

Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



NOVEMBER 2015

WHO/WHERE WE ARE

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

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

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

Peterson AFB, Colorado Springs: Shelly Crook, Assistant Fire Management Officer

US Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs: Brian Mhlbachler, Biological Scientist, Diane Strohm, Biological Scientist, James Donahey, Forester, Melissa Whittingslow, Wildlife Biologist

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

Warren Air Force Base, Cheyenne, WY: Vacant

McConnell Air Force Base: Laura Mendenhall, Fish and Wildlife Biologist

Pueblo Chemical Depot, Pueblo, CO: Clark Jones, Wildlife Biologist

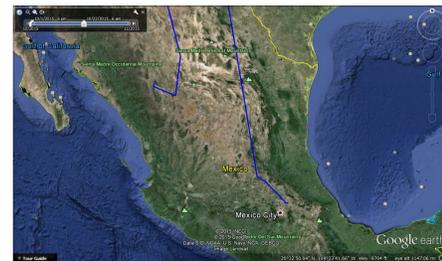
Leadership in Science and Technology

Pond Management: Laura Mendenhall completed pond management plans for five ponds on McConnell AFB using data collected this summer from fish surveys. Management objectives include reducing blue-green algae blooms, providing for angler enjoyment, and encouraging recruitment among desired sport and native fishes. The three ponds with inflows and outflows to the surrounding native streams will be managed for native fish and aquatic biodiversity.

Owl Migration: Two burrowing owls (*Athene cunicularia*) were fitted with satellite transmitters in June at Pueblo Chemical Depot. The birds began their southward

migration in October and pushed further south in November. Burrowing Owl #120430 left Pueblo Chemical Depot on September 29, arrived in Chihuahua State, Mexico on October 21, and is now in the state of Durango in agricultural fields near the town of Lozano Zavala. Burrowing Owl #120431 left Pueblo Chemical Depot around October 6th, stopped over near Lubbock, TX on October 13, then made a long flight south and settled 25 miles northeast of Mexico City in November. Total flight path distance for #120431 is approximately 1,400 miles and #120430 has travelled approximately 1,100 miles from Pueblo Chemical Depot. Despite breeding <2 miles from each other this past

summer, these individuals are wintering 550 miles apart.



Habitat Conservation and Management

Urban Forest Assessment: Laura Mendenhall completed a survey and analysis of the McConnell AFB urban forest, including historic windbreaks. Historic windbreaks were planted in the 1930's to curb topsoil erosion, protect crops, and shield structures from the sometimes devastating Great Plains wind and drought. Windbreaks on McConnell AFB are either Osage



orange (*Maclura pomifera*) or Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*) with some specimens estimated to be

greater than 60 years old. As a result of the survey and analysis, windbreaks in locations that still

protect buildings will be renovated using coppicing or gap planting of Osage orange, Hackberry, or Honey locust.

Tussock moth impacts assessment: Max Canestorp mapped the extent of damage caused by Douglas-fir tussock moths on fir trees during an infestation in 2014 and 2015. Not all fir trees will die as a result of the infestation, many are on the road to recovery.

Habitat and Conservation Management Cont...



Constructed Zuni Bowl to reduce sedimentation

Raptor surveys were conducted on Buckley Air Force Base by Dustin Casady. Surveys give resource managers a better understanding of where raptors occur and how they are utilizing the habitat. Understanding raptor activity allows Natural Resource Managers make adjustments to try to reduce activity in these areas.

Zuni Bowl: Melissa Whittingslow assisted the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program and helped build a zuni bowl on a private landowner's property to help slow and prevent erosion. Building the zuni bowl involved mixing sand/cement mix, filling burlap bags, placement of said bags, moving and placing rock. Individuals from the fish and wildlife service, Colorado parks and Wildlife, and the land owners all came together to make this work day a success.

Water Quality: Brian Mhlbacher and Melissa Whittingslow assisted Colorado Springs Utilities with water quality sampling and stream characterization within the Air Force Academy. CSU is collecting regional stream data to support a request to the State to re-classify various streams using more site-specific regulatory requirements to protect water quality.

Noxious Weeds: Dustin Casady

assisted Max Canestorp with applying herbicides to Canada thistle on Schriever Air Force Base and Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station. Spraying in the fall can be effective if it has been mowed throughout the summer. Mowing thistle keeps the plant actively growing late in the season. Applying herbicide late in season increases the effectiveness of the herbicide as the plant is naturally drawing resources down into the root system along with the herbicide.

Partnerships and Accountability

Monument Creek: Brian Mhlbacher represented the Air Force Academy at the El Paso County Regional Watershed Collaborative meeting and discussed an ongoing project to stabilize Monument Creek against headcutting near a railroad overpass. Stabilizing the stream channel will help protect at least 6500' of Preble's meadow jumping mouse habitat to the installation's northern boundary.

Black Footed Ferrets: Clark Jones and John Hughes fielded questions about a proposed black-footed ferret reintroduction on Pueblo Chemical Depot. A draft Memorandum of Agreement was presented to Puebloplex, the organization responsible for the redevelopment of Pueblo Chemical Depot when it closes.

