

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; Diane Strohm, Biological Scientist; James Donahey, Forester; Melissa Whittingslow, Wildlife Biologist

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

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

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

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

Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office



MAY 2016

Partnerships & Accountability

Children's Water Festival – Colorado State University Pueblo. Clark Jones and several members of the Environmental Management Office at Pueblo Chemical Depot (PCD) participated in the Children's Water Festival at Colorado State University – Pueblo in May. This annual festival is designed to teach fourth and fifth graders about regional water-related issues in an engaging and educational manner. This was the 17th year of the water festival and included over 1,500 participants. The Environmental Management Office from PCD held a presentation describing groundwater contamination and how it can be mitigated using several different approaches. The festival was sponsored by the Bureau of Reclamation, the Lower Arkansas Valley Water Conservancy District, the Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District, the Pueblo Board of Water Works, Pueblo West and the St. Charles Mesa Water Conservancy District, and CSU-Pueblo.

Wildfire Education Workshop. Diane Strohm helped host and participated in the fourth annual public outreach workshop hosted by the Pike's Peak Wildfire Protection Partners (OOWO). Entitled "Assets to Ashes – Managing Wildfire Risks", the event in Monument had approximately 65 participants. Afternoon field sessions included a visit to a recently thinned ponderosa pine forest, situated directly adjacent to an untreated area with highly elevated fuel hazard. Another session featured an assessment of hazards in the home ignition zone of a structure that offered plenty of fodder for discussion. PPVPP is a multi-agency consortium of wildfire professionals dedicated to outreach and education on wildfire preparation and risk reduction. Diane has been an active participant in this group for the past twelve years.

McConnell AFB Kids' Fishing Derby. Laura Mendenhall utilized the kids' fishing derby at McConnell AFB as a source for largemouth bass eligible for tagging to benefit the fish health study. One participant managed to catch a largemouth bass of an appropriate size. An Eagle Scout candidate demonstrated how to weigh and measure the fish while Mendenhall tagged the fish. Mendenhall also taught participants how to remove a hook from a fish and passed out fish ID trading cards and Kansas wildlife guide booklets. When a dead fish washed ashore, Mendenhall dissected the carcass and helped kids ID various organs.

routed through the chain of command at F. E. Warren AFB. One of these options may soon be approved. Approval of one of these options would set the wheels in motion for Fall 2016 pronghorn hunting on base.

Joint Land-use Meeting. Max Canestorp participated in a joint land-use meeting between Schriever AFB and staff with the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments to explore long-term land use compatibility as well as conflict avoidance between military installations and surrounding communities.



Clark Jones presenting at the Children's Water Festival in Colorado.

Pronghorn Hunting Season. Alex Schubert expended extensive effort this month in preparing Air Force Instructions for pronghorn hunting. Alex completed two examples. The first example involves hunting using archery only methods. The second example involves archery, muzzleloader, or shotgun (with slugs) methods. Drafts of both options are currently being

Bluebird Box Maintenance. Melissa Whittingslow went out with Colorado Parks and Wildlife Volunteers to check and clean out the blue bird boxes located on the US Air Force Academy. Currently the Academy has over 137 boxes on the academy. The amazing volunteers from Colorado Parks and Wildlife clean out and monitor the boxes throughout the blue bird nesting season, from late April to early August.

More Partnerships...

Firewise Community Planning. In May, James Donahey and Diane Strohm met with USAFA Housing and Fire and Emergency Services to plan an upcoming Firewise event in which the Academy will officially be recognized as a Firewise Community, and host a fuel hazard reduction demonstration

around one or two homes. James met with USAFA Fire Inspector Tommy Disario to evaluate defensible space of each home in the Senior Officer Quarter area (69 homes), from which James developed a map depicting relative wild-fire hazard for each home. He then met with USAFA Family Housing,

Fire and Emergency Services, and Davey Tree to discuss common structure deficiencies, necessary mitigation measures, and prioritize treatments.

Results of the defensible space inventory.



Species Conservation & Management

“HACCP is risk management to reduce the risk of spreading invasive species[...] via human based pathways.”

HACCP Plan RMNP. Chris Kennedy completed a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) plan for conducting fish surveys in Rocky Mountain National Park. HACCP is risk management to reduce the risk of spreading invasive species and other non-targets via human based pathways. It helps identify the most effective opportunities during an activity to reduce the risk and the specific control measures that are needed.

Avian monitoring. Clark Jones and Colorado State University – Pueblo professor Claire W. V. Ramos initiated an avian banding station at Pueblo Chemical Depot along Chico Creek in May. Chico Creek is an important migration corridor for many bird species and this banding station was established with a goal of assessing migratory connectivity with other locations in the region. Additionally, blood samples are being taken to assess levels of heavy metals that

may be present in migrating passerines and near passerines.



Pronghorn Surveys. This month, the F.E. Warren AFB antelope counting crew consisted of Alex Schubert (USFWS), Dustin Casady (USFWS), and Taylor Cassidy (Student Conservation Association Intern). The crew counted 278 antelope on base this month. The majority of those counted were does (n=143) while there were fewer bucks counted (n=89). Many of the apparently pregnant does have been observed coming closer to the buildings near base and appear to be nearing parturition. Possibly they are beginning

to show up in these areas near buildings to give birth since predators, such as coyotes, do not typically forage in these areas. A few sparring females were also observed.

