



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Jackson Region

June 2015 Newsletter

WY Range Mule Deer Fawn Study Continues

Game and Fish personnel from both the Jackson and Pinedale regions joined researchers from the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and numerous other stakeholders to start Phase II of the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Study looking at fawn survival. A cadre of wildlife biologists and volunteers were able to locate a total of 53 newborn mule deer fawns and fit them with expandable tracking collars allowing researchers to monitor their survival and identify causes of mortality.



Wyoming Coop Unit researcher Melinda Nelson slips an expandable GPS collar on a newborn fawn in the Salt Range.

So far, a total of 13 mortalities have been documented out of the 53 collared fawns. A variety of biological samples are collected at each mortality site in order to determine the cause of death. All carcasses, hair samples, swabs, etc. have been provided to the WY State Vet Lab for analysis and while the results are still pending, both malnutrition and predation have initially been identified as factors.

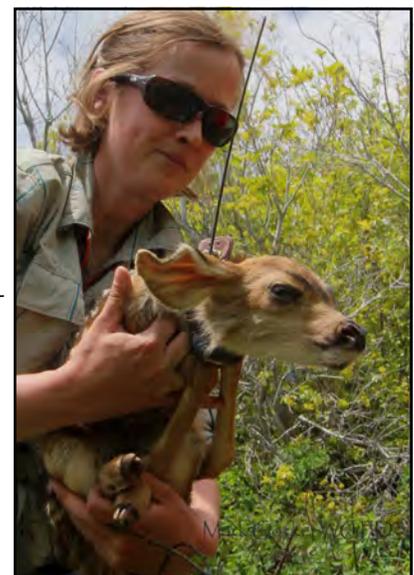
This cutting edge research is the first of its kind in Wyoming. A similar study did occur in the Sierra Nevada Range of California. While it's still too early to draw comparisons between the two studies, researchers did note that at 140 days into the California study only 33% of the fawns had survived. The early results in Wyoming are pointing towards a higher survival rate.

Both Phase I & Phase II of the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Project were initiated to address research and management needs identified in the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Initiative. Habitat and predation were key topics identified during the public input process of the initiative and understanding their relationship to fawn survival and overall recruitment will aid managers in developing strategies to encourage population growth.

Researcher Melinda Nelson gently places a newly collared fawn under heavy brush for protection from predators.



South Jackson Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick measures a newborn mule deer fawn in the Salt Range east of Afton.





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Auburn's Cutthroat Spawn

The Auburn Hatchery crew wrapped up their annual spawning operations for Snake River Cutthroat trout after nine consecutive weeks. Approximately, 1.6 million eggs were collected from some 1,000 female trout. The eggs have been distributed to other hatcheries in Wyoming as well as traded to hatcheries in other states including Nebraska, Arkansas and Idaho. Several of the retired brood stock fish were transplanted to popular local fisheries including the Salt River, Swift Creek Res., Strawberry Res. and Murphy Lake in Star Valley; Kemmerer Community Pond, Diamondville Pond, Herald's Slough (Baggs) and Rock Springs Pond for their Kid's fishing Day events, along with Fontenelle Res. and Jim Bridger pond. In all, some 1,600 brood fish were stocked to area waters.

Photos: (Above) Auburn Fish Culturist Travis Parrill gathers fish in a runway. Below, Parrill collects eggs from a female (left) and then milt from a male (right) to fertilize the eggs. (Below right) Tanner Passey adds a batch of fertilized eggs to the cooler.





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Nongame Page

Jackson Nongame Biologist Susan Patla (Below right) teamed up with Bryan Bedrosian and Beth Mendelsohn of the Teton Raptor Center, based in Jackson, to mark a young Great Gray Owl with both silver U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and color bands. The study was initiated in 2013, to learn more about the ecology of Great Gray Owls in Jackson Hole, as it is

home to one of the few historical studies on the species for comparison. More specifically, researchers are focusing on documenting nesting density, determining productivity estimates, investigating seasonal movements, modeling habitat use and understanding prey selection.

