



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

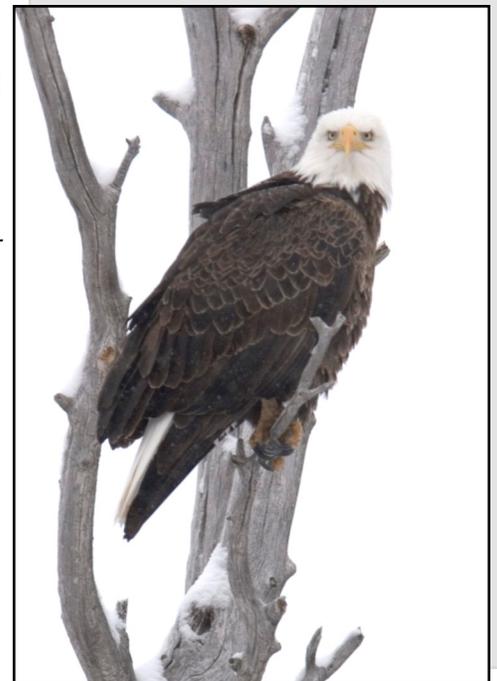
Jackson Region

April 2016 Newsletter

Bald Eagle and Trumpeter Flight

Jackson Nongame Biologist Susan Patla completed the annual bald eagle occupancy aerial survey flight for the Jackson and Pinedale regions on March 26. Of the 69 known nesting territories checked, 87% were occupied and 80% were incubating. Two new nesting territories were also found. The location data will be provided to partner agencies for management and protection of nesting eagles.

In addition, Patla documented a total of 385 Trumpeter Swans during the spring flight, including some residents already on territories (some pairs sitting on frozen ponds) as well as flocks of Canadian migrants that have not yet left Wyoming.



At left, is an aerial photo Patla snapped of the Game & Fish's South Park Wildlife Habitat Management Area ponds (left) adjacent to the Jackson water treatment facility ponds.

Although hard to see, a total of 121 trumpeter swans were counted, mostly on the ice, in the lower pond which has become one of the most important wetlands for both migrant and resident swans during the spring thaw period. Pre-nesting habitat has been identified as one of

the critical limiting factors for this swan population.

Patla also started planning habitat improvement work to address flooding issues at swan nest sites and made a site visit to a ranch owner in Big Piney who is eager to develop wetland habitat for swans.



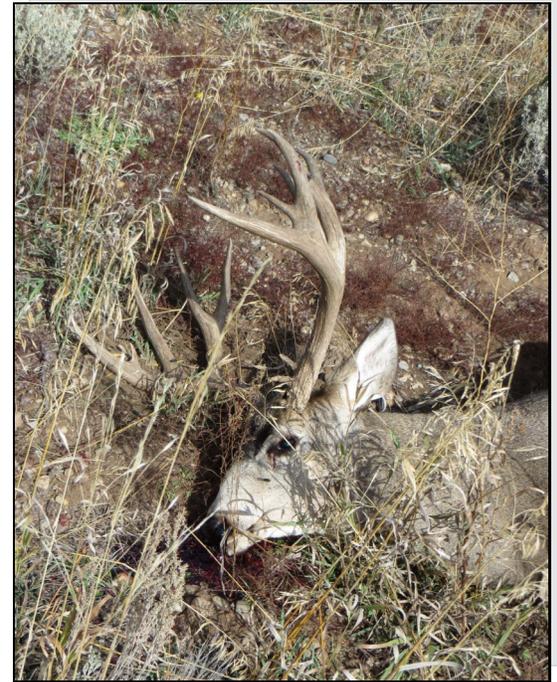


Mule Deer Poacher Convicted

A Jackson man was recently convicted of charges relating to the illegal shooting and abandoning of a trophy mule deer buck on private land north of Jackson last fall.

Travis Gros pled guilty to illegally shooting a mule deer on private land without permission, failure to tag big game and wanton waste of the animal.

Teton County Circuit Court Judge James Radda handed down a sentence of \$1,320 in fines, loss of hunting privileges for two years and ordered Gros to again complete his hunter safety certification. A 180 day jail sentence was suspended while he serves probation and 60 hours of community service.



On October 7, 2015, North Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens received a trespass complaint from a landowner near the airport north of Jackson. Warden Stephens responded to the scene and found the large mule deer buck that had been shot and left. When the reporting party provided a description of the individual, it matched that of a hunter Stephens had checked in the area several hours earlier that day. When Warden Stephens confronted Gros about the crime, he admitted to having shot and killed the deer on private land without permission, claiming he had initially wounded the animal on property he did have permission on.

“This is a good example of how a concerned citizen stepping forward with information on a wrongdoing can make a big difference,” said Stephens. Stephens also commended the work of Judge James

Radda. “I think the sentence sends a strong message that wildlife is a treasured resource in Teton County and such wildlife crimes will not be tolerated.”



New Antler Hunt Rules for the Refuge

New this year, the National Elk Refuge will not be allowing vehicles to line up on the refuge road (left) prior to the May 1 opener for antler hunting on adjacent forest service lands. Antler hunters are being directed to park at the fairgrounds in the town of Jackson. Also new this year, the refuge will be opening the refuge road at midnight, the morning of May 1, but there will be no accessing the refuge from the Gros Ventre road at “Kelly Cliffs.”



Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

April 2016

Managing Elk Damage

Elk damage issues picked up in and amongst subdivisions and agriculture lands north of Jackson in early April with the ending of supplemental elk feeding on the National Elk Refuge. Always looking for new ways to keep elk off of hay crops, Jackson region personnel deployed two 20-foot “Wacky Inflatable Guys” on a ranch north of town. The two units are mounted on small utility trailers, and are powered by generators, to allow for easy relocation. The overall size, motion and noise of the unit has proven effective at deterring elk thus far.



Day on the Ice

South Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash checked this group of anglers on Phelps Lake in Grand Teton National Park. The fishing was slow that day, but the anglers had no complaints about the scenery.

Herding Goats

South Jackson Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick also spent time trying to haze mountain goats away from WY Hwy 89 through the Snake River Canyon near Alpine to avoid vehicle collisions. Mountain goats were first introduced in the Snake River Range by the Idaho Fish & Game Department over a three-year period from 1969-1971. Since that time, the goats have slowly, but steadily, expanded their range into Wyoming. An aerial survey completed in 1996 noted 24 goats in Wyoming. The latest survey completed in August of 2014 recorded 165. The goats have not only increased in number, but also their distribution, with animals now being sighted in the Wyoming, Salt River and Teton mountain ranges. Wyoming Game & Fish offers 12 licenses for this hunt area.





Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

April 2016



Elk Rescue

On March 16th, Warden Lash received a call regarding an elk that had fallen into a deep mud hole on the National Elk Refuge. Warden Lash, with the help from refuge enforcement officer Bryan Yetter was able to get a rope around the elk and pull her safely out of the hole. Access to the mud hole has since been blocked to prevent it from happening again.

Collaring Forest Park Elk

The last of the elk captures on winter feedgrounds were completed by Jackson & Pinedale Brucellosis-Feedgrounds-Habitat crew for this winter, with the final three GPS collars being deployed on elk at the Forest Park feedground some 30 miles up the Greys River drainage southeast of Alpine.

The GPS tracking collars will further define their seasonal movements. Blood samples also were collected to contribute to a long term database looking at brucellosis prevalence in elk.

In all, over 560 elk were handled by Game and Fish brucellosis biologists in both the Jackson and Pinedale regions this winter. This included capturing 498 animals in corral traps at Greys (Alpine), Dell, Fish, Scab and Muddy Creek feedgrounds. An additional 62 elk were darted on other state feedgrounds and the National Elk Refuge. A total of 51 GPS collars and 17 VITs were deployed and 337 blood samples were collected for brucellosis testing, which is currently being done at the Wyoming Game & Fish Vet Lab in Laramie.



Wyoming State Senator Don Dockstader (left) and Meagan Haberberger, daughter of Forest Park elk feeder Tim Haberberger, steady a tranquilized elk while waiting for the reversal drug to take effect.



Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

April 2016



“Do you know what you’d do if you found yourself face to face with a bear or mountain lion?”

If not, you should attend the...

“Staying Safe in Large Carnivore Country”

Seminar

When: Thursday, May 12, 2016, 5:30 – 7:30 PM

Where: Teton County Library Auditorium

Cost: FREE!

For more information please call the Jackson Game and Fish office at 733-2321 or 800-423-4113

Talking Brucellosis Management

The brucellosis crew have been busy drafting the 5-year updates to the Brucellosis Management Action Plans (BMAPs). After meetings with potentially affected ranchers, public meetings were held to gather feedback on 10 brucellosis management options in addition to what the Game & Fish is already doing to battle the disease. Development and periodic updating of the BMAPs was the top recommendation of the Governor’s Brucellosis Coordination Team.



At left, Brucellosis biologists Ben Wise (left) and Eric Maichak address interested members of the public at their meeting in Jackson.



Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

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Circling Back on a Banded Goose

On March 31, Jackson Nongame Biologist Susan Patla observed a banded Canada goose on the Jackson Interagency Visitor Center lawn and was able to read the identification number with binoculars. After a little research, it was determined it was a female banded on July 1, 2008 (Photos below) as a juvenile on the National Elk Refuge (NER) as part of the Avian Influenza surveillance effort that year. Nate Huck, statewide migratory game bird biologist, noted that of the 43 birds that were captured that year: 16 were reported shot or hit by a car, and another seven (including this bird) were read by sight back at the NER (also one at a private pond south of Jackson). This is a very high proportion of plain banded birds to be resighted.



Photos: (Far Left) Former Jackson Game warden Bill Long discusses how to handle captured geese with former Fisheries Technician Dan De-Sorcy. (Left) Young volunteer Emmie Gocke carries a newly banded goose for release. (Below) Former Statewide Migratory Game Bird Biologist Larry Roberts bands a goose in 2008.



Curlews Head Back to Wyoming

Jackson Nongame Biologist Susan Patla is happy to report that the first long-billed curlew tagged with a satellite transmitter in Wyoming in 2014 on the National Elk Refuge (see photos) began her spring migration return flight in late March. From her wintering grounds south of Mazatlan, Mexico, "AJ" flew to New Mexico similar to what she did last spring. From there, she moved over to Texas. Next month, we will have reports on her return date to Jackson and data from the other tagged curlews which began moving north in early April.

