



# Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Pinedale Region

February 2016 Newsletter



(Above & right) Pinedale Game & Fish personnel count and classify elk at the Jewett elk feedground west of Daniel on Feb 2, 2016.

## Winter Elk Counts Conducted

Wildlife biologists and game wardens count big game animals at different times of year based on when they are most visible and can be classified as males, females and juveniles. This gives managers a picture of not only how many animals there are, but how the population is trending: increasing, stable or decreasing. This information helps managers design



hunting seasons that will keep the population at the established population objective. Winter is the best time to count and classify most big game, and especially elk since most elk in the Pinedale and Jackson regions attend winter feedgrounds, making them relatively easy to count. All of the game wardens, biologists and other regional personnel chip in to count the elk as it is a big job. Most elk herds in the in the Pinedale Region remain at or above the desired population objectives after an average to light harvest this past hunting season. Most big game populations saw little change from last year. Consequently, Pinedale wildlife managers do not plan to propose significant changes to any of the big game hunting seasons for 2016. Managers will present all the current big game numbers along with their proposed hunting seasons at upcoming public meetings scheduled for 6-8pm, **March 14th at the Marbleton Town Hall and March 16th at the Pinedale Game and Fish office.**



Elk gather on hay feedlines at the Franz elk feedground north of Daniel prior to being counted on Feb 2, 2016.



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### Elk Brucellosis Surveillance

Jackson and Pinedale personnel in the Game and Fish Department's Brucellosis-Feedgrounds-Habitat (BFH) program continued their multi-year study to monitor long-term brucellosis trend data in area elk.

Elk were captured for the first time in 40 years in the corral trap at the Fish Creek feedground in the upper Gros Ventre drainage. Approximately 100 elk were tagged and 31 yearling and older cows were bled to measure the presence of brucellosis antibodies.



Brucellosis person-

nel also trapped elk at the Alpine (Grey's River) feedground, bleeding 66 yearling and older cows for brucellosis surveillance and again at the Muddy Creek feedground south of Boulder for the 12th year in a row.

Brucellosis prevalence among elk attending Muddy Creek fell from 37% in 2006 to 5% in 2010 after 107 seropositive elk were killed during a pilot project to determine if incidence of the disease could be reduced by test and slaughter methods. Brucellosis seroprevalence rose during 2012, the first year following a year with no elk removed, and had risen to 21% in 2015.





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## Behind the Badge

**South Pinedale Game Warden Jordan Kraft** euthanized a bull elk that had been attacked by wolves and after performing a necropsy determined that the bull elk was susceptible to predation due to an archery wound on a front shoulder.

Warden Kraft also cited a dog owner responsible for two dogs chasing and harassing deer north of Pinedale. Kraft urges dog owners to keep a close eye on their canine companions during the winter months, especially in areas with wintering wildlife, which are now extremely vulnerable to undue stress at this critical time of year.

Kraft also checked late-season elk hunters last month and reported some success, which was effective in displacing elk from damage and brucellosis commingling conflict areas. However, numerous hunters had forgotten to purchase their 2016 conservation stamps and special elk management stamps as the elk season continued into the New Year.

**Big Piney Game Warden Adam Hymas** reports late season elk hunters had very little success on the Big Piney HMA and Daniel area due to little snow causing elk to remain at higher elevations or feedgrounds. Hymas checked a few bobcat and martin trappers during January, but has noticed a decrease in trapping activities this year, likely due to fur prices being drastically down from previous years.

Warden Hymas continues to patrol the mule deer winter ranges and notes that there are several people out looking at deer and scouting for the shed antler season to start. So far, deer on winter range have not had a lot of snow to contend with. He is noticing a few deer not able to outlast the winter, but no major die-off at this time.

Hymas has also been monitoring elk distribution around feedgrounds and native winter range to minimize damage to stored crops and prevent livestock commingling issues. Wolves have been killing elk on a regular basis at the McNeel Feedground near BonDurant, causing damage issues. The wolf problems have been relayed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Finally, Hymas reminds everyone that it is a banner year for rabbit hunting in western Wyoming and a perfect opportunity to get the youngsters out on successful hunts!





