WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

JULY 2015

LARAMIE REGION

"Conserving Wildlife - Serving People"

Urban wildlife

Bears, moose find way to towns

Laramie Region personnel kept busy in July relocating several large mammals away from towns and back to their natural habitat.

A yearling black bear was removed from a Laramie neighborhood after earlier being relocated from Fort Collins, Colorado, where it was getting into trashcans and dumpsters. Another black bear was relocated after getting into trash at the Camp Grace Church Camp on Fletcher Park Road.

Moose also presented a challenge in July. A young bull moose was relocated from the F.E. Warren Air Force base in late July. Earlier in the month, an older bull moose was spotted on the base, but attempts to capture that animal were unsuccessful.

A bull moose was also removed from Wheatland early in the month.

Law Enforcement

Info sought on pronghorn poaching

A lactating doe antelope was poached between July 11 and 12 on a section of state land adjacent to the shooting range on Otto Road west of Cheyenne.

The doe was shot in the hip and the head with what appears to be a .223-.243 caliber rifle.

Game and Fish is seeking any information on this crime. Call the Stop Poaching Tip Line at 1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847). Tips may also be reported online at http://wgfd.wyo.gov. Informants can choose to remain anonymous and may be eligible for a reward for information leading to an arrest.

Three pronghorn shot south of Laramie

South of Laramie, Game Warden Bill Brinegar received a report of three dead pronghorn along Sand Creek Road south of Laramie.

All three pronghorn had been shot multiple times with a semi-automatic, small-caliber rifle.

Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood located bullets with a metal detector while Warden Brinegar meticulously dug through each carcass.

Their patience paid off and they retrieved several small caliber lead bullets from two of the carcasses.

This case is still under investigation and no suspects have been charged.

Man harasses nesting hawks with radio-controlled plane

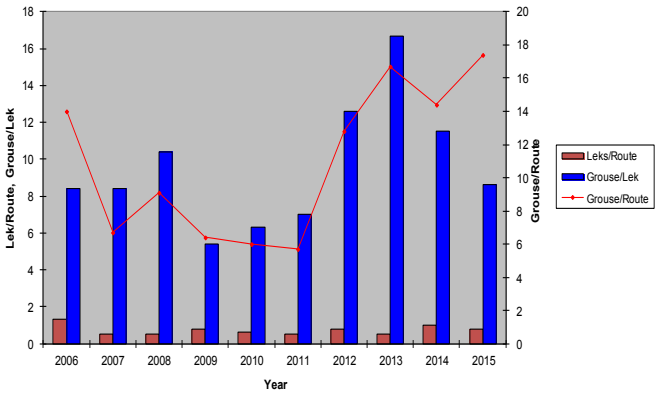
South Laramie Game Warden Bill Brinegar received a report that a man was dive-bombing a hawk's nest with a remote controlled airplane near the Laramie Landfill.

Brinegar arrived to find the man sitting in a lawn chair just off of Rogers Canyon road and he was indeed using his remote control airplane to harass the hawks. Warden Brinegar approached the man with a friendly greeting but the man immediately became defensive.

Two witnesses had described how the plane was used to dive bomb the nest, then it would gain elevation and do it again. This would invoke a protective response from the adult hawks, including attacking the plane.

Since the witnesses were both willing to testify, Warden Brinegar issued the airplane operator a citation for harassing wildlife and seized the plane as evidence.

2006-2015 sharp-tailed grouse lek data



Wheatland Wildlife Biologist Martin Hicks reports that sharp-tailed grouse surveys in southeast Wyoming were down slightly for 2014/2015 due in part to vegetation height. Biologists had several call (sound) observations but the observer could not see the grouse or the lek due to the tall vegetation this spring.

Hicks is optimistic that numbers will continue to increase based on precipitation levels. However, the snowstorm on Mother's Day in May most likely destroyed nests, although it is not known how many at this time. Hicks will conduct brood surveys later this summer to get an idea of hatch success and brood survival.

