



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Jackson Region

July 2015 Newsletter



Hummingbird Health Check

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has been working closely with the University of Wyoming's Dr. Holly Ernest on the Hummingbird Health Project this summer. Hummingbirds have been captured for data collection at a number of locations across the state, including the Jackson and Pinedale areas. The birds are gently captured, examined for diseases, sampled for DNA, fitted with a tiny leg band and released.



The family of hummingbirds (Trochilidae) is among the most species-rich, yet least studied bird groups. Virtually nothing is known of disease incidence or prevalence for this group of birds, especially in western North America. As both insectivores and pollinators, hummingbirds serve as ecosystem sentinels as they rapidly travel from flower to flower for nectar and prey on thousands of tiny insects. These characteristics, in addition to their migratory nature, expose hummingbirds to a variety of potential disease agents and situations.



Hence, Dr. Holly Ernest started the Hummingbird Health Project while at the University of California, Davis and has recently expanded it to Wyoming. In addition to being a University of Wyoming Professor, Dr. Ernest is a wildlife veterinarian with expertise in ecology and genetics as well as one of a few federally-permitted Master Bird Banders for hummingbirds.



Photos: (clockwise starting at left) 1) A hummingbird is weighed 2) Birds are examined with a magnifying glass for signs of disease 3) feathers are blown back to evaluate body fat 4) A male broad-tailed hummingbird is gently held before release 5) a hummingbird's bill is measured 6) Dr. Holly Ernest releases a hummingbird after processing near Jackson.





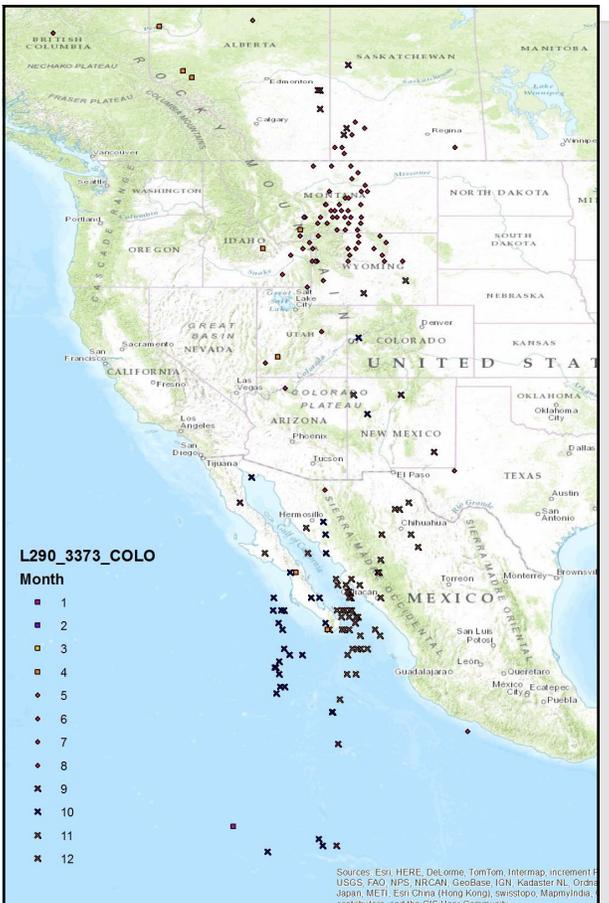
The Call of the Loon

Wyoming Game and Fish (WGF) continued its partnership with Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI) to learn more about the common loon in Wyoming. Jackson Nongame Biologist Susan Patla assisted with a nocturnal capture of an adult male loon with Chris Persico and Carl Brown of BRI (Right). The loon was fitted with a leg-band and geolocator (Middle right).

Below is a map of the results from the first recovered geolocator. These devices measure light levels and that data is used to roughly calculate latitude and longitude. The resulting locations have only mild accuracy, so it shows the general regions where the loon resided during the summer and winter months. The red diamonds (June, July, August) depict it being on territory at Wolf Lake in Yellowstone NP and the blue Xs (October) and orange Xs (November and December) reveal its wintering grounds near the Baja Peninsula and Gulf of California, Mexico.

While migrating loons can be seen across Wyoming, breeding pairs currently occur only in the northwest part of the state. While Yellowstone NP and WGF have been monitoring the presence of loon pairs and fledged chicks since 1987. BRI has expanded the monitoring/research effort and this year documented 17 pairs of loons in western WY. A total of 15 pairs

nested and hatched 11 chicks with nine surviving to August. Compared to historic counts of 21 pairs, the Wyoming loon population has declined. It is still uncertain exactly what has caused the decline and what threats to nesting and survivorship may impact recovery. Productivity in the past two years still has been well above the 0.48 chicks surviving per territorial pair for population stability. The stability of the Wyoming loon population is critical as it is entirely isolated from neighboring populations in Montana, Idaho, and Washington by over 200 miles.



