



"Conserving Wildlife - Serving People"

## Damage increases as winter progresses

In a severe winter, deer and elk often hang around stored crops and livestock feeding operations. South Laramie Game Warden Bill Brinegar and Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton have both had cases dealing with haystack damage. Brinegar reported that despite most of the Simon Ranch haystacks being fenced off over the last year, the elk simply found the next inadequately fenced haystack down the line to feed on.

Burton experienced similar complaints in his district, so elk were discouraged from feeding on haystacks by licensed hunters, pyrotechnics, lights and vehicles. Emergency fencing was provided to several landowners to protect haystacks from elk and deer damage throughout the Laramie Region.



*Above: Damage to a haystack in the Encampment area ended when the hay was fed out to cattle. Left: Damage to haystacks in Game Warden Bill Brinegar's district.*

## New year, new stamp

Hunters and anglers are reminded to purchase new conservation stamps for 2016. Medicine Bow Game Warden Jake Kettley wrote several citations in January to people elk hunting who forgot to buy new stamps. He stated that this is a common violation for January. Conservation stamps must be purchased annually.

## Warm temps and high winds to blame for declining ice

Wheatland Game Warden David Ellsworth reported that ice fishing initially picked up at the start of the new year. Ice at Wheatland 1 was over 12 inches thick and clear. Towards the end of the month, however, with high wind and warmer temperatures, shore ice became very unstable and most ice fishermen directed their efforts toward Wheatland 3 and Toltec where the ice quality was higher. Declining ice conditions and slow fishing surveys led to a decline in fishing presence at Glendo as well.

Cheyenne Game Warden Shawn Blajszczak monitored ice fishing at Curt Gowdy and the local lakes. He observed some fishermen utilizing the open water to fish. He reported that Crystal Reservoir appeared to have a higher success rate than Granite Reservoir.

Fishermen are reminded to stay safe while ice fishing. Remember to always check the thickness of the ice; four inches or more are suggested. Also, avoid fissures and large cracks in the ice.



*Nice trout taken out of Leazenby Reservoir. Photo taken by Game Warden Bill Brinegar.*

## Tom Harpstreith Memorial Youth Goose Hunt a success

On January 24, 2016, Torrington area landowners, waterfowl outfitters and volunteers banded together to host the 2016 Tom Harpstreith Memorial Youth Goose Hunt. Over 40 kids participated in the event and with cooperating geese, the youth hunt was a huge success. Thank you to all those involved for recognizing the importance of passing on the hunting tradition to our young people and taking the time to instill in them the ethics and values associated with the sport. More information on the annual Tom Harpstreith Memorial Youth Hunt and photos can be found at:

<http://www.tomsyouthhunt.com/>.



*Tom Harpstreith with a good days kill and his lab, Ornyx. Photo credit: <http://www.tomsyouthhunt.com/abouttom.btm>*

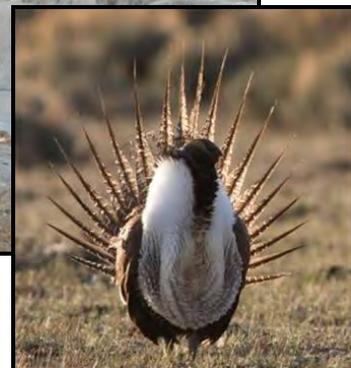
## Sage grouse on the strut

While patrolling northern Albany County one cold morning, Game Warden Jason Sherwood encountered a large flock of sage grouse sunning themselves on a main road. As he was watching them, two males took turns trying out their mating dance, which is unusually early for this time of year. Sage grouse have an

elaborate courtship which includes the males “dancing,” strutting and fanning their tails, and inflating and deflating their bright yellow throat sacs to make a popping sound. Males return and congregate at the same grounds each year (leks) to perform their courtship rituals in order to attract a mate.



*Above: Photo of sage grouse sunning on road in Albany County, January 2016.*



*Right: Male grouse displaying tail during courtship in 2015.*

## Four charged in Canada Goose waste case in Goshen Co.



Four Florida men were cited in Goshen County for the waste and abandonment of 11 Canada Geese. The case resulted from a tip from a local ranch hand who witnessed the violation and reported an accurate license plate

number and vehicle description to the local game warden. This case, yet again, exemplifies the key role played by the public in the detection of wildlife crimes and apprehension of offenders in the state of Wyoming.

## Tips lead to convictions

Each year, hundreds of animals are taken illegally in Wyoming, and without tips from concerned members of the public, many of these crimes would go undetected. Game wardens follow up on all information received through the Stop Poaching program and in many cases these tips lead to successful

prosecutions of perpetrators. Tips can be submitted by phone, text or online and reporters can choose to remain anonymous. Individuals submitting information leading to a conviction can be eligible for a reward through the Wyoming Wildlife Protector's Association.



*Canada geese from a waste and abandonment case in Goshen County.*

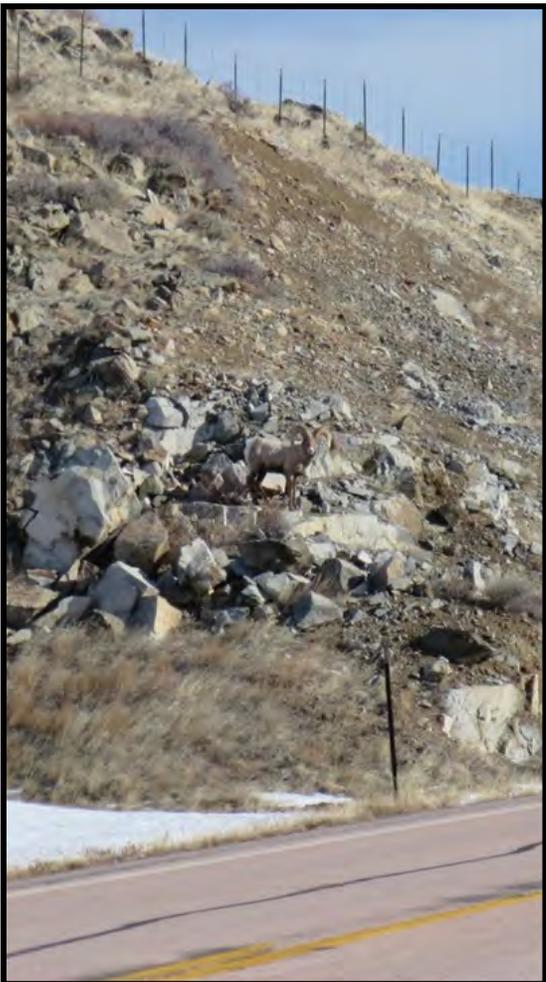
# Spotting the Bighorn Sheep in Sybille



North Laramie Game Warden Kelly Todd was driving through Sybille Canyon in late January when he spotted several bighorn sheep about a half a mile off the road. He observed a couple of ewes and a lamb feeding on a hillside and then noticed a nice ram on top of the hill. He wanted to get a closer look when suddenly the ram started coming towards the road. The ram descended to the road in about ten minutes. When he started to cross the road, Warden Todd remembered a joke he had heard from a family friend thirty five years prior. “Why did the bighorn ram cross the road? To see Ewe.” Kelly was appreciative the ram decided to pay him a visit and give him an optimal view.



**Why did the big-horn ram cross the road?**



Bighorn sheep, making their way through Sybille Canyon, often go undetected by travelers due to how well they blend in with their habitat. Warden Todd stated that he is amazed by how many animals are killed due to vehicle collisions in the canyon each year. It is a good reminder for us to be aware of our surroundings, follow posted speed limits and slow down when you see animals near the road.



## Uncontrolled dogs continue to cause problems

Saratoga Game Warden Biff Burton received three complaints of dogs chasing and killing deer in the towns of Saratoga and Encampment. Police departments in those towns assisted in the investigation and prosecution of dog owners who allowed their dogs to run at large and attack big game animals.

North Laramie Game Warden Kelly Todd had reports of a dog chasing antelope in Kiwanis Park. A husky dog caught a young pronghorn, but luckily a man in the park was able to stop the dog before it was able to injure or kill the pronghorn. Albany County animal control cited the owners for dog at large and Warden Todd issued a warning for harassing wildlife. Owners are reminded to maintain control of your dogs at all times; as failure to do so can result in citations and injured wildlife.



*An uncontrolled dog accused of chasing deer in Saratoga.*

## Hunting requires effort from the hunter

South Laramie Game Warden Bill Brinegar reported talking to an unhappy hunter from Hunt Area 9 who was upset at the lack of elk on the X Bar Hunter Management Area west of Laramie. Warden Brinegar said that he found that complaint odd considering that he had witnessed 350-400 elk nearly each time he patrolled the area. It turned out that the hunter wasn't putting in his fair share of work to have a successful hunt and was showing up too late in the morning.



*Photo taken during recent elk classification flight in Laramie Region near Sybille.*

## Game Warden exam being offered

Cheyenne Game Warden Brooke Weaver and WGFD wildlife division administration successfully edited and updated the Game Warden exam for 2016. The exam is now being offered online. Duties include enforcement of hunting and fishing laws, wildlife management, data collection and analysis, watercraft safety, interacting with the public and landowners and wildlife damage/conflicts.

If you are interested in a rewarding career as a game warden in Wyoming, you can find out more information at: <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/law-enforcement>.

A valid driver's license and a Bachelor's degree in wildlife management, range management, biology, zoology, ichthyology or other closely related field is required.



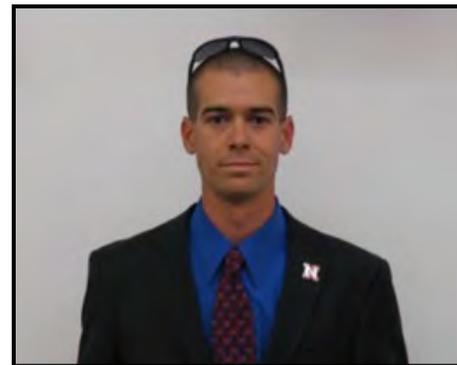
## Two new game wardens hired in Laramie region

Five new game wardens were hired in the last round of interviews and two will be stationed out of the Laramie Regional office beginning in mid-April. Kristen DaVanon graduated from New Mexico University with a Masters in Biology and Mitchell Renteria graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Fisheries and Wildlife from the University of Nebraska.

They are currently attending the Wyoming Law Enforcement Academy in Douglas, WY. They will spend the majority of their time this summer on Glendo Reservoir enforcing watercraft safety and fishing regulations. Welcome to the region Kristen and Mitchell; we are looking forward to your assistance.



*Kristen DaVanon*



*Mitchell Renteria*

**Wyoming Game and Fish Dept.**  
**Laramie Region Office**  
**528 S. Adams St.**  
**Laramie, WY 82070**



February 2016



### 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 Specialist:**  
Terry Creekmore

**TWRC Manager:**  
Matt Huizenga

**Wildlife Biologist:**  
Cole Hansen

**Biologist:** Sam Lockwood



## Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center

### Still More Sheep Facility Construction...

We had a very productive month here in the canyon. We were able to make considerable progress on our sheep handling facility by finishing almost all of the exterior alley way, completing catch pens in the pastures, and installing automatic waterers. Next, we have to finish the chute system in the handling building and some cosmetic work inside. The facility should be complete by mid-March.



*Exterior of the sheep handling facility.*

### Sampling and Moving Sheep to New Pasture

All of our hard work is beginning to pay off. In January we trimmed hooves, sampled all of our bighorn sheep, and moved them out to their new double-fenced pasture. We utilized this opportunity to host new Cody Biologist Juliann Terry and Greybull Biologist Leslie Schreiber for training on bighorn sheep handling, sampling, and sample processing. We try to use each handling experience at the TWRC as an opportunity to train WGFD personnel or students in wildlife handling and disease sampling.



*Greybull biologist, Leslie Schreiber, drawing blood on a bighorn ewe before moving her to the new pasture.*

The new pasture is nearly six times the size of their old enclosure, providing our bighorn sheep with a much more natural and low-stress environment. Our ewes now have access to a free-flowing creek, trees for shade and cover and a rock pile for climbing. They seem to be acclimating well to their new pasture and appear to enjoy the extra space.



*Bighorn ewes acclimating to their new pasture at the Thorne/Williams Wildlife Research Center.*

## Wildlife Necropsy Summary

Twenty-three wildlife cases were submitted for diagnostics in January.

| Species                    | Date Received | County     | Diagnosis                 |
|----------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------------------|
| Elk                        | 1/8/2016      | Platte     | CWD, aspiration pneumonia |
| Eurasian-collared dove (3) | 1/14/2016     | Natrona    | Avian Paramyxovirus       |
| Elk                        | 1/14/2016     | Sweetwater | Pending                   |
| Elk                        | 1/15/2016     | Natrona    | Emaciation                |
| Elk                        | 1/15/2016     | Natrona    | Emaciation, adenovirus    |
| Turkey                     | 1/15/2016     | Johnson    | Phosphide toxicity        |
| Turkey                     | 1/15/2016     | Johnson    | Phosphide toxicity        |
| Cotton tailed rabbit       | 1/25/2016     | Platte     | Pending                   |
| Cotton tailed rabbit       | 1/25/2016     | Platte     | Pending                   |
| Cotton tailed rabbit       | 1/25/2016     | Platte     | Pending                   |
| White-tailed deer          | 1/25/2016     | Park       | Pending                   |
| Bighorn Sheep              | 1/26/2016     | Albany     | Pending                   |
| Eurasian-collared dove (3) | 1/26/2016     | Converse   | Avian Paramyxovirus       |
| Mule deer                  | 1/26/2016     | Converse   | Pending                   |
| Pronghorn                  | 1/26/2016     | Albany     | Pending                   |
| Mule deer                  | 1/26/2016     | Fremont    | Necrobacillosis           |
| Mule deer                  | 1/26/2016     | Fremont    | Pending                   |
| Mule deer                  | 1/29/2016     | Albany     | Pending                   |

### Case of the Month

Wildlife Division Deputy Chief Scott Edberg responded to a call of a number of dead Eurasian-collared doves in west Casper. Laboratory testing of the doves at the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory indicated they died from avian paramyxovirus. Final confirmation from the National Veterinary Services Laboratory in Ames Iowa identified the culprit as pigeon paramyxovirus-1 (PPMV-1).

