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Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



AUGUST 2020

Unified Regions 5/7 Priority Projects

Species Conservation & Management

Hunting

The fall archery turkey hunt at the US Air Force Academy (USAFA) starts September 1st and runs to October 4th. Melissa Whittingslow has been completing visitor badges and giving safety briefings to the twenty archery hunters who will be hunting this fall. Due to Covid-19 the spring turkey hunt at the USAFA was cancelled but the selected hunters were offered the opportunity to hunt during the fall.



Chapin Creek dyed green to measure time of travel for a future chemical removal project.

Chris Kennedy and Dana Shellhorn worked with the U. S. Forest Service and Colorado State University to collect data for a future chemical removal of non-native trout on Chapin Creek and the Cache la Poudre River. Work included measuring flow and time of travel, determining the extent of fish, and collecting environmental DNA in each drainage. This data will inform future restoration projects for the federally threatened greenback cutthroat trout in the area.



Keegan Delurey, SCA intern, measuring Bluegill that were transferred to North Peterson Lake at F.E. Warren AFB.

Fishing

Alex Shubert and SCA intern Keegan Delurey stocked North Pearson Lake with 48 bluegill that were transferred from Lake Centennial on F. E. Warren Air Force Base (AFB) after coordinating with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. The addition of bluegill in North Pearson Lake should enhance the sport fishing opportunity and provide a self-sustaining panfish population.



Audrey Harris, CSU grad student, Dana Shellhorn, USFWS, and CSU student Matt O'Neill evacuating the Poudre River drainage due to the Cameron Peak wildfire raging in the background.

Partnerships and Accountability

- Brian Mihlbachler coordinated with Arkansas Valley Weed Management (AVWM) and the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) on fall noxious weed treatments for USAFA and Farish Recreation Area. CNHP staff will continue to clip or hand-pull weeds that are in small, isolated populations. AVWM will focus on treating larger populations of knapweed and thistle rosettes with herbicide.
- University of Wyoming botanists completed Colorado butterfly plant surveys at F.E. Warren AFB. 4886 flowering plants were counted; below the running average and just over 50 percent of last year's count of 9378. There were no signs of flea beetle herbivory. This year the plants were relatively short, and many had finished flowering before the survey, creating challenges for the census.

Leadership in Science and Technology



Mike Jungen started the process to install Motus towers at McConnell AFB. These are automated radio telemetry arrays used to study movements of small animals. He pInA to discuss this project with Missouri's state ornithologist who established Missouri's first Motus tower lines. He hopes to partner with Kansas Dept. of Wildlife, other Department of Defense installations, and Kansas State Universities to establish the first Motus receivers in Kansas.

Rickey met with Colorado State University—Pueblo faculty Dr. Liz Peterson and Dr. Ron Swaisgood from the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research about conducting burrowing owl translocations on Pueblo Chemical Depot. This would entail trapping burrowing owls from local off-installation locations and translocating them onto PCD to supplement the existing population on base. Their numbers have declined after a plague outbreak in 2016 decreased black-tailed prairie dog populations on the base since the owls use prairie dog burrows for nesting. The research team discussed translocation methodology and timing, habitat suitability, artificial burrow construction, and carrying capacity on PCD. It is anticipated that this project will begin in March 2021.

Joe Murphy is working with the Air Force Civil Engineering Center (AFCEC) to implement a study utilizing unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) imagery for detection of beetle infested trees. Various sites were surveyed throughout USAFA and Pikes Peak National Forest to determine suitability for upcoming test flights. Imagery taken during these flights will be verified through ground surveys to determine the cause of damage, verifying specific signatures in the imagery for each agent causing the tree stress.

Top: Burrowing owl captured by a game camera at Pueblo Chemical Depot. Bottom: Tree infested with Ips or Bark Beetle.



Habitat Conservation & Management

- Katy Fitzgerald performed a vegetation survey on acreage scheduled for prescribed burning in spring 2021 at Schriever Air Force Base. She is also exploring alternative seeding options for post burn implementation.
- Brian Mihbachler located a hairy willow-herb noxious weed site just beyond the USAFA boundary with The Classical Academy (TCA) property, the only known location near the academy. USAFA has coordinated with Colorado Springs Utilities and TCA and agreed to control the small population with herbicides and conduct follow-up monitoring.
- Bryan Wilfong prepared sampling protocol for aspen stands inside and outside elk exclusion fences at Farish Rec Area at the USAFA. He also began resampling long-term monitoring plots installed last year at USAFA to gauge effective of fuel reduction operations performed by a contractor in the summer of 2019.



From left to right: Great Horned owl taking off with a captured rabbit. (Photo: Keegan Delurey) Coyote and badger hunting cooperatively at PCD. (Photo: Rickey Jones) Juvenile Swainson's Hawk perched at F.E. Warren AFB. (Photo: Alex Schubert)