

New Mexico

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Wildlife

Black bears

Protecting wildlife
and the public

Inside:

Black-footed ferrets reintroduced to the state

Photographer's Lens: Bald eagles of the Four Corners

What's in a hunting dog?



Remember to practice safe boating and protect our water bodies from AIS

It won't be long until boaters across New Mexico and the southwestern United States start getting their boats and equipment ready for fun-filled days on the lake. Planning and completing tasks is essential for all boat owners and while some of the things you need to do and take vary depending on the watercraft, two tasks that are common for all those boating in New Mexico are cleaning, draining and drying your watercraft to protect against Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) and preparing for a watercraft inspection.

Since 2013, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and its partners have been providing public outreach and conducting watercraft inspections at various water bodies across the state to prevent the introduction of AIS. Zebra mussels, quagga mussels, Eurasian watermilfoil and hydrilla are just a few of the many AIS species that have the potential to enter our waters and seriously impact recreation, irrigation and municipal drinking water activities. Once established, most AIS are difficult or impossible to remove.

The department conducts routine monitoring throughout the boating season as part of their early detection program. "At this time, there are no New Mexico water bodies that contain a population of zebra or quagga mussels, but the threat continues to increase every year," said AIS Coordinator James Dominguez. "Help from the public is essential to keeping any AIS from entering our water bodies."

What you need to know and how you can help?

- Completely clean, drain and dry your entire watercraft after every boat outing
- Remove boat and other drain plugs before getting on a New Mexico roadway
- Stopping at a watercraft inspection station is required
- Obtain a wire and seal when departing the lake—it will speed up your next inspection
- Lower motor, open compartments and have equipment ready for the inspector
- Call the department to schedule an inspection if you leave the state with your watercraft or your watercraft is registered out of state
- Unlike safety inspections, AIS inspections must be performed throughout the season
- The average boat inspection lasts about three minutes or less
- Inspections and decontaminations are free of charge

Free Fishing Day is September 28!

Anglers can fish for free in New Mexico on Saturday, September 28, as the state celebrates National Hunting and Fishing Day.

"This is a great time to take your family fishing and teach them a skill that will provide a lifetime of

enjoyment," said Kevin Holladay, former conservation education program manager for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

Please remember: everyone must observe bag limits and all other rules and regulations. For information about where to fish and what to use, consult the department's weekly fishing and stocking report.

Department offers summer hunter education camps

If you are looking for a great weekend activity, the Department of Game and Fish is offering several hunter education camps for kids this spring and summer:

- August 9-11: Sacramento at BSA Camp Wehinahpay. This camp will include .22 rifle, archery, and fishing.
- August 16-18: Raton at NRA Whittington Center. This camp will include responsible firearms handling, ethical hunting behaviors, conservation, wildlife identification and basic survival skills.
- September 6-8: Cimarron at Philmont Scout Ranch. This camp will be hosted in partnership with the Safari Club International Foundation.

All camps are open to youth 10 and over who have not yet had hunter education.





New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

Conserving New Mexico's Wildlife for Future Generations

It is the mission of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to conserve, regulate, propagate and protect the wildlife and fish within the State of New Mexico, using a flexible management system that ensures sustainable use for public food supply, recreation and safety—and to provide for off-highway motor vehicle recreation that recognizes cultural, historic and resource values while ensuring public safety.

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Important Telephone Numbers

Gen. Information, License Sales and Harvest Reporting . . 1-888-248-6866
Bear and Cougar Zone Closure and Harvest Hotline . . . 1-877-950-5466
Hunter Education Program Information (505) 222-4731
Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) Information (505) 222-4712
Operation Game Thief 1-800-432-4263
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Cover: This orphaned black bear was released into the wild after six months in the care of Dr. Kathleen Ramsey, a New Mexico veterinarian who specializes in rehabilitation of sick and injured wildlife. Its reddish-brown coat is characteristic of the

cinnamon color phase commonly seen throughout New Mexico. Black bears range in color from black to blond with shades of brown and reddish brown in between. Department photo by Martin Perea.

Hunter education ... why wait!

By Jennifer Morgan

Firearms safety. Ethical shot placement. Respect for natural resources. These may be some concepts that come to mind when you think of hunter education.