PPMV-1 is a virus that is considered endemic in the US and affects primarily pigeons and doves. Since May of 2014, Eurasian-collared dove mortality from PPMV-1 has been documented in Green River, Cheyenne, Ft. Laramie, Douglas and Casper. Mortality rates can be high and may be associated with birds congregating around bird feeders or bird baths. Only one Mourning dove has been diagnosed with PPMV-1 in Wyoming to date.

Pigeon paramyxovirus-1 is spread by direct contact between infected birds, bird carcasses, or by contact with contaminated items such as bird feeders or bird baths. Ongoing mortality events in Wyoming mirror those along the front range of Colorado. Continued mortality of Eurasian-collared doves can be expected throughout southern and eastern Wyoming and may expand to other regions of the state. We are monitoring the movement of this virus in Wyoming and request that die-offs of any doves be reported to the WGFD Wildlife Health Laboratory. We may not conduct diagnostic testing on all die-offs, particularly if the virus has already been detected in that area of the state; however, we will monitor the number of reports we are receiving to gauge the overall impact this virus may have in Wyoming.

A fact sheet on PPMV-1 is available to the public on the Veterinary services web page.

# Wildlife Health Laboratory

## Brucellosis Surveillance:

Brucellosis surveillance in hunter-killed elk was complete at the end of January. Sample totals for this season include: received 1,157 blood samples were received by the laboratory with 798 (69%) of those being suitable for testing. Four-hundred and eighty two suitable samples were received from the Bighorns alone, with no positive animals identified. The final report on the 2015 brucellosis surveillance program will be available by the end of February 2016.

## Chronic Wasting Disease Surveillance

A total of 1,747 deer, elk, and moose samples were analyzed. Of these samples, 98 tested positive for CWD representing 65 mule deer, 12 white-tailed deer, and 21 elk (see table 1). This year's surveillance efforts identified five new deer hunt areas: One at Devil's Tower National Monument, 24 near Sheridan, 100 in the Baggs area, 112 near Cody, and 171 which encompasses most of the Wind River Indian Reservation. Four new elk hunt areas were also discovered in 2015 including: hunt areas 11 and 12 in the Snowy Range Mountains, 21 near Baggs, and 34 on the eastern slope of the Bighorn Mountains (see maps below). Of the 1,747 total samples received, 85% came from hunter-killed animals, 8% from targeted and 7% from road-killed deer, elk and moose. It should be noted that the majority of road-killed surveillance occurs outside of the known endemic area for chronic wasting disease, while targeted animals tend to be submitted from within the endemic area. The final report on the 2015 surveillance effort will be available by the end of February 2016.

|             | Mule Deer |         | White-Tailed Deer |         | Elk   |         | Moose |         | Total |         |
|-------------|-----------|---------|-------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| Hunter-kill | 788       | 48      | 90                | 3       | 605   | 16      | 5     | 0       | 1,488 | 67      |
| Targeted    | 62        | 15      | 20                | 8       | 44    | 5       | 14    | 0       | 140   | 28      |
| Road-kill   | 87        | 2       | 4                 | 1       | 24    | 0       | 4     | 0       | 119   | 3       |
| Total       | 937       | 65      | 114               | 12      | 673   | 21      | 23    | 0       | 1,747 | 98      |
|             | Total     | CWD Pos | Total             | CWD Pos | Total | CWD Pos | Total | CWD Pos | Total | CWD Pos |

Table 1. Distribution of samples and proportion of positives according to surveillance category

## Respiratory Disease Surveillance in Bighorn Sheep

Preparations began for upcoming disease surveillance in bighorn sheep. Plans are currently underway to capture 25 sheep in Devil's Canyon, 10 sheep in the North and South Fork of the Shoshone, five in the badlands near Dubois, 15 in Temple Peak, 20 near Whiskey Basin, and 11 in Jackson. Capture operations will begin in the middle of February and should wrap up by the middle of March.



Bighorn Ewes

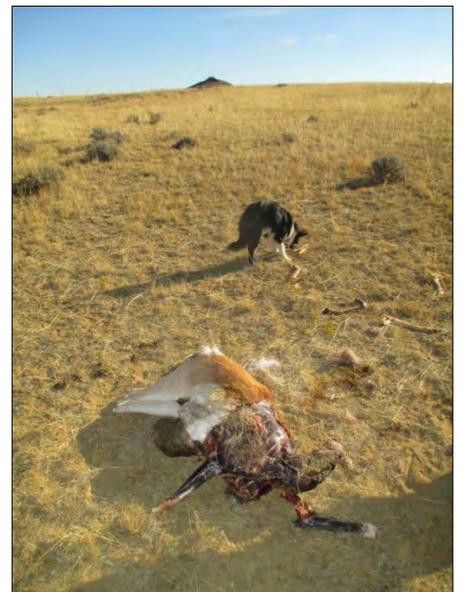


# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

## Wildlife Investigative Unit

February, 2016

- Assisted the South Laramie game warden in an investigation of multiple elk killed without licenses on a ranch with locked gates bordering the Wyoming-Colorado state line. The investigation is being coordinated with Colorado wildlife officers and USFWS agents. Violations date back to 2013 or earlier. A re-interview of the current ranch manager was conducted in Fort Collins.
- Assisted the Wheatland game warden in an investigation of a transfer of license where a 6x6 elk was killed by a Utah individual without a license. Social media records were reviewed and interview leads were sent to Arkansas and Utah officers.
- Assisted several region wardens, carnivore officers and the USFWS agents with social media inquiries, cell phone forensics, record searches, case histories, taxidermist issues and general case assistance.
- Spent a considerable amount of time in January working with the Park County Attorney's Office on an outfitting without a license case involving a Cody man who outfitted several individuals on Park and Hot Springs County ranches in 2013 and 2014.
- Assisted the Meeteetse game warden with an outfitting without a license case in January. A Cody man arranged a guided hunt with a local hounds-man who does not possess an outfitting license. The man paid \$2,000 and killed a mountain lion in the Willow Creek drainage west of Meeteetse. The outfitter then led the hunter across private land as they dragged the dead cat out. He has been charged with outfitting without a license and trespassing to hunt a mountain lion. The hunter provided a written statement and allowed his cell phone to be examined by the investigating officers. Text messages from the hunter's phone will be used as evidence in the case.
- Assisted the Greybull game warden with an elk over limit case in January. Several hunters killed 16 elk in November and left 6 to waste after tagging several, and transferring licenses on others. The investigator and warden worked with the Bighorn County Attorney's Office on a prosecution strategy and sentencing recommendations.
- Worked with Cody Region game wardens to resolve a WIU case in January. The case has been ongoing for several years and involves a Wisconsin man outfitting without a license near Ten Sleep. An arrest warrant was obtained for the man and surveillance was conducted to locate the man and the three hunters who were with him. He was located at the Ten Broek camp ground and taken into custody. He was charged with three counts of outfitting without a license and one count of conspiracy to outfit without a license. At his arraignment he pled guilty to all charges and was sentenced to \$4,000 in fines, \$3,400 in restitution and had his privilege to hunt suspended for three years.
- Assisted wardens with multiple cases involving poaching of antelope, mule deer, white-tailed deer, and elk in several counties. The cases continue to be investigated with the coordinated efforts of local game wardens. Three of the cases involve "TV Channel" hunts where violations are suspected within the State of Wyoming.
- Closed a case investigation following the payment of fines by three Nebraska residents involving the wanton destruction and intentional waste of edible portions of a trophy class buck antelope taken near the town of Kaycee. A landowner discovered the head, cape and legs were removed from the carcasses, but no meat was taken and contacted the Game and Fish Department. With the assistance of the USFWS, the Nebraska Game Fish & Parks, and the local warden, the investigator traveled to Omaha, Nebraska and recovered evidence of the crime. Additionally it was discovered that the hunters were also responsible for illegally killing a swift fox (a non-game protected species). One defendant paid a fine of \$420 for leaving all edible portions of the antelope to waste and a second was fined \$420 as an accessory to the offense.
- Assisted in a case involving the illegal taking of deer, along the Wyoming-Montana border in Sheridan County, an investigator partnered with a USFWS agent, game wardens and the Sheridan County Attorney's Office in conducting a proffer with a defendant concerning additional big game animals poached along the border. Additional charges for killing these big game animals without licenses and wanton destruction of big game animals are expected to follow.





the wyoming game & fish department

# CASPER REGION newsletter

## February Fishing Ice Fishing in the Casper Region

Ice fishing continues to be popular on local waters with reports from fisherman being hit and miss.

The HAWG ice fishing contest at Pathfinder Reservoir sold 663 tickets; 280 trout and 59 walleye were entered. Ice conditions were better this year with only one ATV/Razor going through the ice, compared to seven last year.

In the Casper Region, anglers using live baitfish have the option of purchasing either wild caught or commercial produced baitfish. Commercially produced baitfish are fathead minnows from a Game and Fish approved hatchery, and wild caught are native minnows seined in the wild. Remember, if you have minnows you need to have a receipt. Also remember, there are different rules



and regulations for commercially produced versus wild caught baitfish. Remember to check the 2016 Wyoming Fishing Regulations or call (307) 473-3400 if you have questions.

### Inside This Month's Issue:

**Behind the Badge**  
Casper Pronghorn Poaching Update

**On the Ground**  
Native Tree Planting, Elk Classifications, Winter Conditions

**In the Water**  
Bryan Stock Trail Pond

**Of Interest**  
Rough-legged Hawks, Public Meetings

## Behind the Badge

### Casper Pronghorn Poaching Update

A pronghorn antelope poaching case was recently adjudicated from events that occurred in October. A brief vehicle pursuit, multiple interviews, the use of a language interpreter, and collection of both physical and electronic evidence, resulted in seven men being arrested by West Casper Game Warden Daniel Beach. As the investigation grew, Beach was assisted by a team of local game wardens.



Questioning occurred over a period of three days. The suspects led wardens to believe that the four initially confiscated pronghorn antelope were all that were killed, but Beach had a confiscated cell phone video that he felt told a different story. Through the use of an interpreter, Beach was able to hear the suspects give verbal confirmation they had hit and killed the pronghorn, even though the video did not show the shot animal. Game Wardens Beach and Cody Bish used the video to confirm the location of the shooting by identifying local landmarks, and even the patchwork on the road surface. Once they found the exact location of the shooting, they were able to locate the poached pronghorn and bring wanton destruction charges against the suspect.



In total, all suspects were charged with 29 different poaching violations including wanton destruction of big game, take pronghorn without a license, wrong area, wrong sex, fail to tag, shooting from a roadway and taking big game from a motor vehicle. All the suspects eventually plead guilty resulting in \$33,365 in fines and restitution, forfeiture of a .30-06 rifle and a combined loss of 32 years of hunting, fishing and trapping privileges.



## On the Ground

### Native Tree Planting ,Elk Classification Flights, Winter Conditions

Game and Fish recently planted over 400 native trees and shrubs in a Cheyenne River tributary. Planting will continue on adjacent lands this April. This system has lost much of the native woody component which provides great habitat for mule deer and a wide variety of non-game species. These projects are adjacent to on-going upland habitat projects which aim to restore the native sagebrush component and reduce cheat-grass.



Casper Region game wardens and biologists flew elk classification surveys in mid-January. Conditions were excellent during the elk Hunt Area 19 flight, and over 1,500 elk were observed. Elk in large groups are flown over at a distance and recorded with a video camera. This footage is then evaluated on a computer in slow motion to better capture the composition of the herd. Game wardens and biologists classify elk into total number of cows, calves, spikes and mature bulls. This important information is used to determine the population trend as well as the quality of bulls left after the hunting season. The resulting data helps determine what hunting seasons and license numbers will be for the upcoming fall.



The winter of 2015-2016 has been above average with regards to snowfall in parts of the Casper Region, and it may be impacting overwinter survival of wildlife in some areas. While areas to the north and east of Casper have had lower snow accumulations, Casper Mountain, Muddy Mountain, and the Bates Hole area have seen significant snowfall and accumulation. Lighter winds in these regions allow snow to pile up and persist, rather than blowing free and exposing areas for big game to forage. Pronghorn wintering in Bates Hole (Hunt Area 32) have become highly concentrated in the few places where snow has drifted and exposed forage on hillsides. Deer are faring better, as they put on fat in the fall to help them survive harsh periods when food is scarce and the shrubs they eat are taller and readily available above the crusted snow layers. Warmer temperatures in February have melted quite a bit of snow west and northwest of Casper, but deeper snows are still present in Bates Hole and Muddy Mountain. It will likely take quite a bit longer for these areas to open up this spring, but hopefully the persistent snow pack will provide lasting moisture and a good green-up at higher elevations this spring.



