

## 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 Mihlbachler, 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

McCannell 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



DECEMBER 2017

## Species Conservation & Management

Mule Deer Hunts Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office employees came together in Colorado Springs at the Air Force Academy to assist with the 2017 USAFA deer hunts. SCA intern, Taylor Cassidy, helped as a guide for the first time. Each guide works to ensure their hunter fills their tag, and more importantly, practices safe and ethical hunting while on the academy. The hunts, organized by Brian Mihlbachler and Melissa Whittingslow, assist USAFA in reaching management goals including protecting habitat, boosting animal health, and reducing human-wildlife conflicts such as vehicle accidents. Twenty-eight deer were harvested during the two weekend hunts, with 100% hunter success. A January base-wide deer survey is planned with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to monitor the deer population and set the harvest objectives for the 2018 deer season.

**“28 deer (14 bucks, 14 does) were harvested during the 2 weekend hunts, with 100% hunter success.”**

**Christmas Bird Count** USAFA conducted the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Teams of Natural Resources employees, active duty military, and civilian volunteers dispersed to count the bird species seen and heard. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this long-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations, and to help guide conservation actions.



**Top: successful mule deer harvest at USAFA. Bottom: Melissa Whittingslow and Taylor Cassidy with a successful hunter.**

along the roadside, parking lots, and in lawns, as has been observed commonly during previous years.

**Migratory Birds.** To support Air Force incorporation of migratory birds into INRMPS, Krystal Phillips invited R6 Migratory Bird Deputy, Brian Smith, to review and provide feedback on Navy standards for migratory birds in INRMPS in order to possibly adopt similar guidance for Air Force INRMP development and updates.

**Pronghorn Update** Alex Schubert and Cole Brittain surveyed pronghorn at F. E. Warren AFB in December 2017. The population was less in number than it was at this time a year ago. Also, the impact of the hunting program at F. E. Warren AFB seemed obvious. The

hunting season started August 15, 2017, and lasted 4 1/2 months ending on December 31. By December, the pronghorn had become much more evasive and the majority of the animals could be seen in herds far in the distance in areas inaccessible to people, rather than right

# Partnerships & Accountability

“[...]offered individualized feedback to each participant and taught skills that are invaluable to [...] quality workplace relationships.”

**Stepping Up To Leadership** Clark Jones participated in two weeks of Phase I training for the USFWS's Stepping Up To Leadership program in West Virginia in December. Clark is part of the 35<sup>th</sup> cohort of USFWS employees to participate in the program, and the 4<sup>th</sup> member of the Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office to attend. This program offers individuals the chance to improve their leadership skills through skill assessments, coaching, self-paced and group exercises, and developmental assignments.

a State Highway 21/Powers Boulevard interchange connection to Interstate 25 on Air Force Academy property. The consultant is developing preliminary plans for habitat restoration and mitigation within the project area, but the Academy has concerns about stormwater drainage and potential downstream impacts to habitat on Monument Branch and Smith Creek. In addition, the base is concerned about proposed detention basins that could attract waterfowl to the airfield flight path.

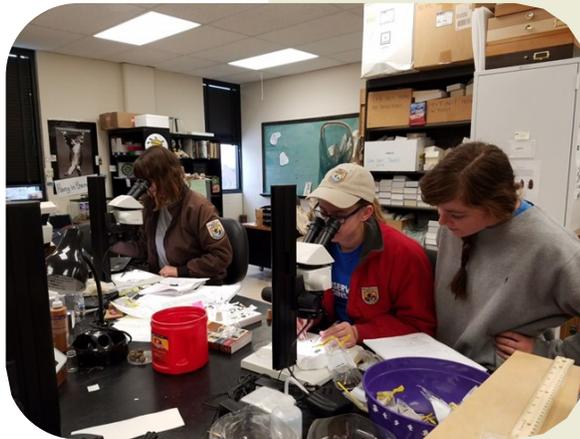
**Speed of Trust Training** Members of the Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office attended a 2 day leadership training in the Regional Office entitled “The Speed of Trust.” The training offered individualized feedback to each participant and taught skills that are invaluable to creating and maintaining quality workplace relationships. As a follow up, the team will participate in bimonthly phone calls to revisit skills and continue the development of trust.

**Forest Health Inventory Project Management: Whiteman AFB, MO.** Krystal reviewed and approved contractor (Amec Foster Wheeler Environment & Infrastructure, Inc.) invoice for tasks completed. Dually, she collaborated with R3 Sikes Act Coordinator to establish final report distribution to appropriate R3 field level Ecological Services staff, Karen Herrington, PL Missouri ESFO, charged with reviewing the Whiteman AFB annual Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan update.

