

# Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



JULY 2015

- **Lakewood:**  
Pam Sponholtz, Project Leader, JoAnn Wise, Budget Admin
- **Buckley Air Force Base, Aurora:** Krystal Phillips, Wildlife Biologist, Dustin Casady, Bio Tech
- **Peterson, Schriever, Cheyenne Mtn Air Force Bases, Colorado Springs:** Max Canestorp, Wildlife Biologist
- **US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs:** Brian Mihlbachler, Biological Scientist, Diane Strohm, Biological Scientist, Melissa Whittingslow, Wildlife Biologist
- **Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park:** Chris Kennedy, Fish Biologist
- **Warren Air Force Base, Cheyenne, WY:** Timothy Grosch, Fish and Wildlife Biologist
- **McConnell Air Force Base:** Laura Mendenhall, Fish and Wildlife Biologist
- **Pueblo Chemical Depot, Pueblo, CO:** Clark Jones, Wildlife Biologist

## Leadership in Science and Technology

*Cheyenne Mountain Douglas fir tussock moth outbreak:* Max Canestorp and Diane Strohm met with Rebecca Powell, USFS Entomologist to evaluate a Douglas fir tussock moth infestation on Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station. The recent outbreak of



Max and Diane surveying Douglas fir mortality on Cheyenne Mountain

this damaging defoliator has killed hundreds of acres of fir, primarily on the adjacent Cheyenne Mountain State Park. A sampling of tussock moth larvae were collected to be analyzed at a lab for presence of a natural virus that

could cause the population to collapse. Results will be considered in evaluating whether the area should be treated to stem further tree mortality. Outbreaks of tussock moth and spruce budworm are cyclical, but the current outbreaks are much worse than usual.

*Falcon trail restoration:* From July 20<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> the Student Conservation Association Interns worked with Melissa Whittingslow and Brian Mihlbachler to redirect part of the falcon trail. The previous trail had standing



SCA Interns constructing new trail

water on it, due to ground water seepage. A new section of trail was created to bypass the flooded section of trail. The old trail was rehabilitated using native grass seed mix.

*Air Force Academy noxious weed management plan:* Brian Mihlbachler reviewed the updated Air Force Academy noxious weed management plan drafted by Colorado Natural Heritage Program field scientists. The plan emphasizes tracking and refining management priorities, enhancing the protection of native vegetation when spraying herbicides, and targeting weed control efforts to promote the protection and conservation of species of concern.

## Partnerships and Accountability

*Bird airstrike hazard (BASH):* Krystal Phillips provided natural resource project updates; presented an oral history of the Buckley Air Force Base BASH program to newly assigned leadership; educated the new installation Chief of Safety about the migratory bird permitting process; and assisted with the coordination of a site visit scheduled for late August to identify and assess requested hazard tree thinning in East Toll Gate Creek

near the end of the active runway.

*Bird/Wildlife Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) meeting:* Max Canestorp participated in a BASH meeting on Peterson AFB. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) personnel briefed attendees on the results of wildlife deterrence activities near the runways to date.



Successful goose drive pen

*Goose Removal on F.E. Warren:* Tim Grosch submitted FEW's Chapter 56 goose removal report to Wyoming Game and Fish Department closing out the 2015 depredation permit.

## Partnerships and Accountability con't

*History of Fisheries.* Chris Kennedy prepared and taught a class on “The History of Fisheries in Rocky Mountain National Park” for the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, a non-profit affiliated with RMNP.

*Arkansas darter sampling:* Laura Mendenhall assisted researchers from Wichita State University and fish biologists from KDWP in sampling for Arkansas Darters in neighboring Kingman County. In the process, Mendenhall learned electro-fishing techniques, im-

proved her Kansas stream fish identification skills, and developed a thorough understanding



of Arkansas darter habitat in preparation for creating Arkansas darter range maps. Several of the fish species observed

have been documented in McConnell AFB streams.

*Rio Grande chub and sucker conservation:* Pam Sponholtz participated in a teleconference with partners from Colorado and New Mexico to discuss the development of a conservation plan for Rio Grande chub and sucker. Both species were petitioned for listing under the ESA last year.