Snowy Range moose study shows good calf crop

Laramie Region personnel assisted University of Wyoming Graduate Student Alex May with the second phase of the Snowy Range moose project in July.

Back in March of this year biologists radio collared 30 cow moose, including 29 adults and one yearling. Each cow confirmed pregnant during the March capture needed a visual confirmation to see if she had a calf at heel. Laramie Wildlife Biologist Lee Knox said this proved to be more difficult than biologists expected due to the dense understory and the sheer ghost-like nature of a few of the cows.

One of the collared moose had died earlier in the summer near Lake Owen and four others could not be located. Many of the moose have moved around quite a bit from where they were originally captured in March. But the good news is that all of the cows except one were observed with a calf. However, no twins were seen.

The animals all had good body fat reserves and looked healthy. Biologists will do another calf check later this year to see how they survive the summer.

Photo by Alex May

Tularemia confirmed in cottontail rabbits in Platte and Albany Counties

In the last month, cases of tularemia have been documented near Devil's Tower, Guernsey, Laramie and the Sybille research center. Because this disease is known to occur throughout the state, additional outbreaks can be expected.

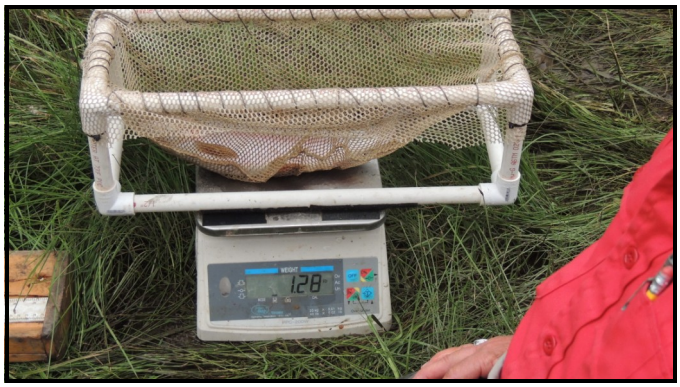
Hosts for the disease are generally rabbits, muskrats, beavers and squirrels. In domestic species, sheep and house cats are most common.

The disease is usually spread to humans through bites from infected ticks or deer flies, but any biting arthropod can transmit tularemia. People can also become infected by consuming contaminated food or water, direct contact with breaks in the skin, or inhaling particles containing the bacteria, usually from exposure to an animal that died of the disease.

Human cases are usually uncommon, with two-three cases/year in Wyoming. However, at least six cases have been reported in 2015. Although symptoms may vary, common symptoms are swollen and painful lymph glands, abrupt onset of fever, chills, headache, muscle aches, joint pain, dry cough, and progressive weakness. A skin ulcer commonly forms at the site of the insect bite and is frequently accompanied by swelling of regional lymph glands.

To prevent tularemia, use an insect repellent with DEET, and wear light colored clothing so that ticks are easier to spot. Do not mow over animal carcasses, and use a dust mask when mowing or doing landscape work. Avoid handling sick wildlife. If an animal carcass must be moved, wear gloves and place it in a garbage bag using a long-handled shovel; place the bag in an outdoor garbage can. Carcasses can also be disposed of by deep burial or incineration. Wear gloves and wash hands thoroughly if you must handle sick animals or carcasses.For more information visit http://www.cdc.gov/tularemia/index.html.

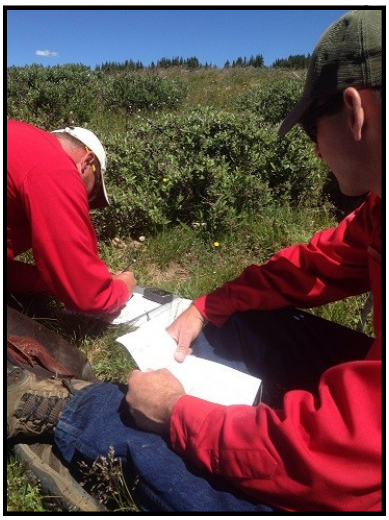
Wyoming Dept of Health: http://www.health.wyo.gov/phsd/epiid/tularemia.html



North Platte River fishery looking great

Each year a population estimate is obtained from one of five representative sections of the North Platte River upstream from Seminoe Reservoir. In July the river section from the USFS Pickeroon Campground downstream two river miles was sampled. Laramie Region fish biologists were delighted to find good populations of brown and rainbow trout. There were several year classes represented and a few of the 15- and 16-inch fish tipped the scales at more than a pound. On one day of sampling the crew netted more than 400 fish in two miles. This is an excellent fishery for Wyoming anglers.

