



# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

## Sheridan Region

### December 2015 Newsletter



#### Sheridan Region

##### Regional Wildlife Supervisor:

Joe Gilbert

##### Regional Fisheries Supervisor:

Paul Mavrakis

##### Office Managers:

Lori Roe  
Kathy Boyles

##### Clerical Specialists:

Wendy Balkenbush  
Stephanie Bomar

##### Game Wardens:

Dayton: Dustin Shorma  
Sheridan: Bruce Scigliano  
Buffalo: Jim Seeman  
Kaycee: Grant Gerharter  
N. Gillette: Jackie Otto  
S. Gillette: Dustin Kirsch  
Moorcroft: J.D. Davis  
Investigator: Scott Adell  
Damage Tech: Joe Weyant

##### Public Information Specialist:

Bud Stewart

##### Wildlife Biologists :

Wildlife Management Coordinator:  
Lynn Jahnke  
Sheridan: Tim Thomas  
Buffalo: Dan Thiele  
Gillette: Erika Peckham  
Terrestrial Habitat: Todd Caltrider

##### PLPW Program Coordinator:

Troy Tobiasson

##### Fish Biologists:

Bill Bradshaw  
Andrew Nikirk  
Aquatic Habitat: Travis Cundy

##### Habitat and Access Coordinator:

Seth Roseberry

##### Aquatic Invasive Species:

Greg Downey

##### Story Fish Hatchery:

Superintendent: Steve Diekema  
Senior Fish Culturist: Brad Hughes  
Culturist: Jennifer Meineke

##### Sheridan Bird Farm:

Supervisor: Darrell Meineke  
Biologist: Nate Brown  
Technician: Kurt Heiser

## White-tailed Deer Rescued From Abandoned Underground Concrete Structure



*The white-tailed buck deer peers up from the underground concrete structure.*



*Sheridan Bird Farm Biologist Nate Brown maneuvers the strap around the trapped white-tailed deer.*

On Saturday November 7, 2015, a pheasant hunter reported a deer stuck in a hole near the old Acme town site to Sheridan Bird Farm Biologist Nate Brown. Brown contacted Sheridan Wildlife Biologist Tim Thomas, Access Yes Coordinator Troy Tobiasson, and Sheridan Game Warden Bruce Scigliano who responded with the needed equipment and manpower to get the white-tailed buck from the underground concrete structure. After a strap was placed around the animal, Thomas immobilized the deer and it was pulled from the pit. With the white-tailed deer hunting season still open in the general area, orange duck tape was placed on the deer's antlers and a tag was placed in it's ear instructing hunters to notify the Game and Fish Department if they harvested the deer. The ear tag is required as the meat from an immobilized animal is not suitable for human consumption for a period of time. The entrance to the pit was covered over so no other animals would fall into the structure.



*Sheridan Wildlife Biologist Tim Thomas prepares to immobilize the deer with a jab stick.*



*Access Yes Coordinator Troy Tobiasson with the rescued white-tailed deer. Note orange duck tape on the deer's antlers.*



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### Devils Tower Game Check Station



The Devils Tower check station, located at the pullouts along Highway 24 south of Devils Tower National Monument, was operated by Wyoming Game and Fish Department personnel each weekend in November. During the nine days the check station was operated, hunters brought 30 mule deer, 270 white-tailed deer and ten turkeys through the check station.

Game and Fish regulations require all hunters, whether successful or not, to stop at game check stations.

*Gillette Wildlife Biologist Erika Peckham visits with a successful deer hunter that stopped by the Devils Tower check station.*

### Mule Deer Population Surveys Started in Late November



Sheridan Region Wildlife Biologists and Game Wardens conducted several postseason mule deer aerial classification surveys in late November. Postseason classifications are used to determine herd fawn ratios and buck ratios. Fawn ratios provide managers an indication of fawn production and survival to early winter. Fawn production and survival is the key factor in mule deer population growth. Buck ratios show the percentage of bucks in each herd and provide an indication of the quality of the buck hunting opportunity. Bucks are classified as yearling bucks, Class I bucks ( $\leq 20$ " antler spread), Class II bucks (20-25" antler spread) and Class III bucks ( $\geq 25$ " antler spread). **The yearling buck ratio indicates how well the previous year's fawns survived the winter.** Classifications will continue through December with managers conducting ground surveys.





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### Resident Youth Have A Great Hunting Season



*Josh Cleveland, a young hunter from Kaycee, had a banner year big game hunting. In October Josh bagged a 6X6 elk and then in November he was successful in taking a great 8X9 white-tailed deer.*



*Terrance Monger of Gillette harvested his first deer on a parcel of public land that had been hunted hard for almost a month.*

Kaycee Game Warden Grant Gerharter was able to snap the photos above of Josh Cleveland. Josh, along with his father Randy and brother Aaron are avid big game hunters.

In late November, Moorcroft Game Warden John Davis checked Terrance Monger and his grandfather Jim while on routine patrol in Deer Hunt Area 3. Terrance had harvested his first deer (photo on left) on a state section that had been hunted hard all season. The Mongers spotted a mule deer buck lying out in the sage brush away from the road traffic and stalked close enough for Terrance to make a one-shot kill.

Congratulations to these two young hunters!



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### Story Fish Hatchery Transfers Eggs in November



*Story Fish Hatchery Senior Fish Culturist Brad Hughes strips eggs from a brown trout.*

This fall the Story Fish Hatchery spawned over 3.2 million eggs from the three (brook, brown and lake trout) fall spawning brood stocks maintained at the hatchery. By November the eggs were ready to be transferred to other fish hatcheries in Wyoming and across the country. The hatchery shipped 113,000 splake (lake trout X brook trout hybrid) eggs to Colorado and other fish hatcheries in Wyoming. Kentucky and Idaho received 135,000 brown trout eggs. Tennessee, Utah and other hatcheries in Wyoming received 100,000 brook trout eggs; while 130,000 lake trout eggs were shipped to Idaho. Story also shipped 286,000 tiger trout (brook trout X brown trout hybrid) eggs to Utah, Nebraska, South Dakota, Idaho, Colorado and other fish hatcheries in Wyoming.

In return for the trout eggs shipped to other states, Game and Fish receives fish species that are not raised in Wyoming fish hatcheries.

### Photogenic Bobcats



While on foot patrol, Kaycee Game Warden Grant Gerharter observed a family of four bobcats and took the photos shown here. After a short time, one of the kittens saw Gerharter and ran away. The mother followed and made some interesting calls to her kittens. There is one bobcat in the photo on the upper left, three bobcats in the photo on the lower left, and all four bobcats are in the photo above. The bobcats blend in well with the surrounding trees and rocks!



the wyoming game & fish department

# CASPER REGION newsletter

## Hunting Update

### Outdoor Dream Foundation. Elk Season

Many people from Newcastle, Wyoming teamed together to provide an Outdoor Dream Foundation hunt for Kaleb Buck. Kaleb has been battling cancer for over four years. Between his latest rounds of treatments the Outdoor Dream Foundation was able to send him and his family to



Newcastle on his dream hunt. WGFD biologist Joe Sandrini organized the hunt and Dick Terry of Wyoming State Forestry helped with the guiding. Special thanks to all the landowners who allowed Kaleb to hunt on their ranches, C&A Meats in Sundance for donating the processing of Kaleb's game and Kim's Art Wild Taxidermy in Lander for mounting his trophies. Thank you Outdoor Dream Foundation for making Kaleb's dream hunt come true.



The hunt started off with Kaleb harvesting his first pronghorn, a trophy at nearly 15 inches. The pronghorn was harvested on the YT Ranch, thank you Shirley Mendenhall ! A couple of days later, after a number of unsuccessful stalks, Kaleb harvested a bull elk (356 points Boone

and Crockett) on the edge of the timber, 275 yards across a windblown meadow on Plum Creek Ranch LLC. -Thank you Liza Millett !

### Inside This Month's Issue:

**December Fishing**  
2016 Regulations

**On the Ground**  
Insta-dams, Mule Deer Classifications

**In the Water**  
NPR Construction Continues

**Of Interest**  
Grebe, Education



Kaleb’s hunting success didn’t stop there. He harvested his first mule deer, a great 4-point at only 50 yards. His mule deer was taken on the Angle N Ranch -Thank you Jason Nahrgang !

Upon returning home Kaleb posted to Facebook, “Just landed in Indiana, glad to be back, but miss everyone that made us feel at home and made my dreams come true in Wyoming.”



Hunting seasons for elk remain open in some areas during December, including Areas 7 and 19. Elk were more difficult to find on public and PLPW lands during the first part of the season. One very large group of mostly cows and calves was observed just to the west of the Muddy Mountain Hunter Management Area (HMA) and would occasionally spill onto the HMA and provide opportunity for hunters with HMA permits. Solitary bulls remained accessible in places, as evidenced by the success of this youth hunter on opening day.

By mid-November, the elk began to move and disperse to more accessible areas on the eastern side of Muddy Mountain and associated drainages. Cow hunters have since had good success as elk have spread out over a wider area, including accessible public and PLPW lands.

## December Fishing 2016 Fishing Regulations

As the snow starts to fly and the ice begins to form, anglers should be aware of the special winter ice fishing provisions and also be aware of regulations concerning fishing with live minnows. Live baitfish shall not be transported out of the designated use area as listed by the WGFD on the live baitfish receipt. More information about the use of live baitfish and the special winter ice fishing provisions can be found in the 2016 Wyoming Fishing Regulations and online at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov).



## On the Ground

### Insta-dams, Mule Deer Classifications

Fisheries Biologist Matt Hahn assisted Tracy Wendt to collect longitudinal profile data on Bolton Creek. The data will be used to evaluate sediment collection associated with the insta-dams (manmade beaver dams) placed in the stream. Beaver introductions were not as successful as hoped, we believe due to lack of food availability food in the winter



Casper Biologists and Game Wardens conducted extensive mule deer surveys by helicopter during mid-November. Deer are counted and classified into sex and age classes in each hunt area using both aerial and ground survey methods. The results of these surveys are then used in computer models to make decisions regarding next year's license numbers and seasons. Nearly 4,000 deer were surveyed between hunt areas 89, 34, and 66 this year. Fawn numbers were particularly high in Area 34, buck to doe ratios were high in Area 89, and the highest number of mule deer since 2005 were surveyed in Area 66. Overall, managers are very optimistic about mule deer herd health and numbers going into 2016.

## In the Water

### North Platte River Construction Continues

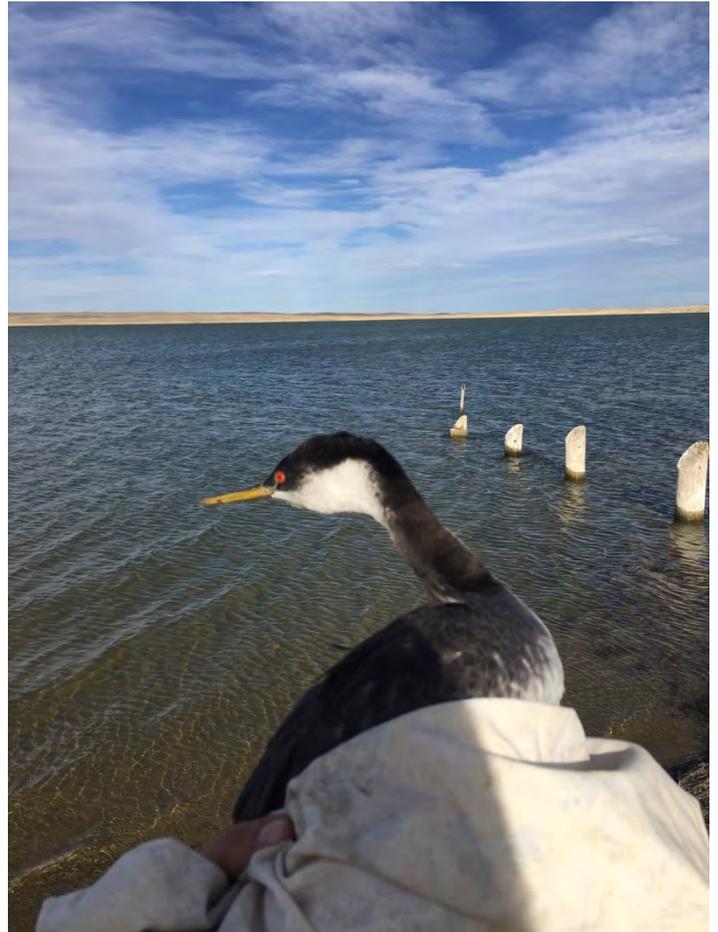
The weather has been very kind to the contractors working on the North Platte River in Casper this fall and early winter. After nearly a three-week starting delay, RiverWorks nearly completed work in Morad Park. Ice will prevent completing all activities this fall and they will return in the spring of 2016 to complete the project. Shamrock Environmental is working on the second phase along Wyoming Boulevard and also made very good progress in the short window for construction in the fall. Shamrock plans to work on bank grading for two weeks into December and return in the fall of 2016 to complete their section of the river.



## Of Interest

### Grebe, Education

Casper Wildlife Biologist Heather O'Brien was contacted by Casper Metro Animal Control regarding an unidentified injured waterfowl. The bird turned out to be a western grebe – a species of water bird whose legs are so far back on its body, it cannot walk on dry land. These birds occasionally mistake wet concrete for water and attempt to land, but then need to be on a large body of water in order to take off into the air. This grebe had done just that and was found in the parking lot of a local business. Landing on the hard concrete caused some minor injuries to the bird's feet. These injuries were treated with topical antibiotic and the grebe was released onto Goldeneye Reservoir, where it quickly found another western grebe.