In the 1940s, volunteer sportsmen and women who had the desire to raise ethical behaviors and actions by hunters while in the field established hunter education as a nationwide effort. This effort was to promote the self-respect of all hunters and change negative behaviors. The problems of firearms and hunting accidents, game law violations and disrespect of the natural resources were met head on by those who had the passion to pass on these positive standards. In just under 80 years, the result has been one of the most successful programs ever produced by conservation organizations and fish and wildlife agencies.

Above: Students learning the importance of shot placement at one of the Hunter Education camps at Washington Ranch near Carlsbad.

Right: Hunter education instructors review the camp agenda and expectations at Camp Wehinahpay near Cloudcroft.

Department photos by Ross Morgan.

Hunter education is intended to provide an educational opportunity that enables students to safely participate in hunting or the shooting sports. Its mission is to produce safe, ethical and responsible members of the community that will be tomorrow's hunters.

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish first provided hunter education in 1965 and in the early-1970s laws were formed to support safe and ethical hunting behaviors. New Mexico requires all hunters under 18 years of age to have a state-approved hunter education certificate before they can hunt with a firearm or apply for any firearms hunting licenses. The department encourages hunters of all ages to participate in hunter education. Hunter education programs are ran by each state's fish and wildlife agency and over 650,000 students are certified annually, nationwide. Hunter education certificates are recognized in all 50 states, Canada and Mexico.

The department offers courses year-round, statewide. Students have options on how to earn their New Mexico hunter education certificate. Students of any age can register for a standard course that is typically taught over a weekend. Students age 10 and over may choose to take the more advanced field-day course option that is a more hands-on, six-hour course. Both of these courses are led by department certified hunter education instructors and staff.

Additionally, students age 11 and over have the option of gaining their certification completely online from one of the three online course providers. There is no in-person requirement. The department also hosts hunter education camps from spring through fall that provide the chance to earn a hunter education certificate in a camp-style setting. Camps provide the opportunity to shoot .22 rifles, bows, shotguns and on occasion, even fish!

It is important to remember that hunting is a privilege. Hunter education is a proactive way that successfully reduces poor hunting behavior and hunting-related incidents. If hunting is to survive for generations, hunters must act safely and responsibly towards themselves, other hunters, non-hunters, landowners and to the resource itself. This is everything that is taught throughout a hunter education course.

Why wait? Take a course today!



Jennifer Morgan is the hunter education coordinator with the department.



More News & Information ...



Biota Information System of New Mexico interface updated

SANTA FE – Want to learn more about species found in your part of the state? Check out the updated interface for the Biota Information System of New Mexico (BISON-M; bison-m.org).

BISON-M was first developed back in the 90's and is continually being updated. It currently contains accounts for over 6,800 species found in New Mexico and neighboring states. BISON-M allows you to do searches for a particular species or get lists of species found in different parts of New Mexico.

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Natural Heritage New Mexico and DataWizards recently partnered to update the interface for the BISON-M website. The update included streamlining several of the search functions and adding new functionality.

Want to learn about the bird you just saw in your backyard? Want to see what species are found on public lands near your house? BISON-M can help you answer these questions and more.

"BISON-M is a continually evolving database," said Ginny Seamster, the department's BISON-M coordinator. "Feedback on the database, including identification of new references or provision of photographs for species that don't currently have them, is always appreciated."

Please visit the BISON-M website at www.bison-m.org for more information or contact Seamster at (505) 476-8111 or virginia.seamster@state.nm.us.

Public reminded to leave young wildlife alone

Spring in New Mexico is an exciting time for wildlife. This is the time of year when most babies are born. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish reminds the public to leave alone any deer or antelope fawns, elk calves, bear cubs or other wild animals they may find.

Most young-of-the-year wildlife that people discover are simply hiding while awaiting their parents' return from foraging nearby.

Removing these young animals can cost them their lives, Orrin Duvuvuei, department deer and pronghorn biologist, warned.

"For about a week after birth, young wildlife exhibit hiding behaviors to avoid detection and increase their chance for survival. You might think it has been abandoned, but in reality, the mother is typically a few hundred yards away," Duvuvuei said. "In most cases, the best thing to do is just leave it alone and quietly leave the area."

If you see young wildlife, please follow these guidelines:

- Do not approach. Its mother is likely close by and aware that you are in the area.
- Leave the area quickly and quietly.
- Observe the animal from a safe distance. Typically, wildlife babies that appear to be dry have bonded with their mothers, and you can safely take their pictures from this distance, but don't linger in the area or touch the animal.
- If you think the animal has been abandoned, if possible mark the location using a GPS and contact the department by calling (888) 248-6866.



