Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Sheridan Region

August 2017 Newsletter

Sheridan Region

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Buffalo: Jim Seeman
Kaycee: Cody Bish
N. Gillette: vacant
S. Gillette: Dustin Kirsch
Moorcroft: J.D. Davis
Sheridan: Ryan Bagley
Sheridan: Luke May
Investigator: Daniel Beach
Damage Tech: Cody Schoonover

Public Information Specialist:
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Wildlife Biologists :
Wildlife Management Coordinator: Dan Thiele
Sheridan: Tim Thomas
Buffalo: vacant
Gillette: Erika Peckham
Terrestrial Habitat: Todd Caltrider

Access Yes Program :
Coordinator: Troy Tobiasson

Fish Biologists:
Bill Bradshaw
Andrew Nikirk
Aquatic Habitat: Travis Cundy

Aquatic Invasive Species:
Mike Locatelli

Habitat and Access Coordinator:
Seth Roseberry

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

Sheridan Bird Farm:
Supervisor: Darrell Meineke
Biologist: Nate Brown
Bird Farm Tech: Reed Moore

Sage-grouse: Lek Surveys and Working Group Field Trip

2017 Spring Lek Surveys for Northeast Wyoming

During the spring of 2017, sage-grouse lek surveys were completed on 314 of the 389 (81%) occupied leks in northeast Wyoming. Male attendance was down about 5% from 2016 (18.5 males per active lek in 2017 vs. 19.5 males per active lek in 2016). The median male attendance was 14 males per active lek. Weather and habitat conditions have favored sage-grouse the last two years as surveys indicate the birds are at the top of their current population cycle.

Northeast Wyoming Sage-grouse Working Group Tours CBM Reclamation Sites

In mid-July, the Northeast Wyoming Sage-grouse Working Group toured an area where research is being conducted on reclaimed coal bed methane (CBM) well sites and roads. University of Waterloo (Ontario) Professor Brad Fedy and PhD student Chris Kirol are investigating sage-grouse habitat requirements and how, and to what degree, sage-grouse are using the reclaimed areas. The researchers have placed small backpack radio transmitters on sage-grouse that record the bird's location several times each day. With these locations the researchers can determine the habitat types the birds are using and what habitats are being avoided.

The Northeast Wyoming Sage-grouse Working Group observes a sage-grouse nesting site (photo at right). The hen sage-grouse that used the site successfully hatched a brood of chicks and moved them to brood rearing habitat.

Professor Brad Fedy (photo at left) shows the Northeast Wyoming Sage-grouse Working Group the reclamation that has been done within the research area.

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Invasive Fish Found in Goose Creek near Acme

During an investigation into the possible illegal taking of fish, Dayton Game Warden Dustin Shorma observed a brook stickleback in a bucket of fish that had been caught in Goose Creek near Acme, Wyoming. This is the first time this small invasive fish species has been documented in this area of Wyoming. Brook stickleback are not native to Wyoming, but have been illegally introduced, most likely through the use of illegal bait minnows, into drainages in the east central area of Wyoming. They are common in eastern South Dakota and Minnesota.

Black Bear Activity Increases

Black bear activity on the east slope of the Bighorns increased substantially in July. Game and Fish game wardens and biologists responded to 23 bear conflict reports during the month. Sheridan Region Damage Technician Cody Schoonover received calls of bears getting into garbage, damaging a green house and chicken coop, chewing up a hot tub cover and damaging a screen door to a house. When possible, the bears were captured and relocated.

Game and Fish advises home owners living in towns just off the national forest and people camping in the Bighorns to take precautions to eliminate food attractants left at campsites and around dwellings.

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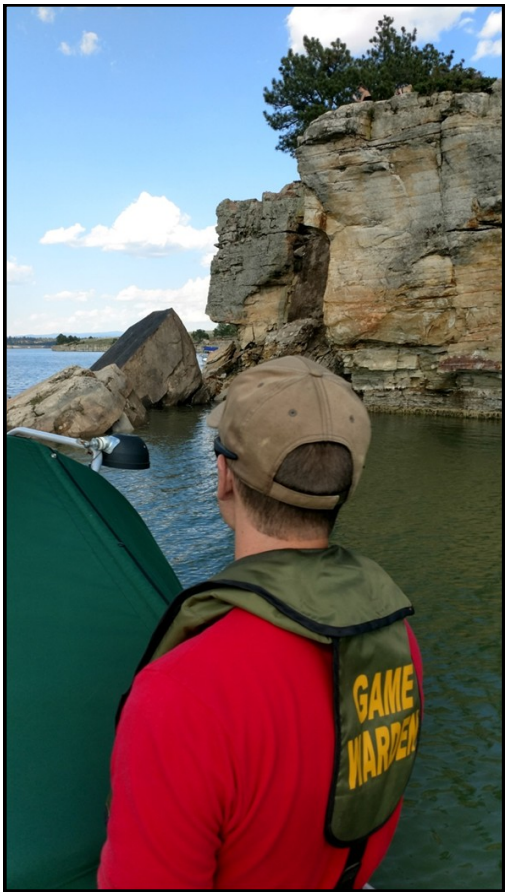
Keyhole Reservoir—Fishing and Boating Enforcement

Game Wardens Ryan Bagley (on left) and Luke May (on right) patrol Keyhole.

