



Ensuring clean waters

Fisheries managers in the Laramie Region sorted through more than 500,000 walleye fingerlings before stocking them into lakes and reservoirs in southeast Wyoming.

The walleye came from the Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery in North Dakota. Game and Fish traded brown trout eggs for these walleye. Since the walleye are raised in ponds and not a sterile hatchery environment, fish biologists sort through the fish to avoid introducing any unwanted species into Wyoming's waters.

Tadpoles, freshwater clams and snails, and bits of aquatic vegetation were removed as the fish were stocked into the lakes. Grayrocks Reservoir received 430,000 walleye, Wheatland Reservoir #1 received 40,000, Rock Lake and Packers Lake each received 6,000 and Hawk Springs Reservoir received 80,000 fish. The tiny fingerlings should grow 7- 10 inches by summer 2017, and 17 inches by the time they are three to four years old.





It's peeper time

During the month of June, Laramie Region personnel teamed up at the Downar Game Bird Farm in Yoder to "peeper" the 2016 pheasant hatch.

Pheasants are predacious by nature and when raised at high density will often attack one another when they can see well enough to do so. To reduce the amount of pecking a peeper, or blinder, is attached over a pheasant's beak to block the bird's forward view and allow only peripheral vision.

With the peepers in place the pheasants display little aptitude for fighting, which reduces death loss over the summer months. Blinders are removed before the pheasants are released in the fall.

It takes several days to put peepers on nearly 17,000 birds. Crew members start work at 6 a.m. while it is still cool outside to reduce stress on the birds, and quit about mid-morning as the temperature begins to warm.

Although many Laramie Region personnel have to get up quite early to be at the bird farm by 6 a.m., you won't hear many complaints when they are greeted by stunning sunrises and crows from rooster pheasants left over from last year's hunting season.





Assessing habitat

Habitat biologists and wildlife managers evaluated various habitat communities in the Platte Valley mule deer herd. The technique, called Rapid Habitat Assessment, includes an inventory of grasses, forbs, shrubs, trees and the animals that use the area. The condition of the plants, amount of herbivory, limiting factors for growth and potential for enhancement are considered. The information from these assessments will be used to monitor the health of big game habitat and changes over time. Wildlife managers will be better able to consider habitat when making decisions regarding herd objectives.

Law Enforcement

Poaching case closed

A case that began in November 2015 was closed in June. It involved a total of four nonresident individuals in the illegal take of a bull elk on a private ranch in Platte County.

The hunter did not possess a 2015 hunting license when the elk was taken. The hunter's father then tagged the elk, and the hunter's mother and step mother assisted with retrieval of the animal. All four individuals were charged with taking an elk without a license or accessory to take an elk without a license, as well as transfer and or accessory to transfer of an elk license. The fines totaled \$6,560. All parties pleaded guilty and paid the fines without contest.

Unlawful to possess big game animals

Cheyenne Game Wardens Shawn Blajszczak and Brooke Weaver addressed the illegal possession of a fawn whitetail deer in June. Warden Blajszczak initially learned about the fawn from a report on KGWN News Channel 5 in Cheyenne.

The fawn was found by a Cheyenne family who was seeking information on how to raise the and care for it. Unfortunately, they received incorrect information as it is against the law in Wyoming to possess live big game animals for any reason.

The fawn was turned over to the department and because deer cannot safely be rehabilitated and returned to the wild, the animal was euthanized. Wardens Blajszczak and Weaver visited all the involved parties to ensure they understand the laws and regulations pertaining to possession of big game animals. No citations were issued.

Grayrocks check station

Game Wardens David Ellsworth, Shawn Blajszczak, Kristen DaVannon and Mitch Renteria conducted a check station near Grayrocks Reservoir on June 5.

The trio detected various violations, including a group with more than 50 walleye between two people. Warden Ellsworth said this was a good check station due to the hot fishing at Grayrocks Reservoir.

FIRE BAN!

Extreme fire danger in southeast Wyoming has prompted the Game and Fish Department to ban open fires on all Game and Fish Commission-owned and administered lands within Platte and Goshen counties.

Affected lands include Table Mountain, Springer, Rawhide and Cottonwood Wildlife Habitat Management Areas, and all Public Access Areas within Platte and Goshen counties.

The following acts are prohibited on all Game and Fish Commission-owned and administered lands during the fire ban:

- Building, maintaining, attending or using a fire, campfire charcoal grill, coal or wood burning stove.
- Smoking except within an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site, or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable material.
- Fireworks are always prohibited on Wyoming Game and Fish Commission lands.