Upper Monument Creek meeting: James Donahy reviewed documents developed over the past several years by the Up-

per Monument Creek Restoration Initiative (UMC) consortium, and attended a UMC meeting in Colorado Springs. The meeting focused on reviewing a proposed plan to specify ecological indicators and metrics to monitor effectiveness of proposed treatments. An inter-agency consortium worked closely with the U.S. Forest Service to analyze forest health, restoration and fuel treatment needs in this portion of the Pike National Forest.

INRMP meeting: Laura Mendenhall met with representatives from McConnell AFB Civil Engineering, McConnell AFB Flight Safety, USFWS, and KDWPT to review the 2015 updates to the INRMP. Topics discussed included water quality, MBTA, supporting the BASH program, and stream erosion control. Future projects include implementing

riparian buffer areas, scoping areas for grassland restoration, conducting avian and small mammal surveys to monitor BASH risk, and developing creel surveys to inform fisheries management.

Bird Airstrike Hazard (BASH): Krystal Phillips participated in the stakeholders meeting and emphasized the need to continue working on the 2016

Migratory Bird Depredation Permits to support flight safety in order to avoid delays for new permit issuance. Also, Krystal reminded the working group of the need to renew the Colorado state annual permit for Use of Prohibited Devices and coordinated with the state veterinarian to garner the current application documents.



Species Conservation and Management

Southern redbelly dace meeting: Pam Sponholtz and Clark Jones met with representatives of Colorado Parks and Wildlife to discuss management of southern redbelly dace on Pueblo Chemical Depot and across the state. Southern redbelly dace are listed as state endangered in Colorado. In 1987, southern redbelly dace were introduced into a pond on Pueblo Chemical Depot and became the only known extant population of southern redbelly dace after the source population died out around 1989. Since then, several other refuge populations

have been established around the state, but only two additional wild populations have been discovered in the past 25 years. A genetics study is being proposed to examine whether or not inter-population introductions should be used as a means to increase genetic diversity.

Macroinvertebrate Study: Chris Kennedy and Pam Sponholtz attended a meeting with US Geologic Survey to discuss ongoing project on the effects of rotenone on macroinvertebrates. The meeting was to discuss last field season's data and the sampling plan for next year.



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

Chris Kennedy planned and hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Dinner to thank volunteers who contributed 1100 hours to the Rocky Mountain National Park fisheries program during the summer. Seventeen volunteers attended the dinner which was held at the Rock Cut Brewery in Estes Park.

Thank you to our Volunteers



Recreation

It's hunting season at the U.S. Air Force Academy! Melissa and Brian are tracking the Academy's 40+ elk herd and have guided three (so far unsuccessful) cow elk hunters. Approximately six elk may be harvested this winter to help sustain the herd at this level.

They are also preparing for the early December deer hunt on the

Air Force Academy. Fifteen buck and 15 doe will be harvested during the guided hunt. Permits are obtained through the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Permit system.

Calling all you mountain bikers...Brian and Melissa are overseeing the construction of five Falcon Trail re-routes and other repairs and maintenance to improve the

user experience and sustainability of the trail system.



Reconstruction of the Falcon Trail to improve drainage



**Welcome to the
COFWCO!!**

Welcome to James Donahey! In November we welcomed our newest Academy Natural Resource staff member, James Donahey. James joins us as a GS-9 Forester, with expertise in both forest and fuels management. He comes to us from the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Yreka, CA, with prior experience with the U.S. Forest Service in California, Colorado and South Dakota. James also spent a season as a firefighter on the Redding Interagency Hotshot Crew. He received Forestry and Environmental Science degrees from Iowa State University. Welcome aboard James!



James on a firefighting assignment in Wyoming

We are on the web!!!

<http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/fisheries/cofwco.php>

Avon Park Prescribe Burn

Shelly Crook, Assistant Fire Management Officer of the Midwest Region of the AFWFC joined with several other FWS and Air Force personnel from the National HQ and East Region of the AFWFC on a field trip to view the implementation of a prescribed burn on the Avon Park Air Force Base in Central Florida. Avon Park fire personnel, both Air Force and FWS, burned a unit approximately 200 acres in a native Longleaf Pine understory. Management of the 106,000 acre Avon Park Air Force Base includes the prescribed burning of an average of over 30,000 acres each year to ensure the health and vigor of this ecosystem. Wildlife species targeted for management included the Florida scrub jay (Federally-designated Threatened) and the Florida bonneted bat (State-designated Threatened).



Air Force and FWS personnel discussing the nature of prescribed burning in the Longleaf Pine ecosystem.

Detail Opportunity: The Avon Park prescribed burning program is a year-around endeavor, however the bulk of the burning occurs during the winter and spring. Two-week long detail assignments to participate in prescribed burns in Florida and South Carolina are available to fireline certified personnel (Firefighter, Engine Boss, Firing Boss). FWS personnel that are currently Redcarded and interested in getting involved can contact Shelly Crook at shelly_crook@fws.gov or their local Zone Fire Management Officer for additional information.