



September 2015

the wyoming game & fish department

CASPER REGION newsletter

September Hunting Pronghorn

Many pronghorn antelope hunt areas around Casper opened during the second half of September. Winds over 60 mph seemed to impact many pronghorn hunters during opening week. Game and Fish had reports of hunters not taking shots because they couldn't hold steady to make a solid shot. Others reported great hunts with harvest. This fall Lindsey Muratore, pictured below with her son and nephew, enjoyed a great pronghorn hunt near Casper. Thanks for sharing Lindsey.



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September Fishing

Platte River Revival, Fall Fishing

The ninth Platte River Revival volunteer day had 24 partners involved in the event. Over 700 volunteers showed up for a Saturday morning work session to remove litter and improve riparian habitat along the North Platte River corridor through Casper. Game and Fish was happy to be a part of the event. The Revival has helped focus interest on our river and has been the springboard for the river restoration master plan and de-signs for extensive habitat improvements. The first phases of in-water habitat improvement construction will begin in October.



Anglers across the Casper Region continue to report great fishing. The mild weather this fall has provided great opportunity for anglers. Fall river flows stayed about 500 cubic feet per second through September this year.

On the Ground

Cheatgrass Update in Weston County



During the month of September, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Weston County Weed and Pest teamed up to conduct a cheatgrass herbicide treatment on crucial winter range on Elk Mountain in Weston County. Cheatgrass is a non-native annual grass that quickly dominates a site after disturbance, and can turn native rangelands into unproductive biological deserts. The presence of cheatgrass can increase the fire fre-

quency of an area once established, which can have a detrimental effect on forage production for wildlife and livestock alike. 455 acres of crucial winter range was treated with imazipic herbicide aerially via helicopter. The treated area is adjacent to approximately 700 acres that were treated during the fall of 2014. This area provides crucial wintering habitat for mule deer and bighorn sheep. Treatments conducted last year showed terrific results, with 99% control of cheatgrass observed. This project was funded by the Governor's Big Game License Coalition and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.



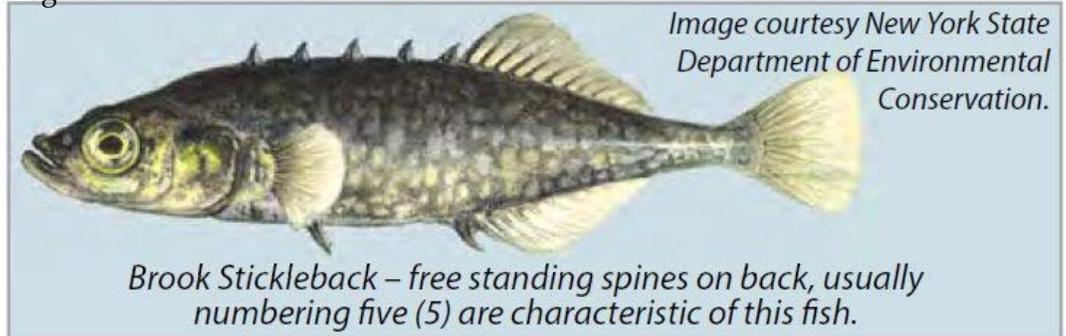
In the Water

Brook Stickleback, Annual Reservoir Sampling

Fisheries Biologist Matt Hahn worked to document the distribution of brook stickleback in the headwaters of the South Fork of the Powder River. Brook stickleback are an aquatic invasive species that we believe were originally brought to Wyoming

with livebait fish from the Dakotas where they are native. Brook stickleback only get about three inches in length, and while you might expect other fish to eat them, their spines seem to be an effective deterrent and prevent them

from being forage. They are also very prolific, eat large zooplankton and fish eggs, thus often outcompete other native fish species. The source in the South Fork Powder River appears to be illegal stocking in a pond. There are no known populations of stickleback in the Powder River drainage other than this recent discovery; and Game and Fish hopes to keep the drainage free of them. Game and Fish will continue to evaluate the potential to eradicate them from the drainage over the winter.



Annual fall gillnetting was completed in Seminoe, Pathfinder and Alcova to evaluate walleye populations in the reservoirs. Conditions in all three reservoirs in recent years have resulted in increasing walleye numbers and size. While the increases in walleye populations are very good for anglers interested in walleye, the increases in number and size of walleye are causing challenges to provide quality trout fisheries.

Of Interest

Black Hills Black Bears, Turkey Update

Black bears in the Black Hills have been helping themselves to honey lately. Three different apiaries were damaged in September.



