Eclipse Mania

With both the Jackson and Pinedale regions in the path of totality for the August 21 solar eclipse, nearly all Game and Fish personnel were out welcoming visitors, answering questions and helping them avoid problems with bears, fires and other regulations. The Department tallied over 7,000 public contacts across the state, reporting a low number of violations, no human-large carnivore conflicts and no damage to Game and Fish properties.

Employees also worked to keep the increased number of boaters safe and keep aquatic invasive species out of Wyoming’s waters. Another task for Game and Fish personnel was patrolling wilderness areas and assisting federal, state, county and local agencies. By all accounts it was a most memorable event for all!
Early Sheep Harvest

Bighorn sheep are some of the earliest hunt seasons generally opening September 1 for rifle. At right, is a dandy bighorn ram taken in the Wyoming Range (Hunt Area 24). Below are two nice rams (one found, one hunted) from Hunt Area 7 east of Jackson. And below, right, Ben Wise, Brucellosis-Feedground-Habitat biologist checks in a hefty ram taken in Hunt Area 2, northwest of Cody.

High Country Sheep Survey

Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens and Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch spent several days surveying bighorn sheep in the Gros Ventre Wilderness in Hunt Area 7 prior to the Sept. 1 hunt season opener. They were able to observe 120 sheep in several groups of mostly ewes and lambs. The herd is currently estimated at 425 sheep. A total of 12 sheep hunting licenses were offered in 2017 for this herd.

(Above) Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens hikes along a high elevation ridge in the Gros Ventre Wilderness. (Right) Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch glasses for sheep.
Dime Lake Gets Restored

After more than five years of planning, Dime Lake and Dime Creek were chemically treated with rotenone to remove a non-native brook trout population. The sizeable project took place the week of August 28th (with treatment occurring on the 30th) and appears to have been a success. There were a total 28 people helping with the treatment project.

Dime Lake is some two acres in size with a maximum depth of seven feet. It is located on the Bridger Teton National Forest within the Teton Wilderness, approximately ¾ of a mile east of Hwy 191 and roughly six miles south of Yellowstone National Park (See map below). The lake is fed by a series of springs and the outlet, Dime Creek, flows approximately three miles before it dumps into the Snake River above Jackson Lake. However, there is a steep cascade that appears to be a complete barrier to upstream fish movement.

Dime Lake and Dime Creek above the cascade, held a large population of Brook Trout ranging in size from 1-7 inches. This Brook Trout population is a source of Brook Trout to the main-stem Snake River and its other tributaries above Jackson Lake. The fish were stocked by the Game and Fish Department some 40-plus years ago, but the problems associated with brook trout in cutthroat trout waters has since been well documented, mostly displacing cutthroat trout due to competition. In addition, Dime Creek and Dime Lake are home to a healthy population of Columbia Spotted Frogs. Trout are known predators to amphibians during several life stages. By removing the Brook Trout population, the lake will be restored to it’s natural state and the Spotted Frog population will be able to increase its numbers.
Pronghorn Numbers Continue to Climb

Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch coordinated with staff from Grand Teton National Park and the National Elk Refuge to conduct several days of pronghorn surveys in the Jackson area. Most pronghorn will migrate out of Jackson in the late fall to winter ranges near Pinedale where they mix with pronghorn from the rest of the Sublette Herd. A total of 519 pronghorn were observed during the recent survey, with 35 fawns per 100 does, 34 adult bucks per 100 does, and seven yearling bucks per 100 does. The winter of 2016/2017 was very severe on pronghorn winter ranges around Pinedale, resulting in above average winter mortality. However, pronghorn that migrate to the Jackson area appeared to fare well. The total number of pronghorn seen during this summer’s count in the Jackson area was similar to previous years, however the fawn:doe ratio was lower. Typically, fawn:doe ratios are 40-50 fawns per 100 does in this segment of the herd. The total number of pronghorn counted during the survey has been steadily rising over the past 15 years (Figure 1).

Shoo Goose

Preventing conflicts between people and wildlife is a year-round job for game wardens and many others in the Game and Fish Department. At right, North Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens is setting up a propane-powered “Wacky inflatable guy” to prevent Canada goose damage to a hay field northeast of Jackson recently. The Game and Fish Department has been using the new technique on deer, elk and other animals, such as geese, for a couple of years now with reasonably good success.
Big Game Hunt Season Reminders

Most general deer hunting seasons in the Jackson and Pinedale area started September 15 and run through October 6. **A significant change to most general deer seasons in the area is that they are open to buck deer only with three points or more on either antler.** With the extremely severe winter of 2016-2017, unprecedented mortality was documented in all age classes, but particularly fawns and older deer. Some really nice bucks have already been taken, but hunters should anticipate seeing substantially fewer deer during the next few hunting seasons.

