



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

June 2016 Newsletter



Pinedale Game & Fish office manager Kristen Draney hoists a 15 pound lake trout netted in Fremont Lake this spring. (Right) Pinedale Fisheries Technician Davy Black with a 13.4 pound lake trout from Half Moon Lake.

Summer Fish Surveys Underway

The Pinedale Fisheries crew have begun their summer field season with fish sampling operations at several of the finger lakes on the west slope of the Wind River Range. This included both Fremont Lake and Halfmoon Lakes. Water temperatures were still low enough in Fremont Lake that lake trout were found exploiting forage fish in the shallower water. A lake trout weighing over 15 pounds (left) was captured in water about two feet deep!

A highlight for Halfmoon Lake was a 13.4 pound lake trout.



Boulder's Bounty

Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea completed netting operations for Boulder Lake. Rainbow trout continue to flourish, and bank anglers targeting them have reported some very good fishing. Lake trout are also doing well with a number of large (including one 30+ pounds, at left) fish were captured and released with tags. Kokanee salmon have also returned to the gillnet catch thanks to the return of stocking.



Antler Violators Sentenced

South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft finalized two cases involving individuals who were caught collecting shed antlers during the seasonal closure. It is illegal to collect shed antlers on all public lands west

of the Continental Divide until May 1. In the first case, the man was fully aware of the antler collection regulation and was observed by witnesses driving a four-wheeler the day before the season opener, collecting several deer antlers. The man was cited for violating the antler collection regulation and lost his hunting privileges for two years and was fined \$290.

A second case involved a man who had gathered deer and elk antlers during the seasonal closure, caching the antlers in the field to be retrieved several weeks later, after the season opener. The man was cited for violating the antler collection regulation and several antlers were seized. The man was fined \$540 and ordered to not antler hunt or accompany anyone who is antler hunting for a one year period while placed on probation.



An elk antler that was illegally cached in the field during the seasonal closure west of the Continental Divide.

shed antler regulations. Violators were from Sublette, Teton, Lincoln and Sweetwater counties in Wyoming, in addition to Utah and Idaho.

Regional game wardens are pleased to report that violators are starting to receive stiffer penalties these days, including not only the loss of antler hunting privileges, but all hunting privileges in some cases. Penalties have varied from six months to two years loss of hunting privileges and up to two years loss of antler hunting privileges. Additional penalties have totaled nearly \$5000 in fines, over 105 hours of community service and 70 days in jail (suspended). The stiffer penalties being handed down are thanks to the Sublette and Teton County circuit court judges and county attorneys.



Shed Antlers Put Back

Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas took about 30 shed deer and elk antlers that had been seized this past winter and put them back out on public lands for the public to pick up. All of the antlers had been collected early during the seasonal closure before the law-abiding antler hunters had the opportunity to find them. A portion of the antlers put back out are pictured here, at right.





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Kids Fishing Day

The Pinedale Fish crew, along with several partners and volunteers, held the annual Kids Fishing Day at the CCC Ponds north of town. As Usual, with several rainbow and brown trout caught. All of the participants cycled through the various educational stations, which included fly and spin casting, fish anatomy, stream habitat demo and fish stocking. Additional sponsors and participants included the local Bureau of Land Management, Bridger Teton National Forest, Trout Unlimited, Two Rivers Emporium (Orvis).





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Sage Grouse Numbers Up

Each year, several employees in the Pinedale Game and Fish office contribute to conduct sage grouse lek surveys. The number of birds counted gives managers a picture of what the general trend is for the species. Pinedale Wild-

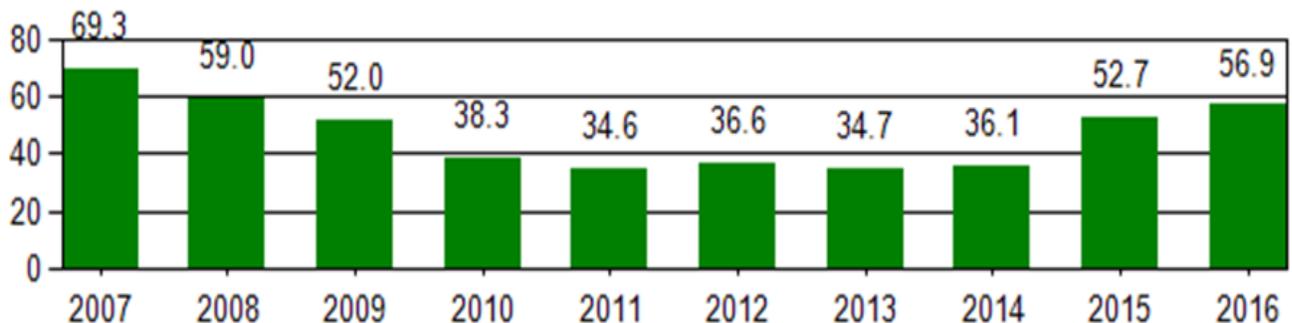
life Biologist Dean Clause compiled the following data summarizing the average number of male sage grouse counted on all occupied leks, or strutting grounds, in the Pinedale area from 2007 - 2016. As you can see, the local population experienced a slump from 2010-2014, but has rebounded nicely the past two years.



