



# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

June 2015 Newsletter



## Pinedale Hosts A Picnic

Several staff members from the Pinedale Region gathered on a Saturday afternoon in June to hold a public appreciation event in the town park. Attendees were treated to a cream can lunch prepared by Tristanna Bickford from the Cheyenne office. There were several educational exhibits set up. Kids were able to shoot a dart gun, stock fish in Pine Creek and everyone had opportunity to visit about a variety of fish & wild-life management topics in a relaxed setting.





### WY Range Mule Deer Fawn Study

Game and Fish personnel from both the Jackson and Pinedale regions joined researchers from the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and numerous other stakeholders to start Phase II of the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Study looking at fawn survival. A cadre of wildlife biologists and volunteers were able to locate a total of 53 newborn mule deer fawns and fit them with expandable

tracking collars allowing researchers to monitor their survival and identify causes of mortality.

So far, a total of 13 mortalities have been documented out of the 53 collared fawns. A variety of biological samples are collected at each mortality site in order to determine the cause of death. All carcasses, hair samples, swabs, etc. have been provided to the WY State Vet Lab for analysis and while the results are still pending, both malnutrition and predation have initially been identified as factors.

This cutting edge research is the first of its kind in Wyoming. A similar study did occur in the Sierra Nevada Range of California. While it's still too early to draw comparisons between the two studies, researchers did note that at 140 days into the California study only 33% of the fawns had survived. The early results in Wyoming are pointing towards a higher survival rate.

Both Phase I & Phase II of the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Project were initiated to address research and management needs identified

in the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Initiative. Habitat and predation were key topics identified during the public input process of the initiative and understanding their relationship to fawn survival and overall recruitment will aid managers in developing strategies to encourage population growth.

*Wyoming Coop Unit researcher Kevin Monteith prepares to place a newly collared fawn back under heavy sagebrush for protection from predators.*



*Wyoming Coop Unit researcher Melinda Nelson takes measurements on a newborn fawn.*



*Wyoming Coop Unit researcher Melinda Nelson takes measurements on a newborn fawn.*





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## Combing the Calving Grounds

With the peak of elk calving season in early June, Pinedale and Jackson Brucellosis-Feedground-Habitat (BFH) Biologists were busy finding Vaginal Implant Transmitters (VITs) that they had implanted in pregnant elk cows earlier this past winter.

The BFH crew spent much of June regularly monitoring about 50 collared elk implanted with VITs from the ground and air. The first VIT expelled due to parturition this year occurred on May 11<sup>th</sup> and the last VIT associated with a birthing event was expelled on July 7<sup>th</sup>, with births peaking around June 1.

Since 2006, BFH Biologists have been capturing cow elk at various feedgrounds throughout the Jackson and Pinedale Regions and implanting pregnant cows. The transmitters are expelled when the calf is born, or aborted. By identifying elk calving, or parturition, areas, wildlife and livestock managers can work together to keep livestock and elk separate at this critical time of year to help reduce the risk of brucellosis transmission to cattle.



*An aerial view of the lower Green River Lake while locating VITs in the upper Green.*



*Every now and then, when locating expelled VITs, biologists will actually get to see a newborn calf (Above). (Right) BFH Biologist Ben Wise listens to the beeps from his receiver to locate and expelled VIT.*





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## Netting at Dollar

The Pinedale fish crew completed their annual monitoring of fish populations at Willow Lake. While none of the fish captured would be considered to be “trophy” class, several were large enough to please most anglers (Right).

Annual netting operations were completed on Dollar Lake and found white suckers to be as numerous or more so than previous years, leading to some imminent decisions regarding the future management of this popular fishery.



*Lake trout caught during the annual sampling at Willow Lake.*

Crews also completed netting on Meadow Lake. No flannelmouth/Utah sucker hybrids were collected during the surveys.

Pre-treatment amphibian and beaver dam density surveys were completed on Bare Creek. Boreal chorus frogs were observed during both surveys but no Boreal toads (Left).

Pinedale Fish Supervisor Hilda Sexauer and Fish biologist Pete Cavalli worked with Miles Anderson, Jerry Cowles, and personnel from the U.S. Forest Service to design improvements to the upper boat ramp at Fremont Lake. The project will be opened for bids in July and will hopefully be constructed this fall.



*One of the beaver dams present on Bare Creek.*

Pete and Hilda spent a considerable amount of time dealing with issues associated with a proposed reservoir that may be built on Sublette Creek. The proponents of the reservoir question the accuracy of data on fisheries and water temperature, so additional water temperature data will be collected this summer.

## Kids Fishing Day

The Pinedale Fish crew, along with several partners and volunteers, held the annual Kids Fishing Day event at the CCC Ponds north of town. As usual, the event was a big success with most kids being rewarded with at least one rainbow trout. All of the participants cycled through the various educational stations before being treated to a free hotdog lunch provided by the local Trout Unlimited chapter.



*A happy angler with a small rainbow trout at the 2015 Pinedale Kids Fishing Day event.*



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## Out at the Boulder Hatchery...

The crew out at the Boulder Hatchery conducted their first-ever spawn from experimental populations of both bluehead and flannel-mouth suckers (Left). Unfortunately, none of the flannelmouth suckers hatched, but they did have a fairly successful hatch on the blueheads.

Boulder Hatchery personnel transported and stocked 55,712 fish this past June to a variety of area waters.

Boulder received 17,000 Colorado cutthroat trout eggs from North Piney Lake. These eggs are looking good and eyed up at 88.3%



**What's all that yellow?** A wet spring has led to great production for many plants and shrubs in the Pinedale Region, including antelope bitter brush on big game transitional and winter ranges.



A full load of stackyard materials headed to Farson area landowners to prevent stored crop damage.



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## Behind the Badge

In late June, what appeared as a possible road kill antelope northwest of Big Piney turned into several antelope being shot over the period of a few days. Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas is currently working on the case involving multiple youth shooting several antelope with .22 rifles. Making things worse, the animals were left to waste. Area residents were extremely helpful and will not stand for such actions of disregard for wildlife. Investigation is still pending, but is nearing a close.

South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft patrolled area lakes and rivers reporting generally good fishing and good compliance from anglers and boaters. Kraft reports the fishing at Soda Lake was especially good and several days were spent checking compliance and watching some suspect camps for possible over-limits. Compliance has been excellent.



*An illegal minnow trap that was not properly labeled by the owner.*



## Bear Bait Clean-up

Regional game wardens cover a lot of ground in June visiting bear bait sites to make sure they're properly tagged and cleaned-up after the hunting season. As with any hunting season, most hunters are typically doing things right, but there are usually a few who need a reminder. (Left) An example of an illegal bear bait that was not properly labeled by the registered owner.