**Habitat Restoration** Brian Mihlbachler met with Colorado Department of Transportation and a consultant for the private developer funding



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



**Bee ID** Laura Mendenhall and Nicole Brown completed the identification of almost 1,000 bees to family level with the help of Wichita State University (WSU) entomology graduate student, Alex Morphew. The team used features such as the shape of submarginal wing cells,

the presence of subantennal sutures, and colors featured on bee faces to sort the bees into family groups. This project is part of the USFWS-AF Pollinator partnership grant which funded the planting of 3 new pollinator gardens on McConnell AFB. Samples were collected throughout summer from these gardens and 3 additional sites on the base. Voucher specimens have been pinned and will be delivered to the Sternberg Museum of Natural History in Hays, KS for safe-keeping.

**Mendenhall, Brown, and WSU entomology graduate student, Alex Morphew, combing through piles of bees.**

## Leadership in Science & Technology

**Firewood Sales** During the month of December NR sold 3.7 tons of firewood from trees felled on USAFA property to 8 individual firewood cutters.

**US Fish and Wildlife Service Military Conservation Partner Award** This annual award given by USFWS recognizes a military installation that has conducted conservation work in cooperation with the Service and other partners. Several COFWCO staff

submitted application packages, including Krystal Phillips for Buckley AFB, Alex Schubert for FE Warren AFB, and Laura Mendenhall for McConnell AFB. Highlights of award application packages included: partnerships and efforts with the Student Conservation Association and AmeriCorps; Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) Compatible Use Buffer Team; environmental outreach and avian rehabilitation, the establishment of a new

hunting program, improvements to fisheries, the establishment of pollinator gardens, and the restoration of prairie.

**SCA Internships** Alex Schubert reviewed numerous applications for an internship scheduled to begin in April 2018 at F. E. Warren AFB. After interviews were completed, the selected individual was contacted and offered the internship position.

# Habitat Conservation & Management



## Region 6 Priority: Cutthroat Trout Recovery

**Trout Restoration** Chris Kennedy worked 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. Each waterbody and drainage will then be ranked on their potential as candidates for restoration projects.

**Trout Coordination Meeting** Chris Kennedy also attended the Colorado River Cutthroat (CRC) Trout Coordination Team meeting. The team is made up of representatives from each agency which manages CRC. Talks were given on different activities related to CRC recovery and activities from the previous year.

## Removal of cattails from the erosion mitigation area on Black Forest Creek (Middle Tributary) at USAFA.



**Habitat Restoration** Brian Muhlbachler is overseeing the construction of grade control structures on Black Forest Creek (Middle Tributary) to stop channel head-cutting. Post-construction revegetation will attempt to convert the cattail marsh to a higher quality Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat by revegetating the site with sandbar willow, cottonwood, snowberry, sedge and rush transplant, and upland and wetland seeding.

**Fuels Reduction** December saw the start of USAFA's 125 Acre Fuels Reduction/Hazard Tree Removal Project. Work is delayed on the boundary line fuels reduction at this point until the USAFA Environmental Assessment is being completed. The crew was on boarded and briefed on the scope of the project and the main focus will be removing hazard trees

The Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office (CO FWCO) submitted a work order to remove the last remaining tree on East Tollgate Creek at Buckley Air Force Base that is of concern to the Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard workgroup. This tree is over seven feet in diameter, partially dead, and was beyond the capabilities of CO FWCO or USDA biologists. The work order that was submitted will be reviewed and the BAFB contracting office will execute funds to hire a contractor to remove the tree.

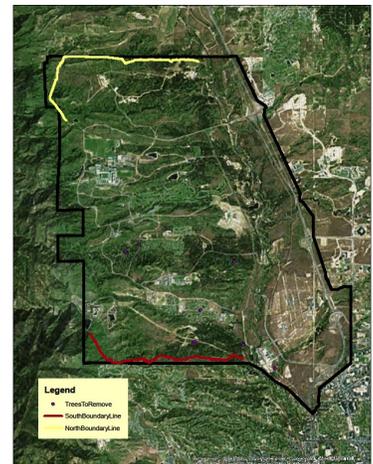
Last remaining cottonwood tree on East Tollgate Creek at Buckley Air Force Base that is a Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard concern.



**Urban Forestry** Alex Schubert used the 2017 urban forestry activity information to complete a Tree City USA application and submitted the application on the Arbor Day Foundation's website. F. E. Warren AFB has received the Tree City USA award recognition for the past 29 consecutive years.

throughout USAFA grounds until work is allowed to commence on the fuels reduction portion of the project.

**Tree Removal** Taylor and Dustin continued to remove the trees that were cut down along East Tollgate Creek, Lake Williams, and the fields north of the runway.



Map showing USAFA fuels reduction project area.