Sage Grouse Lek #s

Year	Occupied	Checked	Percent Checked	Peak Males	Avg Males / Active Lek
2007	111	105	95	5683	69.3
2008	111	103	93	5135	59.0
2009	115	111	97	4469	52.0
2010	127	122	96	3672	38.3
2011	131	125	95	3635	34.6
2012	132	123	93	3663	36.6
2013	130	124	95	3405	34.7
2014	130	125	96	3497	36.1
2015	134	131	98	5590	52.7
2016	136	134	99	6085	56.9

Average Males/Lek from All Occupied Lek Observations





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Spring Black Bear Season

The spring black bear hunting season runs May 1-June 15 in the Pinedale Region, unless the allotted female mortality quota is reached before season's end. Regional game wardens spend considerable time visiting bait sites before, during and after the hunt season to make sure all hunters are following the rules. Regional wardens noted a variety of bait site violations including no identification on bait barrel, using processed bait in unprocessed bait only hunt areas, baits being placed within 200 yards of water, baits being placed within 200 yards of designated roads and trails, and game parts being used as bait.

At season's end, 29 of the allotted 30 female bears had been taken in the Wyoming Range hunt areas 14, 15, 16, 17 and 30. And in hunt area 19 on the west slope of the Wind River Range, only four of the allotted 10 females were taken by hunters.

Managers Talk Fishing

Information regarding the proposed fishing regulations changes and additional information about Dollar Lake and Soda Lake were presented to interested anglers at a public meeting. Attendees asked many questions and were appreciative for the effort to present the information to them.

Pinedale Fish Biologist Pete Cavalli and Fish Technician Davy Black spent opening day of the fishing season at Soda Lake visiting with anglers. They reported catch rates were very high compared to previous years, even fish sampling efforts show the number of fish in the lake is still fairly low.





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Wildlife Habitat Page

As we move out of spring and into our summer months, mule deer are transitioning from a diet high in grasses to one dominated by wildflowers, or forbs. These forb species provide deer with an exceptionally high nutritional value at the onset of summer. Migrating ungulates have adopted feeding strategies that help them to maximize the intake of digestible energy and nutrients in order to recover after the stresses of winter, in addition to the significant energy demands of raising fawns and antler development. Though at times the differences in the digestibility of various plant species may be small, these slight differences can have major influences on the animals that consume them.

One such important forb is clover. There are numerous species of clover, including the more commonly found Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and Alsike Clover (*Trifolium hybridum L.*). Most clover species provide excellent forage both in terms of the amount of crude protein and minerals contained within them.

Clover Facts:

- Average crude protein level 20- 22%
- High percentages of minerals such as calcium (14.4%)
- Alsike often out performs other clover species throughout a range of different soil types
- Alsike is tolerant to acidic and waterlogged sites and areas with higher alkalinity
- Very palatable to all grazing animals, including cattle
- Not drought tolerant and can be killed out during prolonged dry periods
- Lacks persistence, with a lifespan of around two years



The quality of forage available to deer during summer can greatly impact individuals and the herd as a whole. Studies have shown that over winter survival, pregnancy and birth rates, as well as fawn survival are all linked to and affected by the forage available during prior summer months. Keeping this in mind, it is clear as to why forbs such as clover are so important to the health of our mule deer.

In some cases, WGFD habitat biologists work with private land owners to seed clover species into suitable areas as habitat enhancement projects for mule deer or sage grouse. Various implements have been used to accomplish this including disking, Lawson aerator and range pitting in order to get the right seed bed preparation to meet vegetation objectives. If you are interested in working on a habitat enhancement project on your private land, please contact Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall at the Pinedale office at 307-367-4353.

Boating Season

Pinedale office managers Lori Johnson and Kristen Draney have been busy visiting with a lot of boaters to help make sure they're legal on Wyoming waters. The two report registering 98 boats during the month of May alone!