## In the Water

### Bryan Stock Trail Pond

Tillett Rearing Station recently brought around 200 brood cull rainbow trout (average size 18 inches) to Bryan Stock Trail Community Fishing Pond (Lake McKenzie Park). Pat Long, Senior Fish Culturist, hauled the fish safely for five hours before fisheries manager Matt Hahn stocked the fish in Casper. It was a cold, windy day and the fish were ready to be in their new home. Pat and Matt used a chain-saw to cut through eight inches of ice on the pond.



## Of Interest

### Rough-legged Hawks, Public Meetings

Lusk Game Warden Brady Vandenberg dealt with three injured rough-legged hawks on separate occasions along the highways near Lusk. It appears the hawks are hunting along the roads or scavenging road-killed rabbits due to their high numbers this year. Unfortunately he was unable to save two of the hawks, but the third was sent to a rehabilitation facility.



Rough legged hawks are fairly large hawks with broad wings; they are common winter visitors to Wyoming but breed in Canada and Alaska during the summer. While hunting, they appear to hover as they scan the ground below.



The Wyoming Game and Fish Department will hold a public meeting and a series of open houses throughout the Casper Region to address 2016 hunting season proposals for big game, small game, game birds, waterfowl and bison.

A public information gathering meeting will be held from 7-9 p.m. Thursday, March 17 at the Casper Game and Fish office, 3030 Energy Lane.

There will be a formal presentation of the Casper Region hunting season proposals and management recommendations at this meeting. During the open houses, Game and Fish personnel will be available to discuss the proposed 2016 hunting seasons for local hunt areas. Open houses will be held at the following locations:

- Sundance: 4-6 p.m. Monday, March 14 in the basement of the Crook County Courthouse
- Hulett: 7 p.m. Monday, March 14 at the Hulett Community Center
- Newcastle: Tuesday, March 15, 6 p.m. at the USDA Forest Service office
- Lusk: 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 16 at the Niobrara County Courthouse, Commission Room
- Douglas: 6-8 p.m. Wednesday, March 16 in the basement of the Converse County Courthouse

Interested persons can submit comments in writing at these meetings, submit comments online at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov) or mail them to: Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Attn: Regulations, 3030 Energy Lane, Casper, WY 82604. Written comments must be received by 5 p.m. Friday, March 25 and will be presented to the Game and Fish Commission prior to their hearing at their April 21-22 meeting in Casper.

WGFD supports the Americans with Disabilities act. Every effort will be made for reasonable accommodations by contacting the nearest Game and Fish office.





*Elk and Moose Winter Range Surveys ~ Good Bull numbers, but heavy winter conditions.*



Mountain View Wildlife Biologist Jeff Short, with the help of Kemmerer Game Warden Chris Baird and Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas, completed the West Green River elk herd surveys and the Lincoln moose herd surveys. Short reported, "For elk, we observed the cow: calf and bull: cow ratios were good-at 34:100 and 36.6:100. Our total sample size was 2,970 elk. Some good mature bulls were seen." "When we flew the Lincoln moose herd survey we observed that the cow: calf and bull: cow ratios were good-at 42:100 and 38:100. Total moose sample size was 331 moose." On a cautious note, Short said, "The winter conditions are heavy out here and I am concerned that this could turn into a bad winter for wildlife. Some deer mortality is currently occurring, especially fawns, throughout the region."



**Collecting shed antlers and or horns prohibited January 1- April 30 ~ Winter Range Protection**



**Photos top to bottom:**  
 Doe deer soaks up sun near Kemmerer; Doe and her fawns near Baggs; snowman to welcome you to the Baggs Warden Station, and a shed antler sits in a snow bank until someone finds it **AFTER April 30.**

**Exciting research technology**



**Kemmerer Game Warden Chris Baird and Mtn. View Wildlife Biologist Jeff Short** coordinated on an exciting survey technique for ungulates. "This was part of an assignment from the Moose Working Group, in cooperation with the Governors Big Game License Coalition," Baird said. "The survey was conducted in the Lincoln Moose herd in hunt area 26. Hunt area 26 was chosen to explore this technique because of its diverse winter moose habitat types that should be comparable to other herd units across the state."

**Owyhee Air** was contracted to use their *high definition infrared camera* technology to survey for moose while WGFD personnel surveyed from another helicopter. The main objectives were to compare the current traditional survey method to infrared technology. Baird and Short are still working on sorting thru a lot of data and look forward to reporting back to the moose working group on the findings.

**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>





*Access Yes Recognition Program ~ Stoll family is honored*



*Left to right: Commissioner Price, Andy Countryman, Lynn Stoll, Kathy Stoll and family, WGFD Director Scott Talbott. (Photo: Janet Milek, WGFD)*



*Left to right: Mountain View Game Warden Allen Deru, Stoll and Andy Countryman (Photo: Kathy Stoll)*

Southwest Access Yes Coordinator Andrew Countryman reports the southwest Wyoming recipient of the Access Recognition Program is Robert “Lynn” Stoll and his wife Kathy from the Burntfork area, located 30 miles southeast of Mountain View, Wyoming.

“The Stoll’s have a parcel of land located on Cedar Mountain in western Sweetwater County,” Countryman said. “The land has been enrolled in the Walk-In Hunting Area program for the last four hunting seasons. Lynn enrolled his land in hopes of protecting much needed water sources, improving wildlife habitat, and providing a place for the public to enjoy hunting opportunities. Lynn took the bull by the horns and encouraged his neighbors to join in the effort by enrolling their lands, resulting in three other neighbors participating in the program.”

“Lynn maintains his leadership qualities today by keeping the participating landowners informed of any new information involving the walk-in area. Due to Lynn’s effort, all four landowners have agreed to renew their lands this year and provide hunting opportunities for the public for another five years. The Cedar Mountain walk in area provides a quality hunt for deer, antelope, and sometimes elk for sportsmen who are willing to leave their vehicles behind. Cedar Mountain is primarily BLM land, with a spider web of roads that cut across the landscape. The walk in area provides a sanctuary from the intense vehicle traffic on surrounding public lands.”

“The landowners recognized the need for hunters to be able to navigate around the mountain, so they use “designated” roads to allow vehicle traffic on specific parts of the walk-in area while completely prohibiting vehicle traffic in others to produce quality hunting and protect the valuable water sources which enhance local wildlife populations.”

“Lynn believes in providing access and opportunities to people. Not only does he participate and lead in the PLPW program, but he provides opportunities to disabled veterans through the Sgt. Daniel Gurr Foundation. Lynn purchases his landowner antelope license and donates it to a well deserving veteran. He also personally guides these heroes and has housed them at his ranch the last two years during their hunt.”

**Burbot Ice Fishing Derbies ~ A great Year for thick Ice ~ Burbot Bash & Burbot Classic**



*Colby Rich*



*Jim Jensen*



*GR Habitat Biologist Kevin Spence*



*Pinedale Region's Darren Rhea*



*Bottom, left to right: GR Fisheries Supervisor Robb Keith (crazy scanner-guy), GR Fisheries Biologists Joe Skorupski and John Walrath work fish and crowd at Manila Fairgrounds closing ceremony.*



*Jackson Region's Diana Miller (right) and GR Office Manager Sheila Watts collect data.*



Green River (GR), Lander and Pinedale Region staff worked with local sponsors of the annual Burbot Bash and Burbot Classic fishing derbies. Green River Fisheries Biologist John Walrath reports the following derby statistics for the Burbot Bash:

- 678 participants registered (204 teams)
- Over 3604 burbot were removed from Friday afternoon through Sunday morning.
- 157 burbot were caught by the most successful team earning them \$1800.
- The top ten teams caught 1201 burbot and shared in the \$8050 of prize money distributed for this category.
- The biggest burbot caught was 33.1 inches and weighed 7.93 pounds earning that angler \$1300.
- The top ten burbot entered ranged from 33.1 to 30.9 inches and earned the respective anglers a share of \$5500 in prize money.
- Ten youth anglers shared in the \$750 of youth prize money for biggest and smallest burbot caught by a youth. The largest youth burbot was 32 inches and weighed 6.09 pounds.
- Teams turned in seven tagged burbot. One was a fish tagged in 2016 - the other six were tagged in a previous year, including one fish from 2011. The Burbot Bounty, worth \$1400, was split by the 7 teams. The three insured tags, worth over \$13,500 are still swimming around in Flaming Gorge Reservoir.





*Office managers Sheila Watts (right) and Regina Dickson (left) have been busy since the new year, answering questions about current ice conditions, Life Time Licenses, and boat registrations. The girls invite you to stop in and pick up your 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

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



stay connected



*~Critter Spotlight~  
River Otter  
By Mark Zornes a.k.a. Leopold*

- *A large member of the weasel family (Mustelidae) that spends the bulk of its life in an aquatic environment. River otters can dive and hold their breath for four to five minutes while searching for their main source of food; fish and crayfish.*
- *River otters are a fairly common site along some drainages in western Wyoming, especially along the lower Green River. While river otter populations have declined throughout much of its range, otters appear to be fairly secure and increasing in this lower portion of the Green River drainage and its larger tributaries, like the Black's and Hams Forks, and within Labarge and Fontenelle Creeks.*
- *As mentioned above, river otters prey heavily on fish and crayfish, and (contrary to worries of some human anglers) have very limited impact on overall fish populations. River otters also consume other animals, ranging from frogs and large aquatic insects, to muskrats, voles, and the occasional small beaver.*
- *River otters are very social within their family groups, an adult female and her pups. Adult males are solitary except during breeding. River otters groups can often be seen in bouts of "chase" or sliding repeatedly on snow banks, apparently for no reason but play.*
- *While this species is a heavily regulated furbearer in much of its range, due to relatively low numbers and limited distribution, river otters are currently a protected species in Wyoming, with no legal harvest.*
- *River otters are sensitive to pollution and can be eliminated from some drainages or portions of drainages during chronic or acute pollution events.*
- *River otters typically produce one to five young, born totally dependent in a bank den of some form, typically constructed by beavers. Pups are weaned at about 12 weeks.*



## Wyoming Game and Fish Department Large Carnivore Section Newsletter -February 2016-



In January, 2/3 of the animals our Section is responsible for are in winter sleep. Pregnant female black and grizzly bears have recently given birth in their dens, with cubs weighing in at around one pound each. Bears have delayed implantation (also referred to as embryonic diapause - say that fast five times), where breeding occurs in the early summer months, but the fertilized egg is not implanted into the uterine wall until Fall. This is a reproductive strategy for bears and also members of the weasel, rodent, and marsupial families.

While some animals sleep our personnel work on data analysis, annual reports, damage claims, budgets, and other important projects while continuing to respond to conflicts and conduct mountain lion field work. January saw a great deal of snow in many parts of the state, rendering roads closed and vehicles inept (more to come on this aspect later), which shifts ungulates and in turn animals such as mountain lions. Please enjoy the following insight into events occurring within the Large Carnivore Section during the month of January.

### Section Personnel:

#### Cody:

Luke Ellsbury  
Dusty Lasseter

#### Lander:

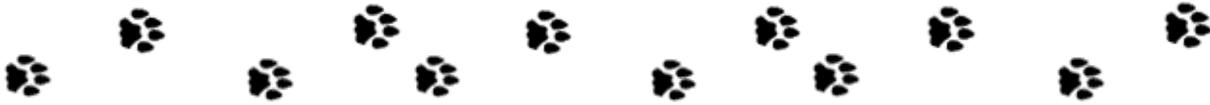
Dan Bjornlie  
Justin Clapp  
Brian Debolt  
Dan Thompson

#### Pinedale:

Zach Turnbull  
Ken Mills

#### Jackson:

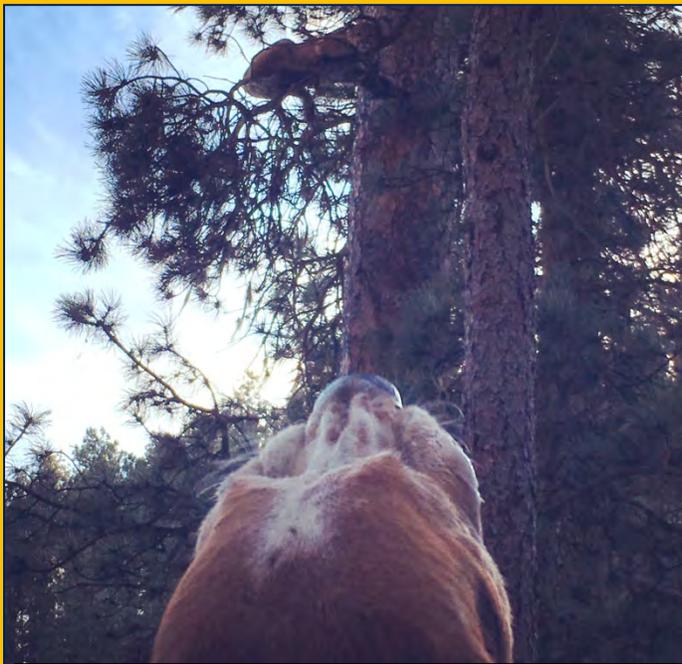
Mike Boyce



## Mountain Lion Management

Our personnel have been interacting with the public and media a great deal lately specific to mountain lion management in the Cowboy State. As per our Wyoming Game and Fish Mountain Lion Management Plan (2006), *“The goal of mountain lion management in Wyoming is to sustain mountain lion populations throughout core habitat at varying densities depending on management objectives to provide for recreational/hunting opportunity, maintain ungulate populations at established objectives or in line with current habitat conditions, and minimize mountain lion depredation to pets and livestock and reduce the potential for human injury...”*

In contrast to ungulate management, mountain lions are managed on a three-year cycle in order to evaluate population trends, and hunt areas are managed with a mortality *limit* versus *quota*; where the mortality limit is the threshold to maintain objective and not a target number that needs to be reached for management success. For instance, hunt area objectives were achieved for 89% and 76% of hunt areas during the first two management cycles (2007-2009 and 2010-2012), respectively. This harvest year (2015/16) represents the third year of the current cycle, meaning annual mortality data will be fully quantified and analyzed to determine population



*Hound’s Eye View:* Luke Ellsbury’s hound “Cat” with a mountain lion treed for monitoring purposes in the Black Hills. Once a sample was obtained the mountain lion safely fled the scene.

trends across the state in order to develop harvest objectives for the next three years. The Section will be meeting with Game and Fish Regional personnel this spring and bringing updated harvest limits and objectives to the public late this spring or in early summer to present the final Department recommendations for mountain lion management to the Commission in July. Stay tuned for more mountain lion information in the upcoming months!



## Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Meeting – Cheyenne, WY

The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission held its January Meeting in Cheyenne, WY at Game and Fish Headquarters, where two presentations from the Large Carnivore Section occurred related to Wyoming's bears. In the Fall of 2015, the Commission had requested an informational presentation about grizzly bear ecology, monitoring, and management. This presentation



focused on the annual activities conducted by the Department related to how bears are monitored, how the data obtained from monitoring is used to demonstrate recovery of the population, as well as how the Section deals with conflicts between bears and people. In addition the Commission was provided an update on the current federal status of grizzly bears by Wildlife Division Chief Brian Nesvik. The Commission meeting wrapped up with a presentation by Dan Bjornlie about black bear ecology and management in the Greys River area in the Wyoming Range of western Wyoming, including panoramic illustrations of population level

movements in relation to harvest. The Section initiated additional monitoring work for black bears in the area last summer and continues to evaluate how increased harvest of black bears is reflected in the population demographics of bears on the landscape. The monitoring efforts will assist our evaluation of black bear management and hopefully become something that the Department can use in other areas across the state.





## **2015 GRIZZLY BEAR RELOCATION REPORT**

In 2005, the Wyoming Legislature enacted House Bill 203, which created Wyoming Statute §23-1-1001. This statute requires the Department to submit an annual report to the Joint Travel, Recreation, Wildlife, and Cultural Resources Interim committee no later than January 15 of each year regarding grizzly bear management captures. The report includes grizzly bear captures and relocation events related to grizzly bear conflict resolution activities conducted by the Large Carnivore Section. During 2015, the Department captured 45 grizzly bears in 51 capture events in an attempt to prevent or resolve conflicts. Of the 51 capture events, 22 captures were a result of bears killing livestock (primarily cattle), six were captured for getting unsecured garbage, and six bears were captured for obtaining pet, livestock food, or foraging on fruit trees. Twelve management captures occurred as preemptive measures for bears exhibiting habituated behavior and/or being in close proximity to people, as well as three non-target captures and two captures for property damage. All relocated grizzly bears were released on U.S. Forest Service lands in or adjacent to the Primary Conservation Area (PCA). The full report is available on the Department's Website → Wildlife in Wyoming → More → Grizzly Bear Management; or by copying and pasting the following link:

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Wildlife-in-Wyoming/More-Wildlife/Large-Carnivore/Grizzly-Bear-Management>



### **Notable LCS Accomplishments and Briefs for January 2016**

- Participated in an informational workshop on livestock conflict resolution in Pinedale for the Upper Green River Cattlemen's Association. Zach Turnbull provided a presentation as to Departmental response to livestock depredation and the Department's grizzly bear management program.

- 
- Conducted multiple media interviews (print and televised) regarding mountain lion and grizzly bear management activities by the Department.
  - In an effort to better understand mountain lion management strategies and population dynamics of mountain lions in southwestern Wyoming, the Section initiated monitoring work in the Green River region. Information gathered will be used to evaluate harvest strategies and also provide additional ancillary data to the ongoing D.E.E.R. project being conducted by the University of Wyoming on deer and elk interactions. Snow is generally advantageous for mountain lion capture, but there is a limit to its benefit...



- Interacted with interested members of the public, other agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in regards to large carnivore management and ecology, specifically related to Departmental mountain lion management and grizzly bear conflict resolution.
- Participated in a livestock damage claim arbitration, in which the claimant was awarded payment in full for his claim.
- Assisted in the release of a mountain lion in the Cody Region.
- Worked with Interagency Grizzly Bear Study Team on 2015 grizzly bear data.
- Assisted with wolverine (*Gulo gulo*) surveys in the Wyoming and Wind River Ranges, as well as assisting with gathering of bait for disbursement at camera traps.
- Assisted the Brucellosis-Feedground-Habitat program, and the Pinedale and Jackson Regions with elk capture and classification. Assisted overall with feedground operations in the Pinedale Region.



# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

## Jackson Region

## February 2016 Newsletter



### Counting the Herds

Winter is typically the time when wildlife managers conduct their big game surveys because animals are concentrated on their winter ranges, making them easier to count. Counts are conducted from both the ground and the air. Managers not only count the total number of animals, but also classify them as males, females and young of the year.



The Jackson elk herd is the largest in the state at

around 11,000 animals and the annual count always generates a lot of interest, from both the public and the media. The National Elk Refuge winters the largest concentration of elk in the herd making it both impressive and challenging. It is usually an interagency effort involving some 20 people to complete. This year, there were approximately 7,300 elk counted on feed on the National Elk Refuge, with another

3,400 or so counted on the Gros Ventre feedgrounds, adjacent winter ranges and the Buffalo Valley, bringing the total counted to 10, 700. The population is estimated at 11,200 elk.



Jackson Habitat & Access Coordinator Matt Miller and Pinedale Habitat Biologist Jill Randall count elk on the National Elk Refuge.



### Additional Big Game Surveys

Big game classification counts were conducted on bison, moose, and bighorn sheep. After a slow bison hunt for much of the 2015 season, harvest picked up towards the end with a total of 206 animals taken. This was down a bit from last year's 299, but still good enough to keep the growth of the herd in check. Managers have struggled to bring the Jackson bison population down toward the objective of 500 animals. This winter there was a total of 666 animals counted in the herd, down slightly from last year's 691. That number is expected to climb to approximately 800 once the calves are born this spring.

Approximately the same number of moose were counted this year at 213, for an estimated population of 450 in the Jackson Herd. On a positive note, the number of calves was up at 41 per 100 cows, as compared to 33 last year.

Similarly, approximately the same number of bighorn sheep were counted this year at 375, for an estimated population of 425 in the Jackson Herd. Also of note, the number of lambs was up a bit from last year at 42 per 100 ewes. It was 36 last year.

Managers will present all the current big game numbers along with their proposed hunting seasons at upcoming public meetings scheduled for 6-8pm, **March 15th at the Thayne Elementary School and March 17th at the Jackson 4-H Extension Building at 255 W Deloney Avenue next to Miller Park.**

Photos: (Upper left) Moose in the Gros Ventre drainage (Left) Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch classifies bison on the elk refuge while Kate Wilmot from Grand Teton NP records the numbers. (Below) Bighorn rams observed in the Gros Ventre Wilderness east of Jackson.





### Elk Brucellosis Surveillance

Jackson and Pinedale personnel in the Game and Fish Department's Brucellosis-Feedgrounds-Habitat (BFH) program continued their multi-year study to monitor long-term brucellosis trend data in area elk.

Elk were captured for the first time in 40 years in the corral trap at the Fish Creek feedground in the upper Gros Ventre drainage. Approximately 100 elk were tagged and blood samples were collected from 31 yearling and older cows to measure the presence of brucellosis antibodies.

Brucellosis personnel also trapped elk at the Alpine (Grey's River) feedground, bleeding 66 yearling and

older cows for brucellosis surveillance and again at the Muddy Creek feedground south of Boulder for the 12th year in a row.

Brucellosis prevalence among elk attending Muddy Creek fell from 37% in 2006 to 5% in 2010 after 107 seropositive elk were killed during a pilot project to determine if incidence of the disease could be reduced by test and slaughter methods. Brucellosis seroprevalence rose during 2012, the first year following a year with no elk removed, and had risen to 21% in 2015.



A portion of captured elk are herded into a smaller holding pen before animals are marked and biological samples are collected.



Photos: (Above) A few elk are coaxed into a chute to be bled and collared. (Above right) A blood sample is collected from a cow elk to test for elevated antibodies to the brucella bacteria. (Below left) Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch assists Jackson Hole High School intern Lexi Daugherty apply an ear tag. (Below right) A cow elk is released back to the Fish Creek Feedground after being handled.





# Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

## February 2016

Conserving Wildlife, Serving People

### Fish On!

Ice fishing is in full swing across the Jackson Region. The most popular ice fishing spot in the Jackson Region is Jackson Lake and February was pretty slow out on the lake. However, one angler did pull a 25 pound lake trout through the ice and then released it back into the lake. Every year there are some really nice lake trout caught.

Fish managers note that the slower fishing in February isn't unusual and catch rates typically improve as winter wears on, which is what they have been seeing lately. On average, managers like to see a catch rate of .5 fish per hour for ice anglers. February's creel data showed a catch rate of .4 fish per hour. Last year, the catch rate bumped up to .74 trout per hour in March, so now is a good time to go fishing.



At right, Jan Brimeyer of Jackson lands a nice lake trout from Phelps Lake in Grand Teton NP.

## FIVE ICE TIPS

### 1. CHECK THICKNESS

Contact a local bait shop or sporting goods store to ask about ice conditions and then check once you get there. The rough guidelines for clear, new solid ice are:

- 2 inches – Stay off
- 4 inches – OK for ice fishing or other activities on foot
- Check the thickness of the ice every 10 to 150 feet.
- Never take any vehicles, snowmobiles or ATVs onto the ice.

### 2. BE SURE IT'S SAFE

- Avoid pressure ridges in the ice and large cracks that can emerge in a lake
- Clear ice is stronger than white ice, which has frozen, thawed and refrozen 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.

### 3. REMEMBER

No matter your preparation and ice conditions, ice should never be considered 100 percent safe. Be prepared and cautious at all times.

### 4. BUDDY SYSTEM

Anglers should never fish alone. Always fish with someone else and be certain to let a friend know where you are going.

### 5. STAY WARM

To prevent hypothermia if an ice fishing accident does occur, pack an extra set of clothes and hot liquids.

## PRACTICE ICE SAFETY



## What else should I know?

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 state and rapidly changing conditions, anglers are urged to call their regional office to inquire about ice conditions.

Game and Fish discourages driving any motorized vehicle on a frozen lake as well as ice fishing on rivers and or other

moving water that has frozen over. Remember to wear a lifejacket or personal flotation device and carry ice safety picks. Ice cleats are also a good idea. Keep a throw rope handy in case someone falls in.

Anglers venturing on fishing trips this winter should also keep in mind the Fishing Regulations and the Special Winter Ice Fishing Provisions, available on the Game and Fish website at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov), regional offices and Cheyenne Headquarters.

### Contact Game & Fish

- Cheyenne Headquarters: 1-800-842-1934
- Casper Regional Office: 1-800-233-8544
- Cody Regional Office: 1-800-654-1178
- Green River Regional Office: 1-800-843-8096
- Jackson Regional Office: 1-800-423-4113
- Lander Regional Office: 1-800-654-7862
- Laramie Regional Office: 1-800-843-2352
- Pinedale Regional Office: 1-800-452-9107
- Sheridan Regional Office: 1-800-331-9834





### Elk Ecology Research Continues

Jackson and Pinedale personnel in the Game and Fish Department's Brucellosis-Feedgrounds-Habitat (BFH) darted elk on the Fish Creek feedground in the upper Gros Ventre drainage east of Jackson. Adult cow elk were tranquilized from the hay sled and fitted with GPS collars to document fine-scale movements and Vaginal Implant Transmitters to identify elk parturition, or calving areas.

In addition, blood samples were collected to continue long-term brucellosis seroprevalence trend data. This information is also useful for developing elk seasonal range maps, determining areas of high brucellosis transmission risk and providing land managers with additional information to make better resource management decisions.

The collars are continually recovered and refurbished with new batteries and drop-off mechanisms and redeployed to continue to collect GPS data on elk. The Game and Fish Department's BFH program personnel, with collaborators from Iowa State University and the University of Wyoming, have collected a total of over 600 years of GPS collar data from elk captured on 20 feedgrounds and seven native winter range sites adjacent to feedgrounds from 2007 to 2016.



Jackson BFH Biologist Ben Wise lands a tranquilizer dart in the rump of a cow elk at the Fish Creek feedground in the Gros Ventre.



Photos: (Left) BFH Biologist Ben Wise fastens a GPS collar to an adult cow elk. (Lower left) BFH Biologist Eric Maichak performs an ultrasound to ensure a cow elk is pregnant before inserting a Vaginal Implant Transmitter. (Lower right) A cow elk scrambles to its feet after the reversal drug takes effect.





# Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

## February 2016

Conserving Wildlife, Serving People

### Eager Antler Gatherer

On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, South Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash cited an individual (below) for picking up a shed moose antler in the Gros Ventre drainage northeast of Jackson during the seasonal closure. Wardens would like to remind the public

that all public lands west of the Continental Divide are closed from January 1<sup>st</sup>- April 30<sup>th</sup> to the collection or stashing of shed antlers or horns.