Sportsmen should also note a county-wide fire ban is in effect in both Platte and Goshen counties until further notice. Information about the county-wide fire bans is available through the Platte County Clerk's office at (307) 322-2141 and the Goshen County Clerk's office at (307) 532-4051.

For more information on the fire ban on Game and Fish lands contact the Laramie Region Game and Fish Office at (307) 745-4046.



Testing sediment load

Encampment River flows finally cooperated in June and a crew from 5 Smooth Stones River Restoration was able to collect bedload samples from three sites on the Encampment River. Bedload measurements will aid in better understanding of sediment transport dynamics for future restoration designs in the Encampment River. Laramie Region Aquatic Habitat Biologist Christina Barrineau and Terrestrial Habitat Technician Paige Hellbaum assisted with some of the sampling efforts. Christina also spoke with numerous curious onlookers as sampling occurred at the Highway 230 and Baggot Rocks Road bridges. Photo by Christina Barrineau.



Access Yes coordinator recognized by peers

Access Yes Coordinator Jason Sherwood was the recipient of the 2016 Peer Recognition Award for the Laramie Region.

Sherwood's primary duty is maintaining the Access Yes Program in southeast Wyoming. He manages 27 separate Hunter Management Areas which provide more than 100,000 acres of access for hunting. And he helps arrange Walk-In Areas in Albany, Carbon, Goshen, Laramie and Platte counties that provide many more acres of hunting access.

Sherwood oversees contracts with landowners to be sure all requirements for their specific properties are met and makes sure all access areas are appropriately signed so the public can readily find them and know the boundaries and rules.

He is an active member of the Wyoming Game Warden Association and currently serves as its Secretary.

Sherwood is always willing to lend his expertise wherever needed. He is the one working behind the scenes to be sure components come together for many varied projects and is seen by his peers as an excellent team player. Congratulations, Jason!



Beaver Creek Wildfire

A smoke plume from the Beaver Creek Fire rises behind 10,979-foot Blackhall Mountain south of Encampment on June 27. Wildlife managers in Wyoming and Colorado continue to monitor the progress of the fire which is burning about 24 miles north of Walden, Colorado. The fire threatens the boundary fences of a private big game farm in Colorado. Measures have been taken to prevent a breach which could allow privately-owned elk from escaping and wild elk and deer from entering the property. As of July 18 the fire was nearly 25,000 acres in size and was 5 percent contained. Closure orders have been issued for U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands and can be found at: <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4797/> Photo by Biff Burton

Platte Valley Mule Deer Initiative

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department will hold a series of collaborative meetings to discuss mule deer management in the Platte Valley.

These meetings will review what we have accomplished during the past five years of the Platte Valley Mule Deer Initiative process, as well gather input on management direction for the next five years. Topics that will be discussed include updates on Population Management, Habitat Management, Predator Management, Public Access for hunting, Disturbance, and Outreach Efforts.

Anyone interested in mule deer management in the Platte Valley is encouraged to attend one of these meetings:

- **Cheyenne:** Monday, July 18, 6 p.m. at the WGFD Headquarters, Trout Room, 5400 Bishop Blvd.
- **Laramie:** Tuesday, July 19, 6 p.m., at the University of Wyoming Biodiversity Institute - Berry Center, Corner of E. Lewis and N. 9th Streets
- **Rawlins:** Wednesday, July 20, 6 p.m., at the Jeffery Center, 315 West Pine St.
- **Saratoga:** Thursday, July 21, 6 p.m., Saratoga Town Hall, 110 E. Spring Ave.



Packers Lake

Wyoming Game and Fish personnel placed catfish spawning structures (sections of a cement culvert) in Packer Lake in eastern Goshen County in June.

Aside from a few car bodies placed at the east end of the reservoir, the lakebed was essentially devoid of any structure, and catfish had few suitable areas to spawn. The new addition should boost the specie's reproductive success and increase population density over time. Photo by Rob Hipp.



Spotted coralroot



Habitat biologists found spotted coralroot, a member of the orchid family, in many locations in June. This plant grows in dead organic matter in the local lodgepole pine forest. Spotted coralroot has no chlorophyll and has a symbiotic relationship with fungi in the organic litter of the forest floor. It cannot live without the fungi. The coralroots produce little or no chlorophyll, and are leafless. Photo by Katie Cheesbrough.

INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF WHISKEY MOUNTAIN CONSERVATION CAMP TODAY!

The need for camp investment

We need your help! To continue to host top-notch conservation education programs, Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp is in need of some basic, but significant, renovations. Without investment, the Camp's historic buildings and the learning opportunities hosted here may be lost forever. The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission feels the Camp is its "Crown Jewel" and voted to invest \$2 million toward the \$4.5 million renovation project to begin in summer 2017. The WGFD hopes to preserve and enhance the Camp in a manner that complements the surrounding landscape and ensures it remains an outstanding facility for wildlife and conservation education.