Habitat assessments



Laramie Region personnel Ryan Amundson, Lee Knox and Bill Brinegar conducted habitat assessments in the Sheep Mountain herd Unit in July.

They accessed the area by horseback. South Laramie Game Warden Bill Brinegar said he looks forward to these types of days in the field. “Ask any game warden and they’ll tell you they didn’t get into this line of work to sit behind a computer all day,” he said.

Over the next five years Game and Fish personnel will be conducting these assessments in winter, transitional and summer ranges, capturing conditions in various important habitat types such as shrub, aspen and riparian.

The young black bear entered a camper trailer through this compartment.

Camp-raiding black bear euthanized

A young black bear was euthanized after entering camper trailers and raiding camps numerous times in the Sierra Madre mountains south of Encampment.

In early July the bear fed on a cooler of food that was left unsecured and entered an unoccupied camp trailer through a storage compartment. The bear then entered a second unoccupied camper through a window, damaging the interior and spilling kerosene fuel.

The next night the bear re-entered the camp trailer, and this time the trailer was occupied by a man, two women and a dog. The bear fled after the occupants fired a shot.

The next day Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton set a culvert trap and two nights later caught the bear. Because of his willingness to enter occupied dwellings and receiving numerous human food rewards, the bear was euthanized.

Habitat and Access

The Laramie Region Habitat and Access crew installed one-half mile of new fence along North Platte River in Rawhide Wildlife Habitat Management Area (below) and irrigated food plots at Table Mountain WHMA (at right).

The crew also Installed four new info/map signs at Gray-rocks Reservoir, replaced 150 yards of fence on Springer WHMA, installed culverts at the Encampment Public Access Area, and completed several other projects.

Outhouse vandalized

The outhouse at the Monolith Public Access Area was vandalized over the Independence Day weekend. After cost of materials and labor the damage will probably cost somewhere around $1,500-$2,000.

A Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation volunteer (at left in background), Rebecca Burton with the Saratoga Encampment Rawlins Conservation District (center) and Katie Cheesbrough with WGFD plant shrubs to enhance mule deer habitat .

Improving mule deer habitat

Habitat work in the Platte Valley and Baggs areas are in high gear this summer as we kicked off the new Rapid Habitat Assessments for the Mule Deer Initiatives, grazing permit renewals for the Grizzly and Red Rim-Daley Wildlife Habitat Management Areas, Platte Valley Habitat Partnership (PVHP) project development, implementation, and monitoring, and PVHP events.

Volunteers from Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and Saratoga Encampment Rawlins Conservation District (SERCD) and WGFD planted 40 shrubs on the Faerber property to improve mule deer habitat along the Hell Creek drainage. Shrubs were planted in tree tubes to protect them from wildlife and livestock grazing, as well as to retain moisture while they establish.

The Third Annual Platte Valley Volunteer Fence Day took place on June 27 and was a huge success. About one mile of hazardous redundant fencing was removed from an important mule deer migration corridor by volunteers from PVHP, WGFD, Bureau of Land Management, and SERCD.

Volunteers gather after a day of removing hazardous fence from important mule deer habitat.

Aquatic habitat

It finally stopped raining in southeast Wyoming and river flows have dropped dramatically, allowing aquatic habitat biologists to get in the field and conduct assessments.

With the abundance of sunshine, Aquatic Habitat Biologist Christina Barrineau and Technician Betsy Morgan began watering riparian vegetation research plots along the Encampment River below Riverside.

Plants are being watered at least once a week until there is more consistent precipitation.

