

WHO/WHERE WE ARE

Lakewood, CO: Pam Sponholtz, Project Leader; JoAnn Wise, Budget Admin

Buckley Air Force Base, Aurora, CO: Krystal Phillips, Wildlife Biologist, Dustin Casady, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Peterson, Schriever, Cheyenne Mtn Air Force Bases, Colorado Springs, CO: Max Canestorp, Wildlife Biologist

US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO: Brian Mhlbachler, Biological Scientist; Melissa Whittingslow, Wildlife Biologist; R. Joe Murphy III, Forester

Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, CO: Chris Kennedy, Fish Biologist

Warren Air Force Base, Cheyenne, WY: Alex Schubert, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

McCConnell 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

Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



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Species Conservation & Management

Threatened Pawnee Montane Skipper Surveys Taylor Cassidy, Cabel Patterson, and Taylor Hackleback — SCA interns — assisted the United States Forest Service in monitoring the threatened Pawnee Montane skipper (*Hesperia leonardus montana*). The group hiked inside Pike National Forest identifying and recording the number of skippers seen, noting the gender of the butterfly, and nearby host plants. The week-long effort provided data on the abundance of skippers in the area supporting a greater effort to follow recovery patterns after the 2002 Hayman forest fires that decimated skipper habitat.

Burrowing Owl Surveys Max Canestorp conducted burrowing owl surveys on



Melissa Whittingslow holding a Preble's meadow jumping mouse that was just pit tagged.

Schriever AFB. Five nest burrows have been identified so far.

Endangered Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse Surveys Melissa Whittingslow and Cabel Patterson assisted Rob Schorr with the annual Preble's meadow jumping mouse surveys. The survey has been conducted since 1997. The mouse is the only endangered species listed on USAFA. The survey entailed trapping along Monument Creek, which contains important riparian habitat. All the Preble's meadow jumping mice trapped are PIT tagged. The data collected from these surveys can be used to monitor the population with changing habitat quality, document survival rates, and determine conservation zones.



Region 6 Priority: Recover the Black-Footed Ferret

Pre-Conditioning at F.E. Warren AFB Black-footed ferrets arrived at the F.E. Warren AFB preconditioning facility in August. There was a good turnout of staff to view the ferrets' arrival on base. The ferrets will be on base approximately 30 days before they will be released into prairie dog town complexes in South Dakota as part of a re-introduction program. The preconditioning facility at F. E. Warren AFB has not been used in several years. However, due to maintenance issues at other preconditioning facilities and occasional above-average kit production at captive-rearing facilities, additional preconditioning capacity will be very beneficial to the black-

footed ferret recovery program as a whole. The availability of a USFWS Natural Resource Manager at F.E. Warren AFB will enable the USFWS, Wyoming Game and Fish, and the F. E. Warren AFB to have the opportunity to benefit endangered species conservation and recovery through cooperative efforts to achieve mutual goals and objectives of all agencies involved. The preconditioning facility can house up to 6 family groups at one time. In the future, the USFWS could house ferrets at the facility on base for up to 115 days.



Black-footed Ferret in a tunnel



Tyler Tretton of the National Black-footed Ferret Conservation Center discusses ferret reintroduction with an Airman at the F.E. Warren AFB Pre-conditioning Facility.

...more Species Conservation & Management

“The goal is to reduce the “trophy” hunting nature of the buck hunts, and emphasize the population management objective.”

Small Mammal Surveys Laura Mendenhall and Nicole Brown continued surveying for small mammals in the riparian buffer areas around McConnell AFB. Brown documented at least one coyote attempting to break into several Sherman traps on one of the transects. Coyote activity will be monitored more closely using game cameras along some of the riparian corridors. This project will segue into a more intensive large mammal survey scheduled for FY18.

Bat Conservation Alex coordinated with Julie Reeves (USFWS Ecological Services) regarding the recent discovery of large quantities of verified bat guano in the bat condo at F.E. Warren AFB. The bat condo appears to be functioning as intended, thus it will

remain at its current location near Pearson Lakes. Additional coordination occurred with Amanda Thimmayya (Wyoming Army National Guard Natural Resources Manager). Amanda provided a bat data logger to record bat activity around the condo.

Hunting Program Brian is coordinating with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to change the state regulations pertaining to the USAFA deer hunting program. The goal is to reduce the “trophy” hunting nature of the buck hunts, and emphasize the population management objective. The state has proposed extending the hunting season to October through December, and the base has proposed limiting hunters to a single-day of hunting on their deer license. Hopefully these

measures will reduce the “trophy” hunting, and over time reduce the number of preference points needed to draw a deer license for the Academy.

