



Habitat is where it's at!

May 2015

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

Spring is here! So are the mountain bluebirds!



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)
- DEADLINE TO APPLY FOR BIG GAME LICENSES IS MONDAY, JUNE 1, BY 5:00 P.M.; APPLY ON LINE AT [HTTP://WGFD.WYO.GOV](http://wgfd.wyo.gov)

CARTER LEASE PRONGHORN MEETING DATES

- 6:30 PM, MAY 26, EVANSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY, EVANSTON
- 7:30 PM, MAY 27, SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD ROOM, MOUNTAIN VIEW
- 6:30 PM, MAY 28, SOUTH LINCOLN TRAINING AND EVENTS CENTER, KEMMERER

PUBLIC INFORMATION GATHERING MEETING IN GREEN RIVER

- 7:00 PM, MAY 27, CHAPTER'S 4 (TRAPPING), 44 (LICENSE ISSUANCE) AND 54 (PROCEDURE FOR WILDLIFE VIOLATOR COMPACT), GR GAME AND FISH OFFICE
- FREE FISHING DAY IS SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2015



At *Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge* a female mountain bluebird searches for nesting material (photo top, left), while the male (photo bottom, left) is evading the photographer-me. More than 400 species of birds "call" Wyoming home during various seasons. Local students celebrated International Migratory Bird Day at Seedskadee National Wildlife Refuge. See story on page 2

Education in the Green River Region ~ International Migratory Bird Day ~ Hunter Education



Students from Green River elementary schools visited Seedskaelee National Wildlife Refuge to take part in outdoor field studies and to have a little fun with a purpose. (photo top, left and center) Students are “birds” searching for “worms” in a relay race against each others’ bird species. They learned about camouflage and predator/prey relationships as they helped celebrate *International Migratory Bird Day* with refuge personnel and *Lucy Wold* from the GR Game and Fish Office.



Students from Lincoln Middle School completed their firearms proficiency field test with their teacher Malcolm Robb and Green River personnel at the regional office. (group photo, below left/center) GR Personnel *Mark Zornes*, *Steve DeCecco*, *Kevin Spence*, *Andy Roosa* and *Lucy Wold* worked with the students to handle firearms safely.

(photo below) *Mark Zornes*, left, and *Kevin Spence* assist students with getting firearms in and out of a vehicle safely. (photo, below left) *Steve DeCecco* assists students with crossing a fence safely with firearms.



(photo right) GR Game Warden *Andy Roosa* helps a student to learn the different firearms carries.



Education in the Green River Region ~ Sage Grouse lek Update ~ Game Warden's Best Friend



(photo top, left) Students from *Little Snake River Elementary School in Baggs* view sage grouse on a field trip with their teacher *Cindy Cobb* and *Baggs Wildlife Biologist Tony Mong*. (photo by *Cindy Cobb*)



(photo center, left) *Green River Game Warden Andy Roosa* driving one of *Maryland Natural Resource Police's 42 foot SeaArk* marine patrol boats with twin 500 horse power *Cummins Diesel* engines during the *Boating Accident Investigation Coarse* in *Stevensville, Maryland*. *Roosa* says it is a good idea to remind people about boating safety so, hopefully, this summer he *WON'T* have to use the new skills he learned at the training.



Kemmerer Game Warden Chris Baird said his Sage grouse surveys this year were "phenomenal". *Baird* said that many of his assigned leks were accessible a month earlier than normal and attendance was "off the charts". *Baird* and his "best friend" *Elah* (photo below, left) surveyed sage grouse on muddy roads. *Elah* was ready to assist should *Baird* get stuck.

Mountain View Game Warden Allen Deru reported that some of his assigned count leks had *more than double* the birds he saw last year. *Baggs Game Warden Kim Olson* reported that her grouse populations are doing "alright" down in her neck of the woods. *Olson* surveyed for both sage and sharp-tailed grouse. She reported that sharp-tail numbers were up and she found another new lek site! *Olson* also verified two new sage grouse leks that were seen from a plane and a sportsperson.



