



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

October 2016 Newsletter



Soda Lake Brooks and Browns



The Pinedale Fisheries Crew sampled trout populations in Soda Lake during the first week of October. Most of the brown trout captured were between 14 and 20 inches long. Each of the two largest brown trout caught were over 27 inches long, and the heaviest fish weighed 10.2 pounds! Most of the brook trout captured were between 11 and 16 inches long, with the heaviest weighing 2.1 pounds. Population estimates have not been calculated yet, but brook trout are obviously more numerous than brown trout, as was the case in 2015. While the number of fish cap-



(Above) Pinedale Fish Technician Cynthia Nau transfers a load of fish from the hoop net to the live well for weighing and measuring. (Below) A brook trout is released back to Soda Lake.

tured is encouraging, the relatively dry conditions experienced this summer did have an impact on habitat in Soda Lake. The water level dropped 1.04 feet during the period from May 3 to October 7, 2016. Unfortunately, the water level began to decline many years ago with the onset of extended drought conditions, and the additional water loss this summer could cause problems for trout in the future. Low water levels can lead to high water temperatures during the summer and low dissolved oxygen levels in the winter;

neither of these scenarios is good for trout. Weather conditions experienced in the coming months will control the number of fish available for anglers in 2017, since adult trout often experience high mortality during the winter at Soda Lake.

(Left) Pinedale Fish Biologist Pete Cavalli measures a hefty brown trout from Soda Lake.





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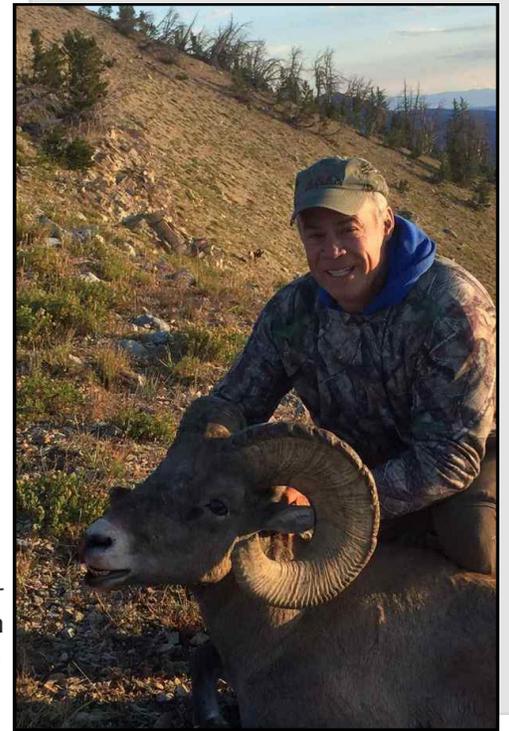
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Hunting: The Good & the Bad

Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas reports that the lone sheep hunter from Hunt Area 24 in the Wyoming Range took a very nice ram on the second day of the season (right). On a further encouraging note, the hunting party reported seeing several other Rams in the hunt area.

While checking backcountry archery hunters, Warden Hymas discovered a bull elk that had been taken except one game bag full of meat had been left behind. It was several days old and, unfortunately, the meat had spoiled. After several days, Hymas was able to determine who had shot the elk and a citation was issued.

Overall, Warden Hymas reports a good hunting season so far with mostly minor violations to this point. However, he does note that there has been a problem of several yearling buck antelope mistakenly identified as doe antelope and harvested on a type-6 license. Hymas gives credit to the sportsmen who turn themselves in for the misidentification, but encourages hunters to look for the black cheek patch identifying it as a buck.



South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft is seeking any information regarding a bull elk that was shot and left to waste on the afternoon of Tuesday, October 4, 2016, south of Pinedale. The elk was found just off the Big Sandy Openings Road, just below the turnoff to Sedgewick Meadows. It is believed the suspect partially field dressed the elk and then abandoned it after he learned he was in a limited quota elk area (Hunt Area 99), for which he did not have a valid license.

The suspect has been described as approximately 5'10", 240 pounds, with dark hair, driving a blue truck with Sweetwater (4) County license plates.