Game Wardens Adam Parks and Cody Bish visited Paradise Valley Elementary School in Natrona County to help generate excitement and kick off a new animal science unit for the first grade students. Wardens Parks and Bish spoke to the students about animal adaptations in relationship to winter in Wyoming, specifically camouflage, migration and hibernation.

After the presentation, students were invited to come to the front and get some hands on experience with some furs and skulls from a variety of Wyoming wildlife.





# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

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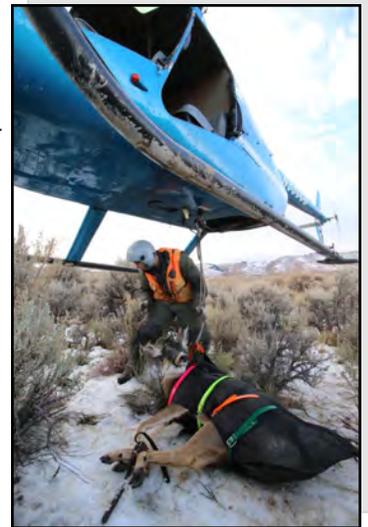
## Mule Deer Research Continues

In December, researchers with the University of Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department recaptured approximately 60 doe mule deer that had been fitted with GPS collars as part of two similar studies evaluating the deer's body condition and habitat on Pinedale area winter ranges. They performed ultrasonography on each animal to determine its percentage of body fat and pregnancy.

Researchers will monitor the animals each autumn to determine fawn recruitment rates and survival. Mule deer will be recaptured every December and March during the next two years to evaluate changes in their body condition between seasons. Ultimately, this information will allow wildlife managers to assess whether these deer herds are reaching their reproductive capacity based on current available habitat, or if other factors are responsible for suppressed population growth in recent years.

This research, the results of the hunting seasons, recent counts and habitat work will all be discussed at upcoming **public meetings January 5 in Pinedale, January 6 in Marbleton and January 7 in Thayne.**

*(Clockwise from upper right) A hobbled mule deer is attached to the helicopter to be ferried to researchers 2) Dr. Kevin Monteith measures body fat on a deer 3) Back to winter range! 4) Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas conducts an interview 5) UW grad student Sam Dwinell releases a collared doe as State Legislator Fred Baldwin of Kemmerer looks on 6) Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick and Habitat Biologist Jill Randall take measurements.*





### Mule Deer Poacher Convicted

Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas and Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas, son and father, respectively, recently teamed up to solve a poaching case in the Wyoming Range where mule deer are highly sought after by hunters. While enjoying a day off hunting together, the wardens observed suspicious activity, which resulted in an investigation and ultimate apprehension of the violators.

“In late September, Green River resident Christopher Galloway, 30, harvested two trophy buck mule deer on one license,” said Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas. “Later in the day, Galloway involved a juvenile to tag the second buck mule deer. This incident occurred in deer hunt area 143, in the South Piney drainage. This hunt area is within the Wyoming Range, where deer are managed for higher buck ratios and buck quality.”

Galloway was sentenced to two days in jail, loss of hunting privileges for three years, fined \$920 for taking an over-limit of deer and accessory to transfer of deer license, in addition to losing both deer. The juvenile was also cited and fined \$40 and will be required to give a presentation at a hunter education class.

“Regardless of the initial intention of this violation, the actions that followed, involving a juvenile, intentionally misleading game wardens, and trying to claim both deer made this violation worse,” Adam Hymas said. “I applaud Judge Haws on his efforts to let the public know the importance of wildlife to the people of Sublette County and the entire state, his promotion of hunting legally and ethically, and the importance of hunting regulations.”

Anyone with information on these or any wildlife violation may also call the Stop Poaching Hotline at 1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847). Tips may be reported to your local game warden or online at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov) Tips may also be reported to the Green River Game and Fish Office at 1-307-875-3223 or the Pinedale Game and Fish Office at 1-800-452-9107. Callers can remain anonymous and may be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$5,000 if the information leads to a conviction.



Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas (left) and Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas, hold the antlers of mule deer illegally taken in the South Piney Drainage in the Wyoming Range





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### Behind the Badge

With mule deer were scattered from winter ranges to mid elevation through all of November, elk hunters were seeing a lot of nice bucks and wondering where they were during the deer season! Elk hunters were having mixed success until mid November when snow started moving elk down to lower elevations and harvest increased in some areas around Pinedale.

**Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas** spent considerable time checking elk hunters and addressing multiple violations, which included three bulls that were shot after the bull season closed and one buck mule deer.

With the very low harvest, violations too were few and far between. **North Pinedale Game Warden Bubba Haley** spent several days on the mule deer winter range and coordinated the 2015 task force, which brought in additional game wardens from other parts of the state. No violations were detected and few contacts made on the winter range. Overall, compliance has been good with only a few enforcement actions taken.

**South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft** checked late season antlerless elk hunters during November, also reporting low success due to extremely mild weather conditions.

Kraft also responded to a number of buck mule deer that were reported suspiciously dead. After performing a necropsy on the animals most were found to be antler wounds from sparring with other bucks.



Jordan Kraft patrolled elk and white-tailed deer hunters during November and documented numerous hunters without the proper stamps. Most elk hunt areas in the Pinedale Region require elk hunters to purchase an elk special management stamp in addition to the required conservation stamp.





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Photos of mule deer on Pinedale area winter ranges by South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft

## Mule Deer on the Move

As mule deer make their annual migration to winter ranges, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department works to maintain a presence there to watch for poachers or suspicious activity. Each year, additional game wardens from around the state work stints to help get the coverage.

Mule deer from the Sublette and Wyoming Range herds spend the winter in the Pinedale/Big Piney/LaBarge area. Although trophy mule deer can be difficult to find in the vast backcountry during hunting seasons, they are more visible, and more vulnerable, as they transition to winter ranges.

“We end our hunting seasons when we do to protect these animals during the winter months when they are more vulnerable,” said Game and Fish Regional Supervisor John Lund. “These deer face many challenges, and blatant illegal shooting is especially disturbing.”

Game wardens continue to focus their attention on these mule deer winter ranges, but they still need help. “We do not have the personnel to be everywhere, all the time, so we rely on reports from the public,” said Lund. “There are quite a few people out there watching the deer and their reports of suspicious activity can be extremely helpful. Whether you’re a hunter or just a wildlife enthusiast, the illegal shooting of these animals should not be tolerated by anyone.”

To report a wildlife crime, please call the Stop Poaching Hotline at 1-877-WGFD-TIP. Callers can remain anonymous and may be eligible for a cash reward if a conviction is made.



## Whoa Pardner!

As deer and other big game make their way to winter ranges, they also have to face many obstacles including highways. Regional Game and Fish personnel work closely with WYDOT to strategically place the electronic warning signs along area highways. Motorists are reminded to pay heed to the signs warning of the increased possibility of wildlife crossing roadways.





### Big Game Groceries

The growing conditions were excellent in 2015 for shrubs on winter ranges in the Pinedale Region. The quantity of precipitation was above average and it came during spring and early summer where it resulted in annual production on shrubs (see figure below). Spring and summer rains also generated good conditions for seed production on shrubs. Although seed production is the first step in seedling establishment, growing conditions for three years will need to be favorable to establish a new age class of Wyoming big sagebrush and many other shrub communities. The climate in 2014 and 2015 were both favorable for recruiting a new age class in many shrub communities, but growing conditions in 2016 will likely still influence survival of these young plants. Leader production in 2015 for true mountain mahogany averaged five inches across the five transects that were monitored (Figure below).



Even with favorable forage production on winter ranges, winter severity including snow depth, temperature, and crusting conditions will greatly influence over-winter survival. Fortunately, summer conditions allowed wildlife to maximize fat reserves in 2015 and recruitment of fawns appears to be good from both 2014 and 2015. Many habitat treatments Wyoming Game and Fish Department has planned for Wyoming Range and Sublette mule deer herds have the objective of establishing young age class shrubs for long-term improvements of wildlife foraging conditions.

*Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall measures sagebrush leader growth on the Pinedale Mesa.*

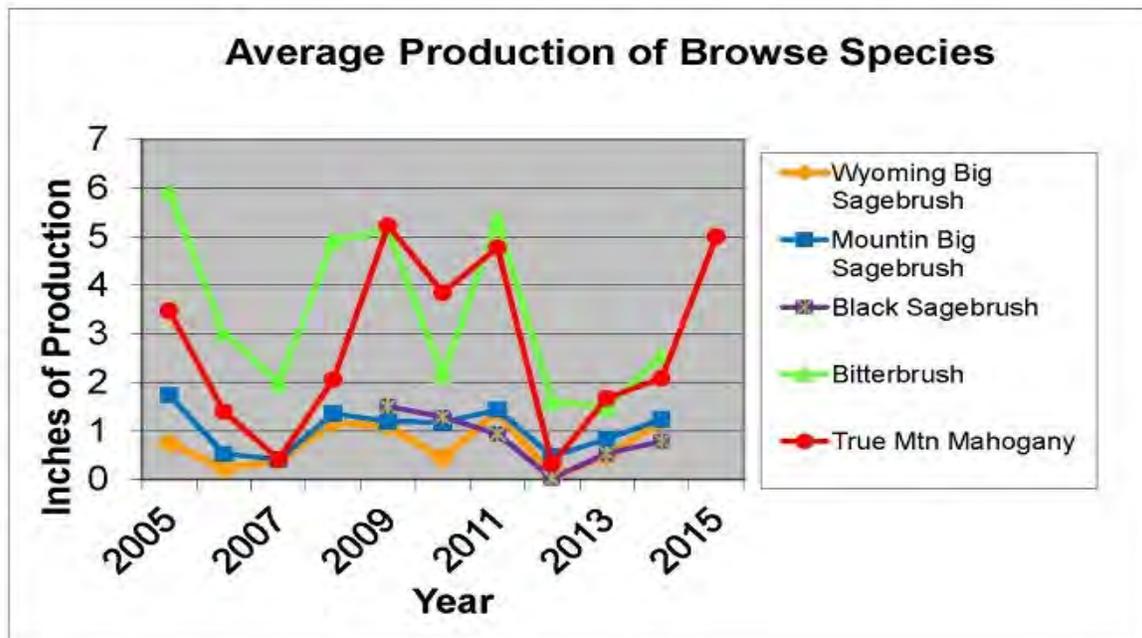


Figure 2. Production on shrubs from 2005 through 2015.



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## Brucellosis Works Continues

As the Game and Fish Department rolled out its updated Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) management plan to the public, Brucellosis-Feedground-Habitat personnel were busy collecting CWD samples from road-killed deer and moose, and hunter harvested elk, as is done every fall and winter. Juliann Terry, the National Elk Refuge CWD technician, was busy collecting samples from successful hunters' elk as snowstorms in late November initiated migrations to the Refuge.

*A lymph node is collected from a cow elk.*

Brucellosis personnel began ramping up work to update the Brucellosis Management Action Plans (BMAPs) for the seven elk herd units containing feedgrounds. A top recommendation of the Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Team, the 7 plans were first completed in 2006, then updated in 2011, and are again due to be updated in 2016.

The plans summarize elk and brucellosis management, along with results of any research, conducted in the herds. Lists of cattle producers with operations in each elk herd are generated, then they are invited to a meeting to discuss various brucellosis management options that could reduce brucellosis among elk attending feedgrounds, and indirectly reduce the risk of brucellosis transmission to cattle. Meetings will be held in mid-December, and federal land managers and livestock veterinary health officials are planning to attend to answer any pertinent questions that may arise.



*Brucellosis GIS specialist Cheyenne Stewart assesses the best option to cut an aspen off the Soda Lake elk feedground fence.*

Brucellosis personnel assisted the Habitat and Access crew by riding approximately 16 miles of the Soda Lake elk fence, cutting down trees that had fallen on the fence and repairing damaged wires. The entirety of the 26 mile-long fence is ridden every fall to ensure its integrity.

Brucellosis section biologists completed final repairs to the elk traps at Muddy and Scab Creek feedgrounds. These feedgrounds, along with the Fall Creek feedground, are the sites where a pilot elk test and slaughter project took place from 2006-2010 in an attempt to reduce incidence of brucellosis among the elk wintering there. Every winter since, brucellosis program personnel have captured and sampled elk from two of the

feedgrounds to assess longevity of the brucellosis reduction associated with slaughtering around 200 brucellosis positive elk. Brucellosis prevalence rose in the first winter following cessation of slaughter, and has continued to rise every year thus far.



*Brucellosis GIS Specialist Cheyenne Stewart (left) and Piney brucellosis biologist Eric Maichak finish re-setting a post supporting the main gate on the Scab Creek feedground. The structure had shifted after a large windstorm, preventing the gate from functioning.*



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### Talk of the Town...

Or maybe 'Talk of the Office' would be more appropriate. A few years ago a local resident found a small turtle in his driveway. Tuttle, as he's now named, is an Ornate Box Turtle not native to the Pinedale area .



*With the winter season upon us ,Tuttle the turtle is expected to go into hibernation, but it's unclear whether anyone told him how! He is giving it a good try though. He's got the front half figured out.*

He's destined to live out his life in captivity, since he doesn't know how to forage for food and has to be hand fed. But Tuttle has become a favorite for office visitors of all ages as he cruises around the office in his turtle ball or gobbles down meal worms for breakfast. Tuttle serves as a good reminder, pets are a long-term commitment. "Don't Let It Loose!"