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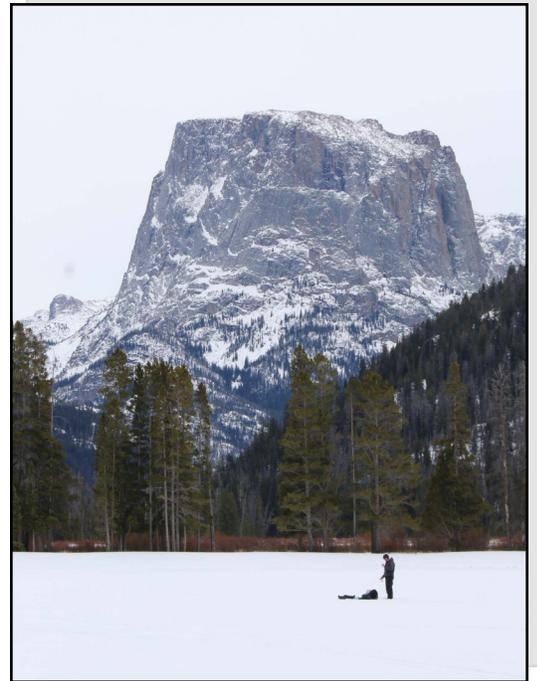
### Ice Fishing Time

Now is a good time for ice fishing in the Pinedale Region. Pinedale Fish Supervisor Hilda Sexauer reports that ice conditions are still good on all area lakes. Anglers are primarily catching lake trout at all of the popular “finger” lakes. Recently an 18 pound lake trout was pulled out of Half-moon Lake north of Pinedale.



Anglers are encouraged to stop by the Game & Fish office and pick up their Anglers Diary to record their success this season. Diaries can then be turned in at the office at the end of the season. The Fisheries Division will use this data to aid in population statistics and fish management on area lakes.

*An ice angler’s catch after about 20 minutes at Green River Lake north of Pinedale.*



## FIVE ICE TIPS

### 1. CHECK THICKNESS

Contact a local bait shop or sporting goods store to ask about ice conditions and then check once you get there. The rough guidelines for clear, new solid ice are:

- 2 inches – Stay off
- 4 inches – OK for ice fishing or other activities on foot
- Check the thickness of the ice every 10 to 150 feet.
- Never take any vehicles, snowmobiles or ATVs onto the ice.

### 2. BE SURE IT’S SAFE

- Avoid pressure ridges in the ice and large cracks that can emerge in a lake
- Clear ice is stronger than white ice, which has frozen, thawed and refrozen and is not always stable
- White ice can also be from air bubbles or frozen snow and is much weaker than clear ice. For white ice, double the recommended thickness.

### 3. REMEMBER

No matter your preparation and ice conditions, ice should never be considered 100 percent safe. Be prepared and cautious at all times.

### 4. BUDDY SYSTEM

Anglers should never fish alone. Always fish with someone else and be certain to let a friend know where you are going.

### 5. STAY WARM

To prevent hypothermia if an ice fishing accident does occur, pack an extra set of clothes and hot liquids.

## PRACTICE ICE SAFETY

## What else should I know?

Fluctuating water levels in reservoirs and wind impact ice conditions and can create dangerous ice conditions. Be aware of recent weather conditions and temperatures and scout out the lake you wish to fish for overflow, wet areas, and open water. With variable ice conditions across the state and rapidly changing conditions, anglers are urged to call their regional office to inquire about ice conditions.

Game and Fish discourages driving any motorized vehicle on a frozen lake as well as ice fishing on rivers and or other

moving water that has frozen over. Remember to wear a lifejacket or personal flotation device and carry ice safety picks. Ice cleats are also a good idea. Keep a throw rope handy in case someone falls in.

