



Habitat is where it's at!

September 2015



We hope you enjoy reading about the adventures of the **Green River Region** personnel as they work to *Conserve Wildlife and Serve People!*

Special dates and points of interest:

- DON'T HAVE A COMPUTER? EVERY REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE GAME AND FISH HAS A COMPUTER AT THE FRONT COUNTER FOR PUBLIC USE.
- DON'T HAVE YOUR HUNTER SAFETY CERTIFICATE? CHECK FOR UPCOMING COURSES ONLINE AT [HTTP://WGFD.WYO.GOV](http://wgfd.wyo.gov).
- PREFERENCE POINT ONLY APPLICATION PERIOD NOW THROUGH NOVEMBER 2
- REMEMBER: YOU CAN BUY ALL YOUR HUNTING LICENSES, REQUIRED STAMPS AND MANY MORE PRODUCTS AT THE WGFD WEBSITE FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN COMPUTER!
- HARVEST INFORMATION PROGRAM (HIP) PERMITS ARE FREE BUT THEY ARE ONLY AVAILABLE ONLINE AT THE WGFD WEBSITE.
- LOST YOUR HUNTER EDUCATION CARD? YOU CAN PRINT AS MANY COPIES OF YOUR CARD AS YOU WANT, FOR FREE, AT THE WGFD WEBSITE.

IT'S HUNTIN' SEASON!

MOOSE FORECAST FOR SW WYOMING

Moose populations in the Uinta and Lincoln herd are down compared to the 1980's and 1990's and this fall's season will remain conservative. Disease (parasite) concerns have been documented and significant losses appear to have occurred, although recent losses are much lower than previous observed losses, and moose numbers are rebounding. The population trend is currently upward on all Green River moose herds and increased opportunity is forthcoming if this trend continues.

Antlerless moose licenses have been eliminated in the Uinta and Lincoln moose herds, with the exception of antlerless moose opportunity in Area 33 along the Green River. Bull hunters will find ample opportunity to harvest large, older-aged bulls, particularly in Hunt Area 26.

Hunt Area 33 was reopened last year for the first time in 10 years to address moose numbers and habitat issues on Seedskaadee National Wildlife Refuge. However, no antlerless moose were harvested in this area in 2014, so the area is open for only antlerless moose (except cow moose with calf at side) in 2015.



Bull moose feeds on Big Sandy River. (photo above)
A peregrine falcon was photographed on Flaming Gorge at Big Firehole in early September.

PRONGHORN ANTELOPE

Hunters will again notice an improvement in pronghorn hunting when compared to last year, both in number of pronghorn and horn growth. Mild winter weather and ample moisture have yielded good horn growth this year. Conditions were favorable throughout the Green River Region for both improved animal body condition and fawn production this year, which will improve hunting for this year and following years.

As always, hunters will find variable pronghorn hunting opportunities in the Green River Region depending on population status but, in general, the outlook is improving. Many pronghorn populations in the region were significantly affected by the winter of 2010-11 and drought caused lower fawn production/survival during the summers of 2012 and 2013. However, very mild winters in 2013-14 and 2014-15 coupled with higher than average moisture, have resulted in conditions that rarely get better, for all local wildlife species.



In general, license numbers and season lengths are similar to 2013 across the region (Hunt Areas 53, 57, 58, 59, 92, 93, 94, 96, 98, 99, 100, and 112), and hunters can expect additional opportunities in the future if conditions persist. Hunters in Hunt Area 94 are reminded to obtain a permission slip from Western Wyoming Range Limited Partnership before accessing private lands.

As is typical for this part of the state during wetter periods, hunters are reminded to stay on established roads and to be prepared for challenging driving conditions, particularly in clay soil types.

DEER

Hunters will likely experience better hunting for mule deer in 2015, given recent mild winters, improved fawn production and survival, and ample spring-fall precipitation. Increased fawn production occurred in many Green River Region deer herds the past three years, with the exception of the very dry, low deer density Hunt Areas 100, 101, and 131. Overall survival of deer was very good during the last three winters in all areas resulting in increased deer numbers across the region.

Most Green River Region hunting seasons have been restricted to a five to 14-day antlered deer structure with very limited opportunity to hunt does. An antler point restriction is now in place in Hunt Area 131 (four-point restriction), remains in place in Hunt Area 132 (three-point restriction), and has been added to Hunt Areas 133, 134, and 168. Areas with better buck and total deer numbers will have longer hunting seasons.

Hunters can expect a good variety of buck age classes to choose from this year, and antler growth appears to be good this year due to very good habitat conditions. Buck ratios generally remain in the special management (≥ 30 bucks:100 does) category in most mule deer hunt areas in the Green River Region.



Double Vision: two buck mule deer try to hide from the photographer near Baggs.

2015 General Hunting Season Forecast for Southwest Wyoming ~ Deer, Elk

DEER CONTINUED

Mule deer numbers in the South Rock Springs herd (Hunt Areas 101 and 102) appear similar to last year and some large bucks were observed this summer. License numbers were reduced for the 2014 and 2015 seasons, and those hunters successful in the draw should experience very good hunting this year. The season in Hunt Area 102 will again be open for any deer, and hunters will continue to be restricted to taking antlered deer in Hunt Area 101. Hunters can expect to see good numbers of older-aged bucks in these areas.

