



Jackson Region Fisheries Newsletter

Exploring the Gros Ventre Wilderness

The Gros Ventre Wilderness was established in 1984 and is located east of Jackson, WY. It is bounded by the Hoback River to the south and the Gros Ventre River to the north. This wilderness area encompasses more than 287,000 acres filled with over 200 miles of trails and hosts a wide variety of plant and animal species. It has been called the finest remaining unprotected wildlife habitat in Wyoming today.

This year's Fisheries Newsletter insert will focus on the aquatic resources within the Gros Ventre Wilderness. It will provide you with a brief overview of a few streams and lakes this area has to offer. We encourage you to pick up your fishing rods and reels, poles and lures, and head out to the Gros Ventre Wilderness in search of a great backcountry fishing adventure.



Aspen Hollow

Confessions of a Second Rate Habitat Biologist



Trout Creek beaver dam

maintain instream structures that create complex wetlands and pools. These habitats provide stream stability, elevate water tables, restore local riparian function, store sediment, and increase abundance of woody vegetation. In turn, more trout, native non-game fish, amphibians, waterfowl, passerine birds, and big game utilize their project area. How can I compete with that?

In the past, I told myself "Beaver aren't perfect. They eat themselves out of house and home and their dams blow out." But over many years of celebrating my competition's failures, I now realize their brilliance. Beaver know that instream structures are not permanent. They recognize streams are naturally dynamic and changing systems. Streams are always adjusting based on flows and whatever is happening in the watershed. Beaver know when to move on. Their unmaintained dam blows out, the sediment deposits on the banks, and the pool drains. And what is left? Clean spawning gravels for trout and a scoured riparian area that now is perfect for aspen, cottonwood and willow regeneration. So not only do beaver do successful short term structure projects, they also produce long term enhancements projects. I can't win.

So what can a second rate biologist do? Here is my devious plan. Trick this first rate biologist into doing my job and then taking the credit. Beaver have an obvious weakness. They build where they are not welcome. This is where my colleagues and I take advantage of nature's engineers. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department contracts trappers to live trap unwelcome beavers from private lands, then transplant these "problem" beaver to suitable but unoccupied habitats. They build enhancement structures, maintain them through the years and then move to the next stream "in need". Please hold your applause.

Now I hold my head high and take great pride in doing my best. Knowing it is tough to compete against *Castor canadensis*, who invented the game. -Lara Sweeney Gertsch

I have been a habitat biologist for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department for seventeen years. After all these years, experiences and trainings, I will never be the best habitat biologist. My rival works late into the evening hours, uses the best materials and spends an inordinate amount of time on streams and wetlands. How do I compete with this infamous and iconic workaholic, *Castor canadensis*?

When it comes to watershed enhancement projects, beaver are the best habitat biologists. The goals of a watershed project are to improve fish and wildlife habitat over the long term by providing a more diverse array of plant species, instream habitats and watershed complexes. These rodent engineers build and

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Don't Move a Mussel: Preventing Aquatic Invasive Species in Wyoming

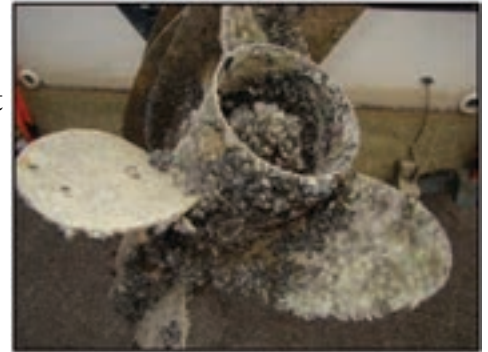
Aquatic invasive species are organisms that are introduced into new ecosystems where they cause harm and threaten human uses of water resources. Often called “nuisance” species, they can attach to equipment, boats, and clothing used in the water and can then be transferred from one body of water to another. Once established, these species cause significant problems for aquatic ecosystems and the people who use them. Of particular concern are two species posing a large and immediate threat to Wyoming—zebra and quagga mussels.

What are they?