#fishnmwithbigfoot

April 1 kicked off the 2019-2020 fishing and game hunting license year. With the start of the season you can find the current Fishing Regulation and Information Booklet (RIB) posted on the department's website; the printed version can be found at department offices and vendor locations across the state.

Page 26 has become the center of attention in this year's fishing RIB. Look closely and you will notice Bigfoot lurking in the picture.

During the 2019-2020 license year, grab your gear, catch a fish, snap a picture with the current RIBs and share it on Instagram with the #fishnmwithbigfoot. We will be featuring photos on our social media feeds and sharing them throughout the year.

Good luck and happy fishing!

Above: Department photo.

Black-footed ferrets reintroduced to New Mexico once again

By Alexa J. Henry



Hiding inside small pet carriers in the back of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service truck, eight very rare animals that once thrived in New Mexico waited to go home.

It was a sunny, late September afternoon when wildlife biologists, conservationists, ranchers and local residents gathered on the side of a dirt road at the Moore Land and Cattle Company ranch east of Wagon Mound for the rare opportunity to witness the reintroduction of the black-footed ferret to New Mexico. The ferrets were driven down from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Black-Footed Ferret Conservation Center near Fort Collins, Colo. where the animals are raised in captivity and prepared for release at sites throughout the interior western United States.

The release location was only the third ever in the state; several years have passed since the last reintroduction attempt at the Vermejo Park Ranch in 2012 in Colfax County, not too far away from this 500-acre black-tailed prairie dog town.

In the wild, black-footed ferrets reside in prairie dog towns. For ranchers such as Greg Moore, owner of the 25,000-acre ranch, this program is an opportunity to restore native species to his property.

And the large prairie dog population on Moore's ranch means ferrets can thrive there. Black-footed ferrets rely almost exclusively on prairie dogs, for food and for their burrows, which provide denning and shelter sites; the presence of a predator species would keep the prairie dog population in check, enable ranchers to avoid shooting or poisoning the animals and possibly force them to move elsewhere before they further damage the land damage the land by creating too many burrows.

"Is the prairie dog the villain or is it just getting used by a lot of other species, and then the prairie dog gets the blame?" asked Moore, who has owned the ranch since 1971. "Maybe the little ferrets could make them move around so they don't sit in one spot."

Opposite: A released ferret peeks out from a black-corrugated tube. Department photo by Jim Stuart.



Black-footed ferrets were believed to be extinct in the early 1980s. The species has been listed as endangered across its entire range since 1967, according to the Fish and Wildlife Service. In 1981, and to the surprise of many ferret researchers, one last colony was found in northwestern Wyoming, said Pete Gober, black-footed ferret recovery coordinator with the Service. "It did ok for a few years but it was impacted by plague," he explained. "What few animals were left there had to be pulled into captivity." Those captured survivors provided the breeding stock for all black-footed ferrets that are alive today.

The ferrets existed in New Mexico up until the mid-20th century, said Jim Stuart, endangered nongame mammal biologist with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

After the discovery of ferrets in Wyoming, there was a big push to try to identify if there were any ferrets left in New Mexico as well as in other states where it historically occurred, Stuart said. "There was a lot of public outreach and requests for information from the public, a lot of surveys were done on prairie dog towns throughout New Mexico, and none of them ever detected a ferret," he said. "After about a decade or so of surveys, we assumed the species was indeed gone from New Mexico."

The two other releases conducted in New Mexico at Vermejo Park happened in 2008 and 2012; today, it's unknown if any have survived due to drought and plague. At present, the release program at Vermejo is on hold.

Gober estimates that there are probably 300 to 400 ferrets in the wild across the former range which included portions of the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain states. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has released ferrets in 30 different places on prairie dog towns—on public, tribal and private lands—across the west. Ten sites have not succeeded due to plague, he noted.

Moving forward, wildlife biologists will focus on keeping the plague—referred to as the sylvatic plague in animals and the bubonic plague in humans when it is transferred to people via flea bites, direct contact with infected animals and bites from infected mammals—at bay. Both prairie dogs and black-footed ferrets are susceptible to plague, which occurs throughout New Mexico and was first detected in the state in the 1930s. Although the released ferrets were already vaccinated against the sylvatic plague, the prairie dogs at Moore's ranch were not. In November 2018, department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel administered edible peanut-butter flavored baits that contained sylvatic plague vaccine on the prairie dog town in order to inoculate the rodents. Application of the vaccine baits will have to be done on an annual basis to ensure that a large percentage of the prairie dogs remain resistant to the disease in the event of an outbreak.

