



Lander Region Newsletter

Serving Dubois, Rawlins, Riverton, Lander, and places between

February 2015

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On the Land - habitat and access

Habitat and Access staff capitalized on the spring-like weather during the first half of February and spent the later half of the month preparing for spring to actually hit.

Miles Proctor hooked up the range drill and was able to seed close to 45 acres on Spence and Moriarity Wildlife Management Area. Miles drilled the upland wheat-grass seed mix in less productive areas of Long Meadow. This will



Drilling upland seed mix on Long Meadow, Spence and Moriarity WMA.

allow beneficial residual cover to grow and help stabilize soil, provide some forage and help reduce the spread of noxious weeds. These areas can be irrigated in long water years, but may not be in drought years. Use of the upland seed mix will result in greater flexibility and adaptability to changes in weather over time. Miles also spent time fabricating a bale spear for our backhoe which will be invaluable come hay season.

Derek Lemon and Matt Pollock spent time in February on the Muddy and Fivemile fences at Sand Mesa Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA). Derek and Matt were fixing fence, but also inventorying

the status of the fence so out during the summer sections can be prioritized for irrigating, fencing and replacement and maintaining the WHMAs in the Lander Region and across the state. Derek also spent time at Ocean Lake WHMA working with Patrick Construction as they did the dirt work to enlarge Pond 4. This project will provide future wetland habitat targeted to benefit western grebes, however numerous waterfowl and shorebird species will benefit as well.

Habitat and Access also spent time in February going through applications and interviewing perspective seasonal employees. This year six seasonal employees will be hired. These employees do the yeoman's work day in/day

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Pond 4 expansion to benefit western grebes.



With the Mule Deer - how many mule deer can you see?

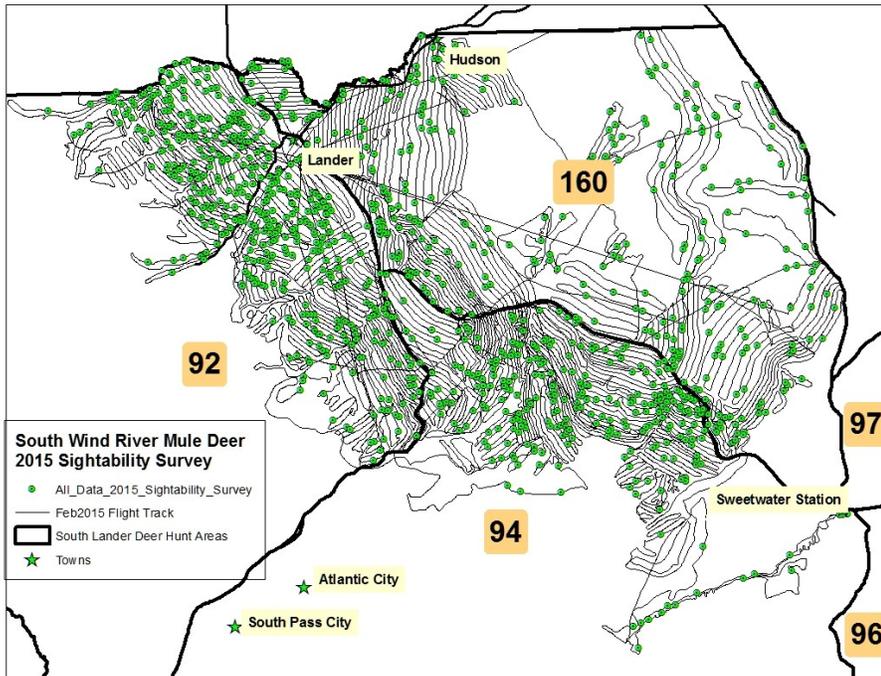


Figure 1. Map of South Wind River Mule Deer herd sightability survey routes and locations of animals observed.

In early February 2015, Lander Region wildlife personnel conducted a mule deer sightability survey for the South Wind River herd. This was the most intensive survey ever conducted for this herd unit and was designed to count all mule deer in the population. This survey utilizes actual mule deer counts along with snow and hiding cover variables to provide a correction factor for each group of mule deer, thereby estimating the number of deer missed in the survey. This technique and correction factor was originally designed in Idaho and Wyoming's Platte Valley herd near Saratoga. Radio collared deer there were used to determine the number of deer missed in different types of cover.