**ATTENTION  
ANTLER  
HUNTERS**

COLLECTION OF SHED ANTLERS AND HORNS IS PROHIBITED FROM JANUARY 1ST - APRIL 30TH ON PUBLIC LAND WEST OF THE CONTINENTAL DIVIDE

COLLECT MEANS TO SEARCH FOR, OR ATTEMPT, TO LOCATE, STOCKPILE, OR POSSESS SHED ANTLERS/HORNS ON PUBLIC LAND.



Anyone witnessing a violation can call the Game and Fish Department STOP POACHING hotline at 1-877-943-3847

### Back to the Wild

Jackson Wildlife Coordinator Doug Brimeyer came upon this great horned owl standing in the middle of Highway 89 south of Jackson on the evening of January 6. The owl was not flying away despite the traffic, so Brimeyer picked it up and took it to the Teton Raptor Center in Jackson for possible rehabilitation. Luckily, the owl didn't have any broken bones and after a couple weeks under their care, they determined the owl was ready to be released back to it's original home.

*Watching the owl take flight are Sarah Ramirez from the Teton Raptor Center (left), Doug Brimeyer with WY Game & Fish (right) and his daughter Ashley Brimeyer.*



Don't forget to put in for the Super Tag raffle!

**Super Tag** - One winner for each of nine species – Tickets \$10 each.

**Super Tag Trifecta** - One winner chooses from any three species offered - Tickets \$30 each.

Raffle includes Wyoming's premier big game and trophy game species: bighorn sheep, moose, elk, mountain goat, mule deer or white-tailed deer, wild bison, antelope, mountain lion and black bear.





# Statewide Wildlife and Habitat Management

## Monthly Summary - February 2016

### MIGRATORY GAME BIRD PROGRAM

**NATE HUCK**

Migratory Game Bird Biologist Nate Huck completed the Canada goose classifications in Natrona and Converse County. In total, 10% of the geese in Converse County and 1% of the geese in Natrona County were classified as “small” Canada geese. The purpose of ground classifications is to estimate proportions of small (Central Flyway Arctic Nesting) and large (Hi-line Population) Canada geese counted during the mid-winter survey.



*Mallards on the North Platte River near Lingle, Wyoming.*

important waterfowl habitats in each state. In total, more than 60,000 waterfowl were counted in Wyoming. Over 28,000 mallards were counted in the 4-mile stretch of refuge along the North Platte River upstream from Lingle. The most unusual find was eight sandhill cranes observed along the Bighorn River near Kirby, WY. The majority of sandhill cranes winter in central New Mexico.

Nate also conducted the mid-winter waterfowl survey. This cooperative national survey is conducted during the first week of January. The goal is to develop an index of wintering waterfowl in the United States based on counts done throughout the majority of



*Canada geese on water kept open by ice heaters at Table Mountain WHMA*

### HARVEST SURVEY PROGRAM

**GAIL SHERIDAN**

The Fall Wild Turkey Harvest Survey was launched January 19. Harvest Survey Coordinator Gail Sheridan worked closely with Cathy Weese, I.T. Programmer, to update and test the revised Wild Turkey Harvest Survey program. The Small Game, Upland Game Bird and Migratory Waterfowl Harvest Survey was scheduled to launch February 1.

The 2015 Antelope Harvest Report was received from Tetra Tech on schedule and distributed. The 2015 moose harvest survey closed with a 97% response rate. The 2015 deer, elk, and black bear harvest surveys are still active. The black bear survey is currently at 43% response rate, already more than years past. The black bear report will be completed in February. The wild bison harvest information has been received from Jackson Office Manager Barb Long and will be finalized in the next few weeks.

The planning continues for the special survey to ask lifetime and pioneer license holders about their hunting activity. Phase I of this survey will be to email a survey to the license holders with email addresses on record and will likely occur this summer. Phase II will be to mail a hard copy to those without email on record. The purpose for 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.

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## NONGAME BIRD AND MAMMAL PROGRAM

ZACK WALKER, SUSAN PATLA, ANDREA ORABONA, NICHOLE BJORNLIE

### Harlequin Duck



*A pair of harlequin ducks, the colorful male and much drabber female. For this project, two males will be tagged with an internal satellite transmitter and two females will be marked with a geolocator attached to a plastic leg band.*

A major factor contributing to the wildlife diversity of Wyoming is the combination of ecotypes in the state. For example, the extension of boreal forest habitat into western Wyoming makes us the southern end of the breeding range for species such as Harlequin Duck, Common Loon, and Great Gray Owl. Given small and disjunct populations, meaningful conservation work for such species requires region-wide efforts and multiple partners and funding sources. Nongame Biologist Susan Patla is glad to report that this month one of the major goals for Harlequin Duck conservation work in WY got off the ground with a unique combination of federal and state agencies and non-profit support. Biologists from Environment Canada have been marking harlequin ducks with satellite transmitters for some years in their coastal breeding grounds in British Columbia and refined the surgical techniques for implanting transmitters safely in wild ducks. Last year they started to reach out to other agencies in the Intermountain Rockies with the goal of acquiring data on ducks across their range in Canada and the western U.S. After a series of conference calls, grant development and planning meetings over the past few months, everything came together and the project will be initiated this spring. Ducks will be trapped and tagged in the Jasper, Canada area (eastern edge of their range in Canada) and the states of Washington, Montana and Wyoming. Funding and deployment for the first two transmitters in WY was achieved through a partnership of the Department and the Meg and Bert Raynes Wildlife Fund, Biodiversity Research Institute (who also are conducting a loon study in WY) and Grand Teton National Park. Next year we hope to continue and expand this effort in WY and regionally through additional funding and partnerships. The end result will be the first data on migration routes to the west coast, timing of migration, and identifying winter habitat use areas for Harlequin Duck across its range including WY, which is needed to understand and manage conservation risks for this colorful duck of turbid waters. It is fulfilling to see objectives turn into action after years of waiting and working for all the necessary factors to come together to make such a project possible.

### Ocean Lake

Nongame Bird Biologist Andrea Orabona assisted the Lander Region Fisheries crew and a cadre of dedicated volunteers, including WGFN retirees Dave Dufek and Kevin Johnson, with an annual fish habitat project on Ocean Lake. Over the past 20 years, approximately 11,000 Christmas trees have been put to use to create habitat for fish, thus improving the fishery resource on this popular lake in Fremont County.



*Volunteers assisted with the Ocean Lake fish habitat improvement project.*

### Black-footed Ferret

Nongame biologists Nichole Bjornlie, Jesse Boulerice, and Zack Walker attend the USFWS Black-footed Ferret Conservation Subcommittee and WAFWA Prairie Dog Conservation Committee annual meetings. These meetings are designed to share information across jurisdictional boundaries and include non-governmental organizations. Annual ferret survey results were discussed and ongoing ferret and prairie dog research was highlighted. Nongame biologists were able to discuss issues with other regional biologists and learn more about programs ongoing in other states.

## SWAHM STAFF BIOLOGISTS

### STEVE TESSMANN & GRANT FROST

Staff Biologist Steve Tessmann completed an administrative review and final editing of the Laramie Plains Level II Wetland Condition Assessment final report prepared by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). This is the second 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 continued to review and edit the step-down plan for the Wind River priority wetland complex. This is one of the last two priority complexes for which step-down plans are being developed under the statewide wetland strategy. When completed, it will be posted on the Department’s website along with the statewide strategy and seven other completed step-down plans.

Steve conducted herd unit reviews for several mule deer, elk, and bighorn sheep herds in the Cody, Jackson, and Pinedale regions. The herd unit reviews are conducted annually by Wildlife Division Administration to provide opportunity for the regions to discuss significant management issues and concerns in the herds they manage.

Steve continued planning for the annual State Conservation Partnership (SCP) chair meeting to be held in Jackson, WY in May, 2016. The SCPs are the project implementation arm of the Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV). This meeting takes place in one of the 11 western states each year. Its primary purpose is to collaborate on ways to enhance project delivery under the various IWJV-administered programs. Steve will be contacting regional personnel with requests to assist with some of the presentations and a tour itinerary to showcase local projects.

Senior Wildlife Biologist Grant Frost updated the Herd History Spreadsheets to include alternative management objectives and a new column for numbers of animals classified and/or counted in trend counts. Grant completed some formatting revisions to Sandhill Cranes hunt areas on the early migratory game regulation map. Grant continued work on the radio collar frequency database. This database will help those deploying radio collars for management and research to avoid using the same or overlapping frequencies within the same geographic area.

## STATEWIDE HABITAT PROGRAM

### IAN TATOR, RYAN AMUNDSON, RACHEL NUSS

Statewide Habitat Biologist Ryan Amundson attended the Wild Sheep Foundation's Sheep Show in Reno. Three days were spent at the convention hall with Doug McWhirter talking to hundreds of sportsmen at the WGFD booth. Many inquiries were made about non-resident big game hunting opportunities and assessing draw odds and preference points.

The annual WGFD/BLM (Rawlins Field Office) meeting was held on January 26. Numerous projects are on-going or cooperatively planned in southcentral Wyoming.

Statewide Terrestrial Habitat Manager Ian Tator and Ryan, with other WGFD personnel, met in Lander to finalize rapid habitat assessment worksheets drafted in 2015 and work on JCR and Objective Review templates for upcoming reports. Ryan completed several seeding plans for Spring 2016 for private landowners and several questions were fielded concerning cheatgrass control options from agencies and private landowners within and outside of Wyoming.

January was filled with many hours working on grant applications to meet upcoming deadlines for project funding by Ian, Ryan, and Office Manager Rachel Nuss.

## ADMINISTRATION

### BOB LANKA

SWaHM Supervisor Bob Lanka continued to work with others on several issues including: Migration Corridor protection, Western States Wolverine Conservation Project and the revision of Wyoming's 2010 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP). At their January meeting the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission voted to add Ungulate Stopover Areas and Ungulate Migration Bottlenecks to the Vital mitigation category in their Mitigation Policy. For vital habitats the Commission directs the Department to recommend no significant declines in species distribution or abundance or loss of habitat function. At the same meeting the Commission also voted to approve the Department's recommendations to revise the list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need which will be a major component of the 2017 revision to Wyoming's SWAP.

## SAGE-GROUSE PROGRAM

**TOM CHRISTIANSEN & NYSSA WHITFORD**

Sage-Grouse Coordinator Tom Christiansen together with the Habitat Protection Program, Department of Ag, WyGISC, NRCS, BLM and USFS provided training to over 350 private and agency persons regarding updated sage-grouse policies and the Density and Disturbance Calculation Tool (DDCT) process. Day long training sessions were given in Rock Springs, Cheyenne, Worland and Casper.

Sage-Grouse GIS Analyst Nyssa Whitford attended the sage-grouse training in Worland. This information will help Nyssa provide better customer service to consultants and other parties that contact her for sage-grouse information. The new year brought a renewed interest in sage-grouse and Nyssa fulfilled and completed several mapping, data, and figure requests.

Both Tom and Nyssa worked on planning and logistics for the 30<sup>th</sup> Western State Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Workshop to be hosted by the Department this summer. The workshop will be in Lander June 13-16. Up to 200 biologists, managers, researchers and grouse enthusiasts are expected to attend. More information can be found at: [http://www.wafwa.org/workshops/sage\\_and\\_sharp-tailed\\_grouse/](http://www.wafwa.org/workshops/sage_and_sharp-tailed_grouse/)

### SAVE THE DATE 30<sup>TH</sup> SAGE AND COLUMBIAN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE WORKSHOP BRINGING IT HOME

**WHEN: JUNE 13-16, 2016**

**WHERE: LANDER, WYOMING**

**WHO: BIOLOGISTS, LAND MANAGERS, SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM ADVOCATES, RESEARCHERS, NGOs, UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND ADVISORS.**

**WHAT: A BIENNIAL GATHERING OF SAGE AND COLUMBIAN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE PROFESSIONALS SHARING CURRENT MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH.**



## Wyoming Big Sagebrush

By Ryan Amundson



In this new series a different plant species important to mule deer survival will be highlighted each month. The plant species highlighted will coincide with heavy mule deer use periods. In February, we'll discuss one of the most widespread and prevalent shrub species found in Wyoming: Sagebrush. In Wyoming, there are three major subspecies of big sagebrush: Wyoming, Basin, and Mountain. All of the subspecies can be seasonally important to mule deer diets and provide thermal and hiding cover values throughout the year. The most prevalent of the big sagebrush subspecies found in Wyoming is: Wyoming big sagebrush - *Artemisia tridentata wyomingensis*.

### Wyoming Big Sagebrush Facts

- **Elevation:** ~5,000' – 7,000' above sea level
- **Precipitation zone:** ~8 – 12"
- **Height:** 18" – 30" tall
- **Crude Protein % (CP) in Feb:** 11-13% (mule deer require >6% for body maintenance)
- **Amount consumed daily by mule deer in Feb:** 4+ lbs (where present)
- **Treatment methods to stimulate re-growth:** mowing, aeration, harrowing
- **Management concerns:** cheatgrass invasion, juniper encroachment, lack of recruitment
- **Pros:** Height allows mule deer access in moderate snow conditions, relatively high CP %
- **Cons:** Volatile oils can have a negative impact on rumen function

Wyoming big sagebrush is a shrub native to Wyoming. It is the most drought tolerant of the three major big sagebrush subspecies. Where Wyoming, basin, and mountain big sagebrush ranges overlap, Wyoming big sagebrush tends to grow on the shallowest, most well-drained soils. Wyoming big sagebrush is technically an evergreen, but is semi-deciduous. It develops two types of leaves: large ephemeral leaves and smaller, perennial leaves.