*Tuttle cruising the office in his ball.*

### Fish News

The Boulder Hatchery continued the Fall Rainbow Trout spawn in November with a total green egg take thus far of 2.4 million. The Boulder hatchery crew was appreciative of the help they received from Pete Feck, Jake Foos, Tim Kurtz, Kris Holmes, Greg Lehr, Darren Rhea and Des Brunette.

Pete Starr from Speas Hatchery delivered 42,000 Colorado River Cutthroat transfers to Boulder. And Boulder shipped 320,000 eyed kokanee eggs to the Dubois Hatchery in November.

Matt Joki and Joe Gillis attended the Fish Division meeting in Lander. Matt gave a presentation on Boulder operations and Joe gave a presentation on the East Fork Hatchery.

Boulder had 16 visitors during November.

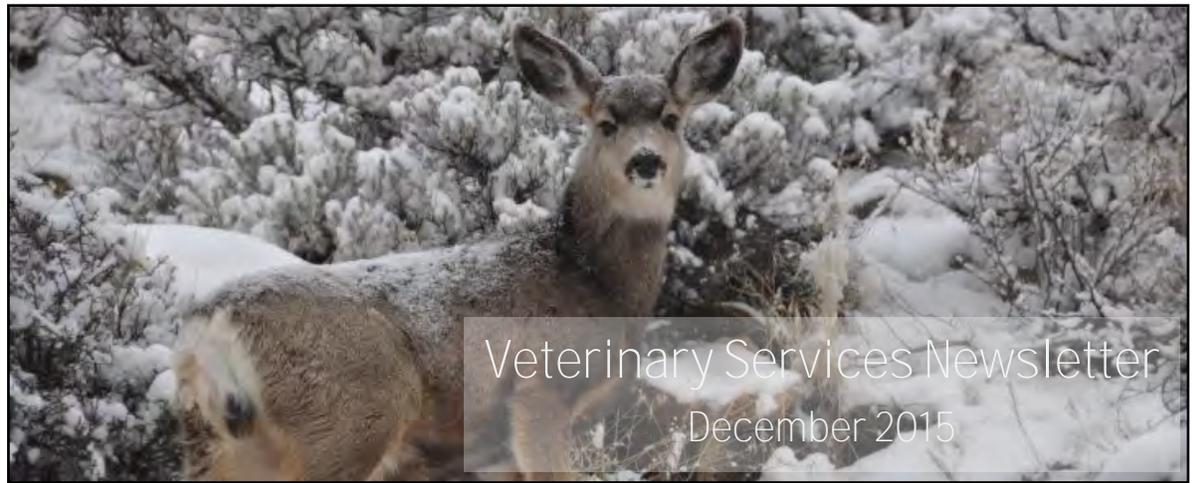
Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea contacted anglers at Boulder Lake who were taking advantage of the early ice fishing conditions. Not many fish were caught in this group. We received one report of a Boulder Lake ice angler catching a lake trout over 15 pounds this month.

Pete Cavalli attended another preconstruction meeting for the Fremont Lake boat ramp/dock/fishing pier project. The contractor mobilized equipment with plans of starting demolition work early in the month. Construction activities will begin in the spring after the ice on the lake melts.



*Pinedale Fish Biologist Darren Rhea hoists a large lake trout that was netted and released in Green River Lake.*

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## Wildlife Necropsy Summary

Fifteen wildlife cases were submitted for diagnostics in November.

Species	Date Received	County	Diagnosis
Mule Deer	11/2/2015	Carbon	Adenovirus
Pronghorn	11/3/2015	Johnson	Bacterial peritonitis
Mule Deer	11/6/15	Unknown	Intestinal hemorrhage
Mule Deer	11/6/2015	Sweetwater	Lung abscess and epicarditis
Mule Deer	11/9/2015	Lincoln	Adenovirus
Elk	11/10/2015	Carbon	Pending
Elk	11/10/2015	Carbon	Pending
Pronghorn	11/10/2015	Fremont	Adenovirus
Mule Deer	11/16/2015	Sweetwater	Emaciation
Mountain Lion	11/17/15	Fremont	Pending
Mule Deer	11/18/2015	Natrona	Adenovirus
Mule Deer	11/19/2015	Laramie	Pending
Mule Deer	11/23/2015	Platte	Adenovirus
Eurasian Collared Dove	11/24/2015	Goshen	Avian Paramyxovirus
Eurasian Collared Dove	11/24/2015	Goshen	Avian Paramyxovirus

### Case of the Month

Wyoming Game and Fish biologist, Gary Fralick, submitted five fawns from Star Valley to the Wildlife Health Laboratory. Adenovirus Hemorrhagic disease (AHD) was found to be the cause of death of each fawn. Although this disease has been documented in Wyoming, diagnostic tests for this disease were poor, and many cases were likely missed. Between 1999 and 2014, only sixteen animals were diagnosed with AHD (13 MD, 1 WTD, 2 moose). This level of mortality was not alarming and AHD was considered a somewhat obscure fringe disease in Wyoming.

That all changed in August of 2015 when Dr. Myrna Miller of the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory developed a new diagnostic test for AHD using polymerase chain reaction (PCR). Since then, 16 mule deer and one pronghorn have been diagnosed. Juvenile animals appear to be more susceptible than yearling or adult animals but mortality has been documented in all age classes. These preliminary results indicate that AHD may be a more significant mortality factor in juvenile mule deer than was previously considered; however, there is still much we do not know about this disease in Wyoming. Some of the big questions include: Is the increase in adenovirus cases related to better diagnostics or an increased incidence of AHD? Is occurrence of AHD cyclic? Are there management actions we should consider?

One approach to answering these questions will require development of a serologic test to identify AHD in blood samples. The Game and Fish Wildlife Health Laboratory maintains an extensive serum bank spanning 40 years. Serologic testing may provide an indication of the historical distribution and prevalence of AHD in Wyoming.

### Veterinary Services Staff

**Branch Supervisor/Wildlife Veterinarian:** Dr. Mary Wood

**Laboratory Supervisor:**  
Hank Edwards

**Senior Lab Scientist:**  
Hally Killion

**Senior Lab Scientist:**  
Jessica Jennings-Gaines

**Brucellosis Lab Assistant:**  
Kylie Sinclair

**Wildlife Disease Biologist:**  
Terry Creekmore

**TWRC Manager:**  
Matt Huizenga

**Wildlife Biologist:**  
Cole Hansen

**Biologist:** Sam Lockwood

## Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center (TWRC)

### Never ending sheep facility construction

It's winter again here in the canyon. Despite the colder temperatures and howling winds we have been able to stay busy and productive. Most of our time has been spent working on our new sheep handling facility and alleys. Much of the alleyway from the individual pens into the building has been completed. We also put in water lines to the building as well as automatic waterers for the pastures. The building, alleyway, and pens should be fully functional and ready for sheep before the end of winter.

### CWD vaccine study winding down

This November, we worked elk to collect samples for our CWD vaccine study. Only 11 elk remain in the study, most of which have specific genetics that allow them to survive longer in the face of chronic wasting disease. Sampling this month included blood, fecal, and saliva samples as well as biopsies to evaluate disease status. Many of these samples are being stored in the freezer with the hope that someday soon there might be a good way to test them for presence of CWD.



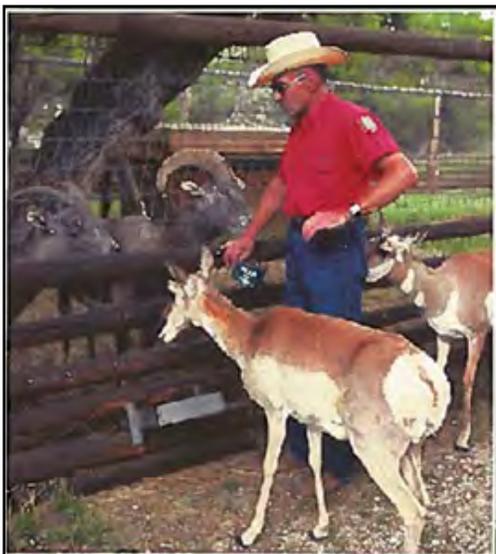
*New sheep alleyway.*

### The legacy of the TWRC – Why study wildlife in captivity?



Over the past 60 years, the TWRC has contributed over 100 peer reviewed papers and countless research studies to scientific literature. Early research at the facility established very basic information on wildlife biology. We often take it for granted that we can quickly look up the gestation period for a pronghorn or a bighorn sheep. That information came from research at the TWRC. Early evaluations of wildlife nutrition, selective forage, and nutritional/mineral requirements for wildlife were conducted at our facility. A significant amount of disease research has been conducted in captivity including: understanding disease biology in wildlife species, evaluation of management strategies, and development of diagnostic tests that allow us to conduct surveillance for disease in wildlife populations nationwide.

Captive wildlife research also allows us to develop and evaluate safety of new wildlife management tools including: new types of GPS collars/wildlife marking tools; implants, transmitters, and sensors; new anesthetic protocols; population management options such as reproductive control; disease management tools such as vaccines or therapeutic treatments. All of these tools must be first evaluated for safety and efficacy in wildlife under controlled conditions before they can be used in free-ranging populations. The applications of captive wildlife work directly improve the health and welfare of free-ranging wildlife while also providing safe and effective management tools for managing wildlife populations on the landscape.



*Original TWRC director, Floyd Blunt, pioneered tools and techniques for handling wildlife in captivity.*

## Wildlife Health Laboratory

### Surveillance updates:

Brucellosis surveillance in hunter-killed elk is well underway. By the end of November we have received 956 blood samples in the laboratory with 671 (70%) of those being suitable for testing. As we mentioned in our October Veterinary Services newsletter, the focus of our surveillance is the Bighorn Mountains, from which we have received 598 samples, with 438 (73%) being testable. From these samples, 411 were from yearlings or adults (considered the most valuable for brucellosis surveillance). As of the end of November, we have not identified a positive elk from any of the 438 samples collected in the Bighorn Mountains.



*Kylie Sinclair processes blood samples from this year's brucellosis surveillance effort in hunter-killed elk.*

### Surveillance updates (continued):

CWD surveillance in deer, elk and moose is starting to wind down. So far this season, we have received 1,176 samples (as of the end of November). Fifty-nine hunter-killed samples have been identified as positive for CWD, and letters have been sent notifying the hunters of the positive test results. Eight new hunt areas have been documented as having CWD this year; deer hunt areas 1, 24, 100, 112, 171, and elk hunt areas 12, 21, and 34.



*Sampling a retropharyngeal lymph node for chronic wasting disease testing.*

### Bighorn Sheep Sinus Tumors

Veterinary Services initiated a surveillance effort this fall to survey for sinus tumors in the State's bighorn sheep herds. Collection kits were distributed to several taxidermists with a request that they save capped skulls (rather than tossing them in the trash) so they could be examined for sinus tumors. These tumors grow within the skull sinuses of the horns, forehead, and above the teeth, and have the ability to cause skull and horn deformities as well as potentially contribute to respiratory disease in the herd. Last year was the first time we documented nasal tumors in the state's bighorn sheep herds, when we found an affected ram from the Absaroka herd unit near Cody. So far this year we have received a total of 18 skulls from hunt areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 12, and 22. Three skulls have strong evidence of sinus tumors; one from hunt area 1, one from 22, and one from an unknown hunt area.



*Sinus tumor in a bighorn sheep from hunt area 1. Sinus tumors are evidenced by the thickened sinus walls on the right side.*



## Wyoming Game and Fish Department Large Carnivore Section Newsletter -December 2015-



### Section Personnel:

#### Cody:

Luke Ellsbury  
Dustin Lasseter

#### Lander:

Dan Bjornlie  
Justin Clapp  
Brian Debolt  
Dan Thompson

#### Pinedale:

Zach Turnbull  
Ken Mills

#### Jackson:

Mike Boyce

#### Roving AWECS:

Clint Atkinson  
Kyle Bales  
Colby Clark  
Sam Stephens  
Carter Nielsen

For some time it felt like summer was going to stick around in perpetuity, but colder weather and snows came around Thanksgiving and our wildlife populations responded in kind. Bears are currently using the fat reserves they squandered away this late summer and fall, as they sleep for the next several months. Bears do not go into full torpor and as such can and do awaken if startled – (*professional tip: never wake a sleeping grizzly bear*). Field seasons shift in November, with more of a focus on mountain lion work and a great deal of paperwork related to end of year data tabulation and analysis, working on damage claims for livestock depredations, and making sure all the important data that is collected over the past several months is consistent and correct so it can be used by the Department for the better management of large carnivores across the state. A monumental thanks and acknowledgment goes out to all of our field folks listed to the left; this was one of the busiest seasons to date for black and grizzly bear management, and our personnel went above and beyond to get the

job done while maintaining a positive outlook and even having a few laughs. Thanks for those efforts and for all the assistance from other WGFD personnel over the past several months - DT

**MERRY CHRISTMAS**

**FROM THE LARGE**

**CARNIVORE SECTION!!!!**



## *Kudos to our Seasonal Employees*

November sees us bidding adieu to most of our At-Will Contract Employees (AWECs). While we've always stressed that this is one of the best seasonal biologist positions a young wildlife professional can attain, it doesn't mean it's easy or forgiving. Our AWECs do a lot of the low glamour work from cleaning up carcass remains to entering harvest data and maintaining capture gear. The lifestyle of young wildlife professionals are foreign to many of the 9-5 workaday types that have a charted path from high school to college to job at hand. The nomadic lives of young wildlife folks sees people living from month to month; in campers, tents, and shacks, and making the sacrifices necessary in order to hopefully some day get a full-time gig in our field. These final statements are a repeat from previous summaries but absolutely ring true and are timeless. Perspective is a wonderful thing, and working with the young and old of our profession allows us to step back and realize how fortunate it is to call this a career. **To all of our seasonals, thanks for the countless hours and undying efforts over the past several months.** We couldn't function as a Section, Division, and Department without your tireless efforts and sacrifice for the cause!!