How your investment helps

The Camp sits within the Torrey Valley, outside of Dubois, and the WGFD's Whiskey Basin Wildlife Habitat Management Area, which provides crucial winter habitat for bighorn sheep, elk and mule deer. This unique location has introduced generations of campers to outdoor skills and world-class wildlife. A renovated camp will begin a new era of conservation education and continue to inspire the next generation of conservation leaders.

- Help preserve this one-of-a-kind camp with basic infrastructure needs as well as an updated kitchen, dining area, ADA-compliant guest room and classrooms.
 - Grow conservation education efforts across Wyoming. Your help will ensure the Camp can continue to function and will expand the overall summer capacity and ADA-compliant facilities for more people to enjoy.
 - Help the bighorn sheep population in the Dubois area by raising awareness and increasing conservation education directed toward these animals.
 - Facilitate the use of Commission dollars across Wyoming on WGFD habitat projects such as the Statewide Mule Deer Initiative, Squirrel Creek Wildlife Restoration, South Pass Aspen, and LaBarge-Creek Fish Passage.
- Please consider giving today and remember every donation makes a difference!



To donate or for more information, visit wgfd.wyo.gov/whiskeymntn

Be Bear Aware

Laramie Region Information and Education Specialist Robin Kepple and Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton presented a large predator workshop to U. S. Forest Service personnel, campground hosts and volunteers of the Brush Creek/Hayden District in Saratoga in early June.

Participants learned how to educate forest visitors and campers about reducing conflicts with bears and staying safe in bear and lion country.

Burton and Kepple discussed the importance of keeping campgrounds free of attractants to bears. The students also learned how to use bear spray and defend themselves from aggressive bears.

Bears are attracted to camps with coolers, barbecue grills and unsecured food. Bears that receive human food rewards will always associate humans with food and can result in the death of these bears. The camp shown in the photo was located in an area of the Snowy Range with a high bear population and repeated conflicts with humans. Kepple and Burton urge campers to keep a clean camp and avoid attracting or feeding bears.

In Medicine Bow, Game Warden Jake Kettley had another bear problem at the Prior Flats campground in June.



Warden Kettley received a call from a concerned woman who said her husband had just been charged by a black bear at the campground. Warden Kettley responded and discovered that the man had probably been bluff charged but was uninjured. He set a trap hoping to catch a female and yearling that had recently been seen in the area. Warden Kettley also emptied 16 garbage cans and removed all of them for the Bureau of Land Management. The BLM later installed three bear-proof cans. *Photo by Biff Burton.*

Bighorn sheep facility



Roofed alleyways help to keep them free of snow during the winter and help to prevent the sheep from jumping or injuring themselves while moving through the alleyway.



Completed bighorn sheep pens and alleyways.

This month was productive at the Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center at Sybille. Water levels finally started to drop, but were still too high to get in the creek and fix the remaining damage to fences. However, with help from Laramie Regional personal, the alley system for the handling facility was finished. Employees installed tin on the roofs of the alleys. The project was scheduled to be finished in May, but flooding had significantly delayed progress. Many thanks to all the Laramie Region personnel who lent some of their time to knock out the last part of the new sheep handling facility.



Owl in trouble

Saratoga Wildlife Biologist Will Schultz rescued this great-horned owl which managed to get itself stuck in a fence.

Schultz freed the owl and kept it overnight to monitor its health. When the bird appeared to be uninjured Schultz successfully released it the next day.

Great-horned owls are one of the most common owl species in Wyoming. This powerful predator can take down birds and mammals even larger than itself, but it also dines on daintier fare such as tiny scorpions, mice, and frogs.



Opossum in garage

Wheatland Wildlife Biologist Martin Hicks responded to a call of a opossum in a garage. He set a trap and it was caught that night, but the opossum must have been ill because it unfortunately died prior to its release.

Free photography workshop

Would you like to learn how to take better photographs of landscapes and wildlife? If so, join the Wyoming Game and Fish Department for a free photography workshop on August 16 in Laramie.

Jessica Grant, photography intern with the Game and Fish Department, said participants will learn how to capture compelling stories through photography, create dynamic compositions and control the technical aspects of images. The two-hour session will include a presentation and the opportunity for you to shoot under Jessica's guidance.

The workshop will be from 2-4 p.m. at the Game and Fish Laramie Regional office (528 South Adams Street). Participants should bring a camera and RSVP to jessica.grant1@wyo.gov.



Wyoming Game and Fish Dept.
Laramie Region Office
528 S. Adams St.
Laramie, WY 82070
(307) 745-4046

