakes and river oxbows.

Did you know there are eight different species of swans in the world? The trumpeter swan is the largest swan and is found only on the North American continent. In 1933 there were only 66 birds left in Wyoming, Montana and Idaho because of habitat loss and unregulated hunting. Although trumpeter swans are still uncommon, there are currently about 100 resident adults in Western Wyoming alone. The trumpeter swan nests and winters in Wyoming. It even mates for life, which can be as long as 25 years in the wild! We want to keep reducing the number of swans that die due to collisions with power lines, fences and illegal shooting. Write to *Wild Times* to find out how you can help!

## Snowshoe Hare

**Size:** Weighs 2 to 3 pounds, and grows to about 20 inches long.

**Eats:** In the summer, grasses, wildflower leaves, clover and dandelions; in the winter, twigs and pine needles.

**Lives:** In forests and thickets of the mountains.

Don't look now, but was that a hare I just saw? During the winter months it might be hard to find the snowshoe hare because of its great camouflage. It turns white in the winter to match the snow, and brown and white in the summer to blend into its mountainous habitat. Did you know a snowshoe hare's home is called a form? It doesn't build a nest or burrow underground, it just finds a shallow impression in the ground under thick evergreen boughs, logs or even up against a rock. It rests under this heavy cover during the day but ventures out at dusk, night and dawn to eat. When scared, it can run up to 30 miles per hour and leap as far as 12 feet before its feet touch the ground again. Wow, that's far!

## Ringtail

**Size:** Head and body 14 to 16 inches with a tail 15 inches long.

**Eats:** Grasshoppers, crickets, spiders, small mammals such as rats, mice, squirrels, and rabbits as well as fruits and anything else it can find.

**Lives:** In rocky cliffs and ridges near water.

Some people think a ringtail is a raccoon, but it is actually a different animal. The raccoon has a black mask and a shorter tail. You might see the ringtail in the southwestern part of Wyoming. It generally begins to eat by devouring its victim's head. Yikes! A ringtail can catch mice better than housecats, so miners would place ringtails in mines to help control the mouse problem. They were often called "Miners' cats" for that reason. The ringtail watches out for bobcats and great-horned owls, which are animals that hunt it for food.

## Shiras Moose

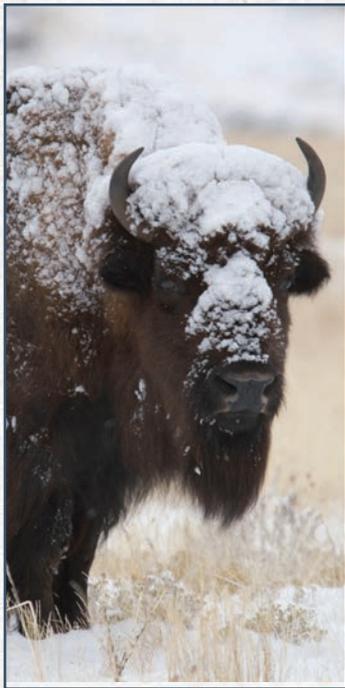
**Size:** 6 to 7 feet tall and weighs as much as 1,400 pounds.