Many deer hunt areas in the Green River Region have a few *white-tailed deer*. In most areas, the season restrictions apply to both species, while a few areas are open for "any" white-tailed deer. White-tails are most common in the Little Snake River Valley portion of Area 82 and 100, along the Green River between (and including) LaBarge Creek and Interstate 80, within and adjacent to Kemmerer city limits along the Ham's Fork and along the Black's Fork near Robertson.

ELK

Elk numbers remain high and continue to increase across the region, with most populations remaining above objective, with exception of the two special management herds, South Rock Springs and Steamboat. Regional personnel expect another above average hunting season for elk hunters with ample licenses and long seasons.

The Steamboat or "Desert" elk herd (Hunt Area 100) is estimated to be slightly below objective and licenses were reduced for 2015. As per current special management direction, bull ratios remain high for this population. This area continues to be extremely popular with hunters, probably due to the abundance of mature bulls and limited time it requires to harvest an animal.

The West Green River herd (Hunt Areas 102-105) remains slightly above objective, especially in the western portion of Hunt Areas 103 and 104. As a result, the number of antlerless elk licenses remain numerous in this portion of the herd unit, while antlerless opportunity was reduced in the more popular Hunt Area 102. We will continue to maintain a shorter "any elk" general season to continue managing for higher bull-to-cow ratios and older-aged males.



Photo above: Buck and doe white-tailed deer.



Elk Photos: West Green River bull elk (top), Little Mountain Elk (center: photo by Andy Roosa), and Sierra Madre elk (above)

ELK CONTINUED

The Game and Fish significantly increased harvest in the South Rock Springs herd (Hunt Areas 30-32) in recent years due to growing numbers of elk. This interstate population is difficult to manage since elk move freely between Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah to escape hunting pressure and utilize existing seasonal habitats. The Department slightly increased opportunity in this area for 2015, and hunting will be very good for those who draw licenses. Bull ratios are high and many older-aged trophy class animals were harvested in 2012, 2013, and 2014.

Hunting remains very liberal across much of the Sierra Madre elk herd to address a population that has been significantly above objective for many years. Issues surrounding hunter density, access, road density, and perennially low bull ratios continue to impact the Department's efforts to manage this population. Increased harvest of antlerless elk in Hunt Areas 13, 15, 21, and 108 will be achieved through a combination of general any elk, general antlerless, and reduced price cow-calf licenses. Recent efforts regarding these seasons has resulted in fewer elk and improved bull ratios and bull age of harvest.

Seasons in the Petition herd (Hunt Area 124) will be the same as last year. We will continue to put the majority of harvest in this area on the female segment of the herd to limit population growth. This area is becoming a popular area with "trophy" bull hunters. Hunters that plan to use the Tipton Hunter Management Area, are reminded to check permit availability and ranch rules on the Department's website, since permit numbers are limited.

Elk hunting in the Uinta herd unit (Hunt Areas 106 and 107) and elk numbers in the "Wyoming portion" of this interstate herd unit continues to be affected more by snowfall patterns than other elk populations in southern Wyoming. Elk in this herd move between Wyoming and Utah, creating challenges for sportsmen in Wyoming. Additionally, access is a concern in this herd, particularly in Hunt Area 106 where private lands are often leased to outfitters. The population is managed to minimize damage to stored grass hay, but snow depths on the North slope in Utah dictate the number of elk wintering in Wyoming more than hunting seasons.

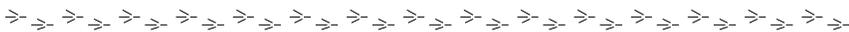
Mountain grouse (ruffed grouse and blue grouse) will vary by locality, although some pockets of good hunting should occur. Observed broods this year are large and robust. Both blue grouse and ruffed grouse hunting should be good in the Wyoming Range, and blue grouse hunting will likely be good in the Sierra Madre Mountains. Hunters are reminded they may harvest a limit of three ruffed grouse and three blue (dusky) grouse again this year - a change from the previous combined "mountain grouse" bag limit. Since many local names for these two species of grouse exist (e.g. pine grouse, willow grouse, etc.), hunters are cautioned regarding proper identification of the two species in order to avoid an over limit violation.

Grouse hunters are also reminded the season remains closed for sharp-tailed grouse west of the Continental Divide, which includes all sharp-tailed grouse in the Sierra Madre Mountains and foothills.



A group of blue (dusky) grouse parade across a log near Kemmerer.

Cottontail rabbit (photo, right, top) numbers are at peak cycle this year in Southwest Wyoming, with numbers greatly increased from the past several years. 2015 will be an exceptional year to take young hunters out and let them enjoy this bounty. Snowshoe hares (photo right, center), a species that receives very little harvest pressure in the Green River Region, are numerous in some of the higher elevations of the southern Wyoming Range, Uinta, and Sierra Madre Mountains, providing additional winter hunting opportunity. *Snowshoe hare photo taken by Mark Zornes.*



Kokanee are spawning in the North Fork of Savery Creek Reservoir near Baggs so the fishing is closed in the month of September on the North Fork. *(photo right)*



Kokanee spawning in the North Fork of High Savery.



