



Habitat is where it's at!

August 2015

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

Special dates and points of interest:

- DON'T HAVE A COMPUTER? EVERY REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE GAME AND FISH HAS A COMPUTER AT THE FRONT COUNTER FOR PUBLIC USE
- DON'T HAVE YOUR HUNTER SAFETY CERTIFICATE? CHECK FOR UPCOMING COURSES ONLINE AT [HTTP://WGFD.WYO.GOV](http://wgfd.wyo.gov)
- PREFERENCE POINT ONLY APPLICATION PERIOD NOW THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30
- MANY HUNTING SEASONS OPEN SEPTEMBER 1. CHECK YOUR REGULATIONS
- PRONGHORN ANTELOPE ARCHERY SEASONS OPEN AUGUST 15 IN SOME LOCAL HUNT AREAS

Baggs Wildlife Biologist Tony Mong, Saratoga Habitat Biologist Katie Cheesebrough, Baggs Game Warden Kim Olson and Statewide Habitat Coordinator Ryan Amundson completed the rapid habitat assessments within the Baggs mule deer herd unit. *(photo right)*

Mong says the results will go into the habitat plan the Baggs Mule Deer Working Group is writing. "Right now the group is working on the potential habitat treatment section and sections involving current habitat conditions, monitoring, and funding structure," Mong said.

The working group is made up of a variety of stakeholders, who all share an interest in the management of the Baggs mule deer herd (deer hunt areas 82, 84, and 100). The group is volunteering their time to identify challenges and issues with the Baggs mule deer herd and explore options to benefit the herd.



Large Carnivore Training ~ Green River Crew gets training from experts ~ Hunter Education



Biologists, Information and Education Specialists, and game wardens from the Green River and Lander Game and Fish Regions took part in a training to learn more about how to trap and move large carnivores, like bears and mountain lions. **Large Carnivore Management Supervisor Dan Thompson** (photo top, left) demonstrated how a mountain lion will move through a trap and how to set the trap.

Game wardens and biologists are sometimes called upon to trap and remove a mountain lion or bear from a residence or other area they could come in contact with humans. The training was valuable and will better prepare them.

The group also learned how to load darts with sedation drugs and which types of delivery systems work best from **Brian DeBolt, Large Carnivore Conflict Coordinator**. (photo center, left) DeBolt also taught the group how to set snares, including one with a "hair trigger" that could hurt you if you didn't know what you were doing. Look closely at Thompson's face-he is grinning, as we all hold our breath and hope DeBolt does not hit the trigger too soon. (photo directly below) 😊



Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative Coordinator Jim Wasseen (photo above) teaches students about hunting ethics in a recent hunter education Internet Field Day (IFD). **Vern Howey, Granger resident and Wildlife Services Technician**, also assisted with the IFD. (photo right) The IFD is one of three options for students to complete the hunter education requirement. **Students complete an online course, print their certificate, and attend the five-hour IFD at any Wyoming location. There are also traditional classes and the Hunter Mentor Program.**



Habitat Improvement Fencing Projects ~ Conservation Partnerships



A whole bunch of heavy steel pipe, heavy lifting, and a lot of heavy sweat went into the construction of a portable steel jack fence on **Little Mountain July 30**. (photos left, top three) The cooperative project is a “who’s who” in wildlife conservation and local businesses made possible through grant monies, donation of materials, and or hard labor. Partners include the Southwest Chapter of the Muley Fanatic Foundation (MFF), Wyoming Landscape Conservation Initiative (WLCI), Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Sweetwater County Conservation District, Wexpro Energy, Breitburn Energy, and R&M Welding.

Workers constructed the modified steel jack fencing to keep ungulates (elk, moose, and cattle) from over-browsing the aspen stands, one to three acres in size, on Little Mountain, while still allowing some mule deer and pronghorn access to these same aspen stands. Aspen stand fencing is expected to significantly reduce levels of larger ungulate browsing to aspen regeneration less than six feet in height, so that young aspen trees are able to grow vertically unimpeded into mature trees and maintain stable stands on the Little Mountain landscape over time.

Thanks to another cooperative wildlife project, pronghorn antelope can now navigate fencing along their migration route in antelope hunt area 93 northwest of Green River. “The net-wire fencing was a huge barrier to pronghorn migration and they could not physically get through or around the fencing,” said Mark Zornes, Green River wildlife management coordinator. “The old fence was torn down and replaced with four-wire smooth bottom wire, what we call a wildlife-friendly fence, and within a couple weeks the pronghorn were migrating with no problems. The fence works.” (photo left, bottom)

“**When we heard** about the migration issues and the proposed fencing work north of our Granger plant I thought Tronox could help fill the gap by tackling some of the fence work in our Granger permit area over a four to five year period,” Tronox employee Julie Lutz said.

