



the wyoming game & fish department

CASPER REGION newsletter

April Fishing Goldeneye is Back!

Goldeneye Reservoir, located 20 miles West of Casper, is an incredibly productive trout fishery that grows trophy sized trout. Unfortunately, Goldeneye is susceptible to winterkill during periods of low water since it



Cutthroat trout in Goldeneye Reservoir from spring 2016 survey

is a shallow lake (20 feet deep when full). Winterkill happens when the lake is frozen and decaying vegetation under the ice uses up the oxygen in the water. The 2013/2014 winter resulted in a near total winterkill for trout since the water level was low going into the winter. Our sampling right after ice-out in April 2014 showed the trout population had declined by more than 95%. Luckily, ample spring moisture resulted in the filling of this reservoir and we were able to restock it in fall 2014. We stocked more fish in spring 2015 and it was recently stocked again this spring. The fishery was sampled in early April 2016 and the trout population is back up and running. The rainbow trout stocked in the fall of 2014 were averaging 18 inches and nearly three pounds after only 1.5 years in the reservoir. Of the trout stocked in spring 2015, the rainbows and Snake River cutthroats were averaging 16 inches and two pounds, while the brook trout were 14 inches and 1.5 pounds. With the high growth rates in this reservoir, rainbow trout should be hitting 20 inches by July and we expect five pound fish available for ice anglers by December.

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Season Setting Commission Meeting

The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission will hold their annual April meeting in Casper to hear season setting recommendations for the 2016 hunting seasons. Once season dates and license allocations are finalized they can be found on the website at <http://wyo.wgdf.gov>. The application deadline to apply is May 31. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at (307) 473-3400.

On the Ground

Winter Turns to Spring, Wild Turkey Season

After a warm February and early March, a snowstorm brought much needed relief to the Casper Area with several inches of moisture received. The moisture should bode well for spring forage. Overall mild conditions quickly returned to the area.

Biologists hope mild conditions persist through incubation and hatch of game birds and fawning of big game. In the Black Hills,

Wildlife Biologist Joe Sandrini noted that the mild conditions seem to have deer and antelope moving back towards spring and summer range a bit earlier this year; and he added, "We are seeing improved numbers of deer and antelope migrating this spring, with most looking to be in very good shape. There are a lot of coming yearlings too; suggesting over-winter survival was very good again this year; something the herds in this part of the state can really use, as they build back up after sinking so low a couple years ago."



Pronghorn antelope finding forage after over one foot of snowfall south of Casper



Mule deer leaving winter range following recent snow



Wildlife biologists and game wardens have been preparing for wild turkey seasons across the Casper Region. The Black Hills wild turkey seasons are extremely popular during the spring hunt. These turkeys pictured (left) were finding some dry land after the storm in late March dropped over a foot of snow in Converse County.



Behind the Badge

Elk Hunt Area 19



East Casper Game Warden Cody Bish recently closed a case involving two bull elk. These two elk were killed illegally in elk Hunt Area 19. After an investigation matching DNA and ballistics, two individuals were charged with over limit and waste. The bull elk and rifle were seized and forfeited. The individual primarily responsible lost three years of hunting and trapping privileges and had to pay restitution.



In the Water

Burbot in Seminoe Reservoir?

Since early spring 2015, the Casper fish management crew has had four separate instances of anglers reporting what may be burbot caught in Seminoe Reservoir.

While burbot are a native species in the Wind/Bighorn, Tongue and Powder River drainages in Wyoming, they are not native to the North Platte River, have never been stocked in the drainage and their presence would indicate an illegal introduction. The fisheries crew is concerned about this possibility as burbot are voracious predators that could have negative impacts on the excellent trout and walleye fisheries in the drainage.



Burbot are a freshwater member of the cod family. They are a predatory species and are unique in that they become more active the colder the water gets. They are prolific spawners and are able to spawn in both lake and river habitats. Spawning takes place in the winter, under the ice and a large female burbot can lay as many as 1,000,000 eggs, allowing them to quickly expand in numbers. While they are an important native species in some parts of the state, illegal introductions of burbot into the Green River drainage in the late 1990's have shown this species is able to quickly expand in numbers and cause ecological harm outside their native range. Seminoe Reservoir is a high elevation, relatively unproductive reservoir, and the presence of burbot would undoubtedly have a negative impact on the excellent walleye fishery through direct competition for forage. Burbot have also been shown to prey on trout and their presence would hamper our ability to provide a quality trout fishery in Seminoe. Of course burbot would not stay in the reservoir, but would spread upstream and downstream and could threaten the world class wild trout fisheries present in the North Platte River above and below Seminoe.



We have been attempting to verify the presence of burbot in Seminoe Reservoir. While we annually sample the trout and walleye populations with gillnets, burbot are not susceptible to capture in gillnets due to their long, slender shape. Trotlines were set in September and came up empty. Set lines were deployed through the ice in January which also came up empty. We took water samples from the North Platte and Medicine Bow Rivers in February to look for traces of burbot DNA through a relatively new technique known as eDNA sampling. Analysis of those samples is pending. We will now attempt netting with a special net called a trammel net which has been proven effective at capturing burbot.

In the meantime, we have proposed a regulation similar to what has been enacted in the Green River drainage where burbot will be listed as a non-game species that must be killed if caught in the North Platte River drainage.

If you have caught a burbot, or know of someone catching a burbot anywhere in the North Platte Drainage, we would like to know about it. You should report any burbot catches to the Casper Fisheries Management Crew at 307-473-3405. If possible, keep and freeze the fish for us, otherwise snap a photo for species verification.



Of Interest

Sandhill Cranes, Douglas Wild Turkey Trapping



Flights of geese and sandhill cranes have been a steady and raucous sight in the sky most of the month. Sandhill cranes and geese stage in high numbers across the Central Flyways on their migration north. The local birds are also returning from their winter grounds, and our game wardens and biologists report what appear to be good numbers of game and nongame birds as they begin their annual sage-grouse surveys. Stay tuned for more reports on sage-grouse numbers next month.



Volunteers helped capture wild turkeys

A group of 24 turkeys took up residence in a subdivision within the city of Douglas this past fall. After putting up with turkeys for several months, some home owners grew increasingly frustrated with the constant noise and mess that resulted. Given there was a large field adjacent to these homes, Casper Region employees set up a large drop net that was donated by the National Wild Turkey Federation for turkey transplants and captures. With

the help of various Game and Fish personnel and local volunteers, we were able to trap 17 of the 24 turkeys much to the delight of the homeowners. The birds were hauled over north of Lusk where an anxious landowner asked to have the turkeys released on his ranch. Hopefully these birds will survive and reproduce in a more wild setting, and eventually result in some good turkey hunting in the coming years!



Wild turkeys released north of Lusk