Wyoming big sagebrush is generally the most palatable of the big sagebrush subspecies, and big game species use it heavily, especially in winter. Sagebrush leaves can hold crude protein values at rates of 11% - 13% in winter months, making the plant highly sought after by big game animals. For comparison, grasses (when cured) may only have crude protein values between 4% - 6% in winter months, and cured forbs may only be slightly higher than that. Values of 14% or greater are required when nutritional demands are higher, such as during lactation and periods of antler development.

During periods of inadequate nutrition and high environmental stress, mule deer use stored body fat and body protein (if necessary) to survive. No matter the habitat quality, adult deer may lose 20% or more of their body weight while on winter ranges. Winter survival for mule deer depends on several factors including weather, levels of stored fat reserves, and the deer's ability to conserve energy. Under extreme environmental conditions, deer can reduce the amount of body reserves utilized by limiting all other activities besides eating and resting. This is why the Department advocates for winter range closures to protect wintering wildlife. Regardless of the quality and quantity of winter ranges available to mule deer, their diets are often inadequate to prevent high energy expenditures and subsequent weight loss. However, the rate of weight loss can be reduced by improving winter range forage conditions.

Big sagebrush is a major contributor to the life requirements of mule deer and many other wildlife species in Wyoming and throughout the West, providing high food and cover values. Without this specie, Wyoming's landscapes would look much different and our state's ability to manage current mule deer populations would be greatly compromised.



# CODY REGION newsletter

## Get involved with Game and Fish's season setting

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department's public comment period on 2016 hunting season setting regulations is now open. Individuals interested in the changes to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission's regulations are encouraged to attend a public meeting in the Bighorn Basin and provide written input. Online commenting is available as well.

"Your thoughts on these regulations and the hunting season are deeply welcomed. We at Game and Fish make adjustments to these drafts based on what we hear from you and we try to provide as many ways for the public to get involved as possible," said Game and Fish Director Scott Talbott.

Members of the public can provide comments through the [Game and Fish Public Meeting website](#), by mail, or through a series of statewide public meetings. The deadline for submitting public comment through any medium is 5:00 p.m. Friday, March 25, 2016.

Bighorn Basin meeting schedule:

|                        |          |                         |          |
|------------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|
| Powell Open House      | March 10 | Park Co Fairgrounds     | 6-8 p.m. |
| Cody Open House        | March 14 | Bighorn Federal Bank    | 6-8 p.m. |
| Greybull Open House    | March 15 | Town Hall               | 6-8 p.m. |
| Meeteetse Open House   | March 15 | Senior Center           | 6-8 p.m. |
| Thermopolis Open House | March 16 | Bighorn Federal Bank    | 6-8 p.m. |
| Lovell Open House      | March 17 | Fire Hall               | 6-8 p.m. |
| Worland, Final meeting | March 21 | Washakie Co Fairgrounds | 6-8 p.m. |

Inside this month's issue:

### In the water

Eagle Creek meeting well attended

### Of interest

Tom Easterly Memorial award

### On the ground

McWhirter recognized Elk classifications



## In the water

### Public meeting on proposed Eagle Creek treatment well attended

A recent informational meeting held in Cody to discuss the proposed treatment of Eagle Creek to restore native Yellowstone cutthroat trout was well attended. Online public commenting on the proposed action has been extended through March 6.

During a meeting held at the Park County Public Library Feb. 8, Cody Region Fisheries Biologist Jason Burckhardt presented information on the proposed treatment of Eagle Creek. A question and answer session followed the presentation. Cody Region Fisheries Supervisor Sam Hochhalter said 46 people attended the meeting. "As with any project of this caliber, there are both supporters and opponents of the project," Hochhalter said. "So far, we have received 25 online comments and anticipate more. It is important to note the online commenting period has been extended a week and comments are now due by midnight March 6."



**Fisheries Biologist Jason Burckhardt presented information about the proposed Eagle Creek treatment at a recent public meeting in Cody.**

Yellowstone cutthroat trout have been reduced to a small fraction of their historic range and have been identified as a species of greatest conservation need in Wyoming. "There are numerous causes for the declines in Yellowstone cutthroat trout populations and nonnative trout are a major contributor to these declines," Burckhardt said. "Isolation of Yellowstone cutthroat trout populations from the invasion of nonnative trout is necessary to maintain this species over the long term. Eagle Creek is an ideal location because it has ample habitat above a natural waterfall barrier that will prevent the invasion of nonnative trout."

In cooperation with the Shoshone National Forest, Game and Fish is proposing to use the chemical rotenone to remove the existing brook trout fishery in Eagle Creek, a tributary to the North Fork Shoshone River west of Cody. Treatment will occur above a waterfall barrier approximately eight miles upstream from the confluence with the North Fork Shoshone River. Detoxification will occur immediately below the treatment reach to ensure no rotenone reaches the North Fork Shoshone River. Yellowstone cutthroat trout will be stocked in the drainage after all brook trout have been removed.

Written comments will be accepted online until 12 a.m. March 6 at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regional-Offices/Cody-Region/Eagle-Creek-Yellowstone-Cutthroat-Trout-Restoration>. Details of the proposed restoration action are available online or by contacting the Cody Region Game and Fish office at 307-527-7125.

## Of interest

### Bighorn Basin youth encouraged to apply for Tom Easterly Memorial Award

The application period for the Tom Easterly Memorial award is now open and youth in the Bighorn Basin are encouraged to apply. Recipients of this award will each receive a lifetime Wyoming game bird/small game license and lifetime conservation stamp. Applications are due by April 1.

Greybull Game Warden Bill Robertson said youth in the Bighorn Basin ages 14-17 can apply by submitting an application and essay describing why the applicant hunts and why wildlife is important to that individual.

“The Tom Easterly Memorial Award was established in the spirit of former Greybull biologist Tom Easterly’s belief in our future generations of conservationists,” Robertson said. “This is the second year the award will give two area youth a lifetime Wyoming game bird/small game license and lifetime conservation stamp.”



**Tom Easterly**

Tom Easterly served as the Wyoming Game and Fish Department Greybull area biologist from 1992 through 2014. “Tom’s passion was introducing young hunters to the sport of bird hunting and sharing the importance of well managed wildlife habitat with them,” Robertson said.

To be eligible, applicants must reside within the boundaries of the Greybull Biologist District which include Basin, Burlington, Cowley, Greybull, Lovell, Manderson, Ten Sleep and Worland and be a resident who has continuously resided in Wyoming for at least 10 years immediately preceding the date of application.

Applicants will be judged by their application qualifications and the content of their essay by a committee of five. Applications may be downloaded at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov) and are available at the Cody Region Game and Fish office.

**Left: Tom Easterly collaring a bighorn sheep several years ago.**



## On the ground

### McWhirter recognized by the Wild Sheep Foundation

Doug McWhirter, Wyoming Game and Fish Department Cody wildlife biologist, was inducted into the Wild Sheep Foundation (WSF) 2016 Wild Sheep Biologist's Wall of Fame. The [WSF Wild Sheep Biologist's Wall of Fame](#) was established in 2006 to honor and acknowledge the passion, commitment, and vision of men and women dedicated to the sound, biological management of, and hunting opportunities for, North America's wild sheep.

For many years, McWhirter has co-chaired the Game and Fish Bighorn Sheep Working Group, the Wyoming Statewide Domestic Sheep/Bighorn Sheep Interaction Working Group, and the Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Bighorn Sheep committee.

McWhirter also coordinates implementation of bighorn sheep disease surveillance throughout Wyoming, was instrumental in initiating a tri-state (Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho) bighorn sheep and mountain goat research project in collaboration with Montana State University, and has served for many years as the Game and Fish representative to the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) Wild Sheep Working Group.



"Doug has been an outstanding employee for Game and Fish, has established himself as a wildlife professional of the highest regard and is an expert in the area of wild sheep management. Our sincere appreciation to Doug for a job very well done and recognition well deserved," said Scott Talbott, director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.



**Doug McWhirter**

WSF's mission is to enhance wild sheep populations, promote professional wildlife management, and educate the public and youth on sustainable use and the conservation benefits of hunting while promoting the interests of the hunter and all stakeholders. Inductees to the Biologist Wall of Fame are based on their scientific contributions to the enhancement of North America's wild sheep and sheep hunting, to honor those that have dedicated their professional lives to conservation and management of wild sheep.

"The Wild Sheep Foundation is proud to induct Doug in our WSF Wild Sheep Biologist's Wall of Fame. Doug epitomizes the high-caliber professional wildlife manager that WSF values so highly." said WSF President and CEO Gray N. Thornton. "Doug's recognition speaks volumes for him as an individual, and for our partner in wild sheep conservation, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department."

## On the ground

### Elk classifica-



**Worland Area Biologist Bart Kroger counts and classifies elk in Hunt Area 64 from a helicopter.**

During the winter months, Game and Fish biologists collect ratio data on elk populations through aerial observations using a helicopter. Game and Fish collects a sample of the total population and classifies the animals into the following groups: females, juveniles, and males. From the total number of elk sampled, biologists evaluate the number of calves per 100 cows, the number of adult bulls per 100 cows and the number of yearling bulls per 100 cows. In combination with other data, this information is used to evaluate hunting seasons, assess herd productivity and determine over-winter survival.





# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

February 2016 Newsletter



(Above & right) Pinedale Game & Fish personnel count and classify elk at the Jewett elk feedground west of Daniel on Feb 2, 2016.

## Winter Elk Counts Conducted

Wildlife biologists and game wardens count big game animals at different times of year based on when they are most visible and can be classified as males, females and juveniles. This gives managers a picture of not only how many animals there are, but how the population is trending: increasing, stable or decreasing. This information helps managers design



hunting seasons that will keep the population at the established population objective. Winter is the best time to count and classify most big game, and especially elk since most elk in the Pinedale and Jackson regions attend winter feedgrounds, making them relatively easy to count. All of the game wardens, biologists and other regional personnel chip in to count the elk as it is a big job. Most elk herds in the in the Pinedale Region remain at or above the desired population objectives after an average to light harvest this past hunting season. Most big game populations saw little change from last year. Consequently, Pinedale wildlife managers do not plan to propose significant changes to any of the big game hunting seasons for 2016. Managers will present all the current big game numbers along with their proposed hunting seasons at upcoming public meetings scheduled for 6-8pm, **March 14th at the Marbleton Town Hall and March 16th at the Pinedale Game and Fish office.**



Elk gather on hay feedlines at the Franz elk feedground north of Daniel prior to being counted on Feb 2, 2016.



# Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

## February 2016

### Elk Brucellosis Surveillance

Jackson and Pinedale personnel in the Game and Fish Department's Brucellosis-Feedgrounds-Habitat (BFH) program continued their multi-year study to monitor long-term brucellosis trend data in area elk.

Elk were captured for the first time in 40 years in the corral trap at the Fish Creek feedground in the upper Gros Ventre drainage. Approximately 100 elk were tagged and 31 yearling and older cows were bled to measure the presence of brucellosis antibodies.



Brucellosis person-

nel also trapped elk at the Alpine (Grey's River) feedground, bleeding 66 yearling and older cows for brucellosis surveillance and again at the Muddy Creek feedground south of Boulder for the 12th year in a row.

Brucellosis prevalence among elk attending Muddy Creek fell from 37% in 2006 to 5% in 2010 after 107 seropositive elk were killed during a pilot project to determine if incidence of the disease could be reduced by test and slaughter methods. Brucellosis seroprevalence rose during 2012, the first year following a year with no elk removed, and had risen to 21% in 2015.





# Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

February 2016



## Behind the Badge

**South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft** euthanized a bull elk that had been attacked by wolves and after performing a necropsy determined that the bull elk was susceptible to predation due to an archery wound on a front shoulder.

Warden Kraft also cited a dog owner responsible for two dogs chasing and harassing deer north of Pinedale. Kraft urges dog owners to keep a close eye on their canine companions during the winter months, especially in areas with wintering wildlife, which are now extremely vulnerable to undue stress at this critical time of year.

Kraft also checked late-season elk hunters last month and reported some success, which was effective in displacing elk from damage and brucellosis commingling conflict areas. However, numerous hunters had forgotten to purchase their 2016 conservation stamps and special elk management stamps as the elk season continued into the New Year.

**Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas** reports late season elk hunters had very little success on the Big Piney HMA and Daniel area due to little snow causing elk to remain at higher elevations or feedgrounds. Hymas checked a few bobcat and martin trappers during January, but has noticed a decrease in trapping activities this year, likely due to fur prices being drastically down from previous years.

Warden Hymas continues to patrol the mule deer winter ranges and notes that there are several people out looking at deer and scouting for the shed antler season to start. So far, deer on winter range have not had a lot of snow to contend with. He is noticing a few deer not able to outlast the winter, but no major die-off at this time.

Hymas has also been monitoring elk distribution around feedgrounds and native winter range to minimize damage to stored crops and prevent livestock commingling issues. Wolves have been killing elk on a regular basis at the McNeel Feedground near BonDurant, causing damage issues. The wolf problems have been relayed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Finally, Hymas reminds everyone that it is a banner year for rabbit hunting in western Wyoming and a perfect opportunity to get the youngsters out on successful hunts!





# Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

## February 2016

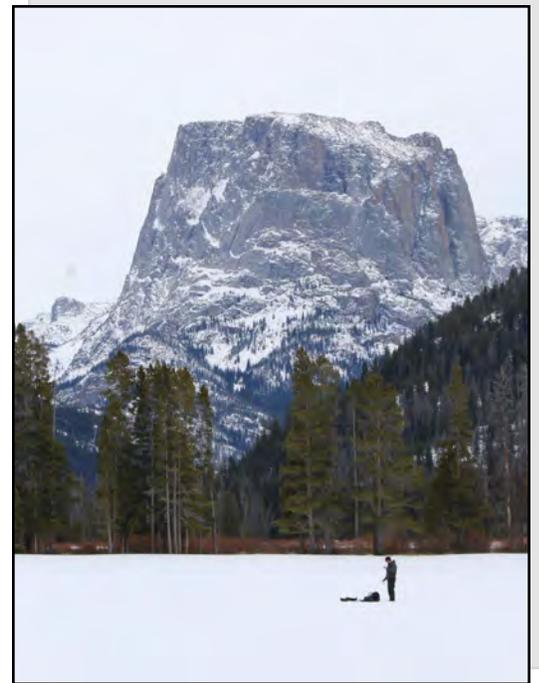
### Ice Fishing Time

Now is a good time for ice fishing in the Pinedale Region. Pinedale Fish Supervisor Hilda Sexauer reports that ice conditions are still good on all area lakes. Anglers are primarily catching lake trout at all of the popular “finger” lakes. Recently an 18 pound lake trout was pulled out of Half-moon Lake north of Pinedale.



Anglers are encouraged to stop by the Game & Fish office and pick up their Anglers Diary to record their success this season. Diaries can then be turned in at the office at the end of the season. The Fisheries Division will use this data to aid in population statistics and fish management on area lakes.

*An ice angler’s catch after about 20 minutes at Green River Lake north of Pinedale.*



## FIVE ICE TIPS

- 1. CHECK THICKNESS**  
Contact a local bait shop or sporting goods store to ask about ice conditions and then check once you get there. The rough guidelines for clear, new solid ice are:
  - 2 inches – Stay off
  - 4 inches – OK for ice fishing or other activities on foot
  - Check the thickness of the ice every 10 to 150 feet.
  - Never take any vehicles, snowmobiles or ATVs onto the ice.
- 2. BE SURE IT’S SAFE**
  - Avoid pressure ridges in the ice and large cracks that can emerge in a lake
  - Clear ice is stronger than white ice, which has frozen, thawed and refrozen 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.
- 3. REMEMBER**  
No matter your preparation and ice conditions, ice should never be considered 100 percent safe. Be prepared and cautious at all times.
- 4. BUDDY SYSTEM**  
Anglers should never fish alone. Always fish with someone else and be certain to let a friend know where you are going.
- 5. STAY WARM**  
To prevent hypothermia if an ice fishing accident does occur, pack an extra set of clothes and hot liquids.

## PRACTICE ICE SAFETY

## What else should I know?

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 state and rapidly changing conditions, anglers are urged to call their regional office to inquire about ice conditions.

moving water that has frozen over. Remember to wear a lifejacket or personal flotation device and carry ice safety picks. Ice cleats are also a good idea. Keep a throw rope handy in case someone falls in.

Anglers venturing on fishing trips this winter should also keep in mind the Fishing Regulations and the Special Winter Ice Fishing Provisions, available on the Game and Fish website at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov), regional offices and Cheyenne Headquarters.

### Contact Game & Fish

Cheyenne Headquarters: 1-800-842-1934  
Casper Regional Office: 1-800-233-8544  
Cody Regional Office: 1-800-654-1178  
Green River Regional Office: 1-800-843-8096  
Jackson Regional Office: 1-800-423-4113  
Lander Regional Office: 1-800-654-7862  
Laramie Regional Office: 1-800-843-2352  
Pinedale Regional Office: 1-800-452-9107  
Sheridan Regional Office: 1-800-331-9834



# Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

February 2016

## Hatchery News...

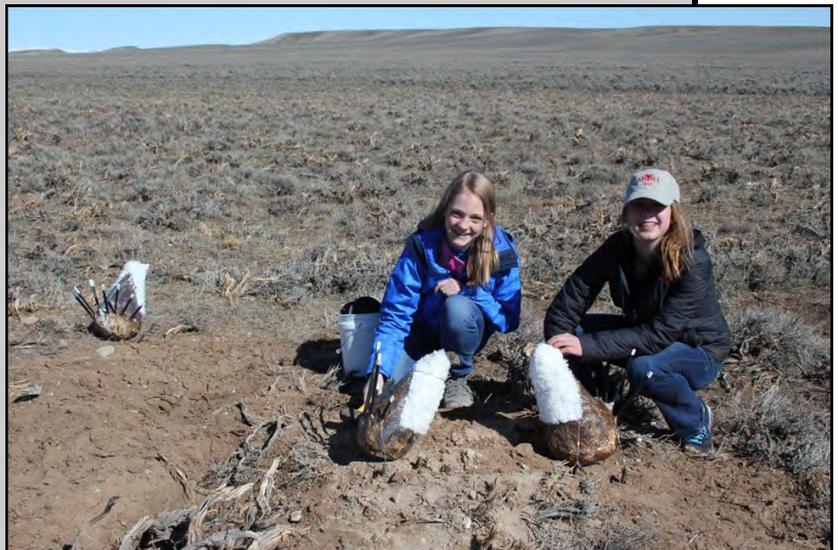
The Daniel Hatchery has been busy hatching and raising several species of fish including Colorado River cutthroat trout, brook trout, brown trout, kokanee salmon and splake. Daniel's splake which are now a little over an inch long (right) were hatched in early January and will be about 3-4 inches long next August when they will be stocked via helicopter to four different lakes in the Bighorn Mountains: Cloud Peak Reservoir, Willow Lake 1, Lower Medicine Lodge Lake and Sawmill Reservoir. A splake is a cross between a brook and a lake trout and are generally a sterile hybrid that does not reproduce in the wild. They are stocked in several lakes across the Cowboy state as they are both sporting and good eating! The state record splake was caught out of North Crow Reservoir on April 1, 2011, weighing in at 13.6 pounds!



The Boulder Hatchery crew teamed up with statewide fish distribution staff and other regional personnel to stock out a total of 1500 brood fish to Saratoga Lake for their annual fishing derby. Hatchery Superintendent Chip Moller traveled to Clark to pick up 127,000 fall rainbow transfers.

## Talk of the Town...

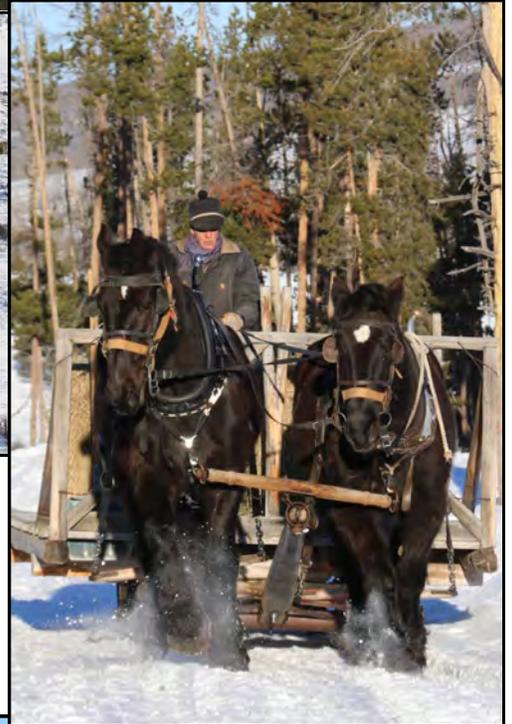
Three Pinedale Middle School students won 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place honors during the 2016 Science Fair. Kellen Schupp tied for 1<sup>st</sup> place for Environmental Management and won the overall Best in Fair Project Award. Nora Legerski & Maggie Majhanovich won 2<sup>nd</sup> place for Environmental Management. The students collaborated with WGFD wildlife biologist Therese Hartman on two separate sage grouse projects. One project utilized sage grouse decoys as a tool to lure strutting sage grouse away from gas field activities. The other project explored techniques to buffer noise from energy development impacting nearby leks.





# Pinedale Region Monthly Newsletter

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Feedin'  
the Elk





february 2016

the wyoming game & fish department

# LANDER REGION newsletter

## With the lions

How does lion management work?



*A hound's eye view of a mountain lion treeed for monitoring purposes. A sample was obtained from the mountain lion by dart and then the lion safely fled the area. (The hound "Cat" is Large Carnivore Biologist Luke Ellsbury's)*

years. Large carnivore managers will be meeting with regional biologists and wardens this spring to discuss updated harvest limits and objectives. Look for public meetings late this spring or early summer to present the mortality limit and objective proposals.

In addition, the large carnivore section initiated mountain lion monitoring in the Green River region. According to Large Carnivore Biologist Justin Clapp, "Data gathered from these efforts will provide information to better understand our local mountain lion populations and evaluate mountain lion management strategies and monitoring criteria. The timing is also advantageous because the Game and Fish can collaborate with the University of Wyoming on research being conducted on deer and elk in the same areas. It is our intent that these efforts complement each other and our understanding of wildlife population dynamics in the region."

Mountain lion management in Wyoming has been a hot topic lately, and one worth mentioning this month.

As per the Wyoming Game and Fish Mountain Lion Management Plan (2006), "The goal of mountain lion management in Wyoming is to sustain mountain lion populations ... to provide for recreational/hunting opportunity, maintain ungulate populations at established objectives or in line with current habitat conditions, and minimize mountain lion depredation to pets and livestock and reduce the potential for human injury..."

Mountain lions are managed on a three-year cycle in order to evaluate population trends over that time. Lion hunt areas are managed with a mortality *limit* versus *quota*. The mortality limit is the threshold to maintain the population objective and not a target number that needs to be reached for management success.

This harvest year (2015/16) represents the third year of the current three-year cycle. Annual mortality data for the last three harvest years will soon be analyzed to determine population trends across the state to develop harvest objectives for the next three

**Inside: Ice fishing** pg 2, **Case files** pg 2, **Bighorn sheep** pg 3, **Elk** pg 4-5, **Fish habitat** pg 6, **Animal rescue** pg 7, **Sage grouse** pg 8

# Out of the case files

## Bald eagle shot



South Riverton Game Warden Brad Gibb has started working on a case involving a bald eagle that appears to have been shot. Brad responded to a call in the Riverton area about a sick eagle sitting in corrals, unwilling or unable to fly. Once the eagle was captured it was transferred to Ironside Bird Rescue, a raptor rehabilitation center in Cody.

X-rays revealed multiple pieces of lead shot in the breast and digestive track (bright white dots in the images below) and blood tests revealed some level of lead poisoning. For a couple weeks, the bird appeared to be getting better, gaining weight and flying, then sadly and unexpectedly he went blind (common side effect of lead poisoning), was unable to stand, and died.

Gibb is coordinating with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agents and the case is ongoing.

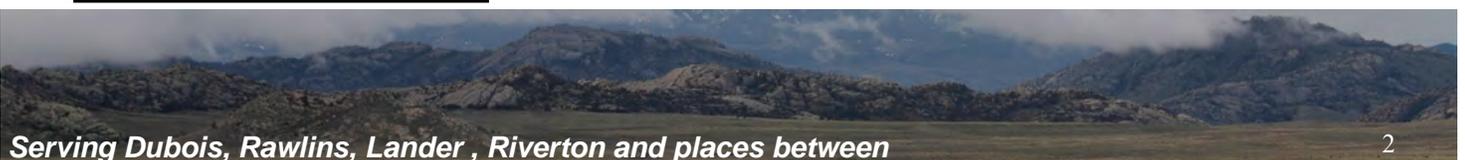


## Under the ice

### Enforcement and education at a fishing derby



Lander region fisheries biologists and game wardens conducted a coordinated enforcement and education effort during the Wild West Winter Carnival fishing derby on Boysen Reservoir. Overall, compliance was good, but we did have the opportunity to talk to several individuals about correctly identifying sauger and wall-eye as well as have several discussions about bait fish regulations. A few live bait fish issues were discovered that will be worked on over the next couple of months.



# On the mountain

## Looking for bighorns



**W**ildlife Biologist Greg Anderson and Education Specialist Rene Schell classified bighorn sheep on foot in January. They climbed Whiskey Mountain looking for about 60 sheep that were not found during helicopter classification flights. Despite a few patches of deep snow and 60 mile per hour gusts at the top, 40 sheep were located and classified. Greg was sure the last 20 were “just over the next ridge,” but shadows were getting long and they headed back to the truck.

Look for an update on all the bighorn sheep in the Region over the next few months as some will be trapped for disease testing and collaring and others relocated to supplement existing populations.