Male sage-grouse strut on their leks. Photo *Andy Roosa, WGFD*

Habitat is where it's at ~ Big Sandy Project

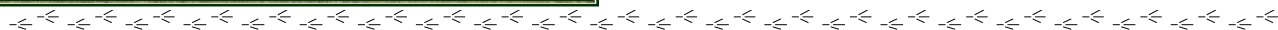


Sill AA before (top, left)

Sill AA after the work (bottom, left)

Sill C before work (top, right)

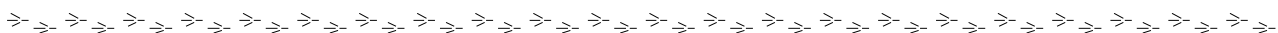
Sill C after work (bottom, right)



Green River Aquatic Habitat Biologist Kevin Spence has been busy with construction crews on the Big Sandy River. Spence reports that 48 existing instream rock sill structures are located on the lower Big Sandy River between Farson and the confluence with the Green River. Most of these structures were built in the 1990s as a collaborative effort between the local Trout Unlimited chapter, Seedskadee NWR, BLM, WGFD, and BOR.

“The original purpose of each structure was to enhance river aquatic and riparian habitats, and thereby improve the fisheries potential,” Spence said. “Over the years, these structures provided habitat to support a recreational sport fishing opportunity for the public in nearly 11 miles of stream that virtually did not exist prior to the structures. The sills have also encouraged the river channel to narrow, deepen, and stabilize through stream reach they were installed. Sill structures are located on State, BLM, and BOR lands, with 26 of the 48 structures situated on State of Wyoming Lands. Twenty one of these twenty six sills on state lands were in need of various levels of maintenance work in order for them to function properly, remain hydrologically sound, and continue to provide habitat.”

“During early May, *Seedskadee NWR crews* used their heavy equipment to perform the necessary maintenance work for each structure,” Spence said. “Project objectives include: 1) Continue to maintain recreational sport fishing opportunity for the public along the lower Big Sandy River. 2) Maintain the hydrologic function and integrity of each structure so that they continue to perform as intended. 3) Provide deep pool habitats to attract and hold fish, associated clean scoured stream substrates & benthic macro invertebrates for both fish and waterfowl, and large rock structures with interstitial niches for juvenile fish cover. 4) Encourage the river channel to continue to narrow, deepen, and stabilize. 5) Elevate and maintain localized riparian water tables near each structure, and encourage improved riparian vegetation species composition and habitat conditions. “



Sagebrush Mortality/Mule Deer Winter Range Tour ~ Deer Mortality Surveys

Game and Fish habitat and wildlife biologists Ryan Amundsen, Ian Tator, Jeff Short and Mark Zornes participated in two range tours, one focused on sagebrush mortality and the other on the condition of the Leroy Mule Deer Winter Range (Uinta mule deer). Jeff and Mark provided the local knowledge of these sites, along with existing concerns and constraints. Ryan and Ian provided habitat expertise and made suggestions for improvements and future monitoring. (photo top and center, right)

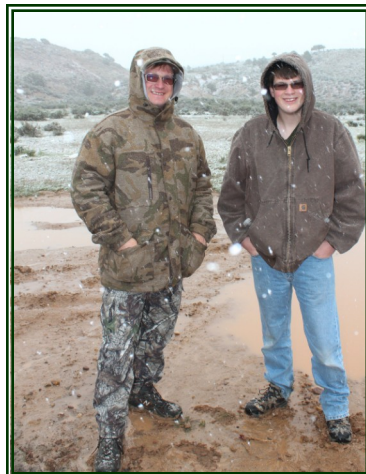


Mark Zornes and Ian Tator surveying areas of sagebrush mortality in Antelope Area 93.

Volunteers assisted Green River and Jackson personnel with the 22nd annual deer mortality surveys near Cokeville and Leroy. (photos below) The mortality surveys assess how this past winter has affected the Wyoming Range and Uinta mule deer herds of western Wyoming. The annual surveys are conducted on mule deer winter ranges to assess overall mortality for the herds, and to evaluate which age classes have been impacted the most. Thayne Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick lead the Cokeville survey. A hearty thank you to all who volunteered!