Zebra and quagga mussels are freshwater, bivalve mollusks, typically with a dark and white pattern on their shells. They are native to Eurasia and were first discovered in the Great Lakes in 1988, most likely transported in the ballast water of ocean-going ships. They are up to an inch long and are often found in clusters attached to hard surfaces such as boats, piers, pipes, and other equipment. Invasive mussels reproduce rapidly. There are no known population of these mussels in Wyoming to date, but they have rapidly invaded waters across the country and are now present in Colorado, Nebraska and Utah.

Impacts to You

The negative impacts of invasive zebra and quagga mussels cannot be overstated. They impede water delivery and increase maintenance costs by clogging pipes, pumps, turbines and filtration systems. Invasive mussels can clog water intakes on motors, overheating and ruining boat engines. Invasive mussels remove plankton from the water. Plankton is the primary food source for forage fish—which in turn are the food of sport fish. The result is often a catastrophic decline in sport fisheries.



Motor encrusted with mussels.

How You Can Help

Overland transport on trailered watercraft poses the greatest risk for spreading aquatic invasive species. To prevent the spread of these mussels to Wyoming and protect our resources, we're asking all boaters and anglers to **Drain, Clean, and Dry**. Drain all water from your equipment and boat, including the livewell, bilge, and ballast. Clean all mud, plants, and debris from your equipment and boat. Dry your equipment and boat thoroughly before launching in another body of water for at least 5 days in summer, 18 days in spring and fall, and 3 days in winter.

The 2010 Legislature passed a new aquatic invasive species bill that allows the establishment of check stations to inspect watercraft for aquatic invasive species and if necessary decontaminate the watercraft. In addition to encountering check stations at boat ramps throughout Wyoming, boaters will need to purchase a Wyoming Aquatic Invasive Species Decal before launching in any waters in Wyoming in 2010. For more information, call 307-777-4600 or visit <http://gf.state.wy.us/fish/AIS/index.asp>.

To report an aquatic invasive species sighting, or to request assistance with watercraft decontamination call 1-877-WGFD-AIS.



Exploring the Gros Ventre Wilderness

Welcome to the Gros Ventre Wilderness! This country is filled with fishing opportunity and beautiful scenery. Access to the Gros Ventre Wilderness is more convenient than some of the other, local, wilderness areas. It is most easily accessed on the North from the Gros Ventre Road, on the South from the Hoback Road (Hwy 191), or on the West from Hwy 191. Please use this guide as a jumping off point for your fishing adventures, it is, in no way, a complete list of fishable streams and lakes, so explore as you wish. Remember to bring a Forest Service map, as this insert is not meant for navigation.

Be sure to stop in and tell us your fishing stories!

Waters in the Gros Ventre Drainage

<u>Water</u>	<u>Species</u>
Alkali Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Burnt Creek	Mountain Whitefish
Big Cow Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Clear Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Mountain Whitefish Brook Trout
Clear Creek, Dry Fork	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Crystal Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Mountain Whitefish Brook Trout
Crystal Creek, West Fork	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Darwin Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Goosewing Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Mountain Whitefish Brook Trout
Goosewing Creek, West	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Jagg Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Brook Trout
Lafferty Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Miner Creek, West	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Brook Trout
Miner Creek, East	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Shorty Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Tepee Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Bare Back Lake	Brook Trout
Brewster Lake	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Bridge Creek Lake	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Chateau Lake 1	Brook Trout
Chateau Lake 2	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Brook Trout
Chateau Lake 3	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Brook Trout
Clear Creek Lake 1	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Farney Lake 1	Brook Trout
Rock Chuck Lake	Brook Trout

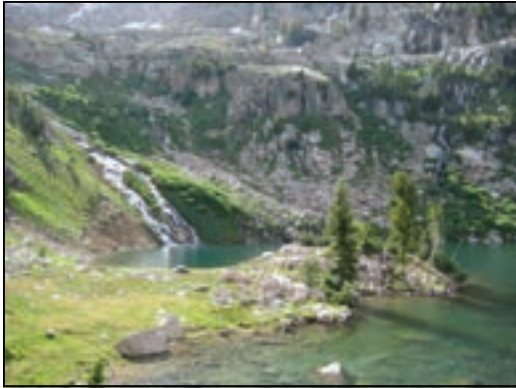
The streams and lakes within the Gros Ventre Drainage are accessible from the Gros Ventre Road and Flat Creek Road, as well as through the numerous trails that originate in the Hoback and Flat Creek drainages. Trails, starting at several major trailheads, will lead you to most of the streams and lakes listed here.