The South Wind River mule deer sightability survey was conducted by helicopter with nearly 60 hours of survey time and nearly 3,000 survey miles covering winter ranges and other areas we expected to see mule deer, as shown in the map in Figure 1. We ob-

served an actual count of 6,640 mule deer (in 692 groups) and nearly 7,300 individuals of another 14 species (Table 1). Using the correction factor, the estimated number of mule deer in this herd unit is between 8,000 and 8,500 deer, based on the snow cover, vegetation/hiding cover type and activity of each group of deer we observed.

Overall, this was a fantastic opportunity to gain a lot of knowledge about mule deer numbers and distribution, and we also gained valuable information for numerous species.

The Lander/Green Mountain Mule Deer Working Group met twice in February and worked hard on developing habitat and research recommendations for arresting the decline of mule deer in the Sweetwater and South Wind River herd units. At their next meeting, they will look at season structure and ATV use.



Lander/Green Mtn. Mule Deer Working Group meeting on March 16 at 6:15 PM, Lander Regional Office, 260 Buena Vista Dr. Open to the public.

Table 1. Number of animals counted by species in February 2015 during the South Wind River Mule Deer herd sightability survey.

Species	Total Counted
Bald Eagle	5
Bighorn Sheep	5
Chukar	1,384
Coyote	76
Elk	1,676
Golden Eagle	30
Goshawk	1
Mallard	21
Moose	33
Mule Deer	6,640
Pronghorn	3,798
Red Fox	1
Red-tailed Hawk	2
Sage Grouse	48
White-tailed Deer	192
	13,912



Under Ground - are bears still sleeping?



A den camera picture of a bear out searching for den bedding.

any month of the winter. However, this normal bear activity does not signify bears are emerging early this spring due to weather or climate.

The Large Carnivore Section is able to monitor bear den activity remotely through radio-marked bears in the state. Through this they can document bear movements in and out of their dens throughout the course of the winter. They have found that sometimes bears come out just to poke around, to look for food or to acquire den bedding material. Ultimately, they analyze peak yearly den emergence and denning ecology differences by gender and age.

The unseasonable warmth of the last few months has led some people to question the sleeping behavior of bears. In February, Large Carnivore Section personnel responded to a few potential bear tracks and sightings of bears out of their dens. In fact, some bears were out of their dens last month as it is common for bears to take short forays in

Alas, bears did not decide to leave their dens several months early. But, people should always be aware of their surroundings when recreating in large carnivore country, no matter the time of year.



LIVING IN CARNIVORE COUNTRY WORKSHOPS:

- LANDER 4/13 AT THE LANDER PUBLIC LIBRARY
- DUBOIS 4/14 AT THE HEADWATERS CONF. CENTER

BOTH BEGIN AT 6 PM

On the Ice - creating fish habitat with volunteers



Above and to the right: volunteers and staff help place recycled Christmas trees on the ice at Ocean Lake.

were placed on the ice, wired together in bundles of ten, and attached to cinder blocks as weights. When the ice melts, the weighted trees will sink, providing structure for fish and improving the overall lake health.

Kevin Johnson believes "Volunteering is a way for anglers and hunters to give back to the resources they enjoy, and in many cases we simply can't accomplish our mission without the help of dedicated volunteers. Assistance with projects on the ground, eyes in the field, and feedback are all ways we look for the public's input and help."



Regional personnel and volunteers helped the department's Fish Division and Habitat and Access crew along with Fremont County Solid Waste and Inberg-Miller Engineering with placing Christmas trees on Ocean Lake.

This project began with an idea from volunteers, Rick Glanz and Howard Johnson in 1986. Rick was back again this year to help, as he has been for most years.

Throughout the year, Game and Fish relies on volunteers to assist with different projects. Lander Region Fisheries Supervisor

This year, 525 recycled Christmas trees



With the Wildlife - bighorn sheep testing



Disease sampling in the Seminoe Mountains. Photo on left: helicopter bringing the bighorn sheep from the capture site to the sampling site. Picture on right provided by Silver Fox Imaging: Brady Frude carrying a bighorn ewe with Greg Hiatt and Hank Edwards in tow.

In February, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department’s Lander Region and Veterinary Services crew captured and sampled thirteen bighorn sheep in the Seminoe Mountains in preparation for transplanting bighorn sheep from Devil’s Canyon to augment this population.

cance (and biotype) of the pathogens we find in our bighorn sheep herds, but our research at Sybille has shown that these three can have a significant impact on lamb survival when all three are present.”

