



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Jackson Region

August 2016 Newsletter



Summer Elk Flight

Jackson Wildlife personnel flew a helicopter survey for elk in the Teton Wilderness (hunt areas 70 & 71) and southern Yellowstone NP in early August. The majority of elk that spend the summer in these areas will migrate over 50 miles to the National Elk Refuge to spend the winter. Managers are concerned about declines in calf recruitment over the past two decades in this segment of the Jackson Elk Herd. A summer survey in 1991 found 37 calves per 100 cows. Ratios from 2001-2016 have ranged from 23 to 30 calves per 100 cows, with this year's survey resulting in 24 per 100. Game & Fish will continue with conservative hunting seasons designed to protect cows and calves from this important herd segment.





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(Above) A hefty Snake River cutthroat trout characteristic of Flat Creek that was captured by the Jackson fish crew during their regular monitoring efforts. Photo by Mark Gocke, WGFD (Right) Jackson fisheries technician Lauren Flynn visits with an angler while conducting a creel survey on opening day for Flat Creek at the National Elk Refuge on Aug 1, 2016. Photo by Ryan Dorgan, Jackson Hole News & Guide.



Flat Creek Opener

Many anglers eagerly await the annual August 1 opener for Flat Creek on the National Elk Refuge. The blue ribbon trout stream is renowned for its trophy class Snake River cutthroat trout. The trout are also known for their wariness, so it is something of a badge of honor for those who are able to land one of the big boys. It is not uncommon to see anglers crawling on hands and knees and making their cast well away from the water's edge so as to not spook the fish.

Past creel surveys have shown that on average, anglers fish for 2.6 hours per outing and catch .6 fish/hour, or one fish for every 1.7 hours of fishing. During the regular population surveys conducted by the Jackson fish crew, of the fish they caught that were greater than five inches, the average length was 15 inches with a weight of 1.5 pounds. That is a healthy population of really solid fish by anyone's standards.





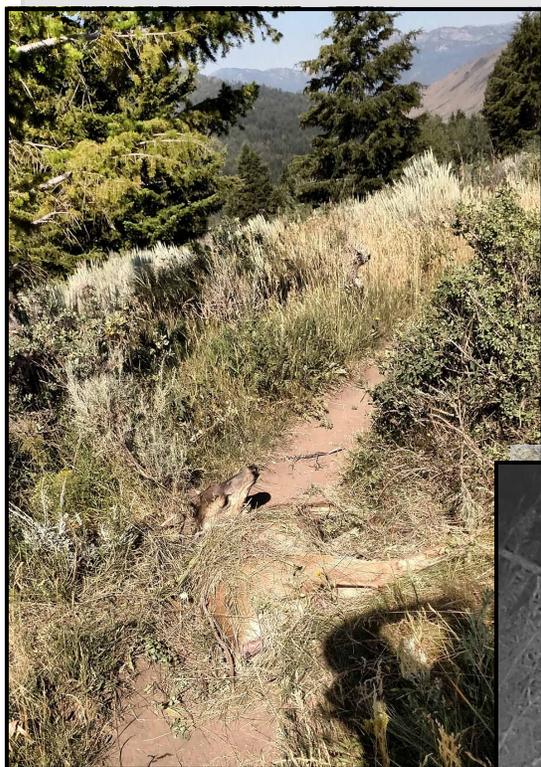
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Kid Predicament

Alpine Game Warden Jordan Winter responded to a report of a mountain goat kid in the Snake River Canyon that had gotten stuck beneath a chain link fence used to keep rocks from falling onto the highway. Warden Winter was able to use a wire cutter to create an opening in the fence and help the young mountain goat out. The kid eagerly returned to its mom and the rest of the herd. Winter expressed appreciation for the timely report so the goat didn't have to suffer long.



Cache Creek Lion

Large Carnivore Biologist Mike Boyce investigated a reported lion kill on the "Putt-Putt" trail about a mile from the Cache Creek trailhead. Mike determined that indeed it was a lion-killed doe deer, left somewhat covered with grass, right on the trail. Mike moved the carcass well away from the trail for safety and monitored it with a trail camera. The lion did return to the carcass later that night, but only briefly and did not feed on the carcass. There was no evidence or photos to suggest the lion ever returned



again. There have been no lion sightings reported in the area since.



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Fishing Contacts

It's the peak of the summer and anglers are out in force across the region. All the Jackson game wardens have been busy contacting anglers, reporting good fishing and generally good compliance with the regulations as well. Wardens have been utilizing all types of watercraft to make angler contacts this summer, including boats, rafts and even kayaks (Bottom photo) on occasion. Most anglers welcome a visit from a game warden. (Right) Fishing guide Jean Bruun, was so welcoming she offered cookies and Tootsie pops as Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash returns her license. (Below) An angler hooks a fish at Green Lakes on the west-slope of the Tetons. (Below right) Warden Lash and Wildlife Society intern Jace Cussins make an angler contact on the Snake River south of Jackson.





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Jackson Big Game Hunt Forecast

When you've got the smallest human population of any state in the Union on the tenth largest land area, the hunting forecast is always a pretty dang good one. But a variety of other factors are having an impact this year, namely a hot, dry summer led to a very active fire season.

At best, hopefully the weather complications will just lead to a dry, noisy forest. But if it stays hot and dry, Wyoming could see additional fire bans and even some road and area closures inflicted by forest fires. To get the latest info hunters are encouraged to check on possible restrictions at <http://incweb.nwcg.gov/> or at local U.S. Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management offices.