Game Wardens Luke May, Ryan Bagley, John Davis and Dustin Kirsch spent considerable time in July on Keyhole Reservoir conducting fishing and boating enforcement. The wardens indicated that recreational boating increased in July at Keyhole while the number of fishing boats decreased. Walleye fishing slowed down in July but northern pike fishing remained good with one angler catching 14 northern pike in one day.

Boating regulation compliance among recreational boaters was good, however one arrest was made for boating under the influence.

While on the reservoir, the wardens observed a bunch of kids that had made a ramp and were using the ramp to launch themselves (and the bike) off a cliff into the water.



Game Warden Ryan Bagley looks at what remains of the cliff near Coulter Bay at Keyhole. The cliff fell into the reservoir on the night of July 27 after the area received heavy rains.

Kids using a ramp to launch themselves into Keyhole Reservoir. A life jacket attached to the bike allowed quick retrieval so the next person could have their turn. In the photo at left, the bike (green arrow) and rider (red arrow) have just left the ramp.

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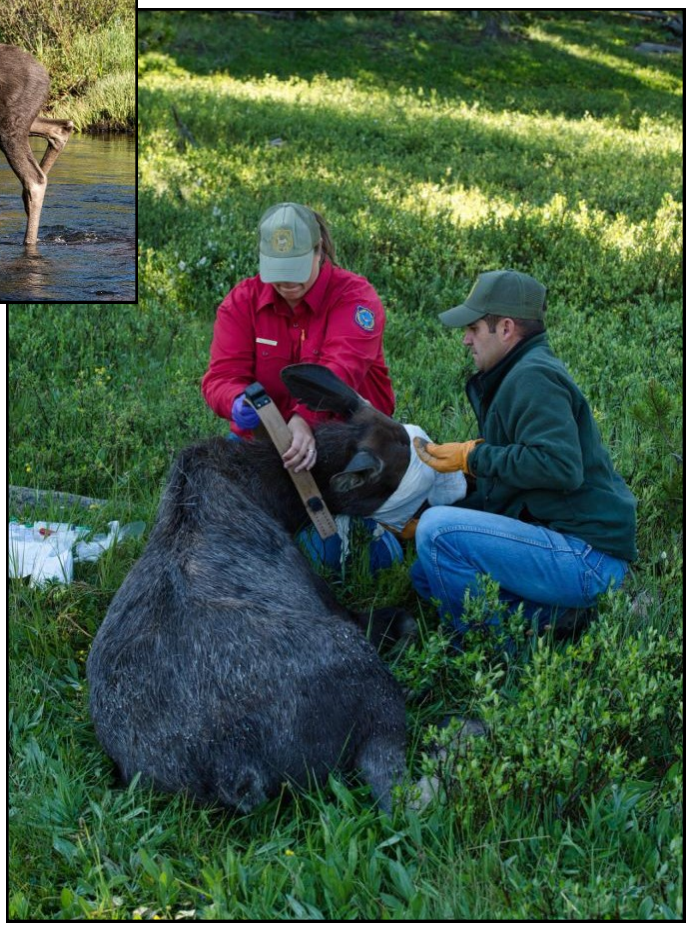
Moose Research Project in the Bighorn Mountains

A collared cow moose with her yearling calf in the Bighorn Mountains.



Cody Region Wildlife Biologist Leslie Schreiber (on left, photo at right) fits a collar on a cow moose as Dayton Game Warden Dustin Shorma (on right) lifts the moose's head so the collar can be fitted.

In early 2017, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Wyoming initiated a first of its kind moose research project in the Bighorn Mountains. The three year project has two primary objectives; evaluate moose population dynamics and seasonal habitat use. Approximately 60 cow moose will be captured and fitted with GPS collars which will collect moose locations every two hours. Several moose were captured in February 2017 using a helicopter and a net gun. As opportunities arise, additional moose will be captured from the ground using a tranquilizer dart gun.

Information collected when the moose are collared and the data gathered over the three-year life span of the collars will allow researchers to determine pregnancy and body condition at initial capture and adult survival and calf recruitment over the study period. In addition, the movement data collected will be used to identify seasonal ranges including calving areas and, if possible, migration routes.

The herd-health information, seasonal habitat selection and migration patterns of Bighorn moose will be compared with previous moose studies conducted across the state (i.e., Jackson, Sublette and Snowy Range herds). This information will help biologists better manage the moose population and their habitats.