**Eats:** Willows, twigs and bark from trees.

**Lives:** In areas around water with aspens and willows.

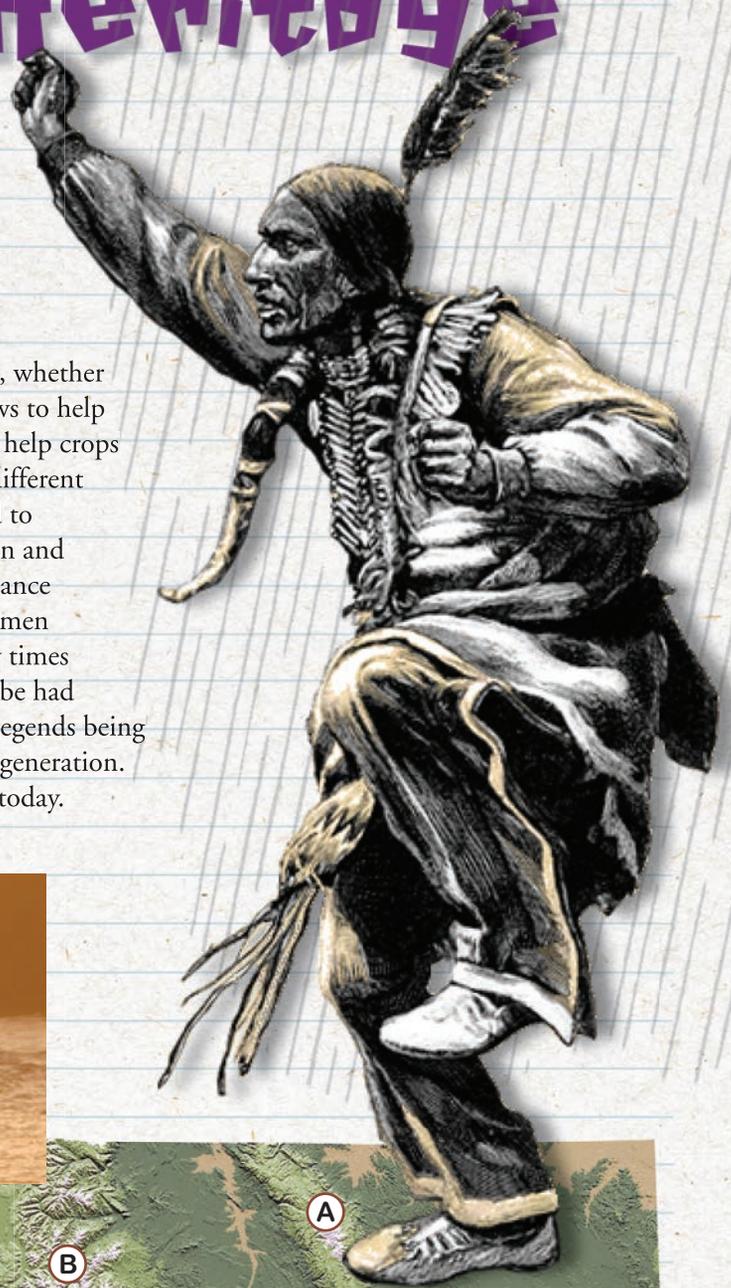
The Shiras moose found in Wyoming is just one of seven different kinds of moose that live all over the northern part of the world. It is a very close relative of deer and elk, but is much bigger in size. Its long legs help it walk through the deep snow and make it good at wading in ponds or streams. The thick, long, dark hair along with its undercoat of hair help keep the moose warm on cold winter days. The moose also has a long face that helps it eat plants that are growing underwater and still be able to keep a lookout for danger, because its eyes are above water.

# OUR Wildlife Heritage



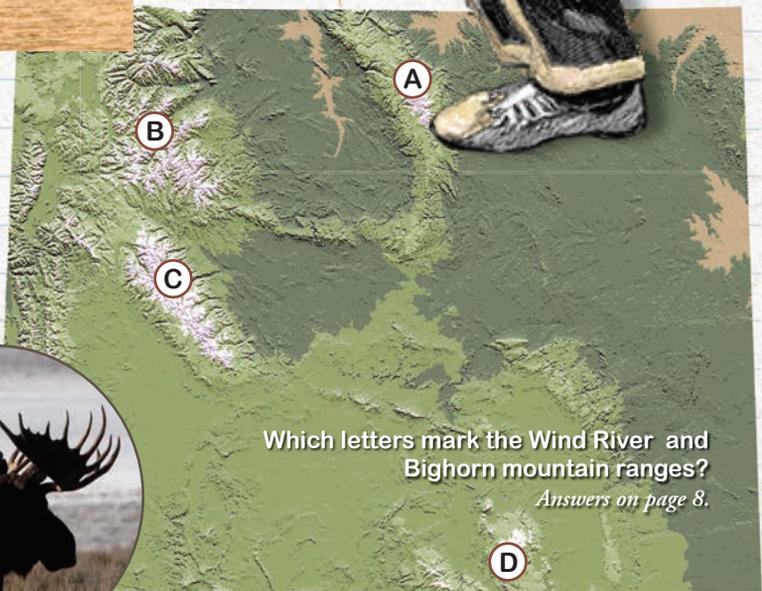
## Will a Rain Dance bring snow?

Precipitation has always been important in the survival of man, whether it's in the form of Wyoming snows to help wildlife habitat or desert rains to help crops grow. The Native Americans in different parts of the country often turned to ceremonial dances to provoke rain and ensure harvest protection. This dance often involved both men and women and occurred during the hot, dry times of the year, like August. Each tribe had different rain dances, with their legends being passed down from generation to generation. Many tribes still use rain dances today.



