



march 2016

the wyoming game & fish department

LANDER REGION newsletter

Photo by Stan Harter

With the families

Ice fishing adventures

Forever Wild Family Ice fishing day was a big success thanks to volunteers, wardens, biologists, and hatchery staff who provided instruction and advice to our new ice fisherman. In addition to fishing, families also dove into the fishing regulations a bit deeper to learn about special fishing regulations and creel limits on Lake Cameahwait.

Plenty of small perch were caught and even a few bass. One family enjoyed it so much they chose to stay after lunch and fish on their own while others were calling it a day.



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In the field

Collaring and sampling bighorn sheep in the Temple Peak Herd



The Wyoming Game and Fish Department, in conjunction with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Business Councils, and Tribal Fish & Game captured and collared thirteen bighorn sheep near Washakie Reservoir on the Wind River Reservation. The bighorn sheep were captured utilizing net guns from a helicopter. They were hobbled, blindfolded, slung in

bags and transported back to a staging area where the State Wildlife Veterinarian Mary Wood and Wildlife Health Laboratory Supervisor Hank Edwards, with help from volunteers and agency staff members were ready to collar, collect samples, perform ultrasounds and ultimately release the sheep again.



This effort was in the Temple Peak herd which has remained a small herd for many years, but recently has started to increase. This is the first time this herd has been sampled for disease since an all-age die-off in 1992.

Above left: USFWS photo of helicopter transporting two bighorn sheep. Above: Dr. Mary Wood prepares to draw blood from a ewe.

Pat Hnilicka, Acting Project Leader, USFWS Lander Office says, "This is really an excellent example of great cooperative work and I know our efforts will produce some very interesting information on movements, areas of use and disease status of sheep in the Southern Winds that we can all benefit from."

Relocation bighorn sheep into Ferris-Seminole Herd



Bighorn sheep being transported by "ewe haul" into the Ferris Mountains.

Along with help from multiple partners and area landowners, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department relocated 24 bighorn sheep from the Devil's Canyon herd near Lovell to the Ferris-Seminole herd unit north of Rawlins.

Twenty-five bighorn sheep were captured consisting of 21 ewes, one male lamb and three young rams. All but the lamb and one



Volunteers carry a ram in Devil's Canyon.

ewe were marked with satellite telemetry collars. Unfortunately, one three-year old ewe suffered from apparent capture stress and was unable to move. She was euthanized and sent to the Wyoming state veterinary lab for necropsy and evaluation. The remaining twenty-four were released in Miner's Canyon on the east end of the Ferris Mountains.

Herd History

Attempted reintroduction of bighorn sheep into the Ferris and Seminoe Mountains began in the late 1940's and extended into the 1980s. While survival of these sheep was good, both the Ferris and the Seminoe segments failed to thrive. It was discovered they were lambing too late in the spring, missing the flush of high-protein vegetation necessary for ewes to produce enough milk for lambs to survive. More recently, supplemental transplants of bighorn sheep were acquired from Oregon in 2009 and 2010, and from the

Devil's Canyon herd near Lovell in 2010 and 2015 and released in the Seminoe portion of the herd unit. These sheep typically lamb in late April and early May, when there is still adequate high-protein forage. Lamb production and survival improved and herd size increased, despite losses related to extensive wildfires and severe spring blizzards in April 2013.

Wildlife Biologist Greg Hiatt says, "This has been our first attempt since the wildfires of 2011 and 2012 to reintroduce bighorn sheep into the Ferris Mountain portion of this herd. Since 2009, the sheep have come from a population of low elevation, non-migratory, early lambing sheep and we are hopeful that we've got the right type of sheep to thrive in these mountains."

Habitat Restoration

Since the recent wildfires in the Ferris and Seminoe Mountains, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has worked extensively on recovery efforts to prepare the habitat once again for bighorn sheep; replacing fences, applying herbicides for cheatgrass control, and repairing and adding guzzlers.

Rangeland Management Specialist, Mike Murray with the BLM says, "The Ferris Mountain bighorn sheep release and habitat restoration work would not have been possible without support and cooperation from our many partners, including committed landowners who were even there that day opening roads so Game and Fish could reach the preferred release site."

Staying Home

As of mid-March the vast majority of the sheep are still on the mountain as expected. Assuming most of these sheep will remain in the Ferris Mountains and adding the expected recruitment from a 2016 lamb crop, the herd is expected to reach approximately 140 animals by fall of 2016.



Onlookers, including Game and Fish Commissioner Mark Anselmi, watch and photograph as bighorn sheep are released into the Ferris Mountains. Photo by Gary Sundberg.



On the mountain

In search of *Gulo gulo*



Nongame biologists, along with numerous volunteers, partnering agencies, and other Game and Fish employees used snowshoes, snowmobiles and/or skis to access 23 wolverine camera stations last month. At each site they re-bait and collect photos and hair samples.



Sometimes checking trail cameras looks like this. Nongame Biologists Seth Halman above and Lee Tafelmeyer at right.

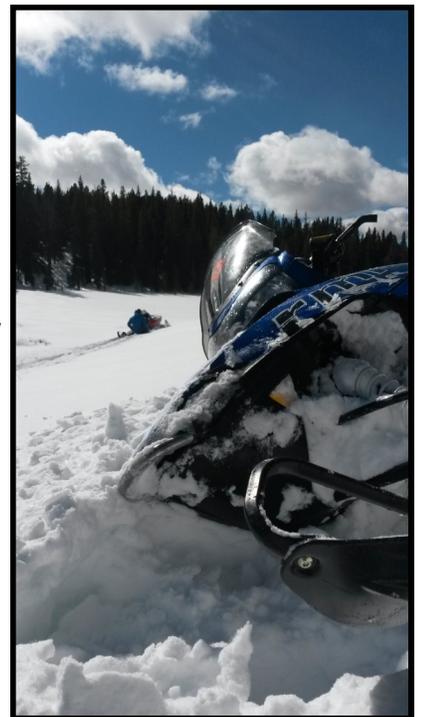
The camera stations are located at high elevations within the mountains of western Wyoming and tend to be difficult to access in the winter. However, thanks to the hard work of the project crew and lots of excellent help, all the camera stations were checked safely and on time.