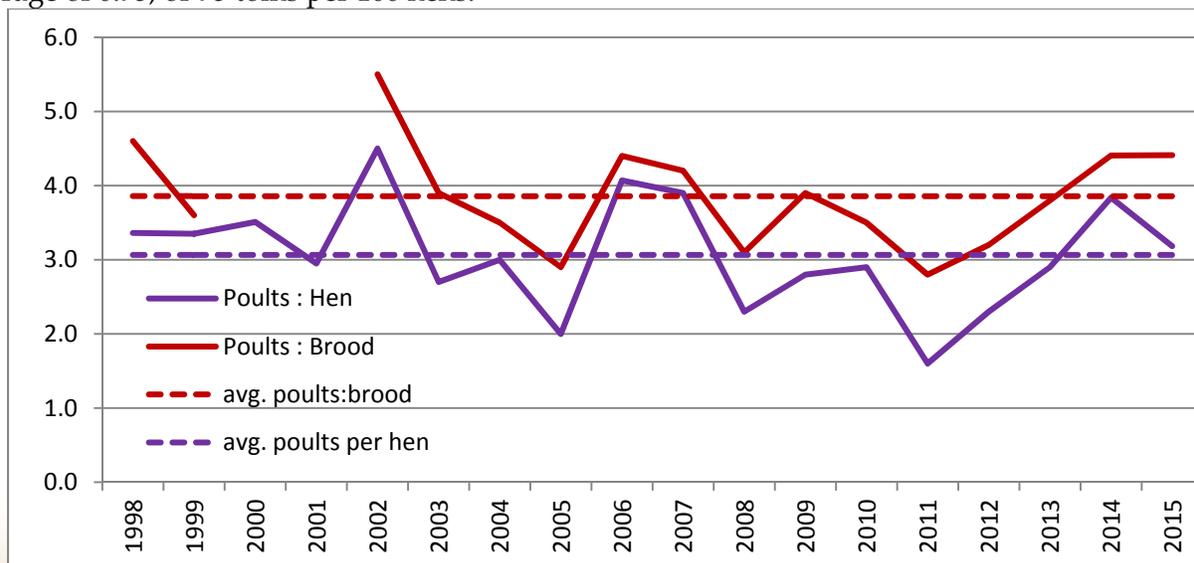
Game and Fish has made an effort to gauge wild turkey productivity in the Black Hills using late summer brood counts since at least 1967. Brood counts are designed to give managers a window into the average poult per hen, and poult per brood ratios each year. Surveys are completed after the majority of poult mortality has occurred. These data are a good indication of annual wild turkey production and can give insight into future population trends. Summer brood counts have been correlated with hunter success the following fall and spring in many areas. In the Black Hills, spring wild turkey harvest is highly correlated with the poult production two years prior.



During the month of August and early September this year, our personnel classified about 1,050 wild turkeys in the Black Hills with help from local landowners along with USFS, BLM and State Forestry personnel. G&F Commissioner Keith Culver has also helped boost our sample sizes by assisting with data collection.

The collected data are analyzed in late September. This year we saw an increase of about 25% above last year in the total number of wild turkeys observed. This was to be expected, as poult production last year finally rebounded to long term averages after six years of low productivity and survival. That long stretch of increased mortality and decreased reproduction resulted in a significant decline in wild turkey numbers in the Black Hills. Thankfully, this population is beginning to rebound – a trend that has now continued for two years.

This year we observed an average of 3.2 poult per hen and 4.4 poult per brood. These figures are above the long-term average and in line with what we saw when wild turkey numbers were increasing between 2000 and 2007. The other good news is that the number of tom turkeys observed has also rebounded. This year’s classification effort yielded a figure of 0.77 toms per hen (or 77 per 100), which is about spot on with the long-term average of 0.75, or 75 toms per 100 hens.



In the News

Deb Vincent Honored, Casper Moose Relocated, Hunting with Heroes

Many Game and Fish customers may recognize Deb Vincent. She was recently recognized by her peers at the Wyoming Game and Fish for her outstanding work with the public with the Peer Recognition Award. Deb is often the first person to help customers with information on the best places to hunt, fish or just enjoy an afternoon outside. She also helps on projects critical to get information to public. Thanks Deb for all you do for Game and Fish.



Casper wardens and biologists responded to a call of a cow moose near the Fab-Tech complex on Highway 20/26 early Sunday morning September 20th. The moose had found her way inside the compound and was drawing attention from traffic passing by on the highway. Wildlife Management Coordinator Justin Binfet was able to sneak between buildings and parked vehicles inside Fab-Tech to make an excellent long shot with the tranquilizer gun. The moose wandered along the southeast corner of the fence and laid down after the immobilization drugs began to take effect. With help from Fab-Tech employees, biologists and wardens were able to lift and load the moose into a trailer. Local Sheriff's Deputy Brad Legler also responded and helped safely control traffic along the busy highway. The moose was transported by West Casper Game Warden Daniel Beach to the southern Bighorn Mountains and released into an area with much better habitat.



Casper Region personnel with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department spent a weekend in September helping Hunting for Heroes on pronghorn hunts. Congratulations to the veterans on a great weekend in the field.

Colton Sasser and Dan Currah are the founders of Hunting with Heroes whose mission is giving back to our nation's disabled veterans by honoring our heroes with hunting, fishing and other outdoor experiences.



Cody Bish, Ron Nading, Bill Buxton and Daniel Beach. A successful harvest for veterans Ron and Bill.



Veteran Joel Tavera sights in his firearm with Game Warden Daniel Beach and Joel's success with guide Ken Thoren, Daniel Beach and Joel's harvested pronghorn doe. Joel has a unique hunting story. He was blinded after his Humvee was struck by a rocket in Iraq and now uses a special rifle scope that allows a guide to help him find his target. Joel harvested both a buck and a doe while pronghorn hunting in Wyoming in September.

