



January 2015

the wyoming game & fish department

CASPER REGION newsletter

January Fishing

Thin Ice

January was a tough month for ice fishing in the Casper Region. Ice conditions have been extremely unpredictable with reports of several all terrain vehicles (ATVs) and anglers going through the ice. "The Wyoming Game and Fish Department wants people to use extreme caution when on the ice and highly recommend staying off the ice due to the warm weather," says Public Information Specialist Janet Milek. "The strong, warm winds we have been having in the Casper area make ice unsafe. In just one weekend, six ATVs and nine anglers went through the ice. We were lucky and that no one was hurt."

"Cloudy ice is the most unpredictable," states Al Conder, regional fisheries supervisor. "And that seems to be what we have been seeing throughout the area. This means the ice has frozen and thawed many times, which makes it less safe. Ideally, clear ice is what you want to see."

The Game and Fish reminds anglers that as the ice retreats, it is often the best time for anglers to catch fish from the shore. "Ice-off provides great rainbow fishing at Pathfinder," says Conder. "I know where I would be fishing right now, on the shore."

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On the Ground

Russian Olive Removal Underway

Russian olive removal work has begun at the Walk-in Area adjacent to the Dave Johnston powerplant. The trees are being mechanically treated by mulching the trees in place. Chemical treatment of resprouts will occur in the fall of 2015, as well as several years post-treatment to ensure adequate control of the Russian olives. Once the Russian olives are under control, we will re-plant native woody vegetation, such as buffaloberry, cottonwood and currants. These will provide higher quality forage and cover for wildlife.



Elk Classifications

Casper Biologist Heather O'Brien and East Casper Game Warden Cody Bish completed elk classification surveys in the helicopter during the first part of January. Weather conditions were fair to poor – with ground fog covering some portions of Area 19 making them inaccessible for survey flights. Despite some the fog, a total of 909 elk were classified in Area 19, and another 287 were classified in Area 120. Fawn and bull ratios were fairly average in both hunt areas, with a little better production of calves in Area 120 compared to area 19.



Behind the Badge

Mountain Lions

Game Wardens Cody Bish and Matt Withroder worked on a mountain lion investigation involving multiple suspects and several violations. Interviews were conducted and confessions were obtained from all the suspects. Violations included taking a mountain lion without a license, accessory to take mountain lion without a license, failing to immediately release a treed mountain lion and false statements on a mountain lion registration form.

Matt Withroder investigated a report of wasted elk along the Coal Mountain Rd, southwest of Casper. The investigation revealed elk carcasses which had been dumped, but all edible portions of meat were removed. Tips like these are important to receive from the public as they often lead to poaching cases. Thanks to the public for keeping a watch on the wildlife.

In the Water

Speas Fish Hatchery, Flushing Flows

During January, the Dan Speas Fish Hatchery may seem like a quiet place, however, many people don't realize it is a busy month. Countless hours are spent on the little things that make Speas Hatchery a success. During the month, many of the different groups of fish complete their transition from egg to a feeding fry. This takes extreme attention to detail to ensure that each group is getting the proper care and just the right amount of feed. This past January, Speas had 8 of 14 groups of fish start on feed. These groups include species like brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout, and kokanee. January is also when a lot of necessary maintenance work occurs that keeps the facility operating at peak performance. Speas staff spend time servicing equipment and preparing for the upcoming spring



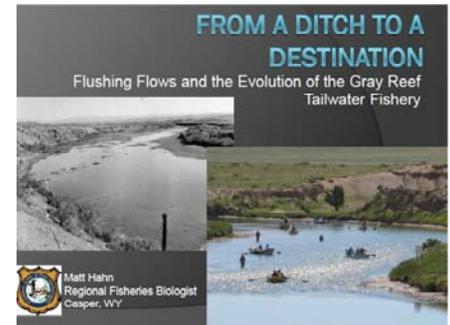
stocking season. This spring, Speas will stock approximately 700,000 fish (approximately 150,000 lbs) of all sizes in waters across the state. In the Casper area fish are scheduled to be stocked in Goldeneye, Big Muddy, and Shepherders reservoirs along with 33-Mile and Yesness ponds, Guernsey Slough and Horseshoe and LaBonte creeks will be stocked. The North Platte River in the Douglas area will also get fish.



The Dan Speas Fish Hatchery is located 15 miles south of Casper off Highway 220 and is open from 8 am to 5 pm daily. Visitors will find self-guided tour pamphlets available in the office or at the visitor information kiosk. For more information, call Speas at (307) 473-8890.

Flushing Flows

Matt Hahn, Casper regional fisheries biologist, made a presentation at the January Commission meeting on flushing flows and his freeze core program below Gray Reef Reservoir. The freeze core technique is a tool managers use to quantify the changes in spawning gravel that previously would have been too labor intensive or impossible. The data collected from this scientific technique has been used to determine the number and timing of the flushing flows in the North Platte and should produce an increase in trout production. Our request to modify the flushing flows was positively received by the Bureau of Reclamation, largely because of the benefits revealed by this technology.



In the News

NWTF Donates To Access Yes

The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) recently donated \$5,000 to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Access Yes program. This donation helps to secure access for hunters and anglers across Wyoming, through the Private Lands Public Wildlife (PLPW) Access Program. That program is designed to support landowners who want to grant hunters and anglers access to private land.

"The National Wild Turkey Foundation is a great partner and supports a variety of wildlife related projects in Wyoming. Through a partnership with private landowners, this donation will open up thousands of acres of public access for all hunters and anglers," said Scott Talbott, Director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. "We are grateful for the Wild Turkey Foundation's support and thank them for this donation."



"The National Wild Turkey Foundation is dedicated to the conservation of wild turkeys and the hunting heritage and has worked with Game and Fish on numerous projects," said Matt Withroder, Casper regional access coordinator for Game and Fish. "Since 2002, NWTF has donated over \$90,000 to Access Yes, benefiting sportsmen in Wyoming."

Funding for Access Yes comes from several sources, primarily conservation stamp sales, donations and restitution payments. Hunters and anglers also have the option of donating to the program when they purchase or apply for a license. Access Yes donations can only be used for purchasing easements for Hunter Management Areas and Walk-in Areas.

Access Yes donations go directly toward the access program and every \$1 donated provides access to approximately four acres of land. In 2014, the PLPW Access Program provided more than 2.8 million acres of access for hunters and anglers.