## Habitat Conservation and Management

*Nesting burrowing owls:* A third pair of nesting burrowing owls has been discovered on Buckley Air Force Base and has been confirmed by Dustin



*Pond Fish Surveys* Tim Grosch and Chris Kennedy assisted Laura Mendenhall and a team from McConnell AFB in sampling fish from four ponds around McConnell AFB. The team used trammel nets, hoop nets, minnow traps, and a hook and line survey to record fish species and number caught. Fish species observed included largemouth bass, bluegill, green sunfish, white crappie, and channel catfish. The team also observed numerous, unidentifi-

Casady. The GPS location of the nest was documented and Krystal Phillips disseminated the information to Air Force personnel who have been instructed to stay out of the area. Disturbance in the immediate area can cause the burrowing owls to abandon the nest and can negatively impact the Colorado threatened species.

able young-of-year fish, and three species of aquatic turtles. Representatives from BASH, Flight Safety, Outdoor Recreation, and Civil Engineering assisted with measuring and identifying fish. The event was documented in a news article featured on the McConnell AFB home page. Data from these surveys will inform a comprehensive ponds management plan that prioritizes BASH, recreation, and the establishment of healthy, native aquatic ecosystems.

*Urban wildlife plan:* Brian and Melissa attended a Colorado Parks and Wildlife Urban Wildlife Plan meeting on the management of black bear, mountain lion, deer, nuisance wildlife, species of conservation concern, and wildlife disease transmission in the Colorado Springs area. The Air Force Academy’s hunting, Preble’s meadow jumping mouse conservation, and trash management programs put the base well-ahead of other local urban wildlife management efforts.



# Species Conservation and Management



Employees from the USGS and RMNP install an insect emergence trap at Mirror Lake.

*Native cutthroat trout:* Chris Kennedy gathered information from Cascade Creek and Mirror Lake in Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), for purposes of conducting a native cutthroat trout restoration projects. Activities fish surveys, water quality measurements and invertebrate sampling. Work was done cooperatively with the U. S. Geological Survey, RMNP and volunteers.

*Bull moose found on FE Warren AFB:* Tim Grosch assisted Wyoming Game and Fish Department with the safe capture and movement of a second young bull moose that was reported at Lake Centennial. The animal was immobilized, loaded and moved to its new home without incident. The bull likely followed Crow Creek out of the mountains to which it was safely returned. One other moose was also reported however has yet to

be found, to be continued ..



# Habitat Conservation and Management

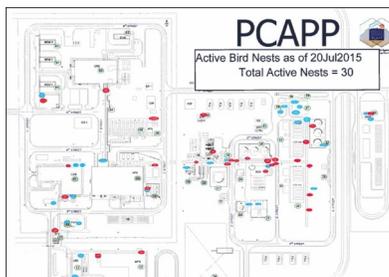
*FamCamp trail improvement:* SCA interns worked on trail improvement and maintenance throughout the FamCamp area on FE Warren AFB. The existing trails have been neglected over the years due to base funding issues but now have been cleared for outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy and take advantage of the numerous wildlife viewing opportunities that can be found along Crow Creek.

*Migratory birds at PCD:* Clark Jones met with the environmental compliance supervisors

of the Pueblo Chemical Agent Destruction Pilot Plant (PCAPP) to review compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. PCAPP is responsible for destroying over 750,000 chemical munitions and monitors bird nests each season to ensure nests do not interfere with operations or cause safety concerns. Active nests are removed only when they pose a safety hazard and removed under a depredation permit held by the Pueblo Chemical Depot Natural Resource Manager (Clark Jones). Since 2014, PCAPP has monitored over

150 nests and fewer than ten have required removal under a depredation permit.

*Fish Passage in the St. Vrain:* With the technical assistance of the USFWS Water Resources Division and the Region 6 Fish Passage Engineer, Pam Sponholtz helped with bathymetric surveys of deep reservoirs that have developed above several diversions on the St. Vrain. These diversions were damaged in the September 2013 flood event and as designed, are significant fish barriers to passage upstream. USFWS is completing the initial designs to retrofit these diversions to be "fish friendly".



Acoustic Doppler surveyor