Hunters are reminded to familiarize themselves with the hunting regulations for the species and area they plan to hunt. While most hunters follow hunting laws and regulations, occasionally some may run afoul of the law. The following is a listing of the most common violations local wildlife law enforcement officers come across every hunting season.

**Most general elk seasons will be getting underway in the latter part of September and early October.** Elk hunters are reminded that an Elk Management Stamp is required to hunt those elk hunt areas associated with elk feedgrounds, which includes most hunt areas in the Jackson and Pinedale regions. Specifically, an Elk Management Stamp is required to hunt elk in Hunt Areas 70, 71, 74, 75, and 77-98. These stamps can be purchased for $12.50 at any license vendor.

Avoid these other common violations:

**Failure to Tag** - Every big game, trophy game and wild turkey license has a carcass coupon attached. Each license has the tagging instructions printed on the coupon. There are four steps to properly “tag” big game, trophy game or wild turkey: 1) Detach the carcass coupon from the license. 2) Date the carcass coupon by cutting out the entire date and month of the kill. 3) Sign the carcass coupon (but not before harvest). 4) Attach the coupon to the carcass before leaving the site of the kill. The coupon may be removed during transportation to prevent its loss, but it must be in possession of the person accompanying the carcass.

**Wanton waste** - Shooting an animal and leaving the meat to waste. Hunters are required to remove all edible portions of meat from their big game animal. This includes all four front and hind quarters and the loin meat along the spine.

**Evidence of Gender** - Many Wyoming hunting licenses require the taking of a specific sex of animal. There are also season dates in some hunt areas when only a specific sex of animal can be taken. To satisfy the proof of sex requirement the regulation states: “in areas where the taking of any big game animal is restricted to a specific sex of animal, either the visible external sex organs, head or antlers shall accompany the animal as a whole or edible portion thereof.

Hunters are encouraged to be on the lookout for wildlife violations and report such violations to the Stop Poaching hotline at 1-877-WGFD-TIP or 1-877-943-3847. Informants can remain anonymous and may be eligible for a reward. Hunting regulations can be obtained from any hunting and fishing license vendor. For more information you may contact the Jackson Game and Fish office at 1-800-423-4113 or the Pinedale Game and Fish office at 1-800-452-9107.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department wishes everyone a safe and successful hunting season!
Be Mindful of Moose and Bears

Game and Fish officials are asking residents to do their part to avoid conflicts with wildlife in residential areas this fall, particularly moose and bears. The Jackson Game and Fish office typically receives an increased number of calls this time of year relating to conflicts with moose, bears and other wildlife in residential areas. This has prompted wildlife officials to offer advice on how to avoid problems with these animals.

“We typically get a number of moose calls this time of year because it’s the breeding season; the bulls are starting to travel a lot in pursuit of cows and they tend to start rubbing their antlers on whatever they can find,” said Aly Courtemanch, Jackson Wildlife Biologist for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. “Consequently, we get reports of bull moose with a variety of things wrapped around their antlers, including fencing, rope swings, Christmas lights, hammocks and so on.”

Wildlife officials are asking residents to be aware of this possibility and remove anything on their property that these animals may become entangled in. Also, it is recommended that people check their speed while driving and be watchful for moose, especially at night. There have been seven moose hit by vehicles on highway 22 over Teton Pass this year.

Similarly, Game and Fish officials are also asking residents to avoid potential conflicts with bears by keeping all bear attractants unavailable. “It has been a relatively quiet summer with regard to bear conflicts, but this is typically the time of year we start receiving an increasing number of reports of black bears being seen in developed areas around Jackson,” said Jackson Large Carnivore Biologist Mike Boyce. “As natural foods begin to dry up, bears commonly start showing up in developed areas this time of year. While bears may just be passing through, it’s important they do not get any food rewards, such as improperly stored garbage, that would encourage them to stay.”

Residents are reminded to not put their garbage out the night before pickup and to store garbage and bird feeders properly as per Teton County regulations. The Teton County Land Development Regulation, passed in 2009, applies specifically to identified bear conflict priority areas within the county, but all residents are encouraged to follow the regulations. Garbage is required to be stored in certified bear resistant containers or in a secure building or enclosure at all times. All bird feeders are to be hung with a catch pan, at least 10 feet from the ground, deck railing or patio and 4 feet away from any tree, post, or support structure.

Wyoming Game and Fish bear managers will follow-up on bear sightings and visit with property owners to ensure bear attractants are properly stored to prevent conflicts. Allowing bears to get a food reward conditions them to associate people with food, which may lead to dangerous or destructive behaviors. “By immediately reporting incidents, we can address the cause of the conflict and hopefully prevent future problems,” says Boyce. “Public safety is always going to be our highest priority, and if informed right away, we have more options in dealing with a problem bear.”