Poor sagebrush condition and severe hedging, Leroy Mule Deer Winter Range.



Mountain View Game Warden Allen Deru (photo top, left) and wildlife biologist Jeff Short (photo top, left in gray hat) give instructions to volunteers on the Leroy survey amidst the snowfall. Evanston volunteers Tom and Kyle Hoblin (photo above center) search near Leroy. GR Wildlife Mgt. Coordinator Mark Zornes (left photo, left side) and Thayne Wildlife Biologist Gary Fralick (left photo, right side) show Cokeville volunteers how to determine male and female deer remains. (photo above right) A shed mule deer antler glistens in the snow and emerging grasses.

Evanston Area Volunteers Clean Up Hunter Management Areas ~ Thank you!



Jennifer and Nick Arnold of 307 Long Range (right in black sweatshirts) give instructions to the group. Volunteers picked up trash and all of their efforts are much appreciated!

On Saturday, May 16, a *landowner appreciation lunch and litter clean-up day* was held in Evanston. The sponsors of the event were *307 Long Range, Wyoming Sportsman for Fish and Wildlife and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department*. These groups came together to *recognize landowners* involved with the Game and Fish Private Lands Public Wildlife (PLPW) Program, specifically Medicine Butte and Bear River Divide Habitat Management Areas, and Woodruff Narrows and Sulphur Creek Habitat Access Areas near Evanston. These landowners are being honored for their contributions to providing outdoor recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat. The litter clean-up on private and public land is to demonstrate stewardship and concern for the environment.

Evanston Game Warden Nick Roberts, PLPW Coordinator Andy Countryman, Pinedale Habitat Access Coordinator Miles Anderson and Mountain View Game Warden Allen Deru assisted in the days events.



Janelle and Don Campbell of Evanston pick up trash. Thank you!

Volunteers from 307 Long Range pick up trash near Evanston on the Bear River Divide HMA. (photos left and below) These six volunteers had a truck full of trash and were looking for more bags in a very short time. Thank you 307 Long Range!



(photo above) Wyoming Senator Paul Barnard, Uinta County, (left) and WY Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife representative Bob Wharff (right) volunteer their time to help pick up garbage on the Bear River Divide. Thanks!





Office managers Sheila Watts (right) and Regina Dickson (left) show-off the new Game and Fish items for sale over the counter at the regional office. You don't have to go online for cool-guy wildlife gifts. You may buy them from Sheila or Regina!

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~Critter Spotlight~
 Cottontail Rabbit
 By Mark Zornes a.k.a. Leopold

- ◆ **The familiar cottontail** is the most widespread and probably the most numerous lagomorph (rabbits and hares) in Wyoming. Cottontails can be found in most habitats throughout Wyoming, but are most numerous in sagebrush and shrub dominated habitats with topographic relief.
- ◆ **Two subspecies of cottontails** inhabit Wyoming, the desert cottontail and the mountain cottontail. Both are widespread in Wyoming. As the name implies, the desert subspecies is typically associated with drier, arid habitats.
- ◆ **Cottontail populations** are cyclical in nature. Populations retreat to only the best of habitats during the low point of the cycle. Population cycles in lagomorphs (all species do this) remain a poorly understood phenomenon. Food availability, predation, weather, and disease all likely influence cycles, but none alone are the "culprit." Predator populations tend to follow prey abundance in a delayed fashion. Cycles generally vary 7 to 10 years between peaks.
- ◆ Cottontails occupy **very small home ranges**. Females may spend the majority of their life within a one acre area, while males tend to range out to 12-15 acres. Cottontails are very social animals and may be found in almost unbelievable densities during peak cycle.
- ◆ **Both male and female** cottontails become reproductively active prior to their first birthday. Females typically give birth to multiple litters every year, typically to 4-8 young.