

Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



MAY 2018

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

Partnerships & Accountability

USDA USFWS Joint Presentation
Dustin Casady presented a joint presentation with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services Biologist, John Callon, at an Advanced Airport Training in Minot, North Dakota this month. The training is put on by the USDA Wildlife Services as a requirement for their employees to become a certified Airfield Wildlife Biologist. The joint presentation focused on how to make things work in a situation where two agencies have responsibilities for wildlife on a Department of Defense installation. The presentation was well received and many attendees were enlightened to see that there are possibilities for cooperation and partnering between two agencies with differing missions.

Pueblo Chemical Depot Prairie Diversity Projects
USFWS, Student Conservation Association and students and faculty with the Colorado State University—Pueblo

(CSU-P) Communities to Build Active STEM Engagement (CBASE) program kicked off the field season with several collaborative projects this May on US Army Pueblo Chemical Depot (PCD). The intent of these projects is to better understand the bio-diversity of prairie grassland habitat on PCD while simultaneously allowing participating students to garner research experience in a field setting. Projects currently underway include: prairie bird diversity surveys with a focus on Lark Buntings, Cassin's Sparrows, Lark Sparrows and Meadowlarks; plant/insect diversity surveys within and around prairie dog colonies; prairie dog density surveys with an extended focus on colonies affected by plague; Burrowing Owl population monitoring; and finally, reptile diversity studies within prairie dog colonies.

Natalia Wicker (CSU), Jessica Gorski (SCA & CSU), and Alex Sinkler (CSU) at Pueblo CD.



Casady and Callon on a tour of Minot AFB.



Region 6 Priority: Cutthroat Trout Recovery

Chris Kennedy spent three weeks on detail at the Leadville National Fish Hatchery working with the Federally threatened greenback cutthroat trout. Work focused on preparing for spawning, spawning and developing a broodstock through genetic matrixing. Spawning was conducted on one occasion with fish on hand at the hatchery and with wild milt which was brought in from Bear Creek. Over 21,000 eggs were fertilized over the course of the detail.



Fertilized greenback cutthroat trout eggs at the Leadville National Fish Hatchery.



Greenback cutthroat trout captured during fish electroshocking surveys on West Monument Creek on the Air Force Academy.

Habitat Conservation & Management



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

“This planting is part of a larger effort to conserve water, reduce maintenance, and provide habitat for native pollinator species.”

USAFA Garden Melissa Whittingslow created a pollinator garden in front of the USAFA Natural Resource office using flowering plants throughout the Air Force Academy. The garden features donated benches and an informational sign.

Girl Scout Pollinator Planting A McConnell AFB Girl Scout Troop helped Laura Mendenhall plant 5 native wildflower species, including rattlesnake master, mint-leaf beebalm, butterfly milkweed, purple coneflower, and yellow coneflower in a pollinator garden that suffered some damage last year from a fallen tree. In the process, the girls discovered (and named) an early instar monarch caterpillar feeding on some showy milkweed.



Kansas Air National Guard Plantings Volunteers from the McConnell AFB Airmen’s Council and from the local community helped Laura Mendenhall plant 2 landscaped beds in front of the Kansas Air National Guard headquarters building. The team removed ornamental shrubs and planted native wildflowers and grasses including little bluestem, aromatic aster, heath aster, penstemon, rose verbena, and purple poppy mallow. This planting is part of a larger effort to conserve water, reduce maintenance, and provide habitat for native pollinator species.

Top: Pollinator garden at USAFA. Bottom: volunteers from the McConnell AFB Airmen’s Council and a former SCA Intern helped replace non-native plants with native flowers and grasses.



Beetle Trap Deployment Max Canestorp deployed and monitored *Ips* beetle traps on Cheyenne Mountain AFS. *Ips* beetles are bark beetles that attack and kill ponderosa pine trees, and the traps are deployed to attract beetles as they disperse from infected pines looking for new trees to inhabit. And they have been successful: most traps that were deployed have captured a number of beetles. Several ponderosas have been lost on Cheyenne Mountain to *Ips* beetle infestations through the years.

Habitat Restoration Project Brian Mhlbachler conducted a final contract site-walk of the Black Forest Creek (middle tributary)

habitat restoration project. All wetland plant plugging, willow staking, and cottonwood pole planting was completed prior to inspection.