Crystal Creek Drainage

Waters in the Hoback Drainage

The streams and lakes within the Hoback Drainage are accessible from Hwy 191 that follows the Hoback River as well as from trails that originate in the Snake River and Gros Ventre River drainages. There is a generous network of trails that follow most major tributaries and lead to abundant fishing holes.



Shoal Lake

<u>Water</u>	<u>Species</u>
Bear Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Boulder Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Bull Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Dell Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Mountain Whitefish Brook Trout
Dell Creek, West	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Granite Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Mountain Whitefish Brook Trout
Little Granite Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Mountain Whitefish Brook Trout
Shoal Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Swift Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Brook Trout
Mac Leod Lake	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Shoal Lake	Bear River Cutthroat Trout
Turquoise Lake	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Bear River Cutthroat Trout

Waters in the Snake River Drainage

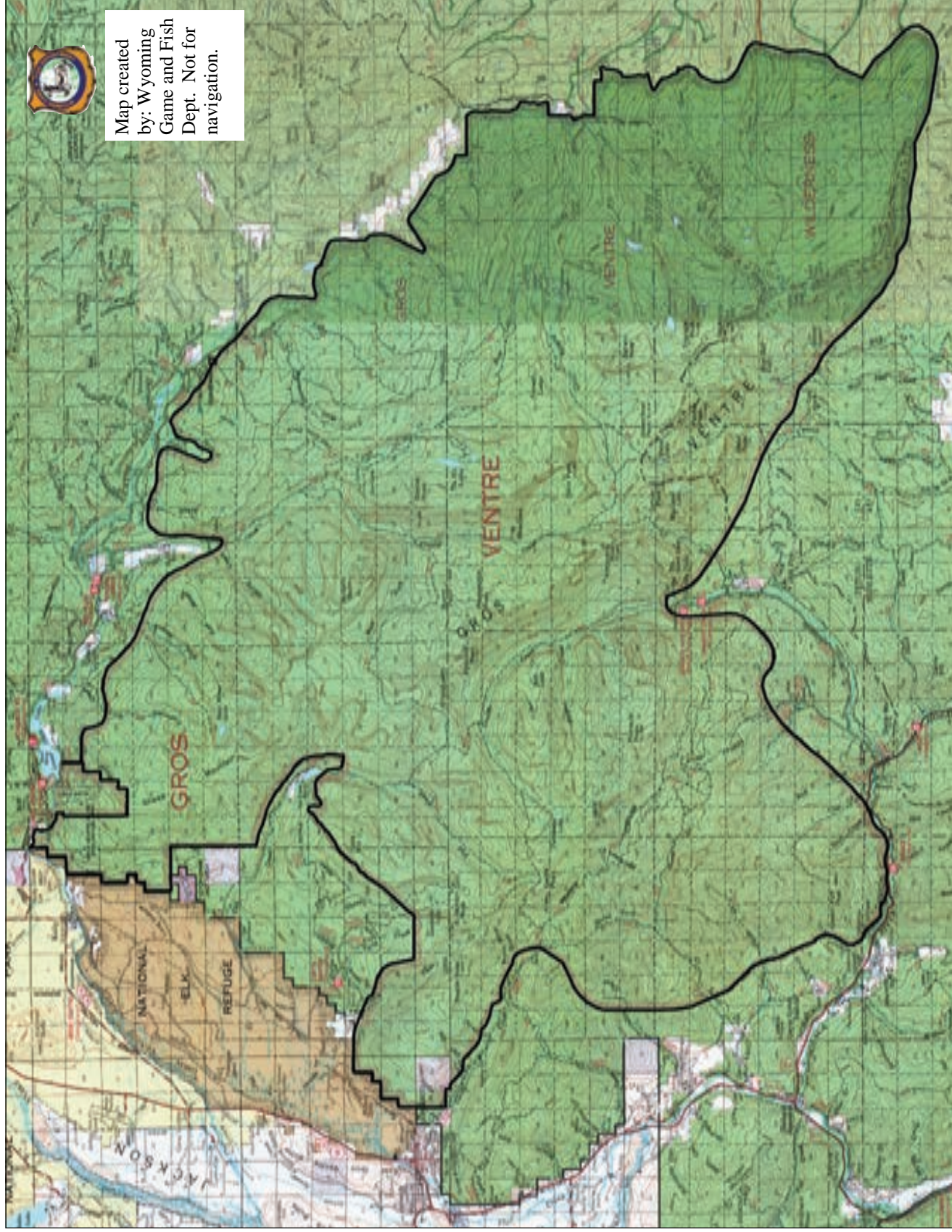
The streams and lakes within the Snake River Drainage may be accessed from Hwy 89 as well as through a number of Forest Service roads including Flat Creek Road and Sheep Creek Road. Although the Snake River tributaries make up a small portion of the Gros Ventre Wilderness, they provide many fishing opportunities close to town.

