



CODY REGION newsletter

Renner Reservoir improvement underway



Game and Fish Habitat and Access crews breach the dam at Renner Reservoir to begin the draining process.

Work is underway to improve the fishery in Renner Reservoir north of Ten Sleep. While Renner has historically provided a relatively high quality largemouth bass fishery, over the last few years fish populations and opportunities for quality angling have greatly decreased.

Last month, the dam was breached to begin the process of draining the reservoir. The draining process is expected to continue over the next month or two. Cody Region Fisheries Biologist Joe Skorupski said there is likely no better time to address the key factors that have contributed to the decline of the bass fishery in Renner. “By draining the reservoir, we will be able to remove the stunted sunfish population, fix an outlet structure, and potentially dig out sediment in select areas to increase water depth,” Skorupski said. “Depending on dry time and a host of other factors, habitat work and replacement of the outlet structure will begin fall of 2017.”

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On the ground

Wedding of the Waters parking lot expanded



Game and Fish Habitat and Access crew expands the parking lot at Wedding of the Waters access area near Thermopolis.

The Wedding of the Waters access area, a popular boat ramp and public access point to the Bighorn River near Thermopolis, recently received much needed improvements.

Brad Sorensen Cody region habitat and access supervisor said the site was improved by doubling the amount of parking area for boaters, fisherman and other recreation users. “Wedding of the Waters is one of the most highly used public access areas in the Bighorn Basin and the parking lot was too small to accommodate the amount of use it gets,” Sorensen said.

Game and Fish Habitat and Access crew conducted the work for the project and materials were donated by Cody based sportsman group, Wyoming Outdoorsmen.

Dead eagles investigated

Last month Greybull Game Warden Bill Robertson investigated the report of two dead golden eagles near their nest location along Elk Creek west of Manderson. Upon investigation, two decomposed carcasses were discovered; a young-of-the-year bird found directly underneath the cliff wall nest and an older juvenile bird found about 300 yards from the nest. The reporting party was concerned that they had been illegally killed, as they had seen both chicks alive three weeks prior. Robertson met with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to discuss the possible illegal take of the birds. A follow-up investigation with the carcasses will be conducted by the USFWS.



Dead golden eagle found on Elk Creek.

Patrolling Medicine Lodge and Paint Rock Lakes



Greybull Game Warden Bill Robertson patrolled the Medicine Lodge and Paint Rock Lakes area over the Fourth of July holiday. There were no compliance issues with fishing licenses or creel limits and Robertson was happy to see that the boats he checked were all in compliance with AIS regulations.

Left: A happy fisherman with his catch.

On the ground

Black-footed ferrets released back at the spot where they were rediscovered 35 years ago

Last month, one of North America's most endangered mammals, the black-footed ferret, took another step towards recovery thanks to a historic reintroduction back to the ranches where the species was rediscovered in 1981 after having been believed to be extinct. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department, in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the owners of two ranches, released 35 black-footed ferrets. The ferrets were released on the Lazy BV and Pitchfork Ranches, outside Meeteetse.

Beginning in 1986, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service founded a successful captive breeding program for black-footed ferrets. Captive breeding continues even today and captive bred and raised ferrets have been released throughout western North America.

"This is a historic moment for the recovery of this species. It is an honor for the men and women who serve the public and wildlife in Wyoming to be a part of this effort. This is a biologically sound and historical place to host a reintroduction and we thank the ranch owners for their commitment to recovery of black-footed ferrets. The decades of hard work from Game and Fish and our numerous partners show in these recovery efforts," said Scott Talbott, director of Game and Fish.

"Bringing the black-footed ferret home to Meeteetse is an extraordinary achievement, which is a source of pride not only for the citizens of Wyoming, but for conservationists everywhere. Countless partners have worked together for decades to ensure the survival of this remarkable species, and their diligent efforts are just as notable as the ferret's return. Today is a special day for those partners, for all of us at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and for anyone who values having wild creatures on the landscape where they belong," said Dan Ashe, director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



A black-footed ferret is released on the Pitchfork Ranch outside of Meeteetse July 26.



Allen and Kris Hogg, owners of the Lazy BV Ranch. The Lazy BV is one of two private ranches near Meeteetse where black-footed ferrets were recently released.

The release of black-footed ferrets back onto private land is possible due to the 10(j) rule that creates special provisions to give landowners protection if a ferret is killed during legal activities. Last year, a state-wide rule was put in place to give landowners assurance they will be able to manage their properties without the concern they might break the law by inadvertently harming a ferret. Implementation of the 10(j) rule ensures the concerns of private landowners and landowners adjacent to reintroduction areas are addressed comprehensively.

Black-footed ferrets almost exclusively eat prairie dogs and rely on prairie dog burrows for shelter, safety, and a place to raise young. Each ferret requires 50-100 acres of prairie dog colony to survive.

The national Black-footed Ferret Recovery Implementation Team has released ferrets at 24 sites across the continent. Current numbers in the wild are encouraging, but more reintroduction sites are needed to fully recover the species so that it no longer requires federal protection.

Of Interest

Snakes observed

On a cool July morning, Worland Biologist Bart Kroger observed numerous snakes along the Nowater and Upper Nowood Roads including a prairie rattle snake, a bullsnake and an eastern yellow-bellied racer.



Kroger estimates this prairie rattlesnake to be 4.5 feet long.



A five foot bullsnake.

Did you know?

Prairie rattlesnakes give birth to live young, instead of laying eggs like many other reptiles.

Bullsnakes are often mistaken for rattlesnakes because when threatened they imitate rattlesnakes by flattening their head, hissing, and vibrating their tail.

Juvenile eastern yellow-bellied racers look very different from adults. Juveniles have darker brown or reddish brown blotches separated by pale bands, appearing more like a very small bullsnake.

Wacky man fends off antelope

Recently a landowner near Worland contacted Game and Fish about a herd of antelope that were damaging his alfalfa field. Worland Game Warden Matt Lentsch and Wildlife Damage Technician Jeff Abplanalp deployed a propane cannon called a Zon gun and another innovative method to discourage the antelope from the field called the tube man or “wacky man.” The tube man is powered by a gas generator that operates a fan forcing air through a nylon tube. This causes the wacky man to move sporadically, scaring the antelope away. The tube man has been deployed several times over the past few years to help mitigate damage by wildlife to crops. Abplanalp said that overall the tube man has benefited damage control efforts with antelope and elk the past two years.



The “wacky man” at work preventing wildlife damage in an alfalfa field near Worland.