

# Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



JULY 2019

## Who We Are/ Where We Are

### Lakewood, CO

*Pam Sponholtz,*

*Project Leader*

*JoAnn Wise,*

*Budget Admin*

### Buckley Air Force Base,

Aurora, CO

*Dustin Casady,*

*Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

### Peterson, Schriever, Chey-

enne Mtn Air Force Bases,

Colorado Springs, CO

*Vacant*

### US Air Force Academy,

Colorado Springs, CO

*Brian Mihlbachler,*

*Biological Scientist*

*Melissa Whittingslow,*

*Wildlife Biologist*

*R. Joe Murphy III,*

*Forester*

*Bryan Wilfong,*

*Forestry Technician*

### Rocky Mountain National

Park, Estes Park, CO

*Chris Kennedy,*

*Fish Biologist*

### F.E. Warren Air Force Base,

Cheyenne, WY

*Alex Schubert,*

*Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

### McConnell Air Force Base,

Wichita, KS

*Laura Mendenhall,*

*Fish and Wildlife Biologist*

### Pueblo Chemical Depot,

Pueblo, CO

*Clark Jones,*

*Wildlife Biologist*

### Gunnison, CO

*Cole Brittain,*

*Aquatic Biotechnician*

*Dana Shellhorn*

### SCA Interns

*Brock Best*

*Emily Frederick*

*Kyle Colburn*

## Region 6 Priority Projects

### Grassland Birds

Several undergraduate students from Colorado State University – Pueblo’s Students to Build Active STEM Engagement (CBASE) program conducted research projects on Pueblo Chemical Depot in coordination with COFWCO wildlife biologist Clark Jones. Several of these students presented posters at the 2019 joint meeting of the 56th Annual Conference of the Animal Behavior Society. One such poster featured research on male Cassin’s Sparrows vegetation preferences (Kauffman, N., C. Dowd, C. Jones, C. Ramos).

### Cutthroat Trout

Chris Kennedy removed and relocated 54 non-native cutthroat trout using electrofishing from West Creek, Rocky Mountain National Park. The fish are being relocated to open habitat for the



*Rocky Mountain National Park Biological Science Technician Erickson Smith releasing non-native cutthroat trout downstream of West Creek Falls.*

Federally threatened greenback cutthroat trout.

### Hunting & Fishing

Brian Mihlbachler briefed the new 10<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing Commander

and Vice-Commander on USAFA’s deer, elk, and turkey hunting programs. The commanders were impressed with the reduction in wildlife-vehicle accidents over the past 31 years due to deer and elk population management using controlled hunting.

Melissa Whittingslow stocked the lakes at USAFA and Fairish Recreational Area with 9-12 in Rainbow Trout in support of the USAFA fishing program.

### Black-footed Ferrets

Alex Schubert began feeding and watering newly arrived prairie dogs at F.E. Warren AFB. These prairie dogs will establish the burrows used by the black-footed ferrets to be pre-conditioned for release soon.

## Partnerships & Accountability

Depredation of raptors (for the purpose of mitigating Bird/Wildlife Air Strike Hazard risk) on Buckley Air Force Base has been reduced in part due to the trapping and relocating program and also due to habitat modifications aimed to reduce the amount of preferred habitat by raptors. 2017 showed a reduction in depredation of 70% from the previous year.

Joe Murphy attended the July meeting of the Front Range Roundtable (FRRT). The



*Trapped American Kestrel on Buckley AFB.*

Roundtable is a coalition of individuals from state and federal agencies, local governments, environmental and conservation organizations, the academic and scientific communities, and industry and user groups, all with a commitment to forest health and fire risk mitigation along Colorado’s Front Range. The focus of this meeting was on learning how different FRRT partners develop desired conditions and treatments with a panel of presenters from both the southern and northern areas of the Front Range.

# Species Conservation & Management

Multiple fish shocking surveys took place this month with help from Dana Shellhorn, Cole Brittain, and SCA interns Kyle Colburn and Emily Frederick. Fish shocking on F.E. Warren AFB turned up Johnny darters, Stonerollers, Creek Chubs, Longnose Dace, and White Suckers.

Fish shocking at McConnell AFB saw Green Sunfish, Bluegill, Stonerollers, Red Shiners, Sand Shiners, Golden Shiners, and Black and Yellow Bullhead Catfish. Alex Schubert and Laura Mendenhall are grateful for the team effort and expertise!



*From left to right: red shiner breeding male at McConnell AFB; large stoneroller at F.E. Warren AFB; Cole Brittain and Dana Shellhorn weighing and measuring fish at McConnell AFB*

# Habitat Conservation & Management



- Brian Mihlbachler conducted a final walk-through of the lower Kettle Creek channel stabilization and restoration project. Due to the late completion of the project, the revegetation will be phased depending on summer rainfall and site hydrology. The planting of willow stakes and cottonwood poles is delayed until early fall. Wetland transplants (*Juncus*, *Carex*) were plugged in moist soil along the channel to help jump start the revegetation process (see photo at left).
- Bryan Wilfong began construction on the irrigation system for USAFA Forestry's new nursery. The nursery is designed to have a 310 seedling capacity.
- Dana Shellhorn assisted with a project to monitor the effectiveness of fish passage projects at Baca National Wildlife Refuge. Dana downloaded data and replaced batteries in the fish passage antennas while Tyler Wallin, a graduate fellowship intern stationed at the refuge assisted with the antennas and took water quality measurements at each location.