Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

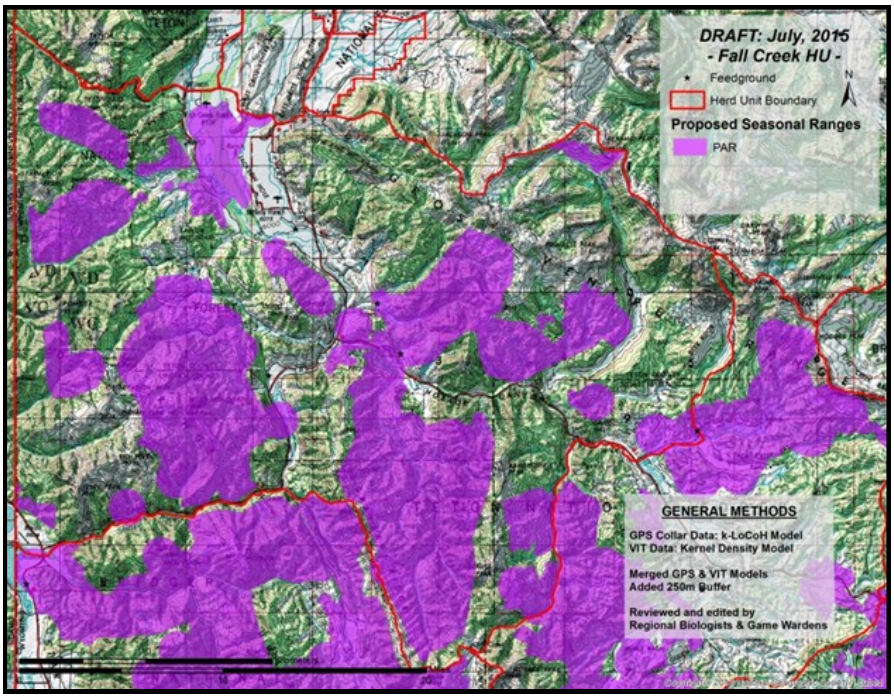
August 2015 Newsletter

Swinging the Hammer

The BFH crew was busy this month helping the Habitat and Access crew with installing a new top rail on the Soda Lake WHMA boundary fence. Cattle from an adjacent USFS grazing allotment have been passing through the fence in recent years, reducing forage available on the unit for wildlife and hampering efforts to end supplemental feeding early on the Soda Lake elk feedground. Since the length of the feeding season is directly correlated with brucellosis prevalence, keeping cattle off the unit facilitates brucellosis management.

Mapping Elk Ranges

Pinedale Brucellosis GIS specialist Cheyenne Burnett has been leading efforts to update elk seasonal ranges in the Jackson and Pinedale regions with recently acquired GPS and Vaginal Implant Transmitter (VIT) data. Updated seasonal range maps are based on over 500 VIT locations and nearly 600 elk-collar-years' of data to develop the new ranges, which are being reviewed by the federal land management agencies. Comments on the newly updated ranges have been overwhelmingly supportive since they are based on quantitative data, and are already being used by the Bridger Teton National Forest for analyses in energy development and travel planning efforts.



Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

August 2015

Colorado Cutties for Bare Creek

Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea lines out project helpers including Game & Fish Commissioner Charles Price.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is in the first year of a project to restore the native Colorado River cutthroat trout in the Bare Creek watershed. Bare Creek is a tributary to South Cottonwood Creek in the upper Green River system that includes nine stream miles of currently occupied trout habitat.

Colorado River cutthroat trout populations will be restored within their historic range in Bare Creek, where they can persist and be managed without continual competition and hybridization from non-native fish species. Once non-natives have been removed, a self-sustaining Colorado River cutthroat trout population can be re-established through transplants from nearby sources.

Game & Fish Fisheries Technician Karl Goemer sets up rotenone drip station to remove non-native fish on Bare Creek.

Fish managers will be treating the entire length of Bare Creek using the piscicide rotenone. This chemical has been used successfully in many stream restoration efforts and has proven highly effective at removing unwanted fish species from aquatic systems with no harmful effects to other plants and animals.

The entire project will continue for the next year with plans to restock native Colorado River cutthroat trout, as well as other native fish species, by the year 2017.

Pinedale Fish personnel also completed high mountain lake surveys for many lakes in the East Fork River and New Fork River drainages. The lakes surveyed supported brook trout and/or cutthroat trout. One Boreal Chorus frog was observed near Toboggan Lake.

With a lot of summer rainfall, fishing in the WY Range and Green River has been spotty until early August when the creek fishing really picked up. Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas reports contacting several anglers with overall compliance being very good.