Patla also monitored nest activity for a variety of Species of Greatest Conservation Need including bald eagle (Below), trumpeter swan, common loon and long-billed curlew.

The staff of a local wooden boat touring company in Jackson volunteers to help collect data along this stretch of the Snake river south of Wilson, which has the highest density of nesting bald eagles in the state.





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Capturing Elk Migration

Aly Courtemanch, North Jackson wildlife biologist, assisted Travis Zaffarano, a graduate student from the Wyoming Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Wyoming, with a project examining the use of trail cameras to study long distance elk migrations. Zaffarano is deploying trail cameras along elk migration routes that will capture photos of elk migrating from summer ranges in Yellowstone and the Teton Wilderness to winter ranges

near Jackson and back. This information will help us better understand how many cow, calf, and bull elk are using various migration routes over time in the Jackson Herd. Photos from the first year show elk migrating in the fall toward their winter ranges (Right) and returning in the spring to their summer ranges, sometimes with a newborn following behind (Above). The project will continue for two more years.



Identifying Calving Grounds



Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens and Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch assisted Brucellosis-Feedground-Habitat (BFH) Biologist Ben Wise in locating and retrieving a Vaginal Implant Transmitter (VIT) in the upper Gros Ventre River drainage. Jackson and Pinedale BFH Biologists were busy finding VITs that they had implanted in pregnant cows earlier this past winter.

Since 2006, BFH Biologists have been capturing cow elk at various feedgrounds throughout the Jackson and Pinedale Regions and implanting pregnant

cows. The transmitters are expelled when the calf is born, or aborted. By identifying elk calving, or parturition, areas, wildlife and livestock managers can work together to keep livestock and elk separate at this critical time of year to help reduce the risk of brucellosis transmission to cattle.



(Above) BFH Biologist Ben Wise listens for the signal of an expelled transmitter in the upper Gros Ventre. (Above left) Biologists were joined by a family member of the Darwin Ranch who granted them key access across a portion of the Ranch.



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Kids Fishing Day

The 25th annual Jackson Kids Fishing Day was the largest to date with 242 kids registered for the event. The previous high was 240 from last year. The kids and their families experienced learning stations, enjoyed a free hot dog lunch and then an afternoon of fishing and other fun activities. Kudos to Jackson Fish Biologist Tracy Stephens for all of her hard work organizing this annual event and to Office Managers Barb Long, Carol Clark, Julie Jaeger; Game Warden Kyle Lash; Bear Biologist Sam Stephens, Aquatic Habitat Biologist Anna Senecal, Habitat & Access Biologist Matt Miller and Jackson Hole Trout Unlimited, for helping with the event.



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(Left) Game Warden Kyle Lash assists a young angler. (Right) Youngsters are enthralled as they learn about the anatomy of a trout.



Water Rescue Training

Afton Game Warden Todd Graham, Jackson game wardens Jon Stephens and Kyle Lash and the Jackson Fish crew all participated in a two-day Swift Water Rescue Course held on the Hoback River south of Jackson in June. The course was reportedly a great learning experience.





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Backcountry Anglers

Both Jackson game wardens Jon Stephens and Kyle Lash made trips into the Teton Wilderness to check backcountry anglers. Many good contacts were made of both private and outfitted camps. Both the compliance and fishing was good!



Roadside Bears

Jackson Game warden Kyle Lash snapped this photo as he arrived on the scene of a roadside grizzly bear on Togwotee Pass north of Jackson. Lash assisted with traffic control on this day and then also investigated the death of a grizzly bear also on Togwotee Pass. It was determined the bear had been struck by a vehicle. Roadside bears have become more common along WY Highway 26 over Togwotee Pass in recent years.

What a Difference a Year Makes

Below are photos from 2014 & 2015 showing the reseeded of a native grass meadow by Habitat & Access Crew Leader Matt Miller at the South Park Wildlife Habitat Management Area south of Jackson.