Anyone with possible information regarding this poaching incident is encouraged to call the Pinedale Game and Fish office at 1-800-452-9107, the STOP POACHING hotline at 1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847) or South Pinedale Game Warden, Jordan Kraft, at 307-367-2470. Callers can remain anonymous and information leading to an arrest and conviction may result in a cash reward.



A bull elk shot and left to waste along the Big Sandy Openings Road on October 4, 2016.



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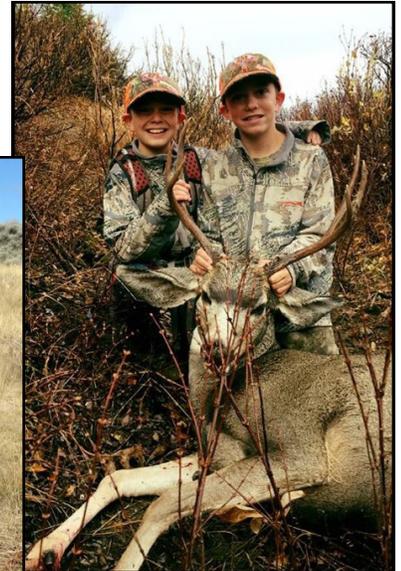
North Pinedale Game Warden **Bubba Haley**, reports a good hunting season so far with only minor violations by hunters. Bubba provided the following photos of some happy young hunters!



Garrett Haley, 9, of Pinedale with archery killed ruffed grouse.



Tristan Haley, 12, of Pinedale with his first elk and deer, both taken this fall.



Chaz Condos, 12, and brother Braxton, 9, of Lyman, with Chaz's first mule deer buck taken near Bondurant this fall.



Pinedale/Green River Habitat Biologist Cheyenne Stewart (L) and Pinedale Wildlife Supervisor John Lund check a hunter's mule deer and collect a tissue sample for CWD testing.

Hunter Check Stations

Several Game and Fish personnel from the Pinedale Region have helped operate multiple hunter check stations at Daniel Junction and LaBarge again this hunting season. The check stations are valuable for collecting harvest data, CWD tissue samples, potentially making a few enforcement cases and as much as anything having personal contacts with a lot of hunters.



Cheyenne Stewart collects a CWD sample



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Swan Flight

Nongame Wildlife Biologist Susan Patla conducted the Trumpeter Swan fall survey flights on Sept. 16 and 17. She counted a total of 274 swans (213 adults and 61 cygnets) which is similar to the previous year.

A majority of Wyoming's resident swans (71%) currently are found in the the Green River drainage. In the Pinedale/Green River Regions the number of nesting pairs

(25) counted was slightly lower compared to the previous year (28) but total number of fledged young increased by 5. Swans successfully produced young in some new sites including a reservoir near Big Piney and in the town of Green River. After seven years of almost 10% growth in the number of white birds in the Green River expansion project area, the number of adults leveled off in 2016.



Pinedale Office Manager Lori Johnson assists a sportsman with his license.

From the Front Desk...

Pinedale Game and Fish Office Manager reports that one of the most popular questions they've been getting lately is whether Soda Lake is currently closed to fishing. The answer is yes. Soda Lake closes to fishing on October 1 every year to protect the spawning brook and brown trout (see cover story). Historically, Soda Lake has reopened to fishing on May 9, however, beginning in 2017, the Soda Lake opener for fishing will coincide with the May 1 opener for all public access. Mark it down.