A very happy young angler with a trophy brook trout caught in North Piney Lake in the Wyoming Range.

Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

August 2015

Backcountry Travelers

Pinedale Wildlife Biologist Dean Clause joined Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch and Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens on a backcountry trip in the eastern Gros Ventre Range to check backcountry anglers and conduct bighorn sheep surveys. Visibility was poor due to smoke from wildfires, but several groups of ewes and lambs were observed.

Pinedale Wildlife Biologist Dean Clause and Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens ride beneath battleship Mountain in the Gros Ventre Range .

A OK Owl

A concerned citizen stopped at the Pinedale office one day in August with an owl in a box. She said she captured it because it had a broken wing and could not fly. After much reassurance, the woman released the owl to the care of office manager Layna Jones. The box was placed in a quiet location while phone calls were made to arrange for it's recovery care.

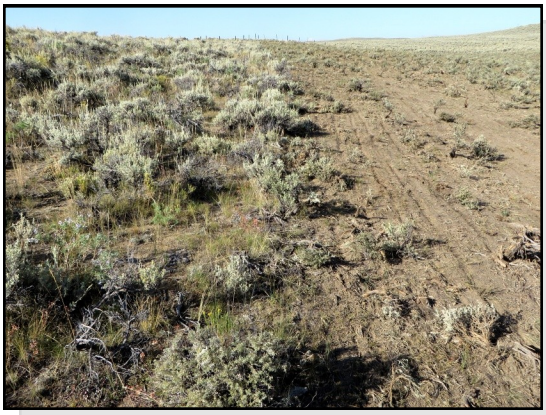
After a short time, the owl recovered from it's ordeal and was determined to free itself from the box. After further inspection by Habitat Biologist Floyd Roadifer and office managers Layna Jones and Lori Johnson, it was determined the owl was a healthy juvenile that was just learning to fly. It was returned to the area where it was found and, with a stretch of it's wings, it flew away.

Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

August 2015

On the Ground

The Habitat & Access crew got started on a habitat enhancement project on private lands in the northern Wyoming Range that will benefit mule deer and other wildlife. The project involves the thinning of old decadent sagebrush to promote the growth of young sagebrush plants, antelope bitterbrush and other plants in the understory.



Aspen Days

Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall and Brucellosis Feedground Habitat Biologist Eric Maichak organized and hosted Aspen Days, a free community workshop focusing on all things aspen, August 10-12, in Pinedale. The workshop began with an evening lecture series on the latest aspen research findings with talks from several aspen experts. Approximately 40 people attended the evening event. The following two days offered Field visits to the Soda Lake/Fremont Ridge Aspen mechanical treatment, recent prescribed burns in the Wyoming Range and the Fontenelle wildfire. There were good discussions about aspen ecology, post-treatment management, effects of browsing and grazing, and monitoring techniques.

(Left) Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall stands amidst robust aspen regeneration in the Fontenelle Fire. (Below) Field tour attendees discuss aspen treatments and monitoring in the Fonenelle Fire west of Big Piney.

Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

August 2015

Behind the Badge

Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas spent several days conducting antelope classifications. Fawn ratios are lower in HA 88 than previous years at 65:100 does, but buck ratios are very good at 60:100 does with a good recruitment of yearling bucks. North Pinedale Game Warden Bubba Haley spent several days classifying antelope where he noticed a decrease in the overall number of antelope from previous years, likely due to a high summer precipitation allowing antelope to disperse more.

While spending several days in the WY Range, Hymas observed that scouting for deer and elk has become more popular and expects more people to be hunting this year if scouting is any indicator.

Hymas also worked on some false oath cases, a trapping case and continued work on a case involving antelope that were shot and left earlier in the summer.

Warden Hymas and Jim Johnson taught a hunter education class in Big Piney and shortly afterward began receiving requests for another one. Area residents can be advised one will be taught in the spring and one in the late summer annually in Big Piney.

An interesting note… at 10,000 ft there were hundreds of ladybugs under some rocks!

Warden Haley also spent six days in the back country checking sheep hunters. To date, three nice rams have been killed.

At the Daniel Hatchery…

Daniel Hatchery personnel conducted 22 tours to a total of 75 people during the month of August.

Hatchery staff also assisted former Pinedale Fish Technician Alex LeCheminant, who is now a University of Wyoming graduate student, with fin-clipping and tagging Colorado River cutthroat trout for his research project studying the movement dynamics of stocked fish to Labarge Creek.

Seasonal technician Alysia Henderson completed her contract at the hatchery and returned to the University of Wyoming for her senior year. Thanks to Alysia for all her hard work!