Sam Stephens



Kyle Bales



Clint Atkinson



Colby Clark

## PUBLIC CONTACTS AND MEETINGS

November saw our personnel working closely with members of local communities, livestock producers, land management agencies, media outlets, sportsmen, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), other state and federal agencies, and all types in between. Although a focus of our section is to de-sensationalize the animals we work with, there is inherently a great deal of public interest and controversy associated with large carnivores. It is critical that we work with those involved in order to convey the accurate facts about management of large carnivores by the Department. We remain very dedicated and transparent as to how we do business and manage large carnivores throughout the state of Wyoming. In November, Section personnel attended the Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee (Y.E.S.) meeting for grizzly bears in Jackson, WY. At this meeting we presented an update on the Bear Wise Wyoming program for the previous year, focusing on the educational component of large carnivore management, as well as the proactive, on the ground work we conduct as a Section to prevent conflicts between bears and people. In addition to the Y.E.S. meeting, Section personnel attended and presented information on grizzly bear population demographics and mountain lion recolonization at the Wyoming Chapter of The Wildlife Society meeting in Lander (this actually occurred in early December). Life is a never-ending educational journey, and we try to help along with this process where we can!

### WYOMING BEAR WISE COMMUNITY PROJECT

Dusty Lasseter - Bear Wise Community Coordinator

Wyoming Game and Fish Department - Large Carnivore Section



## **Notable LCS Accomplishments and Briefs for November 2015**

- Section personnel worked with other agencies within the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team relative to annual population demographics and conflict reporting.
- Represented the Department at the Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team and Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee (YES) grizzly bear meetings in Jackson. Presented an update on the Bear Wise Wyoming program at the YES meeting.
- Presented information on determining cause of death in livestock at the Wool Growers conference in Park City Utah. This was an invited presentation.
- Captured an orphaned black bear cub at a private residence near Jackson. This bear was relocated to a remote location on the National Forest.
- Personnel processed an abundance of damage claims for livestock depredation reimbursement throughout northwest Wyoming. We also met with the Upper Green River Cattlemen's Association to update them on grizzly bear and wolf management and status.
- Personnel met with Jackson Region Department employees to discuss large carnivore conflict and management strategies.
- Conducted multiple media interviews (print, radio, and television) related to large carnivore activities and management.
- We investigated a mountain lion conflict situation where the animal had killed several domestic fowl. The subadult mountain lion was severely emaciated and had several "issues" so the carcass was sent to Laramie for further testing. We are awaiting the final results of the necropsy.
- Checked multiple legally harvested mountain lions. Data from harvested individuals provides insight into population demographics and harvest objectives.
- We met as a Section in Lander to discuss the past years work activities and plan for the future.



the wyoming game & fish department



# LANDER REGION newsletter december 2015

## From the Field

### Pheasants



Successful youth hunters

Regional wildlife personnel were busy stocking pheasants and checking hunters at Ocean Lake and Sand Mesa Wildlife Habitat Management Areas and they ran into a lot of happy hunters in the field.



Rooster pheasant being released.

### Inside:

Luckey Pond pg 2

Carnivores pg 3

Habitat pg 4

Public Input pg 5

FW families pg 6



Serving Dubois, Rawlins, Lander , Riverton and places between

# Under the Water

## Lucky Pond aerator



*Installation of Lucky Pond aerator*

Lucky Pond is a 4.6-acre reservoir on public land near the Wyoming Life Resource Center and is considered Lander's community fishery. Sport fish found in Lucky Pond include stocked rainbow trout and channel catfish and naturally-reproducing green sunfish/bluegill hybrids.

Angling success at Lucky Pond has been inconsistent, likely due to periodic fish kills that reduced fish numbers and prevented fish from growing to larger sizes. For example, a summer kill event in Sep. 2012 left high numbers of dead trout, sunfish, and fathead minnows along the Lucky Pond shoreline. Evidence of large winter kill events have occurred over the years as well. After some research, sampling fish and taking dis-

solved oxygen and temperature profiles, biologists determined that low dissolved oxygen levels were the probable cause.

To prevent future fish kills, an aeration system was installed this August. The aerator has already substantially raised dissolved oxygen levels and should greatly improve the fishery. However, winter ice fishing will no longer be possible because the aerator will prevent ice from freezing solidly enough to walk on. For safety, the access road was closed on Nov. 25 and will re-open when the ice melts next spring. People using the area and their pets are advised not to venture onto the ice due to hazardous conditions.

The installation of the Lucky Pond aerator was a great example of the community coming together to create a better fishery for Lander-area residents. Planning for and installation of the aerator were conducted by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and Wyoming Life Resource Center. Monetary donations (over \$18,000) for the aerator itself and providing electrical power to the aerator were received from the Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust, Lander District Recreation Board, and the Popo Agie Anglers.



*Fish found dead from 2012 summer kill event.*



# With the Carnivores

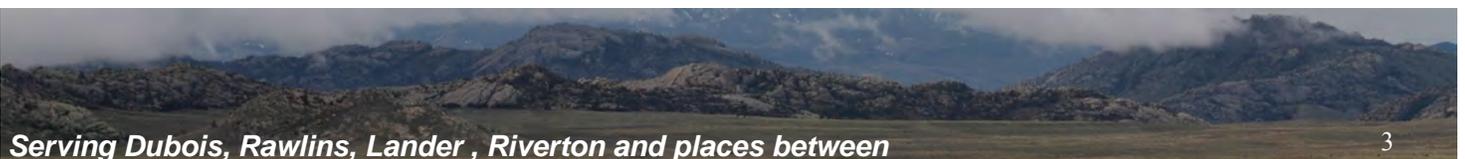
Seasonal employees are much appreciated



From top left, clockwise: Sam Stephens, Colby Clark, Kyle Bales, and Clint Atkinson.

November sees us saying goodbye to most of our At-Will Contract Employees (AWECs). While we've always stressed that large carnivore AWEC's have one of the best biologist positions a young wildlife professional can attain, it doesn't mean it's easy or forgiving. Our AWECs do a lot of the low glamour work from cleaning up carcass remains to entering harvest data and maintaining capture gear. The lifestyle of young wildlife professionals is foreign to many. They often live nomadically in campers, tents, and shacks, and make the sacrifices necessary in order to hopefully some day get a full-time job in wildlife management.

A monumental thank you and acknowledgment to all of our field personnel. This was one of the busiest seasons to date for black and grizzly bear management, and they went above and beyond to get the job done while maintaining a positive outlook and even having a few laughs. Thank you for the countless hours and undying efforts over the past several months. The large carnivore section, the wildlife division and the Game and Fish wouldn't work without your tireless efforts and sacrifice!



# On the Ground

## Bain Meadow Farming



Habitat & Access personnel Miles Proctor, Zach Gregory and John Lee were busy this fall farming Bain Meadow at Spence & Moriarity Wildlife Management Area (WMA) near Dubois. Once they finished haying and shipping the hay to Bench Corral feedground, farming began in earnest. After picking up the gated pipe, approximately 70 acres were farmed and leveled. The field was planted down using a seed mix that includes meadow brome, orchard grass, rye and spreader alfalfa. This spring an annual cover crop will be drilled in to help mitigate topsoil movement and provide a beneficial micro-climate to support grass establishment.

*Farming Bain Meadow on Spence & Moriarity Wildlife Management Area.*

The crew was also able to disc Side-roll Meadow on the WMA a couple times before winter set in. Grant monies helped fund a pivot sprinkler that will be constructed prior to April 2016. Side-roll Meadow will be planted into a cover crop of hay barley or oats for the 2016 growing season, then farmed again next fall prior to planting the field down to grass.

The good quality hay produced at Spence & Moriarity WMA is shipped to Bench Corral feedground to feed elk during the winter months. This allows the Game and Fish to double the benefit of this ground by generating feed to benefit elk in Sublette County and provide supplemental winter forage for elk wintering on the WMA and Whiskey Basin Wildlife Habitat Management Area.

## Little Popo Agie Outhouse

Habitat & Access, who are charged with maintaining Public Access Areas (PAAs) across the state, partnered with the National Outdoor Leadership School's Wilderness Medicine Institute (WMI) to purchase a new concrete outhouse located at the upstream Little Popo Agie PAA in Red Canyon Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA). WMI and Game and Fish shared the cost of this new structure.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission own the access and parking easements on the land owned by WMI, as part of WMI's Wyss Campus south of Lander. This easement provides access for fishermen to the Little Popo Agie. WMI also uses this area of their land to run various wilderness medicine courses. Ron McCall, Gates Richards and Melissa Gray, all from WMI were very helpful coordinating efforts and coordinated financial support.



*Crane assisting outhouse placement.*



The new outhouse is compliant with the American with Disabilities Act and is fully wheelchair accessible. A concrete parking pad will be poured in the spring to further facilitate access. Maintenance of this and other outhouses across the Region is completed by local contractors.



*New outhouse at the upstream Little Popo Agie Public Access Area.*

In addition to assisting with the outhouse install, Derek Lemon got Red Canyon WHMA and Ocean Lake WHMA ready for winter by replacing signs and pulling boat docks. Derek helped prep for the pheasant hunts at Ocean Lake and Sand Mesa. Derek also wrapped up contracts for a new wildlife friendly fence and irrigation pipeline at Red Canyon.

## With the Public

### December meetings



*Jason Hunter and Stan Harter lead a small group discussion on season recommendations.*

the area before making any future recommendations. Notes from these meetings will be available on the Lander Regional Office Webpage in the near future (<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regional-Offices/Lander-Region> ). We would like to thank everyone who attended these meetings and we appreciate all of the feedback we received.

Lander Region personnel conducted our annual post season information gathering meetings in Lander, Riverton, Rawlins and Dubois again this year to gather information from the public prior to setting seasons for 2016. The meetings were well attended again this year with approximately 110 people in attendance with 45 of those being new to Game and Fish public meetings.

The Lander/Green Mountain Mule Deer Working Group hunting season proposal was discussed at the Lander, Riverton and Rawlins meetings to gather more input from hunters in



# Beside the Families

Big game hunting



*Nicole and Justin Kempf, with Nicole's first big game animal!*

Forever Wild Families went afield again this month for deer and pheasant hunting. Two deer were harvested by the Kempf family thanks to their guide Brian Rognon and to the planning and contacts made by Jason Hunter and Greg Anderson. Pheasant hunting excursions were made possible by Daryl Lutz and Teal Joseph. Coming up, families may have the opportunity for more hunting as well as a plan your hunt workshop and some ice fishing.

**Check out the Lander Region Webpage for more great information!**

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regional-Offices/Lander-Region>



# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

## Jackson Region

## December 2015 Newsletter



### Working for Healthy Bighorns

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is continuing its multi-year research project on bighorn sheep in the Jackson Region. In December, 11 female bighorn sheep were captured for disease sampling and fitted with radio collars in an effort to learn more about their survival and migration patterns. Samples were collected to test for respiratory pathogens that can cause pneumonia. In addition, researchers from the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit performed an ultrasound on each animal to measure body fat. This is a three-year study evaluating how body condition is related to pneumonia outbreaks. Since 2011, a total of 48 bighorn ewes have

been collared with 27 of those currently still alive.

The Jackson herd, which typically numbers approximately 500 animals, has experienced two significant die-offs in recent years. In 2002, it was estimated that as many as 50 percent was lost due to a pneumonia outbreak and another estimated 30 percent lost again in 2011. It is estimated that the herd has climbed back to around 400 animals currently. Near Dubois, the Whiskey Basin herd in the Wind River Range has struggled through several pneumonia outbreaks as well. Other bighorn sheep herds across the Rocky Mountains have also experienced significant declines in population due to pneumonia in recent years.



(Photos clockwise from top left) Two bighorn ewes are brought in to be processed 2) North Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens helps carry a ewe to be processed 3) Bighorn released! 4) Wildlife Disease Specialist Hank Edwards gets a tonsil swab 5) G&F Commissioner Charles Price takes measurements.





# Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

December 2015

*Conserving Wildlife, Serving People*



## Elk Traffic Control

Wyoming is blessed with abundant big game populations and November and December is a time when many big game animals are headed for traditional wintering areas at the lower elevations. This often puts animals in harms way, crossing roadways. On this day in early December, North Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens and Regional Information and Education Specialist Mark Gocke worked to stop traffic on Highway 89 just north of Jackson long enough to get a large group of elk to use the elk jumps (lower left) into the National Elk Refuge.



## Goats Stop Traffic

There are many other problem areas throughout the region, including mountain goats in Snake River Canyon near Alpine. South Jackson Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick and game wardens Kyle Lash and Jordan Winter all worked to keep the goats off the road. Unfortunately, one young goat was still hit and killed. Discussions with WY-DOT resulted in an electronic warning sign being put up along the roadside.





# Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

December 2015

Conserving Wildlife, Serving People

## Welcome Warden Winter

Alpine Game Warden Jordan Winter was welcomed to the Jackson Region in November and hit the ground running. Warden Winter worked the end of the elk season in Hunt Area 90. Many hunters were contacted with very few having success harvesting a cow elk. Two hunters reported having found a dead bull elk up a side drainage of the Greys river. Warden Winter followed up on the report, located the trophy bull (right) and found that it had died of scabies. Scabies is a disease that causes animals to lose patches of hair and eventually die of exposure. Winter believed the bull had died the previous night.



## Moose Creek Moose

On November 1, South Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash rode up Moose Creek on the Westside of the Tetons to investigate a reported dead moose (left). Warden Lash conducted a field necropsy on the moose and was unable to determine cause of death.



Lash collected the moose head for regional disease biologists to examine for *Elaeophora* (carotid artery worm) and other diseases. No conclusions were found as to the cause of death, but Lash thanks the hunters who reported the unusual find.

## A Picture of Hunting Season

Jackson Region Game Wardens report late season big game harvest as relatively low this year and consequently violations have been fewer as well. However, specimens are piling up in the evidence freezer at the Jackson office. Not all specimens are the result of a violation, but many are. Most of the meat is donated to local families in need. Fall is a busy time for all Game and Fish personnel. Office Managers address the constant flow of hunters in the office while biologists and wardens are contacting just as many out in the field each day. And when the final season ends (Bison on January 15) everyone takes a deep breath.





A professional wildlife capture crew shoots a net over a mule deer near LaBarge.

### Wyoming Range Deer Project

The Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and Wyoming Game and Fish Department, along with many other partners, continued the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Project initiated during the winter of 2012-2013.

The overarching goal of the project is to investigate the nutritional relationships between mule deer populations, energy development, habitat conditions, and climate.

The first helicopter capture occurred in March 2013 with the capture of 70 adult females, 35 in the northern (Big Piney / La Barge) and 35 in the southern (Kemmerer / Evanston) winter ranges. Each deer has been fitted with a GPS collar to be worn for two years. An ultrasound is performed on each animal to determine percent body fat and pregnancy. Animals are recaptured each December and March to evaluate change in body condition between seasons.

This December marked the successful completion of the fourth capture/recapture of collared deer so far.

Additionally, the deer are monitored each autumn to determine fawn production and survival. Productivity of individual animals combined with their body condition and forage production data will be used to determine the habitat's "nutritional carrying capacity". Ultimately, this information will allow wildlife managers to assess whether the Wyoming Range deer herd is reaching its reproductive capacity based on current available habitat. This research, the results of the hunting seasons and habitat work will all be discussed at upcoming public meetings for the WY Range Mule Deer Initiative. **Public meetings are planned for January 5 in Pinedale, January 6 in Marbleton and January 7 in Thayne.**

*(Left) A mule deer doe is released by University of Wyoming Graduate Student Samantha Dwinnele while State Legislator Fred Baldwin from Kemmerer looks on.*

*(Right) A processed mule deer doe bounds back to its winter range near LaBarge.*



South Jackson Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick takes measurements on a mule deer doe.





### New Mule Deer Disease...or is it?

South Jackson Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick submitted five fawns from Star Valley to the Game and Fish's Wildlife Health Laboratory. Adenovirus Hemorrhagic Disease (AHD) was found to be the cause of death of each fawn. Although this disease has been documented in Wyoming, diagnostic tests for this disease were poor and many cases were likely missed. Between 1999 and 2014, only sixteen animals were diagnosed with AHD (13 mule deer, 1 white-tailed deer, 2 moose). This level of mortality was not alarming and AHD was considered a somewhat obscure fringe disease in Wyoming.



That all changed in August of 2015 when Dr. Myrna Miller of the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory developed a new diagnostic test for AHD using polymerase chain reaction (PCR). Since then, 16 mule deer and one pronghorn have been diagnosed. Juvenile animals appear to be more susceptible than yearling or adult animals, but mortality has been documented in all age classes. These preliminary results indicate that AHD may be a more significant mortality factor in juvenile mule deer than was previously considered; however, there is still much we do not know about



this disease in Wyoming. Some of the big questions include: Is the increase in adenovirus cases related to better diagnostics or an increased incidence of AHD? Is occurrence of AHD cyclic? Are there management actions we should consider?

One approach to answering these questions will require development of a serologic test to identify AHD in blood samples. The Game and Fish Wildlife Health Laboratory maintains an extensive serum bank spanning 40 years. Serologic testing may provide an indication of the historical distribution and prevalence of AHD in Wyoming.

### CWD Work

As the Game and Fish Department rolled out its updated Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) management plan to the public in November, department disease personnel were busy collecting CWD samples from road-killed deer, moose and hunter-harvested elk, as has been done for many years. Juliann Terry, the National Elk Refuge CWD technician, was busy collecting samples from successful hunters' elk as snowstorms in late November initiated migrations to the refuge.



A lymph node is collected from a cow elk.



### Moose Goes to School

A cow moose showed up at the Wilson Elementary School earlier this fall. It rebelliously parked in the fire lane for a bit, but then pushed on, captivating the attention of a student before class. Regional Information & Education Specialist Mark Gocke made sure the young students were aware and gave it a wide berth.



### Salt River Stuff

Eight trout in the eastside diversion of the Salt River were implanted with radio transmitters and released back to the canal. The intent of this tagging was to determine if these stranded fish could be flushed from the canal and back to the Salt River. The canal company agreed to flush the canal between October 21 and November 13. On November 13, a total of 1,321 fish were salvaged from the canal, 848 of which were trout. All eight tagged fish were located in the canal using a telemetry receiver. It did not appear that the canal company completed the flush or the flush was unsuccessful.

Also, the Habitat & Access crew spent several days installing new signs at several Public Access Areas on the Salt River, such as this one at the Perkes PAA. There are several Public Access Areas on private lands along the Salt that provide good waterfowl hunting and angling for big brown and cut-throat trout. Get out and enjoy them!





the wyoming game and fish department

December 2015

# CODY REGION newsletter

## Swift fox sighting

Swift foxes documented northwest of Worland



Three swift foxes documented approximately 20 miles northwest of Worland.

Worland Biologist Bart Kroger documented three swift foxes in early November about 20 miles northwest of Worland. These are only the second documented swift fox to ever occur in the Bighorn Basin. The species were first documented in the area in 2012 when a single swift fox was sighted at the Worland airport.

Swift foxes are considered a species of greatest conservation need and are legally classified as nongame in Wyoming. Nongame Program Supervisor Zack Walker said until recently, swift fox populations were thought to occur only in the eastern half of the state. Recent documentation near Worland and Farson however calls this into question. If funding is secured, Game and Fish nongame biologists will continue population monitoring efforts of swift fox in the eastern half of the state. This work could begin as early as fall 2016. Biologists also hope to initiate research efforts in the western half of the state to help determine the species distribution. "These efforts will help us connect the dots and better understand swift fox distribution and abundance in the state," Walker said.

### Inside This Month's Issue:

#### On the Ground

Moose on the loose  
Sunshine Reservoir boat docks

#### Behind the Badge

Illegal guiding  
Trespassing hunters  
Not a good role model  
Pheasant hunting on Yellowtail

#### On the Water

Ice fisherman urged to be safe  
on ice



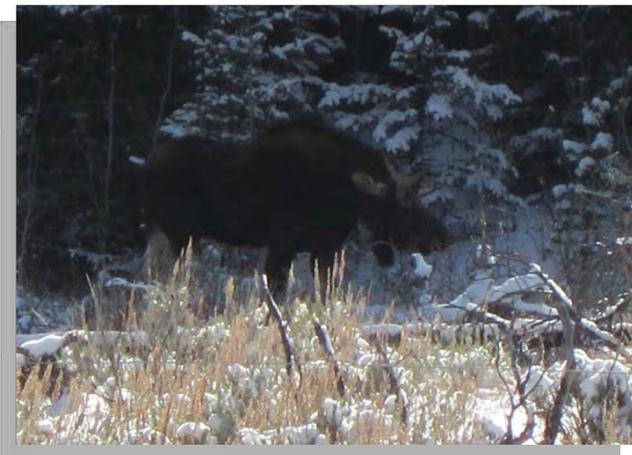
## On the ground

### Moose on the loose

A young male moose in Shell that was causing headaches for homeowners was darted and relocated recently. The moose was chemically immobilized with the aid of a dart gun, then loaded into a trailer and released near Porcupine Ranger Station. Greybull Biologist Leslie Schreiber said the whole operation went off without a hitch.



Kyle Bales with a chemically immobilized moose in Shell.



Game and Fish personnel responded to a report of a moose trapped inside an aspen enclosure in Aspen Creek in the Grass Creek area. The moose had been inside the enclosure for at least a couple of days, and was not very interested in leaving. After several hazing attempts, the very agitated bull moose was finally driven out of the enclosure.

### Boat docks at Sunshine Reservoirs removed from water

Anglers are advised that the boat docks at Upper and Lower Sunshine Reservoirs west of Meeteetse have been pulled out of the water.

Habitat and Access Supervisor Brad Sorensen said that the docks are pulled out of the water every winter so they do not sustain damage from ice. “Pulling the docks during the winter lengthens the life of the dock,” Sorensen said. “The docks will be placed back in the water as soon as ice off occurs in the spring and water levels rise. This spring, anglers can look forward to using a new dock at Upper Sunshine Reservoir similar in design to the dock in Lower Sunshine.”



Game and Fish personnel use a winch to pull a boat dock out of the water at Lower Sunshine Reservoir.

## Behind the Badge

### Illegal guiding

North Cody Game Warden Travis Crane finalized an illegal guiding/outfitting case last month when Russell Stockie of Cody had a change of plea hearing. Stockie pleaded guilty to two counts of guiding /outfitting without a license, was ordered to pay \$5,080 in fines and will lose big game hunting privilege for the next three years.

### Trespassing hunters take trophy deer

Recently, Greybull Game Warden Bill Robertson confiscated the head of trophy white-tailed deer that was harvested on private land by trespassing hunters. Initially the landowner did not want to pursue court action against the hunters as long as they made some attempt to make contact and apologize. Although Robertson advised the hunters of the landowner's good will, a month passed and no contact was made with the landowner by the suspects. The landowner is now requesting that a citation be written against the hunter.



White-tailed deer taken by trespassing hunters.

### Not a good role model

Lovell Game Warden James Hobbs reports that November was active for enforcement. One notable case involved a father and his 13-year-old son from California. The father purchased a license for himself and one for his 16-year-old son that was unable to come on the hunting trip. The father said he didn't want a perfectly good license to go to waste, so he had his 13-year-old son shoot a buck.

Hobbs contacted the pair as they were dragging the un-gutted deer to their truck and knew something was amiss when the 5'7" 13-year-old didn't match the 6'1" 185 pound description on the license. The father was cited for accessory to take a deer without a license and accessory for transfer of license. The father received \$1,280 in fines and lost hunting privileges for six months.

## Of interest

### Pheasant hunting on Yellowtail

Pheasant season began last month with lots of hunters taking advantage of the stocked birds at Yellowtail Wildlife Habitat Management area. There have been many wild birds harvested in addition to the released birds. It appears that game birds are doing as well as ever.

Right: Kolby Parker with a pheasant harvested on Yellowtail last season.



## On the water

### Anglers encouraged to be safe on the ice

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department advises anglers to use extreme caution while venturing out ice fishing, especially during the early season and during warmer winter temperatures. Ice on many waters may not be safe.



An ice fisherman pulls his equipment across the snow covered ice on Buffalo Bill Reservoir last winter.

For safe fishing, ice should be at least four inches thick. Anglers should take special efforts to check the thickness of the ice every 100 to 150 feet. Avoid fissures in the ice and significant sized cracks that can emerge in a lake. Clear ice is stronger than cloudy or white ice, which has frozen, thawed and re-frozen and is not always stable. White ice can also be from air bubbles or frozen snow and is much weaker than clear ice. For white ice, double the recommended thickness.

Fluctuating water levels in reservoirs and wind impact ice conditions and can create dangerous ice conditions. Be aware of recent weather conditions and temperatures and scout out the lake you wish to fish for overflow, wet areas, and open water. With variable ice conditions across the Bighorn Basin and rapidly changing conditions, anglers are urged to call the Cody Region Game and Fish office at 307-527-7125 for local current ice conditions.



An ice fisherman on Lower Sunshine Reservoir.



# Statewide Wildlife and Habitat Management

## Monthly Summary - December 2015

### SAGE-GROUSE PROGRAM

**TOM CHRISTIANSEN & NYSSA WHITFORD**

Sage-grouse lek attendance should increase again in 2016 based on wings deposited by hunters in wing barrels around the state in 2015. Members of the WGF Sage-Grouse Working Group participated in the group's annual meeting and sage-grouse wing-bee on November 9-10 on the Yellowtail Habitat Management Area near Lovell. The working group was joined by volunteers Dick Staiger (Alta), Joel Farber (Thermopolis), and WGF retiree, Joe Bohne (Alpine). Results indicate the number of wings deposited by hunters increased from about 1,500 in 2014 to over 2,200 in 2015. There were about 1.7 chicks per hen in 2015, the same as 2014. Results varied by location, but this level of chick production should again result in generally higher lek counts next spring. 1.7:1 is the highest chick ratio documented since 2005, and more than doubles the recent low of 0.8 chicks per hen in 2012. The 10-year (2005-14) average was 1.3 chicks per hen. Grouse numbers declined in most of those years.