Fish Stocking Alex submitted a fish stocking application for September 2017 fish stocking in North and South Pearson Lakes at F.E. Warren AFB. The application is for catchable size rainbow trout. Once approved, the stocking will take place in September when the water temperature of the lakes cool to 65°F, ensuring maximal trout survival potential. Fishing permit sales at F.E. Warren AFB are again exceeding expectations this year, with more youth fishing permits sold this year than any year in recent history.



Region 6 Priority: Cutthroat Trout Recovery

Trout Survey Taylor Cassidy, Taylor Hackleback, and Cabel Patterson worked in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) with Chris Kennedy electrofishing a 900 meter stretch of Fern Creek to obtain a population count on native cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii*). The group collected weight, length, and a tissue sample from each fish caught before releasing it back into the creek. The data collected will inform the need for a cutthroat

trout restoration project in the park.

Population Estimate Chris Kennedy conducted mark-recapture sampling at Dream Lake within Rocky Mountain National Park. One hundred and twenty-three cutthroat trout were captured by hook-and-line and 56 fish were captured by gill net during the recapture portion of the project. The population estimate has not been calculated as of yet; however, Dream Lake has a healthy cutthroat trout popu-

lation. Evidence of damage to fish caused by anglers was evident at this high-use lake.

Restoration Strategy Chris Kennedy continued work on a strategy to restore native cutthroat trout within RMNP. The strategy will compile data on a number of variables for each body of water within RMNP which currently contain fish.

The team, pictured at a sample site in Fern Creek.



Melissa Whittingslow with a Farish recreational employee, stocking the Farish Lakes.

Recreational Fishing Management On August 28th Melissa Whittingslow stocked the three fishing lakes at Farish Recreational Area with 8-10 inch Rainbow trout. On August 30th the five lakes at the US Air-force Academy were stocked

with Rainbow trout by Melissa. As a part of the Natural Resources recreational fishing program, the Farish fishing lakes are stocked from May to October and the Academy lakes are stocked from April to October.

Habitat Conservation & Management

“[...] advocating for protecting the remaining riparian/wetland habitat and filling and stabilizing the eroded channel to reconnect the floodplain.”

Cottonwood Tree Removal Dustin Casady and Student Conservation Association intern, Taylor Cassidy, finished work removing a large number of cottonwood trees on Buckley Air Force Base. These trees sprouted from the roots of a dozen larger cottonwoods that were not properly treated when removed. The trees warranted removal due to their proximity to the runway and the potential to attract a large numbers of birds which are a hazard to aircraft.

Noxious Weed Control Max Canestorp coordinated noxious weed control on Peterson AFB. Several small stands of Canada thistle and knapweed were treated with herbicide.

Habitat Measurements Chris Kennedy replaced water temperature loggers at eighteen locations (Upper Hutcheson, Lower Hutcheson, Pear, Fern, Crystal, Lawn, Bear, Dream, Adams and Poudre Lakes, Hidden Valley (2), Cony (2) and Chaos Creeks and the Big Thompson River (3)) within RMNP. These loggers are deployed in cutthroat trout populations to assess temperatures for recruitment of cutthroat trout and detect changes associated with climate change, wildfire and beetle kill.

Dam Study Brian participated in a value engineering study for the removal of the Kettle Creek dry dam on the US Air Force Academy, which could include opportunities for up-

stream riparian habitat restoration depending on the amount of fill material generated by the project. Brian is advocating for protecting the remaining riparian/wetland habitat and filling and stabilizing the eroded channel to reconnect the floodplain.

Grounds Maintenance Dustin Casady completed the annual mowing of the historical lake bed of Lake Williams on Buckley Air Force Base. The lake poses a risk to flight safety and has been drained. Plans have been made to remove the dam and restore the watershed, but the project is awaiting funding. The annual mowing of the lake bed decreases wildlife use and the associated risk of Bird Aircraft Strike Hazards.

