

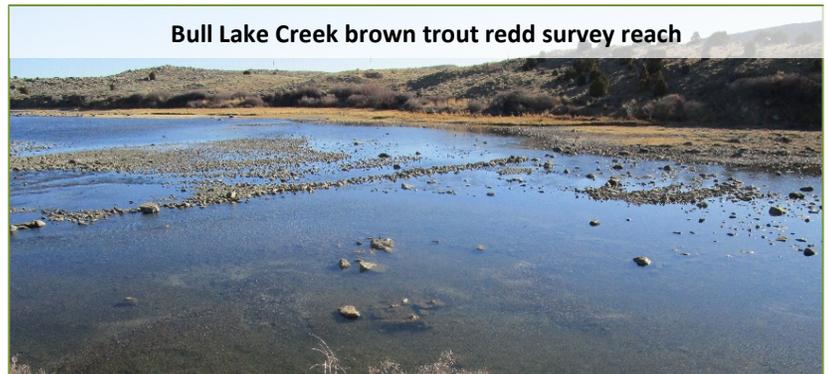
## Monthly "tweet sheet" of activities assisting the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes on the Wind River Reservation, WY – November - December 2020

US Fish & Wildlife Service, 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:

Surveyed brown trout redds below Bull Lake Dam. Trout dig nests in gravel called "redds" to lay their eggs. Twenty-five redds were observed in the survey reach, the fewest observed since surveys began a decade ago.



Collected fish in the Little Wind near Fort Washakie for submission to EPA for an assessment of mercury levels. Fish were selected from this stretch due to its proximity to town.

Assisted Tribal Fish & Game with recovery of grizzly bear parts from a suspected poached bear near Beaver Creek in the East Fork Wind River drainage. The bear was frozen in the ice of a tributary stream and is part of an ongoing criminal investigation.



Registered 5 bighorn sheep harvested by tribal hunters in the Owl Creek Mountain hunt unit, 1 in the Wind River Canyon hunt unit, and 5 in the Dinwoody hunt unit. Hunter registration of sheep heads helps minimize illegal harvest of this highly desirable species.

Assisted Wyoming Game and Fish Department with their annual sage-grouse wing evaluation. Sage-grouse wings collected from hunters are used to estimate the proportion of males, females, and juvenile birds in local sage-grouse populations, and indicate how many young grouse were recruited to the population. This analysis showed an average recruitment year that should hold the local population steady.



Conducted monthly swan surveys. Wintering trumpeter swan numbers appear to be slightly down this year with fewer juvenile swans present. A total of 47 adults and 6 juvenile swans were counted in the Dinwoody and Bull Lake areas. These counts are incorporated into the larger assessment of the Tristate flock (MT, WY ID).

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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 Ervin Brown without whose concurrence and cooperation we could not accomplish our mission.

Investigated a mortality of a trumpeter swan after it struck a power line located below Bull Lake dam. We notified High Plains Power who will now be installing line reflectors to improve visibility and reduce future swan collisions.

Investigated mysterious mortalities of three GPS-collared elk. Prior to death, each cow appeared to have a period of partial paralysis and showed significant signs of struggle. Mortalities were located in Jewel Canyon, on Riley Flats, and on Diamond Ridge. We collected a variety of tissue samples, which the Wyoming State Vet Lab is analyzing for toxicity. Following lab results, we will provide a summary report of the findings. In addition to these three, hunters legally harvested an additional four collared elk.



Cow elk mortality located on Diamond Ridge

Retrieved GPS collars from two doe mule deer mortalities. A mountain lion killed and cached one doe on Crow Mtn in the Owl Creek Mountains during her migration back to winter range. A hunter harvested the other doe and discarded the collar at the kill site located along Dry Creek in the Wind River Mountains. This information continues to build our knowledge of how and where mule deer mortalities occur and will help guide decisions for sustainable management of this population.

Conducted a 2-week survey of collared mule deer to assess fawn survival and herd demographics as mule deer return to their winter ranges on Wind River. We visually observed 27 collared deer. This was ~1/2 of the active collars. Two biologists from the Colorado Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office provided excellent assistance.



Biologists Dana Shellhorn & Cole Brittain glass for mule deer

In collaboration with Tribal Fish & Game, NRCS, the Nature Conservancy, Wind River BIA and Fremont County Weed and Pest, we mapped and identified potential large-scale cheatgrass spray projects in the Coyote Basin and Washakie Breaks area. These winter ranges for bighorn sheep and mule deer have been severely impacted by feral horse grazing and cheatgrass invasion. Horse removal and control of cheatgrass would greatly improve these ranges for wildlife.



Collared mule deer doe with a fawn

Photo by Ervin Brown

Provided environmental reviews for three proposed homesites and an APHIS's proposal to use a bio-control wasp in Fremont County against the invasive *Drosophila* insect pest.

### January 2021 proposed activities:

Investigate mortality sites and retrieve deer & elk GPS collars as needed.

Conduct midwinter eagle count.

Re-capture 35-40 mule deer does to download location data and reprogram collar release to a later date. This is part of the on-going investigation of inheritance of migration patterns from mother to offspring.

### February 2021 proposed activities:

Retrieve 50+ GPS collars that are programmed to release on Feb 1<sup>st</sup> from live mule deer and elk.