Kokanee are also beginning to spawn in the Green River Flaming Gorge. Anglers are reminded that all kokanee caught in Flaming Gorge Reservoir September 10 through November 30 must be released back into the water immediately. *(photos center/bottom)*



Spawning female kokanee

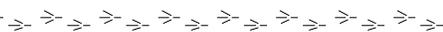


Spawning male kokanee

Fishing on the Green river from Fontenelle Dam downstream one mile to the USGS Gauge Station (cable crossing) is closed October 1 through December 31.

Anglers are reminded that snagging any fish in Wyoming is illegal. Snagging is an attempt to take a fish in such a manner that the fish does not take the hook voluntarily in its mouth. In the "old days" it was legal to snag fish and consequently, many vulnerable spawning fish were taken.

The protection of these kokanee is in place to ensure kokanee populations for future generations to enjoy.



Awards to personnel in the Green River Region ~ Good folks. Well deserved. ~ Rawlins Parade



Office manager
Sheila Watts received her 15-year service award. (photo, left)
Baggs Game Warden Kim Olson received the Green River Peer Recognition Award. (photo, right, far right)



Southwest PLPW Access Coordinator **Andy Countryman** received the Team of the Year Award. (photo, left)
Baggs Wildlife Biologist Tony Mong received his five-year service award. (photo, right)



Game and Fish personnel entered the Carbon County Parade in August.
Baggs Game Warden Kim Olson said the theme this year was "Country Pride, County Wide", so she revised that for the float to "Wildlife is our Country Pride, Report Violations County Wide".



Baggs Game Warden Kim Olson (above, left) **Rawlins Game Warden Teal Joseph** (center) and **Game and Fish habitat biologist Mark Cufade** (right) pose with their float on parade day and they took second place.

2015 River Festival ~ Aquatic Invasive Species Sampling



Fisheries Supervisor Robert Keith helps River Fest participants learn to identify fish in the Green River (photo, top, left). Office manager Regina Dickson and fisheries biologist John Walrath help participants migrate to safe spawning grounds like fish would, encountering many hazards along the way. (photo above) Information and Education Specialist Lucy Diggins-Wold helps River Fest participants learn about wildlife that use the riparian habitats along the Green River. (photo left) The 2015 River Fest was another success this year thanks to great agency, non-government organization and city partnerships.

Green River Region Aquatic Invasive Species Specialist Wes Gordon (wearing hat) and AIS Technician Royce Duncombe sample plankton in Flaming Gorge Reservoir for the presence of zebra and or quagga mussels. The process involves the collection of microscopic organisms in the water column using specialized, fine mesh nets and analyzing those samples at the Fish Wildlife and Parks Dreissenid lab in Montana. (photos below)



Cross-polarized light microscopy is the method utilized by the lab to detect the larvae (veligers) of zebra and quagga mussels. The dark green life forms move in the plastic containers. (photo, bottom, far right)





Office managers Sheila Watts (left) and Regina Dickson (right) model some of the new Game and Fish products for sale right here in the GR Region Office. The ladies have been busy selling hunting licenses and answering many questions about hunting, fishing, trapping, and.....the occasional weird stuff.

<http://wgfd.wyo.gov>
 Office Phone: 307-875-3223
 Office Fax: 307-875-3242
 Toll Free In-State 1-800-843-8096

Conserving Wildlife-Serving People

We are on the web! <http://wgfd.wyo.gov>  stay connected    



~Critter Spotlight~
Swift Fox
 By Mark Zornes a.k.a. Leopold



- **One of three fox species** found in Wyoming, including the red fox and the grey fox found in the Black Hills.
- **The swift fox** is Wyoming's (and North America's) smallest canine, weighing in at a whopping five to six pounds; smaller than many domestic house cats.
- **Swift fox** are tied to arid grassland and mixed shrub-grassland habitats. This species is most common in the Great Plains habitats of eastern Wyoming. In southwestern Wyoming, swift fox have been documented in the shrub-grassland habitats near Farson.
- **Wyoming led the work** to reintroduce this species to Alberta (with some overflow into northeastern Montana) following extirpation. Numerous swift foxes were live-trapped in Laramie County and shipped to southern Alberta for this successful reintroduction effort.
- **Swift fox**, like other wild canids, will eat "anything that doesn't eat them first." Their diet consists primarily of rodents, rabbits, insects, ground nesting birds, fruits, and some herbaceous matter. Carrion is consumed when available.
- **Swift fox** are preyed upon or simply killed by many predators, including coyotes, red fox, golden eagles, domestic dogs, badgers, and bobcats. They are vulnerable to trapping harvest and are of limited value in the fur market.
- **Swift fox** can give birth to four to five pups during good years. This fox typically lives for four to six years in the wild.