

# Monthly "tweet sheet" of activities assisting the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes on the Wind River Reservation, WY - March 2020

US Fish & Wildlife Service, Lander Fish & Wildlife Conservation Office



In response to COVID-19, we have been directed by our agency to suspended fieldwork. Activities listed below occurred prior to this decision.

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

In cooperation with University Wyoming's Migration Initiative and Shoshone and Arapaho Fish & Game, we surveyed mule deer on winter range to determine presence of juveniles with GPS collared does. Following this field recon, we used a helicopter contractor to capture and collar eighteen 9-month old juveniles. The goal is to assess the degree of generational-learning of migration patterns.

Retrieved a mule deer collar in the Spring Mountain area. A mountain lion had killed the collared doe.

In Cooperation with UW, SAFG and Wyoming Game & Fish, we re-captured 15 GPS-collared ewes in the Red Rocks portion of the Whiskey Mountain bighorn sheep herd to assess health and body condition. This is a part of a long-term study of lamb survival and herd health.

Conducted a helicopter survey of bighorn sheep in the South Fork Little Wind River area, Bull Lake Ridge, Owl Creek Mountains and Wind River Canyon. Fewer bighorns were observed since wind conditions in certain portions prevented us from conducting a complete coverage of these areas.

Collared mule deer doe on left with other does and a fawn



Helicopter crew preparing to net capture mule deer

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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 landscape, and the abundant fish and wildlife that reside there. Our special thanks go to the Shoshone & Arapaho Fish & Game Department: Art Lawson, Ben Snyder, Justin Friday, Wilma Wagon, and Ivan Brown without whose cooperation we could not accomplish our mission.

Surveyed 5 of the 50+ sage-grouse leks located on Wind River. Though early in the breeding season and only representing a small percentage of leks, male attendance was down 20 to 30% compared to last year during mid-March.

Attended BIA-led meeting to discuss a plan that directs the emergency response to a catastrophic failure of Washakie Reservoir Dam or Ray Lake Dam.

### April 2020 proposed activities:

Fieldwork suspended due to COVID-19.

### May 2020 proposed activities:

*Assuming field activities will resume:*

Conduct a netting survey of Ray Lake to assess the fishery.

Collect fish for mercury contamination analysis in the South Fork Little Wind drainage.

Conduct a river otter survey on the Big Wind River to help determine presence and abundance. No otter surveys have been conducted before on the Reservation.

Capture and collar one to two wolves in the St. Lawrence Pack. Having a collared wolf greatly enhances our ability to monitor pack distribution and help assess and address livestock depredations. 2018 was the last year that this pack had a collared wolf.

Install range cages at monitoring sites in the Wind River Mountains to track forage availability and utilization.

Revisit wolverine camera sites on Bold Mountain, St. Lawrence Ridge, Blue Trail, Trail Ridge, and Mount Shoshone to check cameras, remove storage cards to review pictures, and resupply with fresh bait and lure for grizzly bear & wolf survey.



Warden Turk Brown helping process a ewe



Male sage-grouse displaying on a lek