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Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



APRIL 2020

Unified Regions 5/7 Priority Projects

Species Conservation & Management

Brian Mihlbachler prepared an end-of-year funding request for the development and testing of camera traps for habitat occupancy monitoring of Preble's meadow jumping mouse at the US Air Force Academy (USAFA). This could be an effective, efficient, and low-cost monitoring technique to support the US Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plan, in addition to reducing USAFA's annual monitoring costs of this species.



Preble's meadow jumping mouse held for measurements during a live-trapping survey at the USAFA in 2019.

Alex Schubert contacted USGS National Wildlife Health Center regarding guano (bat poo) samples collected in the F. E. Warren Air Force Base bat condo in 2019. The samples tested negative for the White Nose Syndrome fungus which has caused significant declines in bat populations in the world.

Alex also coordinated with Saratoga National Fish Hatchery to continue stocking Rainbow Trout in North and South Pearson Lakes.



Left: Pronghorn nursery at F.E Warren AFB. 179 pronghorns were counted during the monthly survey, which was an increase from last month. Right: 1,000 pounds of Rainbow Trout from Saratoga National Fish Hatchery were stocked at North and South Pearson Lakes at F.E. Warren AFB in April.

Partnerships & Accountability

- Katy Fitzgerald initiated burrowing owl and prairie dog surveys on Peterson and Schriever AFB. She also initiated peregrine falcon surveys at Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station (AFS) with the help of Colorado Parks and Wildlife and US Fish and a Wildlife Service (USFWS) volunteer.
- Dustin Casady worked with the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies to plan the migratory bird survey at Buckley AFB. Dustin used ArcGIS to show boundaries of stratum used for the survey and this year included the entirety of the airfield since USFWS has been doing management projects on the airfield. He will escort people onto the base throughout the surveys.

Leadership in Science and Technology



- Dana Shellhorn analyzed data from remote detection antennas that have been active at the Baca National Wildlife Refuge since 2016. These antennas can detect small electronic tags inserted into Rio Grande Suckers and Chubs, two rare native fish in southern Colorado. This data will provide insight to fish behavior, preferred habitat, and factors influencing detections, recaptures, and abundance in the system.
- Chris Kennedy co-authored an article entitled 'Status and Conservation of an Undescribed Lineage of Cutthroat Trout Native to the Southern Rocky Mountains' which will be submitted to a scientific journal for publication. The information within this document will also be used in a Fish and Wildlife Service Species Status Assessment for the green lineage of cutthroat trout (greenback) to determine if this taxon requires protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Dana Shellhorn replacing a remote detection antenna at the Baca National Wildlife Refuge after downloading data cached on the device and changing the battery.

Habitat Conservation & Management

- In early March, a crew from the Iowa Conservation Corps (ICC) and the Wildland Fire Module from Cheyenne Mountain AFS cut and chipped over 60 acres of red cedars in areas at McConnell AFB (MAFB) slated for grassland restoration. Mike Jungen, MAFB biologist, identified additional acres of red cedar encroachment to be removed. He coordinated with FWS fire module on future removal projects and to develop a prescribed burn plan at MAFB.
- Tree surveys continue to be a priority at US Air Force Academy (USAFA). Without proper monitoring, bark beetles can quickly invade and decimate large forested areas especially during the spring through the fall as the beetles are actively flying and infecting surrounding trees. Joe Murphy and Bryan Wilfong, USAFA foresters, conducted field monitoring at the base and Farish Recreation Area to identify trees posing a hazard to human safety and marked them for removal.
- Brian Mihlbachler and Melissa Whittingslow located new populations of garlic mustard at the USAFA. Garlic mustard is a biennial Watchlist noxious weed so they made arrangements with a contractor to treat the sties while much of the other understory vegetation is dormant. They pulled hundreds of larger rosettes to help reduce seed production this summer and noted thousands of new seedlings other known garlic mustard sites, They plan to follow up at these sites this summer to pull any remaining maturing plants.



COFWCO wildlife encounters from left to right: Canada goose on a nest at F.E. Warren AFB. Dekay's brown snake captured during a wetland survey at McConnell AFB earlier in the spring. American badger investigating the prairie dog relocation site at Pueblo Chemical Depot.