



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Jackson Region

August 2015 Newsletter

Managing Bears

With natural vegetation curing out on the mountain and a marginal berry crop across much of the Jackson Region, Large Carnivore Management personnel have been responding to a high number of bears being in developed areas recently. While bear managers get the brunt of the increased bear activity, most everyone in the Wildlife Division ends up

involved in one way or another. Office managers handle an increased volume of calls, wardens and biologists assist with trapping and relocation efforts and the Regional Information & Education Specialist is tasked with the increased media coordination and public inquiries.

Most bear conflicts in the Jackson Region involve black bears getting into garbage. However, one bold black bear and her cub broke through a screen door and entered the home while the homeowners were inside. That adult bear was euthanized and the incident generated considerable media attention. About ten days later, a grizzly bear was trapped near a residential area south of Jackson (South Park), which also was unusual and generated additional media attention.

Photos: (Above right) A grizzly bear is released to the Bailey Creek drainage on the Bridger Teton NF north of Moran. (Right) Jackson Large

Carnivore Biologist Mike Boyce takes measurements on a black bear that was captured in the Jackson area and relocated.

(Left) Jackson Large Carnivore Biologist Sam Stephens delivers an antibiotic to a tranquilized black bear that was captured and relocated in the Jackson area. Photos by Mark Gocke, WGFD





Helicopter Stocking Backcountry Lakes

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) has been stocking fish in alpine lakes via helicopter since the 1970s and stocks several lakes each year. Most alpine lakes do not have suitable spawning habitat to support a naturally reproducing fish population, thus requiring periodic stocking to maintain a sport fishery. The stocking occurs in August as most alpine lakes are high elevation and late summer is the only time they are free of ice.

Historically, fish were stocked in these backcountry lakes via cream cans on horseback, which could take several hours or even days to reach but one lake. This method was far more stressful on the fish because the transport water warms, which holds less oxygen, and may need to be changed several times on one trip. Helicopter stocking is far more efficient in both time and cost with a much higher survival rate of fish.

The number of fish stocked in a lake depends on the size of the lake, but it is usually around 1,000 fish. Fish are usually dropped approximately 10 feet from the receiving water and are released with a large amount of water which absorbs most of the impact.

Fish are stocked in the Jackson and Pinedale Regions every other year, on odd years. This year the lakes stocked included: Hidden, Camino, Brewster, Grizzly, Corral Creek #2, Lost, Moose and Dry Creek, Stonehammer, Peak, Wall, Upper and Lower Cook, Tommy, Middle Sweeney, Spruce, Belford and Upper Chain Lakes.

(Left) Fisheries Technician Jake Foos empties a load of fish and water into one of eight cylinders attached to the bottom of the helicopter. Oxygen tanks are also on board to keep oxygen levels high during transport. (Right) Fish Culturist Adam Leiferman keeps the cables in line during lift-off. Photos by Mark Gocke, WGFD



Fish are stocked in Upper Jade Lake in the Absaroka Range near Togwotee pass. Photo by Jessica Grant



A three-inch rainbow trout which is the typical size of fish stocked via helicopter.





Working the Sheep Opener

Jackson Game warden Kyle Lash and Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch spent a couple days up Granite Creek working the bighorn sheep opener on Sept 1 (Hunt Area 7). Warden Lash was able to contact several hunting parties.

Several sheep locations were documented and hunting compliance was good. Photos by Mark Gocke, WGFD



Registering Bighorns

Office Managers and biologists often work together to register successful hunters' bighorn sheep as they come in for their mandatory check-in. Several rams were harvested in the opening week.



Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch counts the horn annuli to age a hunters bighorn sheeo (left) and drills a horn to insert a plug showing it is a legal harvest. Photos by Mark Gocke, WGFD





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On the Ground

The Habitat & Access crew got started on a habitat enhancement project on private lands in the northern Wyoming Range that will benefit mule deer and other wildlife. The project involves the thinning of old decadent sagebrush to promote the growth of young sagebrush plants, antelope bitterbrush and other plants in the understory. The Jackson crew also laid gravel and assisted with a new hayshed at the Dog Creek elk feedground south of Hoback Junction (Below).



Sit a Spell

In August, Afton Game Warden Todd Graham continued working with Tom Shumway and his dad to complete Tom's Eagle Scout project. Tom, his dad Mel and their scout troop built and installed three benches for public use at two Salt River public access areas. Two of the benches were placed at the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission owned Diversion public access area (Below). The third was placed at the A/G Lane public access area.





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Wetland Work

Construction work was initiated in August on the Wild Red wetland project in the Cottonwood drainage west of Daniel, WY. This project is funded through the Upper Green River standard NAWCA grant. (Below left) Jackson Nongame Biologist Susan Patla met with engineer Chad Espenscheid and environment consultant Brian

Remlinger to discuss wetland design details prior to initiation of excavation. The wetland will benefit trumpeter swans such as the pair below that raised five cygnets at the South Park wetlands near Jackson this summer.



Flying For Grizzlies

Several Jackson Region Wildlife personnel assisted the Large Carnivore Section in conducting the annual observation flights to document the presence of grizzly bears in the Jackson Region. Many of the grizzly bears are observed on the high elevation plateaus of the Teton Wilderness rolling boulders foraging on army cutworm moths.





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Backcountry Field Checks

Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch, Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens and Pinedale Wildlife Biologist Dean Clause traveled by horseback in the Gros Ventre Range and to check backcountry anglers and conduct bighorn sheep surveys. Visibility was poor due to smoke from wild-fires, but several groups of ewes and lambs were observed.

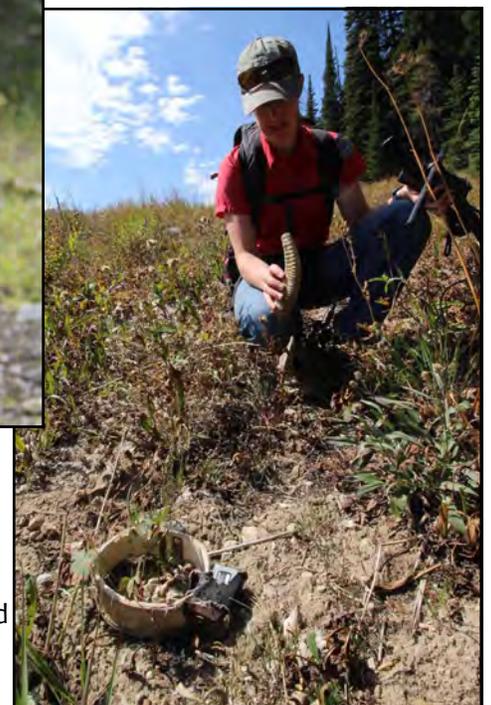


(Above) Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens and Pinedale Wildlife Biologist Dean Clause ride beneath battleship Mountain in the Gros Ventre Range .



(Left) Warden Jon Stephens, and his steadfast side-kick Gus, scan the high country for bighorn sheep.

(Below L-R) Jackson warden Kyle Lash collars a big-horn ewe. Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch uses telemetry to locate a dropped collar and then checks out a ewe bighorn sheep horn as she recovers its GPS collar at the head of Granite Creek.



Recovering the data

The past two winters, bighorn sheep in the Jackson herd have been captured to conduct a health assessment and fit them with GPS collars to learn specifics about their travels. When these animals die, biologists must go find the collar to recover the all-important data it carries. Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch found this collar at the head of Granite Creek in the Gros Ventre Range.