<u>Water</u>	<u>Species</u>
Blackman Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Cache Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Flat Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Mountain Whitefish Brook Trout Brown Trout Rainbow Trout
Horse Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Mountain Whitefish
Horse Creek, Little	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Horse Creek, North Fork	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Porcupine Creek	Snake River Cutthroat Trout
Sheep Creek	Brook Trout
Twin Creek, South	Brook Trout
Goodwin Lake	Snake River Cutthroat Trout Brook Trout

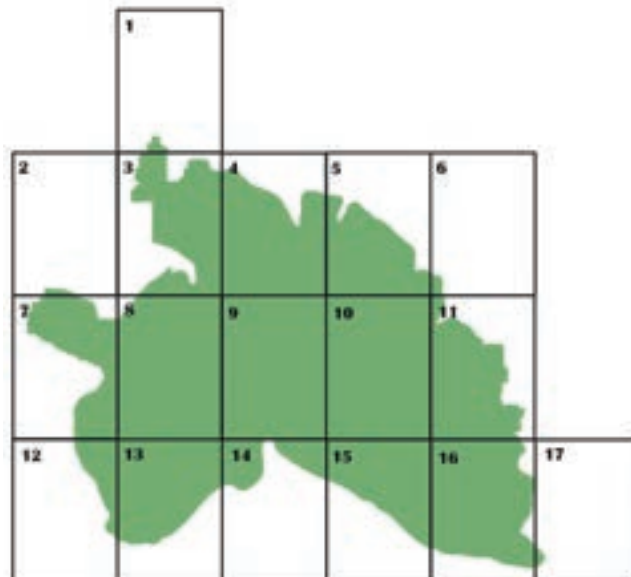


Flat Creek Headwaters

Exploring the Gros Ventre Wilderness



Topographic Map Index of the Gros Ventre Wilderness



1. Shadow Mountain
2. Gros Ventre Junction
3. Blue Miner Lake
4. Grizzly Lake
5. Upper Slide Lake
6. Burnt Mountain
7. Cache Creek
8. Turquoise Lake
9. Crystal Peak
10. Darwin Peak
11. Ouzel Falls
12. Camp Davis
13. Bull Creek
14. Granite Falls
15. Doubletop Peak
16. Tosi Peak
17. Klondike Hill

Before you Bait.....

Baitfish are a common fishing tool within Wyoming, however, due to the unintentional introduction of non-native species into lakes and streams through bait buckets, the possession and use of baitfish is now more heavily regulated than in the past. Within Jackson, Star Valley, and Grand Teton National Park (GTNP), together known as Area 1 in the fishing regulations, the use of live baitfish is prohibited, and within GTNP, dead baitfish may only be used on and along the shores of Jackson Lake. Additionally, the dead bait fish used within Area 1 must be native to the drainage. The following is a list of the fish that **CAN** be used as bait and one non-native species to look out for that **CANNOT** be used as bait.

