Wildlife

Post season deer classifications

Each year after big game hunting seasons close, biologists and wardens conduct deer classifications using ground and aerial surveys. Personnel count the number of deer seen in a given herd and record the numbers of fawns, bucks and does to formulate ratios measured as fawns and bucks per 100 does. Classification data provides population dynamics information, mainly as a measure of productivity (how many new fawns are added to the population and how many bucks are in the herd to evaluate hunting season success).

Northeast Bighorn Basin

During a post season deer classification flight, Greybull Biologist Leslie Schreiber classified 480 deer in the Paintrock Herd Unit (hunt areas 46-47) and 556 deer for the North Bighorn Herd Unit (hunt areas 50-53). In the Greybull district, classification data from the ground is still being compiled, but initial assessments suggest a high fawn ratio.

Southern Bighorn Basin

A total of 2,797 mule deer were classified in the southern Bighorn Basin in 2014, which was similar to 2013. However, some hunt areas will have record high fawn ratios, with several areas having >80 fawns:100 does. It appears deer numbers are still down in most areas, but with better fawn ratios, we are likely to start seeing improving numbers in coming years.

Northwest Bighorn Basin

Cody Biologist Doug McWhirter classified 999 deer in hunt areas 105, 106, and 109 in the Clarks Fork Herd Unit and reports 52 fawns per 100 does. In hunt area 110-113 (Upper Shoshone Herd Unit), 2,279 deer were observed with 53 fawns per 100 does.
Town deer count

Surveys were initiated at approximately 2:00 p.m. and continued until dark (approximately 5:00 p.m.). Areas out of, but adjacent to the city limits of Cody were surveyed soon after. These areas included the County Road 2ABN area immediately north of Cody, and the Cooper Lane and Sage Creek areas immediately east of Cody.

A total of 272 deer (268 mule deer and four white-tailed deer) were observed within the city limits of Cody, and an additional 261 deer (186 mule deer and 75 white-tailed deer) were observed in adjacent areas. Mule deer fawn: doe ratios were 67:100 in the city limits and 57:100 outside the city limits. Total buck ratios were 25:100 in the city limits and 33:100 out of the city limits. Yearling buck ratios were 9:100 in the city limits and 14:100 out of the city limits. The total number of deer observed in the city limits from 2011 to 2014 has not varied substantially (Figure 2).

On December 3, Game and Fish personnel conducted a classification/trend survey of deer within the city limits of Cody to provide data to city managers for their future management considerations. The city was broken out into 10 count blocks (Figure 1), and all deer encountered were classified into sex/age categories (adult buck, yearling buck, doe, fawn).

Figure 1. Cody urban deer survey count blocks.

<table>
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<th>Count Block</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
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<th>2014</th>
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<table>
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<td>2ABN</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>Cooper Lane</td>
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<td>96</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Sage Cr</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Sage Cr</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>234</td>
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<td>186</td>
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</table>

Figure 2. Cody urban deer survey mule deer counts 2011-2014
Fishing

**New Fishing Regulations for 2015**

Several new fishing regulations will go into effect with the new year. These changes came about because of action by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission last fall and went through a series of public meetings.

Of interest to anglers and live baitfish dealers is the change that allows transport of live baitfish into the state from approved commercial hatcheries. The regulation includes new requirements specific to live baitfish importation. The new regulation will allow those holding a commercial hatchery license or a live baitfish dealer license to import fathead minnows from Game and Fish approved commercial sources outside the State of Wyoming.

“This regulation was changed specifically to improve the live baitfish supply for those anglers that prefer to use live baitfish,” said Game and Fish Fisheries Chief Mark Fowden. “We are confident the safeguards we have put in place by only allowing baitfish to be imported from secure sources will make it easier for anglers to get baitfish and still prevent introduction of unwanted species into Wyoming waters.”

**Behind the badge**

**A busy day in the field**

Access Coordinator Dan Smith reports that Spanish Point Hunter Management Area, located north of Hyattville on the Alkali Road, was busy on the second opening of the antlerless elk season. Smith field checked 28 harvested elk on Saturday, Dec. 13 with a couple more still being packed out. The accessibility of the elk made for good hunting, and Smith estimates an additional 20+ elk were harvested that were not checked in the field.

**On the wrong side of the fence**

Greybull Game Warden Bill Robertson released a bull elk which had entered but could not exit an aspen enclosure on the upper Medicine Lodge Wildlife Habitat Management area near Hyattville. The elk had been in the enclosure for several weeks and had pawed through the deep snow to forage. No aspen were observed browsed.
Stories of interest

Black Hills mountain lion study

In December, large carnivore biologists with the Game and Fish worked in cooperation with South Dakota Department of Game, Fish, and Parks to collect DNA samples from mountain lions in the Black Hills.