Continued on right...

Wildlife Disease Laboratory Supervisor Hank Edwards said, “To no one’s surprise, we found this herd to be one of our cleanest in the state – second only to Devil’s Canyon! We did identify four sheep that were carrying *Mannheimia haemolytica*, but no animals were found to be infected with *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* or leukotoxin positive *B. trehalosi*, which is great news. We are still working on determining the signifi-



On left: Greg Hiatt helps hold a ram while samples are collected. On right: Hally Killion, Greg Hiatt and Brady Frude. Photo courtesy of Silver Fox Imaging.



With the Wildlife - bighorn sheep release



Pictured above and to the lower right: Game and Fish staff and volunteers help capture bighorn sheep out of Devil's Canyon and release them into the Seminole Mountains.

Trapping and transplanting efforts commenced in early March. Cody and Lander region personnel with the skillful abilities of Native Range (helicopter capture crew) and a host of volunteers, including a local high school biology class, captured twenty-five bighorn sheep from the Devil's Canyon area near Lovell. All twenty-five of these low-elevation, non-migratory bighorn sheep were released on March 7 in the Seminole Mountains west of Seminole State Park. The release consisted of twenty-one ewes, one male lamb and three

young rams. All but the lamb and one young ram were marked with telemetry collars, thirteen VHS collars and ten GPS collars that will drop off for data recovery in May 2017. Assuming most of these bighorn sheep will remain in the Seminole Mountains, as with the previous three transplants, and adding recruitment from the 2015 lamb crop, the herd is expected to reach 100 animals by fall of 2015. This supplemental release should essentially make up for documented losses during the 2012-13 winter.



In the Research - cwd vaccine study



Dr. Kelly Straka, Missouri state wildlife veterinarian helps draw blood from our research elk. Dr. Straka visited our facility to learn about our captive research.

At the end of February, the Game and Fish research center vaccinated and bled its resident chronic wasting disease (CWD) vaccine study elk.

There were originally forty-two elk in the study—twenty-one vaccinates and twenty-one controls. The elk were brought to the facility in 2013 and are vaccinated yearly. After two years, we are just starting to see some of these research elk develop clinical signs of CWD and we are now down to just thirty-five elk in the study. While the results

from the rectal biopsies taken in September were not promising, the next two years will be interesting as we look to see if the vaccine is able to prolong the period between exposure to CWD and signs of clinical disease.

Blood is drawn from all study elk twice a year to evaluate titers to the vaccine. Additionally, blood from all control elk is sent to a researcher in Colorado to assist with development of a blood test for CWD.



Opportunities for you- season meetings and hunting with heros

Lander Region 2015 Season Setting Meetings:

Using information from our December public meetings, species specific information collected in the field, overall population numbers, habitat conditions, harvest survey information and other public input, wardens and biologists have been busy developing 2015 hunting season recommendations. Draft proposals are scheduled to be available after March 20 and public meetings are scheduled for the following dates and locations (all meetings start at 6PM):

Riverton: March 19th at the Riverton Fire Academy

Dubois: March 24th at the Headwaters Arts and Conference Center

Jeffery City: March 24th at the Jeffrey City Fire Hall

Rawlins: March 25th at the Jeffrey Memorial Community Center

Lander: March 26th at the Lander Regional Office

Information, including an electronic commenting option, is also available on line at <http://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/wgfd-1001683.aspx>.



Previous hunting with hero license recipient and guides with their family.

Jessica Beecham participated in a "Hunting with Heroes" meeting at the North Portal Fire Station.

This group provides hunting opportunities to disabled veterans from around the

A new group of landowners in the North Portal area is working to provide the same type of opportunity there. They expect to take ten to twelve disabled veterans on deer and antelope hunts this fall. Past participants have expressed that the "Hunting with Heroes"

country. A group of several landowners and sportsmen have been providing deer, antelope and elk hunts in the Lysite area, averaging twelve to fifteen hunters a year. Each hunter is provided food, lodging and a guide to assist them on their hunt.

events have been life changing, and many look forward to hunting with the organization again.

All licenses are donated by landowners or other sportsmen through the Game and Fish. Any valid big game license may be donated. For more information on donating a license please visit the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's web-site at <https://wgfd.wyo.gov/web2011/hunting-1001196.aspx>.

Currently, antelope licenses for areas 75 and 97/117 are in greatest demand, including doe/fawn permits.

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