



December 2015 activities assisting the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes on the Wind River Reservation, WY- US FWS Lander Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office

To meet our trust responsibilities of assisting the Tribes with sensible fish and wildlife conservation, we performed the following activities:

Attended the Yellowstone cutthroat trout (YCT) committee meeting in Bozeman. This group coordinates conservation and management of the YCT in the Idaho, Montana and Wyoming region.

Developed partnerships and potential projects to construct fish passage projects from across Wyoming. Water diversions and elevated culverts can act as barriers and prevent fish from moving upstream. Structures are constructed and/or barriers are removed at these sites to allow fish to pass.

In cooperation with the Tribal F&G and Wyoming G&F, revisited remote camera traps and bait sites for detection of wolverines at 2 locations on Wind River. No wolverines were detected in December, but plenty of pine martens though! Sites are above 10,000 feet elevation and included Bold Mountain and Mount Shoshone above Washakie Park. This effort continues the project begun in March 2015, and is a part of a larger regional effort to assess wolverine occurrence in Wyoming, Montana, Idaho and Washington.



3 pine martens captured on camera, Mt Shoshone. The 3rd marten is difficult to see but located immediately above the one in the tree.

Registered, measured and attached metal plugs to the horns of 2 bighorn sheep harvested by tribal hunters from Wind River. Season closed on 11/30. A total of 13 sheep were registered during the 2015 season. Registering creates a "paper-trail" that significantly reduces illegal harvest of these trophy animals.

In cooperation with Tribal F&G, the University of Wyoming, and Wyoming G&F, we captured, collected disease samples, assessed body condition, and released 4 bighorn sheep ewes that were previously captured this past March on or near Red Creek and Sacagawea Ridge. A net fired from a helicopter was the means of capture. All ewes were in apparent good health. Three other collared ewes located in Wilderness on top of Arrow Mtn were inaccessible. A 4th ewe's collar malfunctioned and was not located. Study is being led by UW.

Prior to capture listed above, we ground surveyed the Red Creek/Sacagawea area for radio-collared bighorn sheep ewes to assess whether a lamb was



"Working up" a ewe prior to release near Red Creek.

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Acknowledgements: The Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office located in Lander, Wyoming, has assisted the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes with fisheries conservation since 1941 and wildlife conservation since 1975. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to assist the Tribes with conserving and enhancing their 2.2 million acres of beautiful lands, and the abundant fish and wildlife that reside there. Our special thanks go to the Tribal Fish and Game Department: Ben Snyder, Western Thayer, Art Lawson, Lynelle Shakespeare, Sheryl Heba, Lynette Ferris and Darsyl Posey without whose cooperation we could not accomplish our mission.

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present at the ewes' sides. Four sheep were observed, 2 with lambs-at-side.

Attended Wy G&F Bighorn Sheep Working Group meeting to plan capture and radio-collaring of 15 bighorn sheep this February in the North Fork Popo Agie and Little Wind River areas.

Presented at the Wy Wild Sheep Foundation winter meeting in Dubois describing the current conservation of bighorn sheep on Wind River. The WWSF will provide nearly \$30,000 to pay for the capture and radio-collaring of bighorn sheep mentioned above. The Wy G&F, with support from Tribal F&G and our office, submitted this funding request.

Conducted a ½ day survey of the Crowheart Butte area for the presence of pygmy rabbits. These rabbits are rare and have not officially been documented to occur on Wind River. An unconfirmed sighting in March indicated pygmy rabbits may be present there. Found no definitive sign nor observed any pygmy rabbits.

Surveyed Bull Lake Creek for wintering Trumpeter Swans. Observed 37 adults and 15 juvenile birds equaling the largest total on record. The large number of juvenile is very encouraging. These swans are unlikely to be summer breeders on Wind River. Instead, they are winter migrants from other parts of Wyoming and/or Idaho, Montana and Canada.

A trumpeter swan (#F37) that was released as a juvenile cygnet in Sept 2013 at Alkali Lake near Ft. Washakie has been spotted again for the 3rd consecutive winter along the Green River at Seedskaelee National Wildlife Refuge southwest of Farson, WY. This is approximately 100 air-miles distant. F37 had returned to Alkali Lake in 2015 with a mate. Typically trumpeters will first breed when 3 to 4 year-olds. We're hopeful this pair will breed in 2016 or 2017 at Alkali Lake.



F37 with mate seen on Dec 19, 2015 at Seedskaelee NWR. Photo by Tom Koerner.

January 2016 proposed activities:

Survey wintering trumpeter swans on Dinwoody and Bull Lake creeks.

Conduct mid-winter bald eagle survey along the Big Wind River from Riverton to Red Rocks.

Conduct a 4-day aerial survey of pronghorn antelope to assess population trend.

Conduct ground classification counts for elk in the Wind River and Owl Creek mountains.

Revisit wolverine camera sites on Bold Mountain, Trail Ridge, and Mount Shoshone to check cameras, remove storage cards to review pictures, and resupply with fresh bait and lure.

Conduct fish necropsies and anatomy instruction at Riverton Middle School as part of the on-going adopt-a-trout program on Bull Lake Creek.

Complete BIA Wildlife & Parks program proposals for potential tribal youth and endangered species project funding.

February 2016 proposed activities:

Capture 15 bighorn sheep ewes and rams in the North Fork Popo Agie and Little Wind River wintering areas. This study will assess movements and survival of these sheep that are descendants of 88 sheep transplanted above Washakie Reservoir in 1988 and 1993. There is interest from the local public to transplant sheep into Sinks Canyon, and biologists from the WY G&F and the Lander FWCO would first like to assess areas of use and movement corridors prior to entertaining any transplants.

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