Lake Habitat Alex Schubert, Brock Best (SCA), and Mark Hibdon (USAF) recorded water quality parameters such as temperature profile, secchi reading, and dissolved oxygen levels in North and South Pearson Lakes and Lake Centennial at F. E. Warren AFB. They also surveyed the fish populations at the lakes with seines. The water temperature had warmed enough so that most species had become active and were documented in the surveys.

Invasive Species Control Hannah Atkinson (SCA) recently passed exams to be certified to apply pesticides on Buckley AFB. Since becoming certified she has performed applications that were focused on broadleaf treatments adjacent to the perimeter road of base. The applications targeted thistle species, kochia, and knapweed among others. Buckley AFB is favorable to invasive species largely due to the high occurrence of disturbance to grounds. Many of these areas are not covered by the grounds maintenance contract and are the responsibility of the Natural Resource Program. Limited time and personnel requires a targeted approach.

Species Conservation & Management



Electro-fishing streams on USAFA.

Wetland Plants The Colorado Native Plant Society took a trip to Pueblo Chemical Depot this past month to explore and look for native prairie plants. The trip focused on wetland plants within the shortgrass prairie since rain has been a very rare event in the region. Several members of the NRCS and the local USDA Cooperative Extension Service were also present. Special thanks to Rich Rhoades and Ben Berlinger for coordinating the trip.

Leadership in Science & Technology

Education and Outreach Melissa Whittingslow and Joe Murphy worked with Douglass Valley Elementary, Housing, and Dave Tree to set up an Earth Day Event for the elementary students that was held on May 16th. The 4th graders worked with Melissa and learned the importance of pollinators and created their own pollinator garden. Contractor Mike Isele donat-

ed logs to create benches for the pollinator garden, so it can act as an outdoor classroom for the students. The 5th grade classes went with Joe and learned about forest health and got to core trees to estimate their age. The US Air Force Fire Department also participated along with Smokey the Bear!

White-Nose Syndrome Alex Schubert continued coordination with Laura Beard of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department regarding bat surveys at F. E. Warren AFB this summer. Brock Best (SCA) and Alex Schubert collected guano samples from underneath the bat roosts in the F. E. Warren AFB bat condo to test for the presence of white-nose syndrome. Guano collection efforts will continue at weekly intervals through the month of June. White-nose syndrome has not yet been detected in Wyoming, but has had devastating population effects to bats in the eastern and central North America.

Creek Fish Sampling Brian Mihlbachler helped coordinate and conduct fish sampling on Monument Creek, West Monument Creek, Kettle Creek, and Stanley Creek. Electro-fishing locations sampled in 2014 were repeated by the May 2018 survey. Common fish identified included longnose dace, creek chub, white sucker, and brook trout. Fish diversity and productivity in Monument Creek appeared to decline from north to south, probably due to a higher sediment load from the eastern tributaries. A final report of the results will be available by fall 2018. Melissa Whittingslow, Chris Kennedy, Max Canestorp, and Joe Murphy participated in the fish sampling effort.

Snake Fungal Disease Study Alex Schubert coordinated with Mike Ravesi (DoD) regarding F. E. Warren AFB participation in a snake fungal disease monitoring project. Similar to negative impacts being experienced on bat

and amphibian species as a result of white nose syndrome and chytrid fungus, respectively; many snake species in the United States are being impacted from fungal infections resulting in mortality and population declines, including several at-risk snake species that occur on DoD installations across the U.S. DoD Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (PARC) will be conducting a study to sample for snake fungal disease on approximately 50 military sites, including F. E. Warren AFB and McConnell AFB, in 2018. Resulting data will help identify potential impact of this disease on the training and testing mission. Once the data are analyzed, the PARC team will prepare a DoD Legacy Program report.



Bird Nests Max Canestorp checked on a report of active bird nests in a building under construction on Peterson AFB. The two nests were occupied by house finches. The construction crew is avoiding the area until the nestlings fledge out. Canestorp also checked on a peregrine falcon territory on Cheyenne Mountain AFS that had been active since at least 2014. The peregrines are back again this year, and appear to be nesting in the same site they used two years ago.