*Subtle differences in feather measurements and molt patterns are used to determine age and sex of sage-grouse wings deposited by hunters in wing barrels. This wing is from a male chick.*

### ADMINISTRATION

**BOB LANKA**

SWaHM Supervisor Bob Lanka worked with the Governor's Office, other WGF personnel and representatives from the Wyoming Natural Diversity Database, the oil and gas industry and the mining industry to develop recommendations for Governor Mead's FY17/18 Endangered Species Act budget. The governor's direction for this funding is clear. He wants to see it used for projects that will address species that, if listed, would pose a significant economic hardship to industry in Wyoming. The group cooperatively discussed several sensitive species projects with the governor's direction in mind and made funding recommendations for the governor's consideration. Final funding decisions rest with the governor and ultimately the will of the legislature. This group successfully made recommendations for the past two budget bienniums as well.

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## HARVEST SURVEY PROGRAM

GAIL SHERIDAN

2015 WGFD antelope, deer, elk, moose and black bear harvest surveys are all in full swing. The moose harvest report will be the next to be completed followed shortly by black bear.

Planning has begun for a special survey to ask lifetime and pioneer license holders about their hunting activity. The purpose of this project is to determine which hunters may not be using their lifetime license privileges any longer and therefore can be excluded from future mailings and harvest surveys.

Harvest Survey Coordinator Gail Sheridan is working closely with Doug McWhirter to finalize the bighorn sheep and Rocky Mountain goat harvest reports.

## STATEWIDE HABITAT PROGRAM

IAN TATOR, RYAN AMUNDSON, RACHEL NUSS

Statewide Habitat Biologist Ryan Amundson continued final contract negotiations with the private landowners for the Mule Creek Public Access Area. The 10,000+ acre ranch will be open to permitted elk hunters in Area 7 for the next 15 years once the agreement is finalized.

Ryan conducted a site visit on the Belvoir Ranch west of Cheyenne to evaluate mule deer habitats and another on Cottonwood Land and Livestock north of Wheatland to assess an area burned by wildfire.

Ryan participated in a meeting with Laramie Region personnel and the USFS to discuss travel management on Pole Mountain, located west of Cheyenne. The area is considered one of the most heavily roaded USFS districts in the entire national forest system. Numerous user-created, illegal roads are also found throughout the district that will need to be addressed to reduce impacts to upland and riparian habitats.

Ryan gave a presentation to the USFS (Laramie, Saratoga, Walden, Steamboat Springs Districts) on the proposed plan to aerially treat 3,100 acres of cheatgrass dominated slopes in the Squirrel Creek Fire area west of Laramie. USFS committed \$7,000 to the project, with funds available in 2016. Cost share funds will be solicited from several NGO's in Winter 2016 to cover the \$90,000 project costs, with treatment to be completed in late August 2016.

## NONGAME BIRD AND MAMMAL PROGRAM

ZACK WALKER, SUSAN PATLA, ANDREA ORABONA, NICHOLE CUDWORTH

Non-game Biologists Laura Beard and Brian Zinke visited a mine in the Copper Mountains with the BLM's Abandoned Mine Lands archeologist, Gina Clingerman, and geologist, Tom Thurston, to look for hibernating bats. The day started out snowy, but turned into a beautiful day. The two adits of the mine in question had never been surveyed for hibernating bats before. On this trip, hibernating Townsend's big-eared bats were found in each of the adits, as well as a lively pack rat who had decided to ride out the winter in the back of one of the adits. Townsend's big-eared bats are fairly rare, and require specific winter roosting habitat, so every hibernacula is an exciting find!

Nongame Bird Biologist Susan Patla attended the annual meeting of the Raptor Research Foundation in Sacramento with over 400 other participants. The highlights of the meeting included a symposium on Golden Eagles in the western US and a celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> year since the famous meeting in Madison, Wisconsin that initiated recovery efforts for Peregrine Falcon.

Susan participated in two meetings/site visits with Teton Conservation District staff to discuss possible wetland improvement projects in Teton County that could benefit waterfowl, Trumpeter Swan, amphibians and other wildlife.



*November 13 site visit to wetland ponds that need additional management work, Blackrock Ranger District, Bridger Teton National Forest. From left to right, Tom Segerstrom, ED Teton Conservation District; Tim Stiles, District Ranger Blackrock; Susan Patla, WGFD.*

## SWAHM STAFF BIOLOGISTS

### STEVE TESSMANN & GRANT FROST

Staff Biologist Steve Tessmann completed an in-depth administrative review of the Goshen Level II Wetland Condition Assessment final report prepared by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). This is one of two wetland assessment projects funded by an EPA Wetland Program Development Grant awarded to the Department in 2012. The total cost of the two assessment projects is \$292,000, including an “in-kind” match commitment of \$73,000 being met with Department personnel time. Steve is the Department’s principal representative overseeing this project. The final report is the first detailed inventory and condition assessment of wetlands in the Goshen Basin, and will provide invaluable information for future conservation planning as well as technical information to support conservation programs and grants in the region.

Steve continued to participate on the “Plan your Hunt” committee. The committee, in conjunction with IT Section, is improving format, content, and delivery of hunting and license application information provided for customer use on the Department website. The main feature of the new “Plan your Hunt” website is an interactive, GIS-based map that provides access to a range of information specific to each customer’s areas of geographic interest. The interactive “Plan your Hunt” site should go live in late December.

Steve continued editing and writing species accounts for migratory game bird species that rank NSS4 and lower for the WY State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) revision. The species accounts summarize information about distribution and status, and will provide documentation to support applications for conservation funding. Funds from the State Wildlife Grants program are available to assist with conservation of species with NSS rankings of four and lower.

Senior Wildlife Biologist Grant Frost began updating the historic JCR files to include data from the most recent five years. These data are stored on the intranet for access by Department personnel, and are useful to those individuals constructing trend analyses and data displays for presentations and reports, or for responding to internal and external information requests.

Grant classified mule deer in hunt area 15 south of I-80. Few deer were seen and animal distribution was patchy.

Grant completed last minute changes to the 2016 regulation maps for pheasant and deer. As a reminder, the final due date we agreed upon for regions to review and correct maps is October 12. The map change procedure memo is posted in the SWaHM section of the Department Intranet.

## MIGRATORY GAME BIRD PROGRAM

Migratory Game Bird Biologist Nate Huck attended the November Commission meeting in Laramie to observe the process for adopting late migratory bird regulations. After the meeting Nate took the opportunity to do some field reconnaissance in the Laramie Plains and explore migratory bird habitat in the area. A large number of ducks were observed on Hutton Lake National Wildlife Refuge and on some ponds north of Mortenson National Wildlife Refuge.

Nate fielded calls from multiple hunters about late migratory bird regulations and access. With many big game seasons closing and cold weather moving into the state, more hunters are looking to duck and goose hunting for recreational opportunity.



*Laramie Plains wetland – looking west toward Sheep Mountain.*



# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Wildlife  
Investigative  
Unit

December, 2015

A wildlife investigator assisted the south Laramie game warden in compiling officer reports on a ranch along the Wyoming-Colorado line where individuals from Texas illegally killed three bull elk in 2015 and are suspected of killing additional elk illegally in 2013 and 2014. The investigator and warden travelled to Denver to review digital images from seized electronic media at the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Headquarters. The investigator also forensically mirrored and restored deleted images from a digital camera SD card.

An investigator assisted the Wheatland game warden in capturing Facebook posts and images regarding a suspected transfer of license and illegal take of a bull elk. A preservation request was sent to Facebook regarding three Facebook sites for an upcoming search warrant. Enforcement contacts in Utah and Arkansas were made to obtain additional information on the suspects.

The WIU assisted the south Laramie game warden in forensically mirroring a cell phone seized in an investigation and downloaded a YouTube video regarding an investigation of taking elk in a wrong area and without a proper license.

An investigator compiled investigation reports involving a Laramie individual purchasing and possessing antlers and horns on skull plates without game tags. These reports have expanded into an illegal outfitting investigation.

Investigators met with USFWS agents to discuss case priorities, workloads and common concerns related to wildlife investigations in Wyoming.

In an investigation in the Cody area, a man who had been charged with several charges of outfitting without a license changed his plea to guilty in November. The man was sentenced to pay \$5,000 in fines and his privilege to hunt was suspended for three years.

An investigator continued to assist the USFWS agent, the Large Carnivore Conflict Coordinator, and the Dubois game warden in regards to the illegal take of a grizzly bear which is a federally protected species. The investigator completed the second of two search warrants for records and spent much of the month in the review and tabulation of evidence seized as a result of the search warrants in this case.

Investigators provided assistance to many game wardens regarding the illegal take of bull elk, cow elk, antelope, mule deer and white-tailed deer in several counties.

An investigator worked with several courts to determine the status of cases where defendants had “non-payment” of fines issues. The investigator also coordinated with courts and prosecutors to determine the procedures in place for follow up on such cases with both the defendants and the officers that were involved with the initial charges.



Seized evidence

An investigator assisted the Dayton game warden in the investigation of three buck mule deer poaching cases that occurred over the Thanksgiving Day holiday in Sheridan County, WY. Interviews are currently being conducted with assistance from concerned citizens.

In an update of a case involving the illegal taking of antlered elk, along the Wyoming-Montana border in Sheridan County, WY, the Wyoming Supreme Court denied the respondent’s review and motion. The case continues and will remain in county courts, presumably with a trial in the near future.

An investigator continues to work with the Douglas game warden regarding the illegal taking of at least two trophy bull elk. Kill sites have been identified and the case moves forward.

## Law Enforcement Coordinator

Aaron Kerr

- The coordinator spent five days in the Pinedale Region working the mule deer winter range task force. Observed several large buck deer during this time and contacted many members of the public in areas with high deer concentrations. Most were late season elk hunters, but a couple of groups were specifically looking for deer to photograph and observe.
- Assisted with the interstate check station on I-90 near White Lake, South Dakota. Wardens from South Dakota, Montana and the US Fish and Wildlife Service were also present. The check station was productive and several groups who had been hunting in Wyoming were contacted. A few of these hunters were found to be in violation, including tagging violations, transporting game without interstate game tags, false oath to obtain a resident license, failing to retain evidence of sex on big game, and taking deer without a license. One of the cases involved a resident transferring a license to a nonresident and the investigation is ongoing.
- Assisted with the Black Hills deer seasons the weekend before Thanksgiving. Checked a large number of hunters on the Bear Lodge north of Sundance. Most were in compliance and only a few warnings were issued for minor violations.

December, 2015



*Habitat is where it's at!*

*December 2015*



We hope you enjoy reading about the adventures of the **Green River Region** personnel as they work to *Conserve Wildlife and Serve People!*

**Special dates and points of interest:**

- DON'T HAVE A COMPUTER? EVERY REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE GAME AND FISH HAS A COMPUTER AT THE FRONT COUNTER FOR PUBLIC USE.
- DON'T HAVE YOUR HUNTER SAFETY CERTIFICATE? CHECK FOR UPCOMING COURSES ONLINE AT [HTTP://WGFD.WYO.GOV](http://wgfd.wyo.gov).
- REMEMBER: YOU CAN BUY ALL YOUR HUNTING LICENSES, REQUIRED STAMPS AND MANY MORE PRODUCTS AT THE WGFD WEBSITE FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR OWN COMPUTER!
- LOST YOUR HUNTER EDUCATION CARD? YOU CAN PRINT AS MANY COPIES OF YOUR CARD AS YOU WANT, FOR FREE, AT THE WGFD WEBSITE.

*Green River Game Warden Andy Roosa* had an unexpected visitor stop by the warden station. A large mule deer buck wandered into his back yard towing a string of Christmas lights that had become tangled around his antlers. Roosa and *Green River Wildlife Biologist Patrick Burke* immobilized the buck and removed the lights from his antlers. He was last seen heading up the side of Man's Face Formation in pursuit of a group of does. *(below, left)* Burke checks on the deer and reverses the immobilizing drug. *(below, right)* Photos: *Andy Roosa*





*Wintering Wildlife Protection  
Shed Antler Restriction*

*Shed horn and antler gathering* is prohibited on public lands west of the Continental Divide between Jan. 1 and April 30. State lands are also off-limits to shed antler or horn gathering. Public lands in the Great Divide Basin are excluded from the regulation.

*Public lands* are defined as federal lands and lands owned or administered by the Game and Fish Commission.

*The purpose* of the regulation is to minimize harassment or disturbance of big game animals on their winter and spring ranges when animals are most vulnerable to stress as well as potential displacement to less productive habitats. Colorado and Utah have similar regulations.

*The regulation* was made possible by legislation passed by the 2009 Wyoming Legislature that gave the Game and Fish Commission authority to regulate and control the collection of shed antlers and horns of big game animals *west of the Continental Divide*.

*Enforcement Happenings*

*There* are unsolved poaching cases in the Green River Region. If you have any information about any wildlife violation please contact your local game warden or the **STOP Poaching Hotline at:**

**1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847)**

- **You can also report a wildlife violation at the WGFD website <http://wgfd.wyo.gov>**

*Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas and Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas*, son and father, respectively, recently teamed up to solve a poaching case in the Wyoming Range where mule deer are highly sought after by hunters. While enjoying a day off hunting together, the wardens observed suspicious activity, which resulted in an investigation and ultimate apprehension of the violators.

*"In late September*, Green River resident Christopher Galloway, 30, harvested two trophy buck mule deer on one license," said Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas. "Later in the day, Galloway involved a juvenile to tag the second buck mule deer. This incident occurred in deer hunt area 143, in the South Piney drainage. This hunt area is within the Wyoming Range, where deer are managed for higher buck ratios and buck quality."

