

Sage Grouse Surveys Underway!

Spring is here and love is in the air for Idaho's feathered wildlife. In April, male sage-grouse strut their stuff in the hopes of attracting a mate, as they have since time immemorial. Birds assemble on grassy pockets near sagebrush, known as leks, inflating and compressing air sacks on their chests to produce an unmistakable "popping" sound. Somehow the sage-grouse ladies seem to like this, and by mid-April show up to judge the prospects. This is good news for wildlife biologists, because lekking provides a rare opportunity to survey the birds before they disperse for another year.



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Did you know that IDFG opens access to over 380,000 acres of private land and 490,000 acres of public lands through our AccessYes! Program? AccessYes! is designed to improve sportsmen access by providing compensation to willing landowners. These lands can provide access to hunt on private land, or access to public land through private holdings. If you would like more information about this program, contact Katie Oelrich in Nampa, or look at the IDFG webpage:

<http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/ifwis/huntplanner/accessyesguide.aspx>

There are several wonderful properties in the Southwest Region!

Radio-collared elk in the South Fork Salmon

Idaho Fish and Game darted elk from helicopters to deploy GPS radio-collars on 12 adult cow elk this winter in the South Fork Salmon River drainage. The collars are programmed to collect one GPS location per day for up to 4 years. This effort is part of a larger project that involves over 400 radio-collared elk distributed in study areas across the state. The information collected will help managers better understand factors affecting survival rates, how elk use the landscape, and their seasonal movements. At present, there have been no radio-collared elk mortalities in the South Fork. Some of the elk have begun to make the move from winter to summer range while others are still hanging out close to where they were collared.

Monitoring Northern Idaho Ground Squirrels

Seasonal wildlife technicians have begun an annual effort to count the number of northern Idaho ground squirrels, a small burrow-dwelling mammal federally listed as 'threatened'. This species is unique in that it is found in Adams and Valley counties and nowhere else in the world. Every spring IDFG conducts surveys throughout this limited geographic area to estimate population size and trend. It takes sharp eyes and keen hearing to detect this often secretive mammal that spends 8 months a year underground. Its larger relative, the Columbian ground squirrel, is much more familiar.



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