Native

- **Redside Shiner**

3-5 inches long with green or bluish body and gold or red sides (see photo).

- **Speckled dace**

3-4 inches long with dusky brown to green body and a dark strip down it's side. Displays a groove between the upper lip and the snout.

- **Longnose dace**

3-4 inches long with olive to brownish body and a dark side stripe. Does not have a groove between the upper lip and the snout.

- **Paiute and mottled sculpin**

4-6 inches long with brown mottled body, large pectoral fins, large head, and compressed body (see photo).

- **Utah chub**

Usually 8-10 inches (up to 22 inches) with a brown, stout body and golden or orange side stripe.

- **Utah sucker**

Varies in size from 3-35 inches with a bronze body and white belly (distinguished from native bluehead sucker by lack of a scraping ridge in the mouth. See photo, page 8).



Redside Shiner



Mottled Sculpin

Non-native

- **Fathead Minnow**

2-3.5 inches with a short, stout body (dark above, pale below) with a purplish iridescence and a dark strip down it's side. First dorsal fin ray is short (see photo).

This species has been introduced into the Snake River Drainage and out competes native minnow species for resources. If you catch this minnow, please report it to your local Game and Fish office. Fathead minnows may NOT be used as bait.



Fathead Minnow

WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

PO Box 67
420 North Cache
Jackson, WY 83001

Phone: 307-733-2321
Fax: 307-733-2276
Email: Diana.Sweet@gf.state.wy.us

WE'RE ON THE WEB!
<http://gf.state.wy.us>



**“Conserving Wildlife
Serving People”**

20th Annual Kids Fishing Day

This year kids fishing day will be held on the **5th of June at the Jackson National Fish Hatchery**. Registration begins at 10:30am and all activities are concluded by 2:00pm. Jackson Jaycees will, once again, provide a free lunch. All kids, age 13 and under, are invited to participate and parents can listen in for a great learning experience. Activities include aquatic insects, fly tying, boating safety, and fish identification.

Bridger-Teton Nation Forest, Jackson Hole Jaycees, Jackson National Fish Hatchery, Teton Conservation District, Teton County EMS, Teton County Parks and Recreation Department, Trout Unlimited, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Geological Survey Jackson Field Station, and Wyoming Game and Fish Department are local sponsors of the event.

Thanks to this years newsletter contributors: Tracy Stephens, Lara Sweeney-Gertch, and Beth Bear.

Know Your Suckers

Historically, suckers were important food fish for humans and were used as forage fish for many other fish species. Although they are rarely used as a food source today, they are often used for bait by anglers. Within the Snake River Basin of Wyoming, there are 3 native sucker species. These species are the Utah sucker, the bluehead sucker, and the mountain sucker. **In the Snake River Drainage, only the Utah sucker may be used as fish bait.** The most commonly caught suckers are Utah sucker and bluehead sucker. While sucker fishing this year, remember to look for these differences.

Utah Sucker



Utah suckers have large, continuous, fleshy lips (no notch between upper and lower), **without** a scraping ridge (see below). Utah suckers may be found in both rivers and lakes.



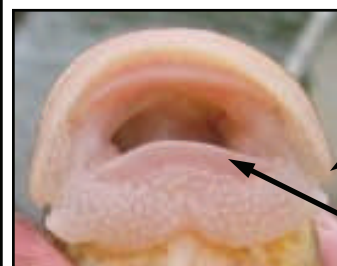
no notch

no scraping ridge

Bluehead Sucker



Bluehead suckers have large, notched lips **with** a scraping ridge (see below). Despite their name, bluehead suckers only have a blue colored head during the spawning season. Although bluehead suckers have been seen in lakes, they are more common in rivers. Bluehead suckers are a species of concern in Wyoming.



notch

scraping ridge