Bird Monitoring. Laura Mendenhall continued monitoring bird activity around McConnell AFB at various point count locations. Mendenhall documented numerous species not present on McConnell AFB in April and located some potential nesting pairs. Many of the monitoring points are in highly visible locations across the base, meaning Mendenhall has the opportunity to educate passersby and recruit potential volunteers. During the counts, Mendenhall discovered the fishing ponds are home to a diversity of charismatic birds including the colorful Baltimore Oriole and a Kansas favorite, the Cedar Waxwing. This area has potential for nesting and educational outreach opportunities.

Species Conservation & Management

SCA interns at Baca NWR emptying hoop nets for Rio Grande chub and sucker on Baca National Wildlife Refuge



Pam Sponholtz and Corinna Hanson (Baca NWR) implemented the first of monthly snorkeling surveys in Crestone Creek on Baca NWR.



Baca National Wildlife Refuge. Pam Sponholtz, Corinna Hanson (Baca NWR), Paul Jones (Colorado Parks and Wildlife) and Jason Kline (SWCA) used hoop nets to sample Rio Grande chub and sucker in Crestone Creek on Baca National Wildlife Refuge. The purpose of the survey was to determine if fish were beginning to spawn in response to high flow events and also to tag additional fish with Passive Integrated Transponder tags. These tags give each fish a unique identity that can be detected on remote antennas that have been installed in Crestone Creek. The antennas will detect movement and if upcoming fish passage improvements will allow for upstream movement.

Locust stand survey. Max Canestorp surveyed and mapped a stand of non-native locust (*Robinia* spp.) on Cheyenne Mountain AFB. Canestorp

also ground-truthed the previous mapping of two other stands. These populations will likely be targeted for control in the future.

Lake Survey. Alex Schubert (FWS) and Taylor Cassidy (Student Conservation Association Intern) surveyed fish in Lake Pierson at F. E. Warren AFB. They used a large seine and made three seine passes. Three fish species were documented along the south and west shores of the lake: yellow perch (n=64), redear sunfish (n=2), and shiners (n=86).

Airfield Management. Brian Mihlbachler and Melissa Whittingslow are working with Airfield Management to remove a denning fox and kits from the Bullseye Auxiliary Airfield. Per recommendations from Colorado Parks and Wildlife, strobe lights and an am/fm radio have been placed in the den area to hopefully harass the animals into relocating away from the airfield.

Welcome New SCA Intern: Taylor Cassidy

Taylor Cassidy first developed a serious interest in conservation after volunteering for the National Park Service at Fire Island National Seashore in New York. Supervised by the wildlife biologist who managed their threatened and endangered species program, Taylor helped monitor piping plover and endangered plants. Since then she earned her Bachelor's in Anthropology at SUNY New Paltz and most recently traveled across the country for a Student Conservation Association internship with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Buckley Air Force Base. Taylor will work as natural resource management intern and assist U.S. Fish and Wildlife Biologists on several Air Force bases along the Front Range.



Taylor Cassidy planting milkweed seed at Buckley AFB.

Habitat Conservation & Management

Noxious Weed Treatment. Dustin Casady assisted Max Canestorp treat a small population of Cypress spurge on Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station. Cypress spurge is noxious weed in the state of Colorado and it grows in dense stands that invade the habitat of native plants crowding them out and forming a monoculture. Small populations are much easier to treat and the application was effective. The site will be monitored for the next several years to ensure no new plants take root.

Smooth Brome Prescribed Burn. With the alignment of weather, plant phenology, and resources, USAFA Natural Resources completed its annual Smooth Brome prescribed burn. One acre was burned to improve habitat for the rare plant Plains Ironweed, one of only three known populations in Colorado. James Donahey completed all planning for the project, from burn plan updating to pre-burn notifications. Bob Ayotte, Wildland Fire Module Crew Leader, served as burn boss,

while Brian Mihlbachler, Shelly Crook, Fire and Emergency Services and the other two members of the Wildland Fire Module participated in the burn. It was successfully completed within two hours.

Douglas-fir tussock moth survey: Max Canestorp conducted a survey for Douglas-fir tussock moth (DFTM) along Cheyenne Mountain AFS's northern boundary. No evidence of DFTM was found, although the moth had defoliated many Doug-fir trees south of this area in recent years before the population crashed.

Stream Restoration. Brian Mihlbachler served on a City stormwater engineering review panel evaluating design proposals for a stream stabilization and habitat restoration project on Monument Branch, east of the Air Force Academy. Brian is also working with City and USAFA staff to facilitate access across base property when the project is constructed.

Falcon Club Thinning. James Donahey has been preparing for a trial to use

herbicide to manage oak resprouting. The trial will take place on the upper slope of the Falcon Club thinning unit. In anticipation of Dustin's spraying the first week of June, James has been pruning trees, which will hopefully prevent any herbicide drift from damaging the trees and will also increase fire resilience of the stand, and the view from the Falcon Club to the Cadet Area.

Water Quality Monitoring. Shain Wright (F. E. Warren AFB), Alex Schubert (FWS), and Taylor Cassidy (Student Conservation Association Intern) successfully re-calibrated the YSI water quality monitoring equipment at F. E. Warren AFB. They then proceeded to gather water quality measurements for all lakes, ponds, and creeks at F. E. Warren AFB. Water quality data from these water bodies will be regularly gathered to establish trends over time. This information will be useful in assessing the living conditions for aquatic life across the base.



Smooth brome prescribed burn at USAFA.

“One acre was burned to improve habitat for the rare plant, Plains Ironweed, one of only three known populations in Colorado. “