The goal is to conserve both species. "If we lose the prairie dogs, we lose the ferrets," said Stuart. "Managing for ferrets requires a lot of work since disease is by far the biggest threat to survival of ferrets and prairie dogs alike. I see this [reintroduction] as a first few footsteps in terms of reintroducing this animal at many more places in New Mexico."

Top: This poster was produced in 1982 by the Department of Game and Fish and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management as part of a publicity campaign to collect observation records from the public of possible black-footed ferret in New Mexico.



One by one, each crate is held over a prairie dog burrow. The ferrets, four male and four female, hide inside a black corrugated pipe. Sometimes the animals just slide in first without hesitation. Sometimes they don't and they take time to finally enter the prairie dog hole, Gober said.

Moore is invited to release the first ferret on his ranch.

It takes several minutes to coax the ferret out of the crate with a stick. The tube and ferret slide into the hole. Then the animal twists around to look up through the opposite end of the tube and chatter loudly in protest.

Upon release of the ferret, a chunk of prairie dog meat was tossed down the burrow so the newly introduced animal would not have to hunt on its first night in the wild. Other than that, the ferrets were on their own.



Each microchipped ferret will be monitored by wildlife biologists over the coming year. A total of eight release burrows were marked with orange flags. A few are released at one area, the rest further down the road at another area with a high density of prairie dogs. The ferrets are not expected to remain where they were released.

Moore noted that better habitat management could help keep four other species on his land—ferruginous hawk, swift fox, burrowing owl and mountain plover—off the endangered species list.

“Maybe we can stop that from happening if enough landowners will do what we’re doing here,” said Moore. “One hundred landowners would make a wonderful start.”

By reintroducing the endangered ferrets, Gober added, “you are able to conserve prairie dogs, and if you conserve enough prairie dogs in enough places you’ll help other species on the coattails of the ferrets.”

Left: Black-footed ferret released at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, Fort Collins, Colo. 2014. Photo by Bruce Gill, retired Colorado Parks & Wildlife.

Right: Greg Moore releases the first of eight black-footed ferrets into a prairie dog burrow. Department photo by Martin Perea.

Bottom: Black-footed ferrets rely on prairie dogs for food and burrows. Department photo by Jim Stuart.

Share with Wildlife 2019 Projects

By Ginny Seamster

The Share with Wildlife program at New Mexico Department of Game and Fish funds wildlife research, education and rehabilitation projects every year. These projects typically focus on species that are not hunted or fished and that have scarce funds available for their conservation, management and other support. For 2019, Share with Wildlife is supporting 12 new projects.

Share with Wildlife is continuing support of three wildlife rehabilitation centers, two in northern New Mexico and one in southeastern New Mexico. New Mexico Wildlife Center is located in Española and Wildlife Rescue Inc. of New Mexico is in Albuquerque at the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park. Desert Willow Wildlife Rehabilitation is in Carlsbad. All three facilities take in hundreds of injured or ill wild animals each year. Their staff and volunteers have a wealth of information regarding our state's wildlife and what you can do to help them in the event that they are hurt.

Two education projects are being supported for 2019. These projects will include curriculum development and implementation by the Bosque Ecosystem Monitoring Program at Bosque School in Albuquerque and River Source in Santa Fe. The new curricula will focus on the biology, ecology and monitoring of Species of Greatest Conservation Need that live in riparian habitats along the Rio Grande and other rivers in the state, including the Pecos River, Rio Pueblo, Rio Santa Barbara and Santa Fe River. These curricula will involve both classroom- and field-based activities.

A key focus for education projects funded through Share with Wildlife is supplementing the science education, especially as it pertains to environmental science, that K-12 students already receive. Bosque School works with thousands of students every year, facilitating their understanding of the natural world through citizen science activities conducted in the unique bosque ecosystem along the middle Rio Grande. River Source works with students from multiple schools in northern New Mexico, including



in El Dorado, Peñasco and Santa Fe, to better understand and value aquatic and riparian ecosystems by leading science-based monitoring activities in these environments.