“**This project** would not have happened without the financial support and landowner permission from Anadarko-Uinta Development Cooperation, the permittee on the affected lands,” Zornes said. “We also recognize and thank workers from the Kemmerer/Rock Springs BLM, University of Wyoming Conservation Corps, Tronox, Seedskaadee NWR, and the G&F who were also instrumental in completing this fencing project. The Rock Springs Grazing Association also supported the project. The new fence will benefit migrating pronghorn in that area for a long time.”



There were only a few minor changes to the southwest region Hunter Management Areas and Walk In Access Areas (WIA) enrolled in the *Private Lands Public Wildlife* (PLPW) program. Access Coordinator Andy Countryman said one of the access areas close to Evanston pulled out of the program. However, a new access area on Bigelow Bench, south of Interstate 80 and near the wind turbines, was added to the program. In addition, Knight Ridge West, which had been closed for a few years, reopened for an antlerless elk only hunt. Hunting on Knight Ridge West is available to hunters who secured a permission slip online at the WGFD website. **Applications start Friday, November 20, 2015 at 8:00 am and are issued on a first come first served basis.** Permission slips will be valid for week-long intervals, valid from Monday through Sunday of each week. The first come first served per application period will start each Friday at 8:00 am preceding the weekly hunt period.

For hunters hunting on the Tipton HMA be aware that you will need a permission slip to hunt on the HMA. The Tipton Hunter Management Area (HMA) is located about 50 miles west of Rawlins, south of Interstate 80. It is comprised of private and leased lands of the P.H. Livestock Co. Access to Tipton HMA can be gained by taking exits 152, the Bar X Road or the Tipton Exit, exit 158. Permission slips for August 15 - November 30 (antelope, deer, and elk hunting) are issued via a random drawing. Permission slips for elk hunting December 1 - 31 will be issued on a first-come, first-serve basis starting November 23, 2015.

Evanston Game Warden Nick Roberts, AIS crew leader Katie Eaton, and WGFD fish hatchery workers assisted with the Upper Bear River Trout Unlimited Kids Fishing Day in Evanston. Roberts said participants caught lots of fish that were stocked and were given a free lunch and a free fishing pole by Trout Unlimited. (photo right, top)

Game Warden Roberts ticketed two Evanston youths for littering on a Hunter Management Area earlier this summer. "The young men agreed to spend a day cleaning up litter with me in lieu of a fine. While cleaning up litter on the HMA, they ran into the owner of the property who was on horseback. After a firm hand shake and a stern talking to, the youths agreed that they would be more respectful of the gracious property owners in the Evanston area." (photo right, bottom)

Game Warden Roberts was able to successfully prosecute an Evanston man for taking a black bear three days after the area had reached its quota for the spring season. Lincoln County Circuit Court Judge Zebre issued the man \$590 in fines and court costs and suspended his black bear hunting privileges for 2016.

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>

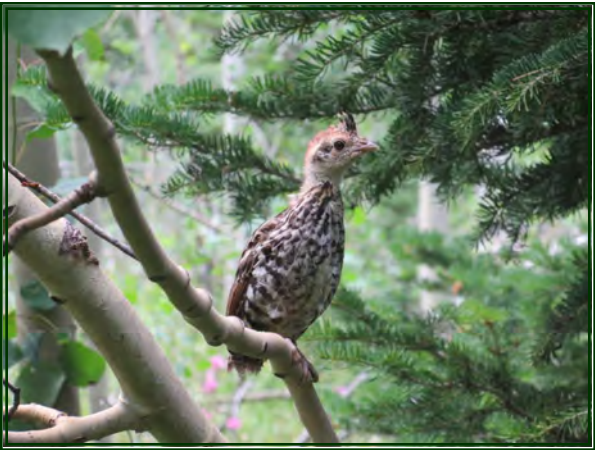


Snakes ~ Grouse ~ Bears, oh my! ~ Beautiful Big Springs



Baggs Game Warden Kim Olson reported she saw a lot of rattlesnakes this month. "They were north, east, and west of town," Olson said. (photo top, left) "And the bears have really been busy these past two weeks as well. We have had several problems with bears near cabins and sheep herds. *Check out the black bear track in the photo below.*

Cokeville Game Warden Neil Hymas took the two photos of a mama ruffed grouse (photos, bottom) and one of the brood in the Nugent Park area in late July (photo center). "This chick can fly, believe it or not, for at least a short distance," Hymas said. Hymas also snapped this photo of Big Springs. (photo bottom, right)



Patrol Cabin Improvements ~ Beaver habitat improvement project



Mountain View Wildlife Biologist Jeff Short, Green River Game Warden Andy Roosa, Green River Wildlife Supervisor Steve DeCecco and Kemmerer Game Warden Chris Baird

began replacing the roof at the La-barge Creek patrol cabin. The project should be completed in a couple weeks, with a new steel roof, just in time for *hunting seasons* and before the snow flies.