Anglers venturing on fishing trips this winter should also keep in mind the Fishing Regulations and the Special Winter Ice Fishing Provisions, available on the Game and Fish website at [wgfd.wyo.gov](http://wgfd.wyo.gov), regional offices and Cheyenne Headquarters.

### Contact Game & Fish

Cheyenne Headquarters: 1-800-842-1934

Casper Regional Office: 1-800-233-8544

Cody Regional Office: 1-800-654-1178

Green River Regional Office: 1-800-843-8096

Jackson Regional Office: 1-800-423-4113

Lander Regional Office: 1-800-654-7862

Laramie Regional Office: 1-800-843-2352

Pinedale Regional Office: 1-800-452-9107

Sheridan Regional Office: 1-800-331-9834



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## Hatchery News...

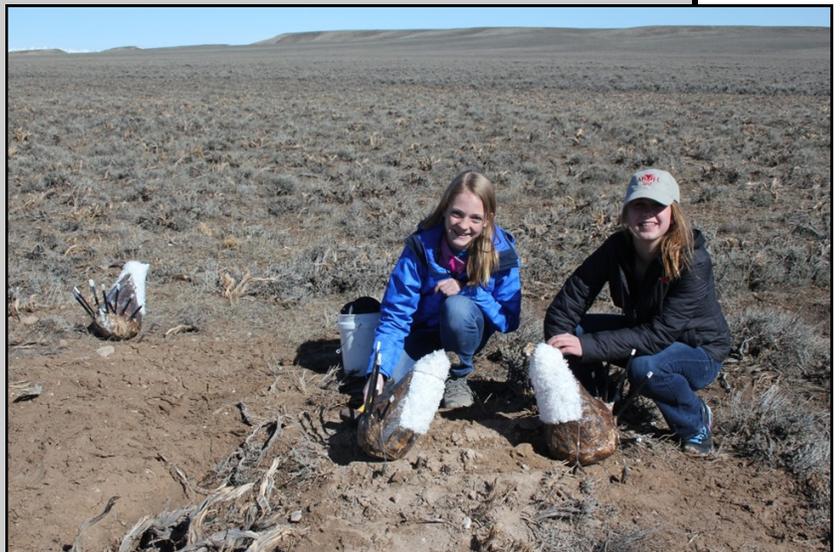
The Daniel Hatchery has been busy hatching and raising several species of fish including Colorado River cutthroat trout, brook trout, brown trout, kokanee salmon and splake. Daniel's splake which are now a little over an inch long (right) were hatched in early January and will be about 3-4 inches long next August when they will be stocked via helicopter to four different lakes in the Bighorn Mountains: Cloud Peak Reservoir, Willow Lake 1, Lower Medicine Lodge Lake and Sawmill Reservoir. A splake is a cross between a brook and a lake trout and are generally a sterile hybrid that does not reproduce in the wild. They are stocked in several lakes across the Cowboy state as they are both sporting and good eating! The state record splake was caught out of North Crow Reservoir on April 1, 2011, weighing in at 13.6 pounds!



The Boulder Hatchery crew teamed up with statewide fish distribution staff and other regional personnel to stock out a total of 1500 brood fish to Saratoga Lake for their annual fishing derby. Hatchery Superintendent Chip Moller traveled to Clark to pick up 127,000 fall rainbow transfers.

## Talk of the Town...

Three Pinedale Middle School students won 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place honors during the 2016 Science Fair. Kellen Schupp tied for 1<sup>st</sup> place for Environmental Management and won the overall Best in Fair Project Award. Nora Legerski & Maggie Majhanovich won 2<sup>nd</sup> place for Environmental Management. The students collaborated with WGFD wildlife biologist Therese Hartman on two separate sage grouse projects. One project utilized sage grouse decoys as a tool to lure strutting sage grouse away from gas field activities. The other project explored techniques to buffer noise from energy development impacting nearby leks.





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Feedin'  
the Elk