*Galloway was sentenced* to two days in jail, loss of hunting privileges for three years, fined \$920 for taking an over-limit of deer and accessory to transfer of deer license, in addition to losing both deer. The juvenile was also cited and fined \$40 and will be required to give a presentation at a hunter education class.

*"Regardless of the initial intention of this violation*, the actions that followed, involving a juvenile, intentionally misleading game wardens, and trying to claim both deer made this violation worse," Adam Hymas said. "I applaud Judge Haws on his efforts to let the public know the importance of wildlife to the people of Sublette County and the entire state, his promotion of hunting legally and ethically, and the importance of hunting regulations."

*Anyone with information* on these or any wildlife violation may also call the Stop Poaching Hotline at 1-877-WGFD-TIP (1-877-943-3847). Tips may be reported to your local game warden or online at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov) Tips may also be reported to the Green River Game and Fish Office at-1-307-875-3223 or the Pinedale Game and Fish Office at 1-800-452-9107. Callers can remain anonymous and may be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$5,000 if the information leads to a conviction.

*Boy scouts make a trip to the office ~ Hunter Education Internet Field Day*



*Green River scout leader Becky Iwin and her daughter dissect their own owl pellet. (photo left) Iwin and the "boys" came to learn about what a wildlife scientist does. They learned about predator and prey relationships, habitat requirements for owls, and how owls are uniquely adapted to surviving in their particular habitats. The scouts used a **Project WILD** activity called "Owl Pellets" and they found bones from other birds, mice, and voles. Because owls regurgitate parts of their prey they can't digest, these young scientists were able to determine what the owls were feeding on.*

*Volunteer John Gunyan (photo left next to grizzly bear and moose), GR Office Manager Sheila Watts (photo below, left) and GR Habitat Biologist Kevin Spence assist with the firearms proficiency practical exam during the December **Internet Field Day**. Spence noticed that the first student was not crossing the fence properly. **Can YOU see why this is NOT the way to cross a fence with a shotgun?***



*Mule deer capturing project near Superior, Wyoming ~ Very important deer migration study*



Students and research biologists from the *University of Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit*, along with *WGFD biologists and game wardens* recaptured mule deer they captured and collared in December 2014 near Superior, WY. The collar data was downloaded to be used to monitor the deer movements.

*UW Professor Kevin Monteith* does an ultrasound on one of the mule deer. (photo left, center) *UW Professor Matt Kauffman and his son Gus Kauffman* (photo left, bottom) take a blood sample. Gus (red jacket) was the youngest member of the research team on that very cold December day.

*Wildlife researchers* have discovered that each spring, an estimated 500 mule deer leave the Red Desert and follow the snowmelt north. After some 50 miles they merge with 4,000 to 5,000 mule deer that winter in the foothills of the Wind River Range and the whole herd follows a narrow 100 mile corridor north. The deer migrate through the high mountains near Hoback Junction, just south of Jackson Hole. *This is one of the longest land mammal migration in the lower 48 states.*



*Mule deer capturing project near Superior, Wyoming ~ Very important deer migration study*



*Rock Springs Game Warden Dave Hays (above photo, left) and Green River Wildlife Biologist Patrick Burke (rear, right) are assisted by the Kauffman Team.*



*Every mule deer captured and collared is also weighed. (above photo, right)*



*Each mule deer is sprayed with florescent paint to mark the animals captured/collared. Volunteer Shauna Lockwood (photo above left) assists Green River Wildlife Management Coordinator Mark Zornes (center) and Dr. Matt Kauffman.*



*Kauffman and Zornes undo the leather hobble straps and release a collared mule deer.*

*Hunter education in Kemmerer ~ Are you interested in becoming an instructor? Call us! 307-875-3223*



*Twenty-four students and their parents took part in a three-day hunter education course in Kemmerer. Southwest PLPW Access Coordinator Andrew Countryman (photo top, left) instructed the students on safe firearms handling. Volunteer instructor Annemarie Albins assisted with teaching the course and is working towards becoming fully-certified to teach future hunter education classes in Kemmerer. (photo center, left) Green River Regional Information and Education Specialist Lucy Wold taught the students about survival. (photo bottom, left) Countryman, Albins and Wold not only like to teach about hunting, they actually love to hunt for real! Countryman with his son hunting turkeys in November, near Lusk. (photo below, right)*



*Nice buck deer Annemarie!*



*Wold with a fall turkey near Alcova.*

*Getting ready for ice fishing... ..we hope! Come on ice. ~ Don't litter with burbot, please.*



*Anyone who fishes for burbot in south-west Wyoming can't deny the excitement they feel when they land one of those huge, slimy, eel-like, invasive burbot. They're invasive because someone or some group of people illegally introduced the fish into area waters at least 12 years or so ago and it has been a fisheries management challenge for Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) biologists ever since. Although there is no limit on burbot, the Game and Fish reminds anglers to properly dispose of all burbot they catch.*

*"Piles of dead burbot have shown up recently in a couple of odd locations," said Green River Fisheries Biologist John Walrath. "Like, the parking lot at the Firehole boat ramp and the borrow ditch along the access into the Buckboard boat ramp. Although we really appreciate everyone's effort to catch and remove burbot from Flaming Gorge Reservoir and other waters in the Green River drainage, we remind anglers that discarding unwanted burbot in this way constitutes littering and they will be cited and fined according to Wyoming littering statutes."*

*Burbot are very active in the winter. So, it follows that winter is a time of high harvest on burbot populations due to the large number of anglers fishing through the ice. As fall gives way to winter and anglers start catching numerous burbot, it raises the question of what to do with so many fish.*

*"The first and tastiest option is to fillet the burbot; they don't call them 'poor man's lobster' for nothing," said Walrath. "If you don't want to eat them and you have a friend or neighbor who will, take them the burbot. For those really large burbot be aware that they contain higher levels of mercury. You can find detailed information on fish consumption rates at the Game and Fish website. If those methods don't work for you, remove the internal organs of the burbot and sink the fish in the water from which it was caught, dispose of it in your trash at home, or take them to an approved landfill."*

*Anglers travel to the region from all over the state and out-of-state to fish specifically for burbot. Burbot derbies are becoming increasingly popular and some local fishing guides cater to burbot anglers.*

*"We are excited that anglers are willing to take long trips to have great times fishing for burbot in the Gorge," Walrath said. "We work to ensure that all anglers have the opportunity to come out and enjoy our fisheries, but no one enjoys fishing next to a pile of dead fish or seeing dead fish along boat ramps; it is unpleasant and unethical. As fisheries biologists, it is our job to maintain a high standard when managing your fisheries. However, we all, anglers and fisheries managers alike, have to work towards keeping our fishing experiences positive and that they are not tainted by piles of decomposing burbot along boat ramps, barrow pits and shorelines."*



Office managers Sheila Watts (left) and Regina Dickson (right) invite you to come on into the Green River Region Office to buy your loved ones a wildlife-related gift from their gift shop. You can also pick up 2016 licenses and Conservation Stamps.

<http://wgfd.wyo.gov>  
Office Phone: 307-875-3223  
Office Fax: 307-875-3242  
Toll Free In-State 1-800-843-8096

### Conserving Wildlife-Serving People

We are on the web! <http://wgfd.wyo.gov>



stay connected



~Critter Spotlight~  
White-tailed deer  
By Mark Zornes a.k.a. Leopold

- **One of two native "deer"** or members of the genus *Odocoileus* found in Wyoming; the other being the familiar mule deer. White-tailed deer are one of the mostly widely distributed species in the western hemisphere. There are three subspecies found in Wyoming: *O. virginianus ochrourus*, *O.v.dakotensis* and *O. v. texanus*. *O. virginianus ochrourus* are found in western Wyoming.
- **White-tailed deer** primarily inhabit treed or large shrub dominated river bottom habitats in western Wyoming. Limited large acreages of cultivated crops and limited prime habitat keep densities of this species relatively low in southwestern Wyoming compared to other portions of the state.
- **Sportsmen are often concerned** "white-tails are taking over (mule deer)" or will "breed them (mule deer) out." Hybrids can occur, but there is no evidence white-tailed deer densities or hybrid densities are increasing in western Wyoming beyond where they have historically occurred.
- **Hybrids** (white-tailed deer X mule deer) make up a very small percentage of the population during any given year and tend to be sterile. Hybrid characteristics are quite variable, **sometimes** affecting antler conformation, tail appearance, and facial appearance. The only characteristic common to all hybrids is an intermediate length on metatarsal gland length. This gland is located on the outside of the hind leg above the dew claws.
- **White-tailed deer** can have very high reproductive rates in areas of the best habitat and large areas of significant cultivated crops. In western Wyoming, fawn production does not exceed that observed in mule deer, and is often less. Sportsmen and other wildlife enthusiasts should rejoice on the variety of deer in Wyoming.



DECEMBER 2015



“Conserving Wildlife - Serving People”



## Program grads harvest first elk



Two recent graduates from the Forever Wild Families program in Laramie harvested their first-ever elk this year!

Fourteen-year-old Calvin Webb shot a young cow in Hunt Area 7. Calvin was joined by North Laramie Game Warden Kelly Todd and Hunter Management Coordinator Sterling Spilinek, who taught the young man many new skills throughout the day.

Jordan Martin of Cheyenne also drew an Area 7 elk license and, with a little help from Wildlife and Habitat Management Supervisor Ian Tator, successfully harvested a nice cow. Congratulations to both of these new hunters.



# Law Enforcement

## Hunters cited for illegal ATV use

Medicine Bow Game Warden Jake Kettley responded to a call about a couple of banned ATVs on the Pinto Creek Hunter Management Area. When he arrived, Warden Kettley noticed ATV tracks going through the small walk-through gate so he waited for the hunters to return to their pickup truck.

The two California men eventually returned and had to take their ATVs back through the gate to get to their truck. The ATVs barely fit through the gate and they had to remove their mounted rifles to make it through.

Warden Kettley cited both hunters for having ATVs on the Hunter Management Area, and issued them warnings for failure to display permission slips. One man was also cited for failing to tag his harvested animal, and the other man received a warning for the same violation.



## Errant shot results in over limit of elk



Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood said a man hunting a remote portion of the Bell Otte Hunter Management Area called to report himself for killing two elk with one bullet.

Despite being on a satellite phone, the call dropped, but Coordinator Sherwood was able to locate the man's vehicle and later met with him and his son.

They went to the kill site and Sherwood helped them finish quartering and packing out the two elk the man shot, and an elk his son harvested.

The man's bullet had passed through the vital area of the first cow, and appeared to then have gone through the neck of a second cow, which was most likely standing slightly behind the first animal with her head down. Both elk fell within a few feet of each other.

The man was cited for taking an over limit of elk, but Coordinator Sherwood appeared in court on his behalf and the entire fine was deferred, pending a one year probation period with no other law violations.



## Warden catches anglers snagging salmon

South Laramie Game Warden Bill Brinegar had been checking hunters in area 45 west of town when he decided to check anglers at the Plains Lakes.

At the Lake Hattie dam, he noticed several young men fishing in the outlet. It didn't take long to figure out they were trying to snag kokanee salmon. The men were visiting from out of state and never looked at the fishing regulations to learn that snagging salmon is illegal.

Warden Brinegar issued one warning and one citation for snagging kokanee. He said these weren't the first or the last anglers to take advantage of the vulnerable prey.

At a later date, Brinegar again watched a group of anglers snag kokanee at the same location. The men, who were from Laramie County, all had licenses but never read the fishing regulations. Besides snagging the kokanee, one man also had an over limit of fish. Brinegar issued several citations and warnings to the men.

## Permission needed to hunt Foote Access Area

Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton reported that a white-tail deer was taken without permission at the Foote Public Access area north of Saratoga.

White-tail deer seasons continue through November and December in the upper Platte River Valley for the few lucky people that drew limited quota licenses. However, finding hunting access for white-tails is challenging.

On Nov. 14 an employee of the 5N Ranch near Saratoga observed a hunter loading a freshly killed deer into his vehicle at the entrance to the parking area at the Foote Public Access Area. The ranch employee contacted Warden Burton.

Because the easement for the Foote Access Area only allows fishing and boating access within 50 feet of the river, permission must be obtained from the owner of the property to hunt on the Foote Access Area.



## Opening weekend pheasant harvest down from long-term average

Wheatland Wildlife Biologist Martin Hicks said opening weekend of the general pheasant season saw an increase in wild bird harvest, but overall harvest (pen-raised and wild pheasant harvest) was still below the long-term average.

However, he stresses the importance of the Springer Wildlife Habitat Management Area for hunting opportunity. Hicks said 79 percent of the pheasant harvest reported at check stations on opening weekend came from the Springer WHMA.