(Right) BRI Biologist, Chris Persico, releases a tagged adult loon back to the water and its chick.





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Moving Moose

Jackson Wildlife Biologist Aly Courtemanch, Wildlife Coordinator Doug Brimeyer and Game Warden Jon Stephens responded to a call of a young moose calf that had become separated from its mother and was hanging out along Highway 89 north of Jackson,

between the road and the National Elk Refuge fence. The calf was captured by hand and helped into a pet carrier for transport away

from the busy highway. The calf was then released in a safe area where the mother had reportedly last been seen.



Working watercraft

On the 3rd of July Afton Game Warden Todd Graham and Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash conducted enforcement checks with Idaho Fish & Game Warden Shane Liss on Palisades Reservoir. Palisades Reservoir straddles the Wyoming-Idaho state line. The wardens checked for boat safety equipment, boat registration, Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) requirements and angler checks as well.

Warden Graham also followed up on several reports of people with watercraft not stopping at the AIS check station. When stopped by Warden Graham most drivers had receipts from the Evanston AIS check station and said they did not realize they had to stop again. Warden Graham spoke with AIS coordinator Beth Bear about asking the Evanston AIS technicians to remind drivers that they must stop at every AIS check station along their route.



Afton Game warden Todd Graham and IDFG warden Shane Bliss conducting boater checks on Palisades Reservoir. Photo Kyle Lash



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Behind the Badge

Jackson game wardens Kyle Lash and Jon Stephens have spent a fair amount of time in both the front and backcountry visiting with anglers and making compliance checks.

During the month of July, warden Lash made trips into both Hidden Lake and Green Lake on the west side of the Tetons with additional trips into Pacific Creek, Willow Creek, Granite Creek, Turquoise Lake, and MacLeod Lake.

Warden Stephens made two multi-day pack trips into the Teton Wilderness during the month of July to check backcountry anglers. The first trip was with Forest Service personnel out of Black Rock and Dubois into the upper Pendergraft/Angle Lakes area. A second trip was made with Law Enforcement

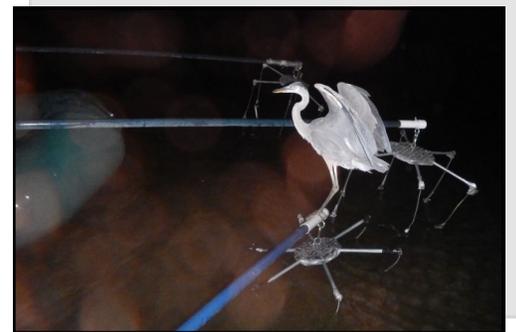
Coordinator Aaron Kerr into the Ferry and Crater Lake areas. Angler compliance was relatively good with only one citation being issued for fishing without a license.

(Above) South Jackson Game Warden Kyle Lash makes his way into Green Lake in the Teton Range with his trusty sidekick, Jax. (Right) a happy angler at Grassy Lake on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest.



Fisheries Work

The Jackson fish crew conducted a population estimate on a three-mile section of the Salt River near Etna. To increase capture efficiency, this section of river is worked at night. Population numbers are good for both Snake River cutthroat trout and brown trout. The crew was surprised when a great blue heron landed on the electro-fishing boat as fish were being processed (Right).



A fish distribution survey of tributaries on the west side of the Teton Range was conducted in the Bitch Creek drainage (Left). The trip involved five people and nine horses. This collaborative effort with Friends of the Teton River and Idaho Fish and Game surveyed sites that were also sampled in 2005 and 2010. The goal is to ensure cutthroat trout streams remain pure and to document the spread of non-native brook trout and rainbow trout in drainages where they are present.



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Trophy Game Monitoring Underway

The Game & Fish's Large Carnivore Section will begin regular population monitoring efforts for black bears and mountain lions to more effectively monitor population trends and better inform management decisions. The initiation of new techniques will be used to estimate population abundance, density, and habitat use and can also help address questions regarding impacts of these large carnivores on ungulate populations by providing information on predator densities. Initial work began this summer on black bears in the Greys River area in conjunction with an ongoing mule deer ecology study being conducted by the University of Wyoming. Over time, data gathered from this work will help to more effectively manage trophy game populations and evaluate current management strategies. Capture efforts are currently occurring in order to calibrate methods to assess black bear densities using genetic-based DNA hair sampling techniques.



Flying For Grizzlies

Several Jackson Region Wildlife personnel assisted the Large Carnivore Section in conducting the annual observation flights to document the presence of grizzly bears in the Jackson Region. Many of the grizzly bears are observed on the high elevation plateaus of the Teton Wilderness rolling boulders foraging on army cutworm moths (Below).