Seven research projects will be getting underway in 2019. These projects deal with species ranging from the Peñasco least chipmunk, which is only found in high elevation areas in southeastern New Mexico, to Bendire's thrasher, an elusive bird found in the southwestern most corner of the state. All seven projects will help inform future conservation and management actions on the part of New Mexico Department of Game and Fish and fill information gaps identified by department biologists. For example, what habitat features are important for juvenile Bendire's thrashers and gray vireos? How are these species impacted by various land management practices in desert shrubland and pinyon-juniper woodland habitats? What is the genetic health of New Mexico's Chihuahua chub populations and how closely related are wild chubs to those held in captivity?

Above: Bendire's thrasher nest with eggs. Photo by Allison Salas, New Mexico State University graduate student.



Virginia 'Ginny' Seamster, Ph.D., is the BISON-M/Share with Wildlife Coordinator with the Ecological and Environmental Planning Division of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

Wildlife water woes

Wildlife in the southeast New Mexico desert get a new drinker

By Cody Johnston

If you are from southeastern New Mexico or have spent any time here you know it is a dry and at times hot climate. It can be really hot, windy and dry in the summer months with not much rain in sight.

With the little bit of rain we do get, it comes down fast and hard and doesn't last for too long on the ground once the sun comes out again. This can make

for wildlife species; after surveys it was decided by the department's prairie chicken biologist and the southeast area habitat biologist that a wildlife drinker could really benefit the wildlife in this region. A plan was set in motion to install a wildlife drinker.

For those who don't know what a wildlife drinker is, it is a system generally set up to catch rainwater, and

Luckily, a few clouds helped to keep down the heat. After numerous trips from the trucks to the site with two side-by-sides and an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) loaded down with gear, we were finally able to get started.

We first worked on putting up a perimeter barb wire fence that would prevent any loose cattle from neighboring properties from getting to the drinker. After a lot of digging, many bags of concrete and a few nicks and cuts from stretched out barbwire, the fence was up. We were then able to get to installing the drinker.

We began by digging out a small trench where the water line would be buried. We then had to dig out the hole where the trough would be set. The clouds had disappeared by this point and the temperature was reaching the upper 90s. Between the heat and having to dig through hard clay, the day was shaping up to be one of those hot, dry New Mexico days. Luckily we had brought plenty of water, and soon the wildlife would have a new water source as well.

After a few more hours of work finishing the installation of plumbing and a gate, the project was complete. Almost on cue, a monsoon arrived. It began pouring rain. What a great way to end the day and to start off that new drinker.

Left: Game and Fish biologists and officers fill up side by sides to the max with fencing materials and tools to install the new Crossroads wildlife drinker and a fence to keep out livestock. Department photo by Cody Johnston.



Cody Johnston is the Department of Game and Fish public information officer for the Southeast Area.



it tough for wildlife in the area to find drinking water. With that thought in mind, wildlife biologists have for decades been installing wildlife drinkers in remote areas where water availability is sporadic. The idea being that wildlife habitat projects, such as wildlife drinkers, can enhance, help grow and maintain healthy populations of different wildlife for everyone to enjoy.

Crossroads #3 Prairie Chicken Area near the town of Crossroads is one of these hot, dusty, dry grassland areas of the southeast. It is home to many species of wildlife including deer, quail and the protected lesser prairie chicken. This area lacks any real water sources

hold it in a tank so it doesn't evaporate. The tank is connected to a small trough that has a float; much like a swamp cooler on your house, and when the water level in the trough drops, more water is released from the holding tank. This assures that water is always available in the trough but not so much that it is evaporating. The large tank has an opening to catch rainwater, which works really well when we have those big monsoons that roll into New Mexico. With this system it helps provide water to wildlife in those tough times when there isn't much precipitation.

Biologists, conservation officers and I loaded up all the tools and equipment we would need for the project and headed to the Prairie Chicken Area.

BioBlitzing

Taking inventory of the Mesilla Valley Bosque

By Jeremy Lane

In the pre-dawn hours of Mesilla, bleary-eyed biologists are debating whether the large black bird they just saw fly over was a common raven or a Chihuahuan raven.

The discussion isn't pedantic one. They are participants in a BioBlitz at Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park, a first for the property.

A BioBlitz is a gathering of naturalists who seek to inventory every living thing they encounter in a short time span—in this case, over the course of a weekend.