With all of that in mind, The Wyoming Game and Fish Department anticipates an excellent hunting season (<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Hunting/Wyoming-Hunting-Forecast>) and stands ready to help plan your hunt. There are excellent maps online (<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/hunting/hunt-planner>) and hunters can call regional offices or the headquarters in Cheyenne with questions.



The Wyoming Range **Deer** Herd (Hunt Areas 134, 135,143-145) is designated as a special management strategy herd which focuses on providing high quality hunting opportunities, mature age class deer, and high buck:doe ratios (30-45:100). Post season surveys in December 2015 indicated that fawn survival was below desired levels with 61 fawns:100 does observed compared to 77 fawns:100 does observed last year. Buck ratios continue to remain at some of the highest levels documented in Wyoming. This year observed buck:doe ratios were 41 bucks:100 does. Deer numbers have increased slightly after three years of high over winter survival among all age/sex classes. Hunters should anticipate seeing bucks that are 3-8 years of age, and exceptional antler growth.

In the Jackson **Elk** Herd, conservative hunting seasons are proposed for the Teton Wilderness and Gros Ventre hunt areas to address low recruitment while trying to maintain bull numbers. Conversely, in the southern portion of the herd, hunt areas 75, 77, 78 and 80, liberal antlerless elk seasons are proposed to address growing elk populations that summer along the Snake River corridor in southern Grand Teton National Park and subdivisions in Hunt Area 78. In Hunt Area 78, Type 1 licenses will be valid off national forest beginning on August 15 and valid in the entire hunt area beginning September 26.

With the Fall Creek herd at the desired population objective, antlerless hunting opportunities will be scaled back this year. Hunt Areas 84 and 85 will have a limited number of cow/calf licenses. In order to increase antlerless elk numbers throughout the herd unit, the general license "any elk" season will open September 26 and close October 9. General license antlered elk, spikes excluded hunting will run September 26 through October 31. With a 20 bull to 100 cow ratio, hunters should have a reasonable opportunity to harvest a bull elk.





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Photo by Susan Patla

Healthy Hummers

Jackson nongame biologist Susan Patla (right) joined Dr. Holly Ernest from the University of Wyoming to capture and band hummingbirds as part of a statewide effort to monitor the health of these unique little birds. The birds are gently captured, examined for diseases, sampled for DNA, fitted with a tiny leg band and released. The family of hummingbirds (Trochilidae) is among the most species-rich, yet least studied bird groups. Virtually nothing is known of disease incidence or prevalence for this group of birds, especially in western North America.



Photo by Braden Godwin, UW

Wyoming Harlequins Head to BC

In late May, Jackson Nongame Biologist Susan Patla joined biologists from Environment Canada, the Biodiversity Research Institute and Grand Teton National Park to capture and mark two mated pairs of harlequins in Grand Teton National Park. The two males each received surgically implanted GPS transmitters to track their travels for the next two years. Each female harlequin was fitted with a geo-locator leg band that will provide less precise location data.

In late June, the males separately began their seasonal migration back to their wintering area. The map below shows where the two birds were located most recently, near Vancouver Island, British Columbia. The females will stay to raise their young and then likely follow a similar migration route back to the Pacific Northwest.





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Removing Wildlife Obstacles

Jackson Region personnel Jon Stephens, Ben Wise, Anna Senecal, and Aly Courtemanch spent a day with volunteers from the Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation to remove barbed wire and top rails from an old fence in the Gros Ventre drainage on Bridger-Teton National Forest. The group of about 30 volunteers removed approximately one mile of obsolete fence. The area is important elk winter habitat and is a migration corridor for elk, bighorn sheep and pronghorn. Removing the fence will allow wildlife to move more easily across the landscape.



New Afton Game Warden

Meet James Hobbs. James is the new Game Warden in Afton following the promotion of Todd Graham to the Green River Wildlife Supervisor position. Hobbs began his Game and Fish career as a warden trainee in Sheridan in 2007. He then spent a year based out of Alpine before becoming the Lovell game warden for the past five years. Hobbs says he has enjoyed all of his warden locations, but is excited to get back to Star Valley for the big mountain country and to be closer to family. James grew up in Salmon, ID and his wife Heather in Montpelier, ID. Together they have six children, four boys and two girls, ranging from six months to 10 years old. Hobbs looks forward to serving the Star Valley community.

On the Trapline

Jackson office personnel had to employ one of the live traps they typically loan out when they realized they had an unwanted guest. In just 45 minutes, Jackson Aquatic Habitat Technician Chance Roberts was able to lure in this ground squirrel with a Wheat Thin covered in peanut butter. The intrepid ground squirrel was released back to the open space area outside the office.





Mark Gocke



Mark Gocke



Mark Gocke

Look Both Ways Before Crossing the Street...

This grizzly bear did a good job of looking both ways before hopping over the guard rail and crossing Highway 26 near Togwotee Pass on July 25, 2016. Jackson Large Carnivore biologists Mike Boyce and Sam Stephens have spent a considerable amount of time this summer responding to and managing roadside grizzly bears on Togwotee Pass between Moran Jct. and Dubois. With an expanding grizzly population, the bears have become a more common sight here in recent years. Unfortunately, a young grizzly cub-of-the-year was struck and killed by a passing motorist on this stretch of highway in July.

Boyce reports a relatively good berry crop coming on in the Jackson area and relatively few bear conflicts in the valley as of late, but this could change as bears will begin feeding around the clock to put on fat for their winter hibernation. Residents are urged to secure all garbage and other attractants.