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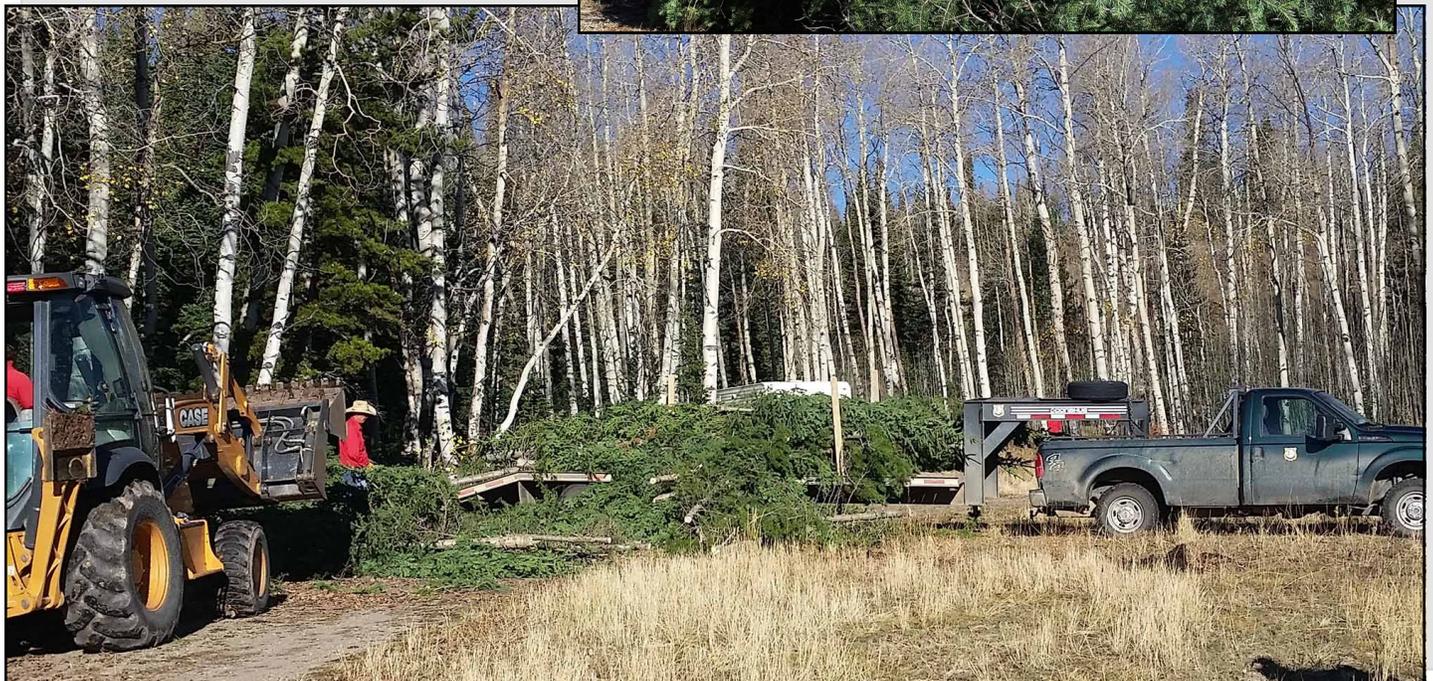
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Hoback Bank Stabilization

Personnel from both the Pinedale and Jackson regions teamed up to gather materials for an upcoming bank stabilization project on the upper Hoback River at the McNeel elk feedground. Small (sub 20 foot) conifers were harvested from a parking lot up Horse Creek road (south of Daniel) that is scheduled for expansion. In addition, approximately 35 dead trees with root balls were salvaged from areas that had previously burned. These materials will be used for bank revetments and toewood bank protection structures on the Hoback River. Managers believe next year's spring run-off may threaten a hay stackyard on the feedground.



(Right) Jackson Fisheries Technician Lauren Flynn and Elk Feedground Manager Dave Hyde (Below) gather conifers for the Hoback River bank stabilization project at the McNeel elk feedground near Bondurant.





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Mule Deer Migration Protected

A key parcel of land was recently secured for wildlife habitat, and specifically mule deer migration, on the northwest side of Fremont Lake north of Pinedale. The land has been purchased with funds from the Conservation Fund and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Game and Fish is in the process of taking over management of the property, which is



planned to be open for public access next spring when a grand opening celebration will take place.



Boulder Hatchery News

Boulder Fish Culturist Joe Gillis (left) and crew began their annual fall rainbow trout spawn with the first egg take on October 11. The spawn will take place every Tuesday into December. In the end, they will collect approximately 2.5-3 million eggs. Most eggs will be shipped to other Wyoming hatcheries, like Dubois and Tensleep, where the eggs will be hatched and reared. Some eggs are traded to other states. Ultimately, the fish will be stocked in many of the large reservoirs across Wyoming.



Daniel Hatchery

With spawning and stocking operations slowing down for the season, the Daniel Hatchery staff took advantage of the nice weather to oil and weatherize the hatchery building and residences. In addition, 15 tours were conducted for visitors during the month of September.

Dustin Cram puts a fresh coat of oil on the front of the Daniel Hatchery.