Monitoring efforts occurred on the South Dakota side of the Black Hills but are used in an overall effort to better understand the ecology and management of mountain lions for the entire Black Hills ecosystem. The tissue samples collected are to be used in a mark/recapture estimation of the mountain lion population in the Black Hills of Wyoming and South Dakota. The samples were acquired by biopsy darting, a method which does not require capture/handling of the animal but rather captures a small amount of tissue through the darting process when an animal is bayed. Thirteen mountain lions (five males and eight females) were treed and sampled as part of this study.

Case of the month

Former Powell man faces stiff penalties for wildlife violations

In three separate court appearances last November, former Powell resident Jacob Adkins, 19, received approximately $2500.00 in fines, eight years suspension of hunting, fishing and trapping privileges, and a 180 day jail sentence for multiple wildlife violations.

In Bighorn County Court on Nov. 24, Adkins pleaded guilty to taking two deer during a closed season and in Park County Court on Nov. 25, pleaded guilty to taking a deer in a closed area and failure to tag. For these violations, Adkins was fined $1500 and lost his hunting, fishing and trapping privileges for five years. In a separate appearance in Bighorn County Court on Nov. 26, Adkins pleaded guilty to purchasing furs without a fur dealers license.

Powell Game Warden Chris Queen said, “Despite a suspension of privileges, a warning, and multiple court appearances, this young man chose to continually ignore wildlife regulations.”

Queen began an investigation after receiving an anonymous tip that Adkins had shot a deer illegally. During the investigation, Queen learned that Adkins had illegally harvested three deer in separate locations in the Bighorn Basin.

Adkins admitted to shooting a buck deer in a closed area in the McCullough Peaks Nov. 3 and not tagging the deer and taking two additional deer during a closed season in Bighorn County.

“During the course of the investigation, it was also discovered that Adkins was in possession of furs without the proper licenses,” Queen said. “Adkins was issued a warning for purchasing several muskrats without a fur dealers license and possession of a snowshoe hare without a small game license.”

“Three hours after appearing in court on Nov.25, wildlife officers observed Adkins attempting to purchase bobcat and coyote furs in Lovell,” Queen said. “Adkins was cited for purchasing furs without a fur dealers license and was arrested.” The following day in Bighorn County Court, Adkins received a maximum sentence for a low misdemeanor which included a $1040.00 fine, a 180 day jail sentence, and an additional three years suspension of hunting, fishing, and trapping privileges.
In the news

Lew Stahl retires after 36 years of service

Lew Stahl, statewide fish passage coordinator in Cody, has retired after 36 years of service with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

Fish Division Chief Mark Fowden said, “Lew’s achievements are both numerous and remarkable; his has been a diverse and productive career.”

Lew began his G&F career as a seasonal wildlife biologist in Gillette in June 1978. He then worked at the Downar Bird Farm near Yoder for nine months before moving to the Yellowtail Wildlife Habitat Management Area (WHMA) near Lovell in 1980, to begin his permanent service as a habitat unit manager for G&F habitat areas in the Cody and Sheridan regions. He transferred to the Lander region in August 1988, where he lived on the Ocean Lake WHMA and worked on habitat areas around Riverton, Dubois, and Lander. Lew then became the terrestrial habitat biologist while in the Lander region and worked extensively with the USFS, BLM, and private landowners. He transferred from the terrestrial section to be the Cody Region’s aquatic habitat biologist in August 1996 and was promoted to be Wyoming’s first fish passage biologist in August 2010. His new position involves providing fish upstream passage past barriers and keeping fish in the streams by screening canal systems.

Lew Stahl at the Darrel Mumm Fishway east of Powell.

Lew is a Goodell, Iowa native, although he spent three years of grade school in Moorcroft and came back as soon as he could in 1975. He attended Iowa State University before moving to Wyoming and earning wildlife management degrees from both Northwest Community College in Powell and the University of Wyoming. Lew also served in the Iowa and Wyoming Army National Guard from 1971-79.

In his spare time he enjoys fishing, hunting, camping, horses and woodworking. He has been a member of Wyoming Biologists Association, the Wildlife Society, Wyoming Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Lew and his wife, Mary Jane, look forward to a new chapter in their lives and plan to travel in retirement.

Left: Darrel Mumm Fishway structure allows fish in the Lower Shoshone River access to Bitter Creek.