The research plots are part of a study examining what species to plant and at what elevation in relation to bankfull for the Encampment River.

Christina and Betsy conducted watershed surveys on three streams (Miner Creek, South Fork Miner Creek, and Beaver Dam Park) in the Encampment River Watershed.

Watershed assessment surveys help guide biologists with potential habitat management actions. The surveys concluded watershed assessment efforts in the Miner Creek watershed.

The next drainage to be surveyed is the East Fork Encampment.

FOREVER WILD families

Rite of Passage

Participants of the Laramie Region Forever Wild Families attended their Rite of Passage event at the end of July. The families traveled to Whisky Mountain Conservation Camp near Dubois where they learned more hunting skills and tried fly fishing for the first time. This was the final event for this year's participants.

Jubilee Days celebration

Game Wardens Shawn Blajszczak, Kelly Todd, Ryan Kenneda, and Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood participated in the Laramie Jubilee Days Parade in Laramie to help celebrate Wyoming's 125th birthday.

Bighorn sheep study winds down

June and July were busy at the Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center at Sybille with monitoring lambs for the respiratory disease research.

Nine lambs were born this year and each was monitored twice a day. Despite our high hopes for this year's study, all of the lambs again developed respiratory disease.

The pathogens and patterns of disease seen in this year's study appeared different from the previous two years and we are getting ready to analyze the data for publication.

While we have yet to find an answer for how to manage respiratory disease in free-ranging bighorn sheep, our captive research has helped us significantly in understanding the roles of pathogens in disease and the potential for chronic herd infections.

Chronic Wasting Disease study

June and July saw a continuation of the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) vaccine study. All remaining study elk were sedated and biopsied to determine if they are positive for CWD.

Two veterinary students from Colorado State University joined Game and Fish Department biologists to learn about captive elk research and CWD. Results from the biopsies help biologists determine whether differences between vaccine and control groups can be detected earlier in the course of disease.

So far results from the study indicate that the vaccine is not producing a protective effect against Chronic Wasting Disease infection. Biologists expect the study to be complete by summer 2016.

Laramie residents attend wildlife photography workshop

Around 20 participants took advantage of a free Game and Fish Department photography workshop offered in Laramie in July.

Participants learned to capture compelling stories, create dynamic compositions and control the technical aspects of their images. The two-hour workshop included a classroom presentation and the opportunity for students to shoot photos under the guidance of instructor Jessica Grant, summer photography intern for the Game and Fish Department.

Photography students snap photos during the free WGFD Wildlife Photography Workshop offered in Laramie in July.

Teamwork

The Laramie Fisheries Management crew assisted the Wildlife Division with release of a porcupine. Wildlife Division personnel caught the porcupine in a back-yard in Laramie and it needed to be released into suitable habitat. Since the Laramie Fisheries Management Crew was heading out to work at a nearby lake, they dropped off the porcupine on their way.

Cheyenne Field Archers donates $1,633 to Access Yes

Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood attended a meeting with the Cheyenne Field Archers where they presented a donation check for $1,633 for the Access Yes program.

Access Yes funds provide the money needed to secure Walk-In and Hunter Management Areas, as well as some long-term hunting and fishing easements on private land. The Field Archers raise money for the program each year through a two-evening archery competition, and have donated for more than ten years. Thank you, Cheyenne Field Archers.

Malfunction causes boat to sink

The Independence Day holiday was busy for law enforcement personnel in the Laramie Region. The annual Glendo task force patrolled Glendo, Gray rocks and Guernsey reservoirs.

One BUI (boating under the influence) was investigated on Guernsey Reservoir after reports of a jet boat “buzzing” the beach, and later seen sinking. The boat had suffered a malfunction, causing it to turn abruptly and take on water. It quickly began to sink.

Quick thinking watercraft operators nearby came to the sinking boat’s aid and they hooked a tow rope onto the bow and towed it to shore. No injuries were reported, and aside from water damage to the jet boat’s motor, only minor fiberglass damage occurred.

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

wgfd.wyo.gov