## Moose on the loose?

Did you know that moose weren't always in Wyoming? It is thought that they came from Montana and Idaho in the late 1800s. In fact, the first moose was seen in Yellowstone National Park in 1880. The first moose came to Wyoming in the Jackson Hole area and slowly started moving into other areas of the state. It wasn't until the 1930s that they were found in the Wind River Mountains, and finally they were seen in the Bighorn Mountains in 1948. Can you find these mountain ranges on a Wyoming map? Why do you think the Wind River Mountains had moose before the Bighorns?



Which letters mark the Wind River and Bighorn mountain ranges?

Answers on page 8.

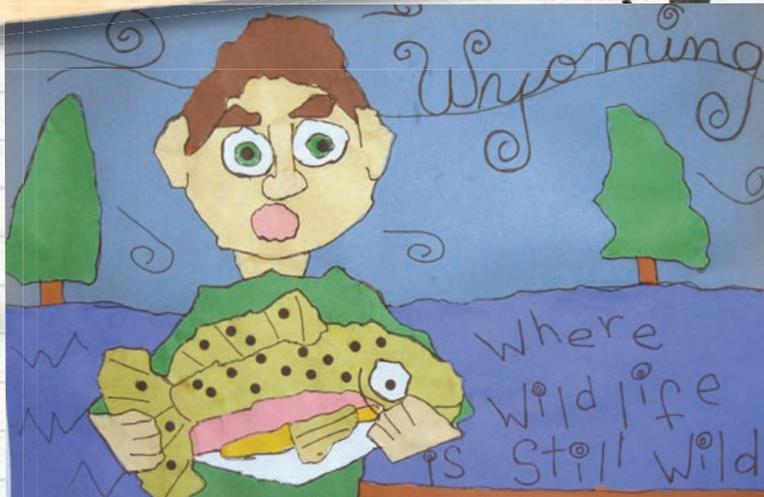
# Around Wyoming



*Where the Wildlife  
is Still Wild*

*Animals wandering all around  
Through the trees and in the ground  
The types of things that are free  
I kind of wish that I could be  
There are elk, deer, squirrels, and birds  
The types of things that are in herds  
They are able to go anywhere  
They also have to look for danger  
Now you've found out  
What Wyoming wildlife is all about!*

*by Kortney Hanson  
Shoshoni, Wyoming*



Picture by Matthew Owen  
Cheyenne, Wyoming  
Hobbs Elementary - Virginia Allshouse, Teacher

**Send Wild Times your poem! Draw a picture or write a story or poem about Wyoming's wildlife and send it to:**

Wild Times, Education Branch  
5400 Bishop Blvd  
Cheyenne, WY 82006

Mark Gocke

# Outdoor Classroom

## Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow!

Did you know most of Wyoming's water comes from snowfall? Yep, it's true. Especially the heavy, wet snows that fall during the spring. Snow is a form of precipitation that is made of small ice particles. Have you ever noticed a difference in the types of snow that fall? This spring you can study the different kinds of snow and see how much water really is in a cup of snow. Don't forget that each kind of snow might have different amounts of water.



## How much water is in your snow?



Have you ever noticed when you shovel the sidewalks that sometimes you can lift a shovel full of snow, and other times it is so heavy you can hardly even push it? That is because the amount of water is different in each storm.

### SNOW CHALLENGE!



This spring take a clear plastic cup and fill it with one cup of snow (don't pack it in there, just scoop up the snow and measure one cup). Can you predict how much water will be in the snow? Mark your guess on the cup and wait for the snow to melt to see if you are right. The amount of water in snow depends on the air temperature, ground temperature, and wind when the water is falling and forming snow crystals. Take this activity even further and test the same amount of snow from each storm that falls on your town. Compare the amount of water from each storm to see which storm had the most moisture!

## Flaky Friends?

How many types of snowflakes are there? Can you and your friends do research on the Internet to find how many types are out there? Is it true that no two snowflakes are alike?