“Not only does a BioBlitz get people outdoors, appreciating nature, but it also provides species lists for land managers – a quick inventory of what's there at that time of year,” explained Kevin Holladay, conservation education coordinator with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. “Using the data, biologists can determine if a species' numbers are increasing or decreasing – how species are doing in general.”

Both of those facets were evident at the event with young children watching and assisting seasoned professionals while they performed different biological sampling techniques throughout the weekend.

Mist-netting (nets of fine filament to trap birds as they fly into the unseen barrier) yielded some very hard-to-observe species such as Crissal Thrasher and Lucy's Warbler, a tiny species that weighs less than a used stick of lip balm, biologists jokingly compared. Appropriately-sized metal bands were attached to captured bird legs before they were released; information about how far they traveled or how long they have lived can be gathered in the future upon recapture.

Small mammal traps, baited with a mixture of rolled oats and peanut butter, were placed in different habitat types and caught things like white-throated

woodrat, “or packrats as they're more commonly known,” said Jim Stuart, endangered nongame mammal biologist at the Department of Game and Fish.

“Packrats build a pile of thorned branches or cactus pads to defend their burrows,” he continued. “These ‘middens’ provide shelter habitat for a number of species, including other mammals, reptiles and amphibians.”

Lizard fishing was performed with thread nooses tied to the end of sticks or fishing poles. “Lizards will only let your hand get so close before they run away, but an inanimate stick is tolerated to even touch the top of their head,” said Eric Justice, a plant specialist and naturalist volunteer at the event.

All animals captured were kept for a short time to photograph and help educate participants, talk about ecology and then were released back where they were found.

Experts in things like butterfly and plants accompanied tour groups as they went for short hikes through the varying Bosque terrain.

“The Mesilla Valley Bosque is a very unique area and a great place for a BioBlitz,” Justice said. “Here you have the Rio Grande close to its height for the season, and all the waterfowl, shorebirds and warblers that like the dense canopy of those wetter areas, but you also have upland areas with creosote bush and soaptree yucca that are home to the species we more closely associate with desert. It's really an oasis.”

If interested in exploring the area yourself, Mesilla Valley Bosque State Park is located at 5000 Calle del Norte in Mesilla, is open seven days a week (including holidays, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) and is free to enjoy. If you plan on deciphering the raven conundrum, get close enough to observe “nasal bristles” and you'll be in good shape.



Top: A yellow warbler has its wing feathers measured to determine age by Mara Weisenberger with the Bureau of Land Management.

Bottom: Jeremy Lane is the Department of Game and Fish public information officer for the Southwest Area.

Department photos by Tristanna Bickford.

Living with bears

A Q&A with department biologist Rick Winslow



New Mexico is home to approximately 8,000 black bears. Every year, a couple hundred come in contact with humans; most encounters are uneventful, but encounters can result in the destruction of property or injuries to both bears and people.

In an interview with New Mexico Wildlife, Rick Winslow, bear and cougar biologist at the Department of Game and Fish, answered questions about the bear population in our state and gave tips on how humans and bears can coexist without conflict.

Above: Department photo by Dan Williams, former assistant chief of information for the Department of Game and Fish.

How can I keep bears away from my property?

The simplest answer is not to have anything that will attract a bear. Fruit trees are generally the biggest thing. If you have ripe apples, peaches or apricots and you're very close to bear habitat, you're going to have bears visit. You can harvest those fruit right as they're starting to ripen—not waiting until they are ripe and are falling on the ground, because once they fall on the ground they're rotting.

Bird feeders: everybody likes to feed birds, everybody likes to see birds. Bird feeders can be extremely attractive to bears; a pound of bird food has 13,000 calories. Bears have an incredibly efficient digestive tract. They eat almost anything. Take your bird feeders inside at night.

What should I do if I see a bear in my yard?

Consider what it's doing. If it's just passing through and if you have a water feature in your yard and it's the middle of the summer and it's stopping for a drink, hopefully it will travel on. If it's hanging around, you need to figure out what the attractant is, why is it staying there, what is it doing and find a way to remove the attractant.

They're not there to bother you and get into your house. They're there to forage naturally. If it's foraging, leave it alone, let it go. It will move on.

What factors affect their hibernation cycle?

The biggest factor is how good the fall is for bears. How fat they are in the fall, how much food they manage to put in and eat. If they have a bad fall, they tend to hibernate early. If they have a good fall, they tend to hibernate early. It's a little counter-intuitive. If there's nothing to eat, it makes more sense for them to go to sleep. If there's tons to eat, at some point they saturate their ability to incorporate more.