Wolverine detected in the southern Winds this year.

So far this winter, two camera stations have detected wolverines. Both detections occurred in the Wind River Mountain Range. One occurred on the western side and one in the southeastern part of the range. These detections are very exciting, as they have occurred at the very southern edge of currently known wolverine range in Wyoming.

Crews also led an interpretive snow shoe excursion outside of Dubois that was arranged by the Wyoming Wilderness Association. Fifteen interested individuals attended. Nongame biologists will continue to check and rebait camera sites during the month of March. This work is being performed in collaboration with Montana, Idaho, and Washington in order to document distribution and assess occupancy....see page 8 for trail camera outtakes!



But lots of times it looks like this!



Behind the badge

Multiple “Coffee with a Warden” sessions

In February there were multiple “Coffee with a Warden” sessions, with five out of six wardens hosting events across the Lander Region. If you attended a session, you may have also seen Game and Fish wildlife and fisheries biologists and lands branch employees there to visit with interested members of the public. Here are some of the hosting wardens’ thoughts:

“Ten community members showed up (that’s almost 1/3 of the Jeffrey City population) to chat and or get help applying for big game licenses. The casualness of the events allows folks to be more comfortable sharing their thoughts on any and all aspects of wildlife management and wildlife issues that they find important, which they may be less apt to do in a larger formal meeting.” - from West Rawlins Game Warden Teal Joseph about the Jeffrey City event



“With three wardens moving into new districts over the last year, it’s also a great opportunity to just stop in and say hello, to meet us and put a face to a name.” - East Rawlins Game Warden Dillon Herman

“These are probably the most positive, intentional public contacts and relations efforts the Game and Fish has ever made. I think it is an effort that should continue, and in EVERY case the people and the venue have requested us back and to continue the program.” - South Riverton Game Warden Brad Gibb



“Ten people stopped by over the course of two hours to discuss issues, ranging from dissatisfaction with the lack of grizzly bear and wolf management, to a high school junior with aspirations of becoming a game warden and wanting as much information as he could get for an early leg up on a career. Landowners, sportsmen and even a few non-consumptive users came to share ideas and get information and although the total number seems small, I feel the program does a great amount of good for local relationships.” - Lander Game Warden Brady Frude

“These events are enjoyed and appreciated by both the public and department personnel. Some attendees have even provided law enforcement intelligence, which is always of value.” - North Riverton Game Warden Jessica Beecham



About the carnivores

Collaring a sleeping bear



Large Carnivore Biologist Dan Bjornlie checks the VHF signal before heading out on snowshoes.

In late February, large carnivore section, other Game and Fish personnel, and the president of the Yellowstone Country Bear Hunters Association, took advantage of the denning period to replace the failed radio collar on a black bear in the Greys River area.

This bear, an adult male, was collared last summer as part of population monitoring work that will continue this coming summer. The re-collaring effort included a 30+ mile snowmobile ride up the Greys River

and an arduous mile-long snowshoe up a steep ridge to the den location. Fortunately, the VHF signal on the collar was still functional, so the den could be located. Following a quick clearing of the den entrance, the bear was

chemically immobilized, the old collar removed and replaced with a new GPS collar; all while the bear remained curled up in his den.



Above: A bear's eye view of Todd Graham, Gary Fralick, Joe Kondelis and Dan Bjornlie peering into the den. Picture by Joe Kondelis. At right: Sleeping black bear with his new collar. Picture Dan Bjornlie.

Information from this collar and collars on other black bears in the Greys River area will help inform the Game and Fish efforts to estimate population abundance and density in the area as well as provide information for an ongoing mule deer ecology study being conducted by the University of

Wyoming. This coming summer, the real work will begin as barbed wire hair corrals will be set up to collect samples of DNA for a population estimation effort.



What would you do if you encountered a large carnivore? Come and learn!



It's that time of year again when bears are waking up and people are preparing to enjoy the great outdoors. As spring arrives, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department reminds outdoor enthusiasts to be "bear aware" and take the necessary precautions to avoid conflicts with large carnivores.

Large Carnivore Conflict Coordinator Brian DeBolt said that at this

time of year, bears are emerging from their dens. "Typically, male bears emerge from their dens in mid-March and April, while females and young-of-the-year cubs emerge in late April and early May," DeBolt said, "This makes it an ideal time to attend a workshop to learn about large carnivores and how to avoid encounters and potential conflicts."

Educational workshops will be offered in communities across the state. At each workshop, Game and Fish large carnivore managers will present information about bear, mountain lion, and wolf ecology, population status, management and more importantly, what people should do in an encounter situation. In addition, there will be discussion on preemptive measures to be taken by the public in order to reduce the likelihood of conflicts with carnivores.



Grizzly bear and wolf pictures by Mark Gocke.

Living in Large Carnivore Country
Seminars in the Lander Region

6:00 –8:00 p.m.

March 31, **Dubois**, Fremont County
Library, 202 N. 1st Street

April 7, **Riverton**, Central Wyoming
College's Little Theatre, 2660 Peck
Ave.



Trail camera out takes

Other visitors to the wolverine cameras



From upper left, clockwise: swinging pine marten, snowshoe hare, golden eagle, Mike Mazur from US Fish and Wildlife Service, family of coyotes, and a bull elk.