Partnerships & Accountability



CBASE participants: Makenna Fair, Jessica Gorski, Dr. Claire-Varian Ramos (advising professor), Clark Jones (not pictured, Connor Dowd)

Communities to Build Active STEM engagement (CBASE) – Western Field Ornithologists Annual Conference Connor Dowd, Makenna Fair, and Jessica Gorski presented at the Western Field Ornithologists Meeting in Pueblo, Colorado in August. These students conducted avian monitoring research at Pueblo Chemical Depot (PCD) this past summer as part of

Colorado State University's CBASE program. Connor Dowd presented on Lark Bunting nest success which reported that nest success of Lark Buntings was low on PCD during June and July this summer. The cause of low nest success may be tied to heavy rain events but further research is needed. Jessica presented her Burrowing Owl research examining burrowing owl occupancy patterns between disturbed and undisturbed habitat on PCD. Her research suggested that road density results in lower probability of a site being occupied even when suitable habitat is present. Makenna presented her research on sex ratio bias in Lark Buntings on PCD which indicated a female nestling bias in spite of an apparent male bias in the breeding population.

Watershed Clean-Up Brian is coordinating volunteers to help with the “Creek Week” cleanup on USAFA from 30 September – 8 October. Creek Week is a regional watershed cleanup activity sponsored by the Fountain Creek Watershed and Greenway District and Colorado

Springs Utilities. In 2016, nearly 15 tons of trash were removed from the watershed by 2400 volunteers. USAFA had 128 volunteers that collected 107 bags of trash. Eight creeks and upland areas, including habitat for the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, have been selected for cleanup by the USAFA volunteers.

Cooperation with State Game Wardens Alex coordinated with DoD staff Gary Dutremble to ensure that the Wyoming Game and Fish Department game wardens would have funds in their account to charge to for their work patrolling and enforcing wildlife regulations during the antelope hunt.

INRMP Annual Review Dustin Casady coordinated the annual review process for the Buckley Air Force Base Integrated Natural Resource Plan. Comments have been requested and received for parties involved in the annual review. These comments will be reviewed and incorporated into the INRMP which will be signed at the Tri-party INRMP annual review meeting in late September.

Leadership in Science & Technology

“[...] to discuss the preparation of a draft Wildland Fire Management Plan update for F.E. Warren AFB.”

Cultural Resources Clark Jones completed Pueblo Chemical Depot’s annual data call to update the Army’s metrics for tracking cultural resources on Army installations across the country. These metrics are some of the primary data sources for Congress and are collected annually at the end of each fiscal year. These metrics also track compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and consultation with Tribal Nations.

INRMP Brian Mihlbachler and Joe Murphy are updating the 2008-2013 Air Force Academy Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP) to comply with Air Force

and DoD guidance. Significant changes will include new information on pollinators, conservation law enforcement, noxious weeds, special status species, forestry, and wildland fire. Signature approval of the document by USFWS, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Academy will be completed by early fall 2017.

Wildland Fire Management Plan Taylor Hackleback and Alex Schubert met with Brian Bartow (Assistant Chief, F. E. Warren Fire and Emergency Services) to discuss the preparation of a draft Wildland Fire Management Plan update for F. E. Warren AFB. After Brian’s comments and addi-

tions are incorporated into the draft, it will then be forwarded to Robert Ayotte (USFWS Wildland Fire Planner) for review.

Cooperative Agreement Brian is coordinating with the AFCEC IST and Colorado Parks and Wildlife to renew a Sikes Act cooperative agreement between USAFA and CPW. The agreement outlines mutual responsibilities and assistance concerning base access, wildlife law enforcement, training, wildlife surveys, volunteer activities, habitat management, nuisance wildlife response, and hunting activities.



Region 6 Priority: Reverse the Declining Trend of Monarch Butterflies & Other Endemic Pollinators

Landscape Restoration Dustin Casady submitted a work request at Buckley Air Force Base to remove three large Russian olive trees that were originally planted as ornamentals in front of the Navy building. These trees will be replaced with pollinator gardens to help revive the health of bees, butterflies, birds, bats and many other pollinators. This project also supports the U.S. Fish and Wildlife priority to save the Monarch butterfly.



Site of future pollinator gardens on Buckley AFB.

Pollinator Surveys Laura Mendenhall and Nicole Brown have been surveying for pollinator species across 6 sites including the 3 newly-established pollinator gardens, a bioswale, and 2 conventionally landscaped beds on McConnell AFB. The team is using bee bowls, area searches, and walking transects to tally the number of native bees, butterflies, and non-native honeybees. These surveys will help to establish a baseline of invertebrate pollinator species.

Women on Target Class Melissa Whittingslow attended a Women on Target class in Keystone, Colorado. This class was put on by the National Rifle Association and is designed to teach women general gun safety and the fundamentals of marksmanship. During the class Melissa was able to practice her rifle and shotgun marksmanship, which she will use in her course of work.



Melissa Whittingslow, practicing her marksmanship skills.