(photo left, top)



WLCI Coordinator Jim Wasseen, Green River Wildlife Coordinator Mark Zornes and Kemmerer Game Warden Chris Baird

worked on a project designed to reestablish beaver in a small tributary of Fontenelle Creek in a drainage they were removed from in the 1960s. They will provide all the benefits beaver provide to the area.

"It is far enough removed from other colonies that it has not been re-colonized since removal," Zornes said. "The site was suitable for beaver, but did not have security habitat (a small pond or deep water). We are providing this element for them in a temporary manner until they can do this for themselves, which will happen quickly once they are released."

"Releases are done in the fall using a mated pair and their progeny which ensures they will immediately "go to work" and settle at the release location," Zornes said. "Releases done earlier in the year often result in the beaver dispersing back toward their capture location, which may result in loss on these animals to predation." (photos, center and bottom)





Left to right bottom: Molly O'Liddy (WY Forestry), Jason Katzman (Casper College), Zach Hutchinson (Audubon), Janet Sowell (Casper Early Childhood), Jessica Halverson (WY PLT Coordinator), Jason Vlcen (BLM National Trails Center)
Left to right top: Steve Scharosch (private forester and WILD/PLT steering committee member), Ben Wudtke (Forestry: Neiman Industries), Peter Coggi (Naturalist Thermopolis Museum/school teacher), Hazel Scharosch (Project WILD Co-Coordinator, PLT Steering Committee, and school teacher), Lucy Diggins-Wold (WGFD, Project WILD Co-Coordinator and PLT Steering Committee member) Katie Theule (Cokeville Meadows NWR) and Marynell Oechsner (WYPLT and retired US Forest Service and one *very happy retired biologist*) pose in front of the library at WMCC. (photo top, left)

A group of **Wyoming conservation facilitators** and volunteers with the non-profit groups Project Learning Tree and Project WILD completed their annual facilitator rendezvous at the WGFD Whiskey Mountain Conservation Camp near Dubois. **Green River Information and Education Specialist Lucy Diggins-Wold** assisted with the training. Diggins-Wold facilitated the Project WILD activity called "Pay to Play", a card game where students understand how the Pittman Robertson and Dingle Johnson Acts (PR/DJ) fund wildlife programs and the issues surrounding funding wildlife management. **Cokeville Meadows National Wildlife Refuge Manager Katie Theule** was one of the participants. Theule did so well at managing the **Wildlife Bank** we think she could moonlight as a **bank manager**. (photo, top right)



Green River Aquatic Habitat Biologist Kevin Spence helps **River Fest** participants work through the wildlife along the Green River quiz at the 2015 River Festival. There are so many highlights to report from this fun community event that we will place more photos in the September addition. The event has many sponsors as a way to showcase the **Green River**.



Office managers *Sheila Watts (right) and Regina Dickson (left)* have some fun with compound bows, as archery season for pronghorn antelope opens in some hunt areas August 15. The girls are busy with watercraft registrations, archery license sales, AIS decal sales, and many questions about leftover licenses.

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~Critter Spotlight~
Loggerhead shrike
By Mark Zornes a.k.a. Leopold



- **Loggerhead shrikes**, also called the "**butcher bird**", are one of two shrike species found in Wyoming. Loggerheads spend the spring-fall period here (a few overwinter in mild years). The other species, the much paler northern shrike, is usually found here only during winter months.
- A **songbird** that shares many traits with raptors, or birds of prey. Shrikes possess a strongly hooked beak that it uses to dismember and feed upon a variety of prey animals, ranging from large insects like grasshoppers, to lizards, small mammals, and small songbirds. Loggerhead shrikes have been documented killing many species that are toxic to other animals and impale them to be fed on at a later date when toxins are broken down.
- **Unlike true raptors**, shrikes have weakly clawed "songbird feet" and rely on thorn bushes and barbed wire fences to hold their larger prey items. Large prey is impaled on a thorn or barb and then fed upon. Smaller items (e.g. small insects) are consumed on the spot.
- **Loggerhead shrikes** are birds of open habitats, being most common in shrub dominated plains and desert country. Are closely tied to sagebrush and salt desert shrub habitats in Wyoming.
- **Loggerhead shrikes** are boldly marked similar to northern mockingbirds, but can be differentiated by their strong hooked beak and black "robber's mask."
- **Loggerhead shrikes** commonly nest in appropriate open habitats throughout Wyoming, and seek taller dense shrub habitats for their nest site locations. Nests are typically four feet above the ground or more, and their single clutch of eggs is usually five to six eggs.