# Mountain lion freed from trap, released



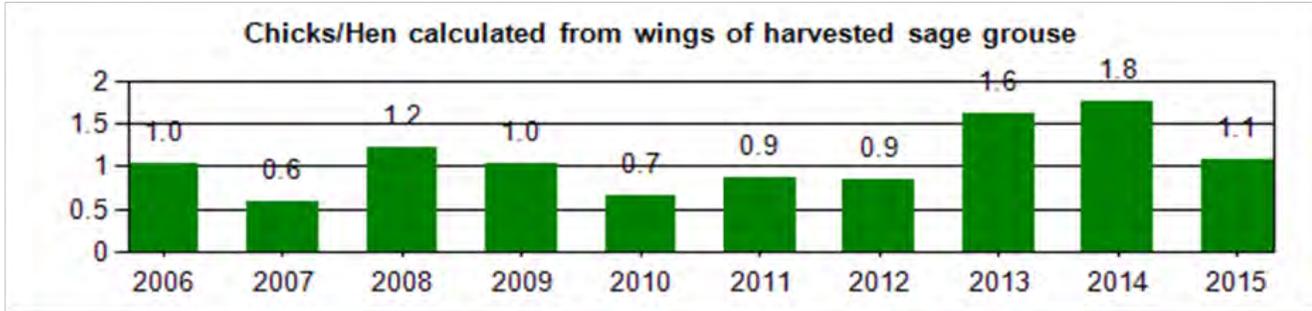
Wheatland Wildlife Biologist Martin Hicks, Medicine Bow Game Warden Jake Kettley and North Laramie Game Warden Kelly Todd went up to the Tunnel Road area to release a mountain lion that a trapper had accidentally caught in a leg hold trap.

After its release, the young cat recovered and was gone within an hour. Biologist Hicks put an ear tag in the right ear just in case we ended up catching her again in the future.

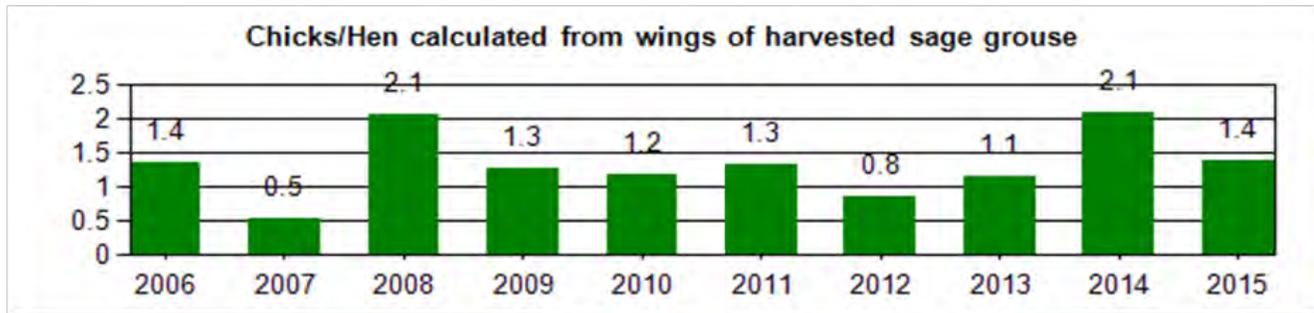


# 2015 Greater Sage-Grouse Wing Bee results

Bates Hole/Shirley Basin Management Area



South Central Management Area

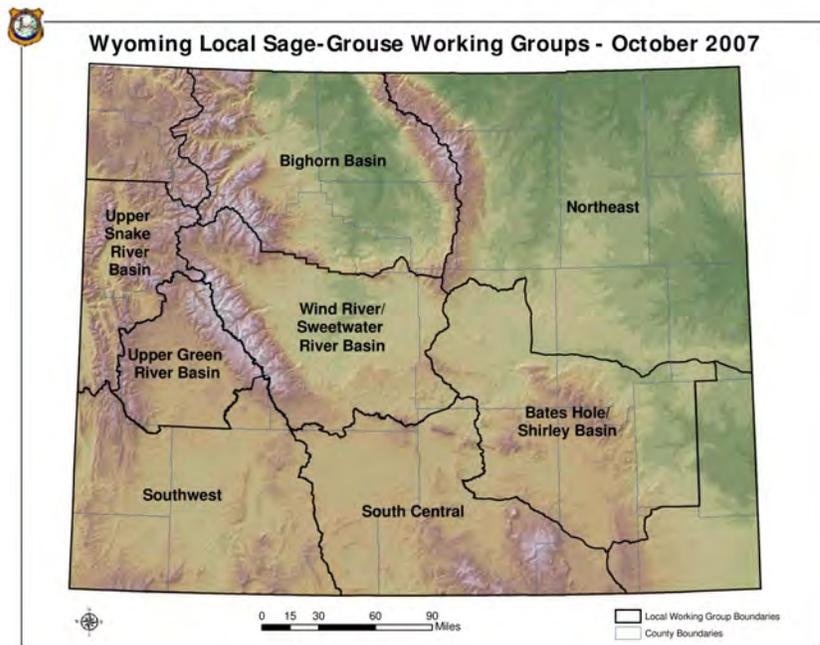


Biologists recently conducted the annual sage-grouse “Wing Bee.” During a wing-bee, biologists determine sex and age of sage-grouse wings that were collected from hunters during the hunting season.

The information is used to evaluate the trend for annual chick survival. Generally, more chick wings in the harvest equals better production and survival rates in the field. Statewide analyses of wing data have suggested chick-per-hen ratios of 1.4-1.7 typically results in relatively stable populations for sage-grouse.

The 2015 chick survival appeared to be down slightly from the notably high rate observed in 2014. However, overall sage-grouse numbers had improved across Wyoming because of the higher survival rate observed last year.

The graphs above show the results for the management areas in the Laramie Region, including the Bates Hole/Shirley Basin Management Area and the South Central Management Area.





## A long hunting tradition

Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood recently checked a hunter named Lydia Sullivan on the McFarlane Hunter Management Area. Sullivan, who is in her 80s, continues to hunt elk on the rocky, roadless portions of the HMA each year with some help from her son, Mike, and grandson, Sean.

As Sherwood accompanied her to some nearby HMA signs for a photo, Sullivan said she walks her dogs twice each day, "just to stay in shape for elk season!" Apparently the walks are worthwhile, as she still typically gets her elk each year.

## Crews plant willows and cottonwoods along Encampment River



Above: Crews plant willows along the bank of the Encampment River. Below: Aquatic habitat biologists assisted the Medicine Bow National Forest and Laramie County Conservation District with two stream crossing rehabilitation projects on Pole Mountain. The crossings were recently damaged by off-road use. The project involved installing fencing, willow cuttings and erosion matting.



Laramie Region Aquatic Habitat Biologist Christina Barrineau had help from the Laramie Habitat and Access crew and employees of Stantec to plant willows and cottonwoods on the Boykin Reach of the Encampment River habitat project.

The cobble rocks used to stabilize the river bank make it difficult for vegetation to grow, so biologists plant woody species to help hold soil in place. Native grasses should eventually establish in the cobble with adequate amounts of soil.

The crews planted the cottonwoods in plots made up of a 4-foot by 4-foot diamond pattern to encourage sediment deposition. Twelve plots were established at various locations within the project site. Blue plastic tubes are used to protect the vulnerable cottonwoods from depredation by deer and other ungulates, and Barrineau sprayed the willow plants with Plantskydd® in efforts to discourage browsing.

Barrineau also worked with Saratoga Habitat Biologist Katie Cheesbrough to kick off the Platte Valley Speaker Series in November. The first speaker was Lindsay Ciepiela, a graduate student at the University of Wyoming, who spoke on her research on estimating trout movement and use of tributary streams in the Upper North Platte Watershed.

About 25 people attended the presentation. Game and Fish will host a Speaker Series talk every other month in either Saratoga or Encampment to promote various habitat topics. Information can be found in future editions of this newsletter and online at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov).

## Bump Sullivan fishery is showing improvement

You need adequate amounts of water to support healthy fish populations and Bump Sullivan Reservoir is a perfect example.

The reservoir was essentially dry from the early 2000s to about 2009. Things started picking up again in 2010, and the reservoir has been full since 2013. In response to good water conditions, Game and Fish stocked large-mouth bass and channel catfish in the reservoir in 2014 to reestablish the fishery. More channel catfish were stocked in 2015.

The fish are growing nicely. Sampling in October turned up bass weighing 1 pound and measuring 12 inches. Bluegill were coming in at .10 pound and measuring 5 inches. Wall-eye have found their way into Bump Sullivan Reservoir from irrigation ditches, with some nice fish weighing more than 3 pounds and measuring over 21 inches. Channel catfish are also growing, with some measuring 14 inches and weighing .76 pound. "We're encouraged with the results," said Fisheries Biologist Lee McDonald. "A 10-inch bass in two to three years is good growth."

Biologists will continue to monitor the fishery in upcoming years. Channel catfish and black crappie are scheduled to be stocked in future years, and other species will access the lake from the supply ditches on their own. Habitat and Access crews have repaired the delivery ditches and Game and Fish has leased water to hopefully keep water levels adequate for continued development of this fishery.



## New furnace will keep crews warm

Habitat and Access Crew Leader Micah Morris installed a new furnace in the bunkhouse at the Wick/Beumee Wildlife Habitat Management Area.

Game and Fish Department personnel often stay at the bunkhouse while working on the WHMA. A separate building contains a cooking area and a bathroom with a shower.

The Wick/Beumee WHMA contains nearly 23,000 acres about six miles southeast of the town of Elk Mountain. Although managed primarily for elk, the area also supports mule deer, pronghorn antelope, blue grouse, sage grouse, cottontail rabbits, waterfowl, coyotes, mountain lions, bobcats and more. Three ponds and ten miles of stream provide fishing for rainbow, brook and brown trout.

## Hunting with the game warden

North Laramie Game Warden Kelly Todd spent a day hunting elk with 14-year-old Dillon Hanrahan.

The duo didn't find any elk, but Dillon was a trooper and with every ridge they came to he would get more excited. Warden Todd spent time reviewing hunter safety issues with the young man, and they talked about the fire that burned the area in 2012 and how it improved the forage for wildlife.



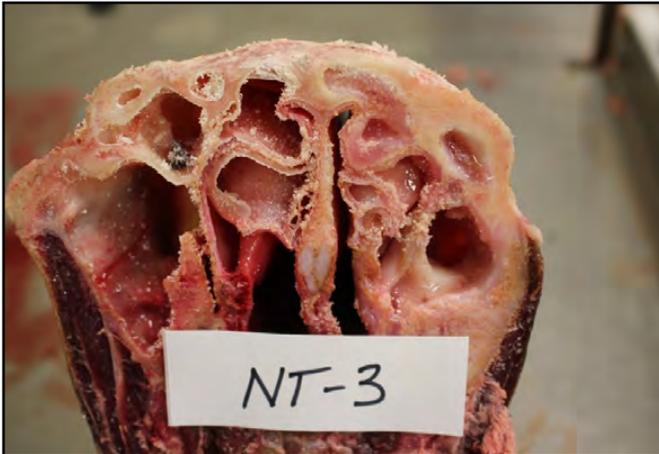
## Elk moving around Halleck Ridge

Elk Mountain Game Warden Ryan Kenneda reports good habitat conditions that should support plenty of elk in the Halleck Ridge area.

Elk in Hunt Area 125 usually start their trek to the winter range on Halleck Ridge around this time of year. By late November, 1,200 elk had crossed onto their winter range on part of the Elk Mountain Hunter Management Area.

Most of the elk harvest in this area takes place in December and January. With the amount of grass in the area, there should be adequate feed for the large herd of wintering elk.

The Elk Mountain Hunter Management Area (HMA) is located approximately 60 miles northwest of Laramie. It is comprised of private and leased lands of the Elk Mountain Ranch. For information on hunting the Elk Mountain Hunter Management Area, visit the Game and Fish Department website at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov).



Sinus tumor in a bighorn sheep from Hunt Area 1. Sinus tumors are evidenced by the thickened sinus walls on the right side.

## Bighorn sheep sinus tumors

Veterinary Services initiated a surveillance effort to survey for sinus tumors in the state's bighorn sheep herds. Collection kits were distributed to several taxidermists with a request that they save capped skulls so they could be examined for sinus tumors.

These tumors grow within the skull sinuses of the horns, forehead, and above the teeth, and have the ability to cause skull and horn deformities as well as potentially contribute to respiratory disease in the herd. Last year was the first time we documented nasal tumors in the state's bighorn sheep herds, when we found an affected ram from the Absaroka herd unit near Cody.

So far this year we have received a total of 18 skulls from hunt areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 12, and 22. Three skulls have strong evidence of sinus tumors; one from Hunt Area 1, one from 22, and one from an unknown hunt area.

## Young elk safely removed from fence

While placing signs on the boundary of the new Menter Knob Hunter Management Area, Access Coordinator Jason Sherwood came across an elk calf that had tangled its hind legs in the fence.

Sherwood safely removed the elk from the fence, and the animal ran away after a few minutes of catching its breath and regaining its bearings.

The Menter Knob Hunter Management Area is located north of the Palmer Canyon Road and west of the Cottonwood Park Road in Elk Area 7. It is comprised of private and leased lands of the EJ Medicine Bow Ranch.



## WGFD seeking bids for maintenance contractor in Platte Valley

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department is seeking formal bids for a contractor to perform maintenance at Public Access Areas along the North Platte River in the Platte Valley.

This is a year-round contract. The successful bidder will be required to visit each Public Access Area weekly during high-use months, with less frequent visits in the off season. Some PAAs may require additional visits throughout the year depending on use. Duties include sweeping outhouses, stocking toilet paper, cleaning parking lot areas, painting, checking inlets at lakes, removing ice in winter, mowing and other duties. A complete list of duties can be found in the formal bid packet.

Persons interested in submitting a formal bid should contact the Laramie Game and Fish Office at (307) 745-4046. Interested persons have until Wednesday, Dec. 23 to respond.

**Wyoming Game and Fish Dept.  
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