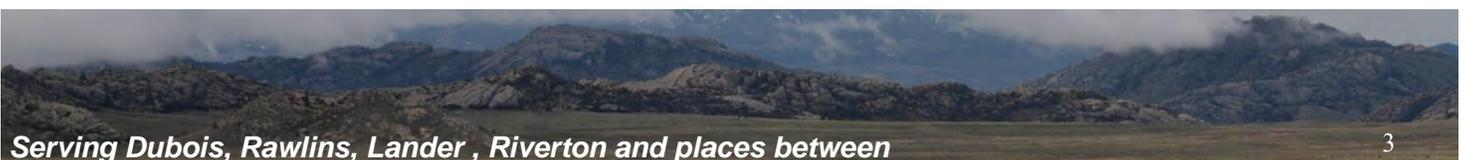


**Check out the Lander Region Webpage for more great information!**

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

**And sign up to receive the newsletter electronically**

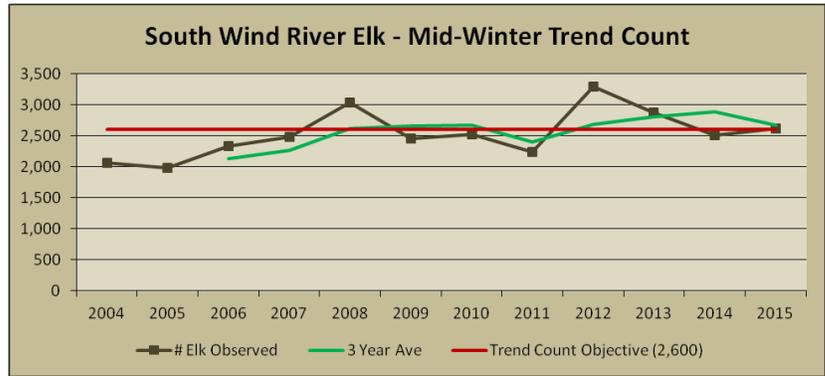
<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/email-sign-up>



# In the Elk

## Population counts

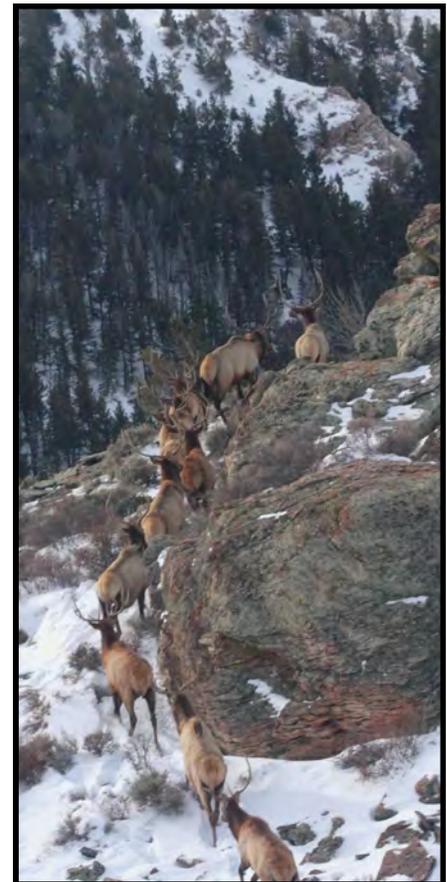
South Wind River and Green Mountain elk surveys have been completed. In the South Wind River herd unit a total of 2,621 elk were observed between Hunt Areas 25, 27, 28, and 99. This is almost exactly the same as the 3-year average trend count and shows the herd right at objective. The ratio of 28 bulls/100 cows is the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest since 1994, with a calf/cow ratio of 30 calves/100 cows.



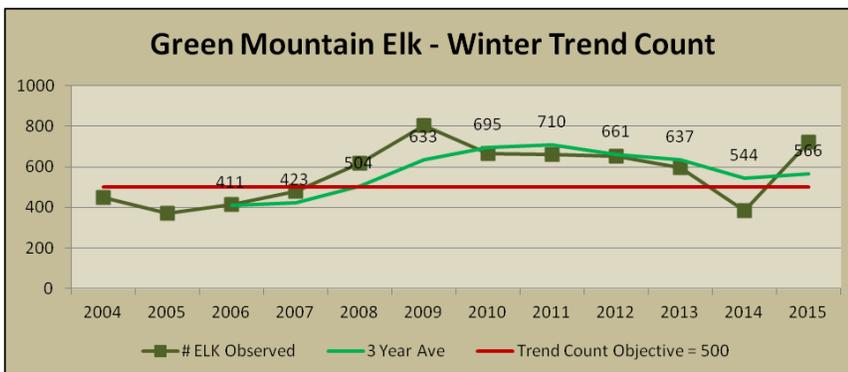
In Green Mountain, 630 elk were observed in Hunt Area 24, mostly on or near Green Mountain. Nearly 100 elk have been observed along the Sweetwater River in Hunt Area 128, putting the total of over 720 elk about 44% over the mid-winter trend count objective of 500 elk. The 3-year trend count average of 566 is only 13% above objective. More bulls were observed this year than in 2015.



Bull elk group. Photo by Stan Harter.



Bull elk group. Photo by Stan Harter.



## Highway crossing



Elk have been a common occurrence on U.S. Hwy 28 near South Pass this winter, crossing almost everyday. Thank you Wyoming Department of Transportation for putting alerts on your signs, and thank you motorists for slowing down!



# Improving habitat

## Christmas trees at Ocean Lake



*Volunteers and staff place Christmas trees on Ocean Lake to benefit the fishery. Photo provided by The Riverton Ranger..*

**R**egional personnel and volunteers helped the Fish Division and Habitat and Access crew along with Fremont County Solid Waste and Inberg-Miller Engineering with placing Christmas trees on Ocean Lake.

Approximately 25 people spent the morning of January 30th placing 375 recycled Christmas trees on the ice at Ocean Lake as part of an annual sport fish habitat project. Bundles of ten trees were wired together and attached to cinder blocks as weights. They will sink to the bottom when the ice melts and provide structure where sport fish such as walleyes, yellow perch, and black crappies congregate. Ocean Lake is shallow with a silt bottom and does not have much habitat (like drop-offs, rocky shorelines or aquatic vegetation beds) to attract schools of fish. The Christmas tree structures benefit anglers by providing places that attract fish and in turn provide better angling opportunities.

Since the project began in 1985, an estimated 11,000 Christmas trees have been sunk into Ocean Lake. The tree branches likely last only two to three years before they decay to just a trunk, so putting new trees in the lake every year helps to maintain old structures.

Over the years, most trees have been placed on the ice approximately ¼-mile north of Long Point boat ramp. Although the trees usually sink at that location, high winds during ice-off sometimes blow the ice sheet with the trees to other locations in the lake. When the trees do not sink near Long Point, some Ocean Lake anglers are ambitious enough to use depth sounding devices to find the newly sunk trees and have their own secret fishing spot.



# Animal rescue

## Stranded elk

Recently, concerned ice fishermen called the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the Wind River Tribal Fish and Game when they saw two elk get stuck on Pilot Butte Reservoir while trying to cross with the rest of the herd. The Reservoir lies northwest of Riverton and is within the exterior boundary of the Wind River Indian Reservation. Tribal Warden Art Lawson called Large Carnivore Conflict Supervisor Brian DeBolt who was nearby duck hunting and able to respond quickly. Along with help from several ice fishermen on site, Brian was able to hobble, blindfold, place into a sled and pull to shore one yearling bull. The second yearling cow was euthanized due to the extent of the injuries she sustained from repeated falls on the ice. Riverton Wardens Brad Gibb and Jessica Beecham responded as well and were able to field dress and donate the meat from the yearling cow. A big thank-you goes out to the concerned citizens who called and assisted that day!



*Under the direction of Game and Fish, volunteers assist in moving a yearling elk off the ice.*



# On the ground

## Sage grouse

Sage-Grouse GIS Analyst, Nyssa Whitford has been working on planning and logistics for the 30<sup>th</sup> Western State Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse Workshop to be hosted by the Department this summer. The workshop will be in Lander June 13-16. Up to 200 biologists, managers, researchers and grouse enthusiasts are expected to attend. More information can be found at: [http://www.wafwa.org/workshops/sage\\_and\\_sharp-tailed\\_grouse/](http://www.wafwa.org/workshops/sage_and_sharp-tailed_grouse/)



SAVE THE DATE  
30<sup>th</sup> SAGE AND COLUMBIAN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE WORKSHOP  
BRINGING IT HOME

WHEN: JUNE 13-16, 2016

WHERE: LANDER, WYOMING

WHO: BIOLOGISTS, LAND MANAGERS, SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM ADVOCATES, RESEARCHERS, NGOs, UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND ADVISORS.

WHAT: A BIENNIAL GATHERING OF SAGE AND COLUMBIAN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE PROFESSIONALS SHARING CURRENT MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH.





# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

## Sheridan Region

### February 2016 Newsletter



#### Fish Passage on Pratt & Ferris Ditch

**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



*View of the baffling in the vertical slot fish ladder.*



*View of where the fish that have come up the ladder will exit above the diversion dam.*

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Apache Foundation, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are partnering to build a dual vertical slot fish ladder and rotating drum fish screen at the Pratt and Ferris #1 dam and diversion on Piney Creek. The dam occurs about 2.5 miles above **Piney Creek's confluence with Clear Creek. Brown and rainbow trout, rock bass, stonecat, longnose dace, longnose and white sucker, and shorthead redhorse** occur in the project reach. The fish ladder combined with the previous ramped diversion structure completed at the Dunlap Diversion on Piney Creek will reconnect about 30 contiguous miles of Piney and Clear creeks. The drum screen will limit fish entrainment in the 18 to 24 cfs Pratt and Ferris #1 diversion ditch. DRM Incorporated began constructing the fish ladder and screen in late November. Completion is expected in March 2016.

**This project addresses another step in the Game and Fish Department's goal to reconnect Clear and Piney Creeks to the Powder River.** Other native fishes considered species of greatest conservation need cannot yet reach the mouth of Piney Creek due to remaining barriers on Clear Creek.



*View of the floor of the rotating drum fish screen that will prevent fish from being lost down the irrigation ditch.*



*View from downstream of the fish ladder looking upstream at the ladder.*



# Sheridan Region Monthly Newsletter

## February 2016

### **Law Enforcement Efforts Continue Along Sheridan County's Northern Border**



*One of two white-tailed deer that were poached along the Wyoming/Montana border in January.*

Wyoming Game and Fish Department game wardens from several areas around the state took turns patrolling the northwest part of Sheridan County in January. The increased poaching of big game animals reported in 2015 continued into 2016 as game wardens worked on a case involving an individual who poached a white-tailed deer along the Wyoming/Montana border. Prompt investigative work by wardens lead to a quick identification of the suspect. The suspect was interviewed and also confessed to poaching an additional white-tailed deer. Charges are currently pending against the suspect.



*Bullet recovered from a big game animal poached along the Wyoming/Montana border in January.*



*A Wyoming Game Warden collects evidence near the Wyoming/Montana border where one white-tailed deer had been shot and left.*



# Sheridan Region Monthly Newsletter

## February 2016

### **Moorcroft Game Warden Teaches Ice Rescue Class**

Moorcroft Game Warden John Davis taught an ice rescue class to 17 people representing the Hulett Fire Dept., Sundance Police Dept., Moorcroft Police Dept., Crook County Sheriff's Office, Keyhole State Park, as well as the Wyoming Game and Fish Dept. The class was held at Keyhole Reservoir near the marina boat docks where agitators keep the water from freezing. The weather was ideal for the class. All those attending the class had an opportunity to get into the Mustang Survival suits to practice going into the frigid water to rescue a "victim" as well as being a "victim".



*A rescuer crawls out to the "victim" during the ice rescue training taught at Keyhole Reservoir.*



*A second rescuer (yellow suit on right) wearing a Mustang Survival suit carefully approaches the "rescued victim" with a sled to transport the "victim" to safety.*

### **Story Hatchery Ships the Last of Eggs Taken During the Fall of 2015**



*Eggs being stripped from a brook trout at Story Fish Hatchery.*

The last of the eggs taken during the fall spawning of 2015 at Story Fish Hatchery were shipped to other locations in January. The State of Idaho received 44,000 brook trout eggs, while another 54,000 brook trout eggs were shipped to the Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery in Kentucky.

After all in-state commitments are satisfied, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department trades fish eggs and fish to other state and federal fish hatcheries for fish that the Wyoming Game and Fish Department does not raise. Fish such as channel catfish, walleye, tiger musky and northern pike are obtained through these trades for stocking in Wyoming waters.



# Sheridan Region Monthly Newsletter

## February 2016

### Elk Surveys Completed in January

Wyoming Game and Fish Department Sheridan Region wildlife biologists completed winter elk trend surveys in January. The effects of a dry and mild 2015 fall hunting season contributed to harvest objectives not being met, resulting in increased elk numbers in several of the herds surveyed.

Wildlife managers utilize trend surveys to count as many elk as possible to provide an indication of the population trends. Obviously, not all elk are counted, but with favorable survey conditions (snow cover) a high percentage of the elk can be observed. These trend counts are flown with either a small airplane or helicopter. A digital camera is used to obtain images of the larger herds. The photographs are then downloaded to a computer and the number of elk are tallied.

Hunt areas near Buffalo and Kaycee showed increases this year with Hunt Area 33 tallying 1,671 elk, Hunt Area 34—1,738 elk, Hunt Area 35—1,179 elk and Hunt Area 36—1,069 elk. Hunting seasons being planned for 2016 in these hunt areas are expected to have increased opportunity as a result of this year's counts.



*Digital photo (at left) of a herd of elk in the southeast part of the Bighorn Mountains.*

*The same photo as above after being downloaded onto a computer and the number of elk tallied using Arc GIS software. As a colored dot is placed on each elk with a click of the computer mouse, the GIS program records the number in the table seen on the right side of the photo.*

*Although difficult to see, the number on the bottom line (red arrow) is 582, so there are 582 elk in that herd.*