# ▶ TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ◀

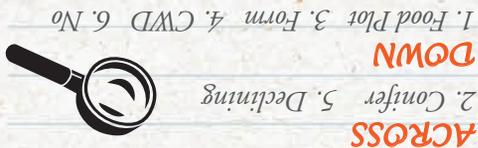
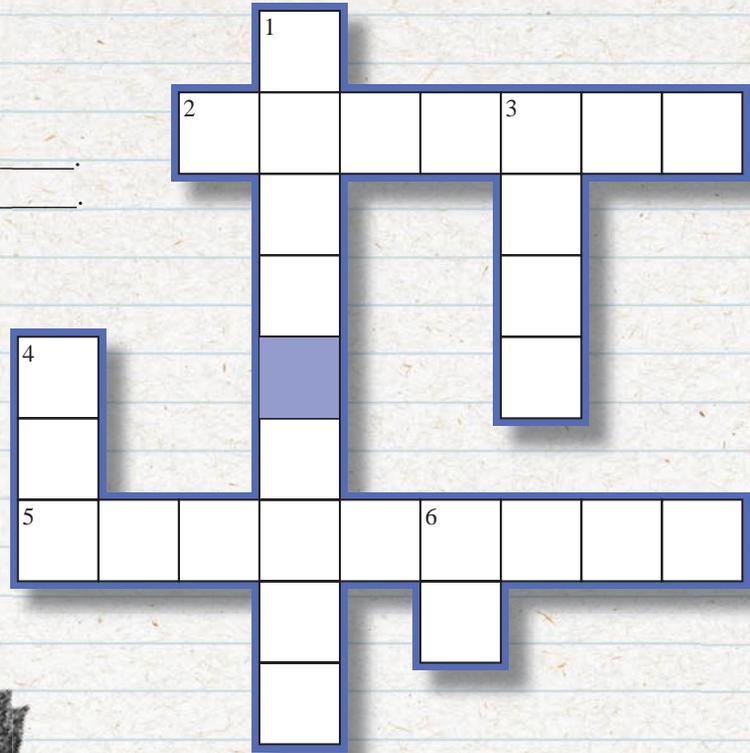
## Crossword Puzzle

### ACROSS

2. A tree that doesn't lose its needles in the winter is a \_\_\_\_\_.
5. When something is going down in numbers, it is \_\_\_\_\_.

### DOWN

1. Crew Leader Dave Baum grows crops for wildlife in the \_\_\_\_\_ program.
3. A snowshoe hare's home is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Chronic wasting disease, a disease that affects mule deer, is abbreviated by \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Have moose always been in Wyoming?



Can you tell where the snowshoe hare got its name? Look close at its tracks...do they look like something people use to walk on snow? What are they called?



Mountain range answers for page 5:  
Wind River Range – C; Bighorn Range – A.  
Absaroka Range – B; Medicine Bow Range – D.

# ▶ LEARNING LINKS ◀

## Books

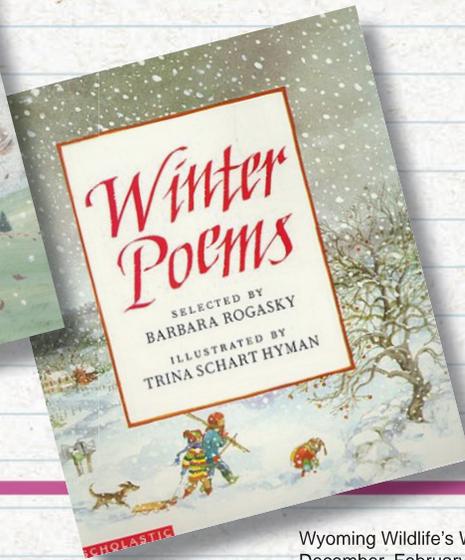
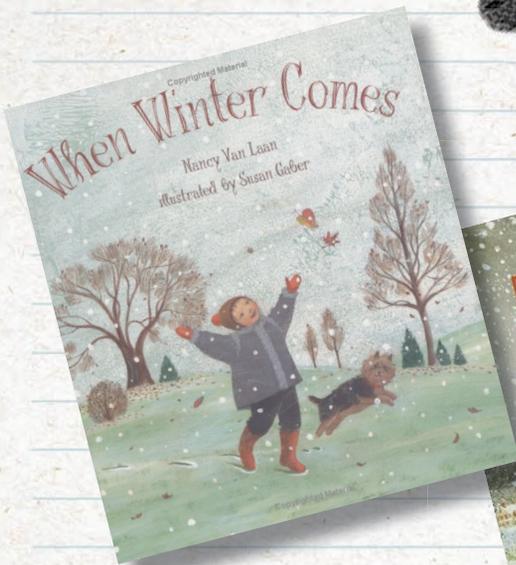
Have you ever wondered what happens to plants and animals when winter comes?

### When Winter Comes

by Nancy Van Laan, 2000

### Winter Poems

by Barbara Rogansky, 1994



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