They can only gain so much weight and they'll go to hibernation reasonably early. Female bears, especially female bears that are going to have cubs, will go into hibernation early. They can go in late September or early October. Whereas male bears, if there's still food on the ground, may stay out until December.

Some male bears, particularly in the southern portions of the state, and at lower altitudes, may not hibernate much, or at all. Since there is food available all year in some of those areas (juniper berries, cactus fruit, mesquite beans, etc.) male bears and younger, non-breeding bears, don't necessarily need to hibernate.

What do bears usually eat throughout the year? How does their diet change from season to season?

They eat anything they can. If it has nutrition, bears will eat it. When they get out of hibernation, they generally tend to eat green grasses and forbs—all the little things that aren't grass such as dandelions and purslane. That's what they eat initially. After that, bears sort of enter the worst time of the year for them. As those grasses and things like that dry up, as it warms up and the snow recedes, and as the moisture dries up for the year, they move to insects. They do things like tear up logs, roll rocks, eat ants and beetle larva and whatever little critters they can find underneath those and inside of those logs and rocks.

As fruit starts to develop in the summer they start eating fruit, moving into what we call soft mast. Any fruit is soft mast. Then they move to hard mast as it develops, acorns, pinion nuts and juniper berries. Even though juniper berries are a berry, they're a strange berry and fall between hard and soft mast. Juniper berries can be very important. There are areas of the state where there is not a lot to eat other than juniper berries and the bears eat a lot of them. We also have bears that are very desert adapted. Prickly pear fruit, agave fruit, mesquite beans. All of these things are edible and sources of nutrition for bears.



Why do bears wander into urban areas? I thought they're afraid of humans.

Naturally, bears are afraid of humans. We represent something that is dangerous to them and they are aware of that. However, they get used to us over time, particularly bears that have been taught by their mothers or by being around humans from time to time that we are not as dangerous as we may appear at first. And they just get used to us. They become habituated to human presence and they stop worrying about it. This is why we continually say a fed bear is a dead bear. Don't feed the bears because when you feed them and they start to look at us as a source of nutrition, that's when problems begin and more conflict occurs.

Above: Rick Winslow has been a bear and cougar biologist since 2003. Department photo by Martin Perea.

I like having bird feeders on my property but I heard they can attract bears. Do I have to get rid of my bird feeders?

No, you don't have to get rid of them, but yes, you should. There's plenty of wild food for birds in the summer time, grass seeds, plant seeds... all of these things the native and natural food birds are eating in the first place are more than adequate for them. We supplement that food by feeding them bird feed such as bird seed and installing hummingbird feeders. Hummingbird feeders are like a can of Pepsi or Mountain Dew for a bear. But they don't need that. If you provide it during the time when those birds are here they will tend to stick around more and they will make a mess. Some birds feed by knocking birdseed on the ground. If you want to avoid a problem, put the bird feeders up where the bear is completely incapable of getting to them, which basically means suspended by a wire or a line that will not support a bear in between two trees, or in between structural portions of a house, or outbuilding, at least 10 feet above the ground and at least six feet out from anything a bear might be able to climb.

If I see a bear in an urban area, how do I report it?

The best thing to do is call the Department of Game and Fish between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekdays. If game and fish is not available and it's not during those hours when we are open, call your local sheriff or state police. The State Police serves as our dispatch at this point.

Animal control is not equipped to handle bears, Winslow notes. Instead, the public should contact a conservation officer; failing that, contact one through the State Police. County Sherriff's offices can usually contact a conservation officer as well.

Visit the department's website to find contact information: <http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us>. For more information about living with bears in New Mexico, please consult Keeping Bears Alive and Yourself Safe.

Bears that are accustomed to receiving food regularly from humans and do not get that food as expected, may go looking for different sources. If you have information about someone who is feeding bears, or other wildlife, call (800) 432-4263. Callers can remain anonymous.

Blind hunter sets no limits for himself



With the help of good friends and adaptive equipment, Mike Sanders goes after big game

By Alexa J. Henry

When Mike Sanders lost his eyesight in an industrial accident at an oil refinery 15 years ago, he thought he would never hunt again.

Today, he will hunt anything he can get a tag for in New Mexico. The hunting trophies covering the walls of his living room are a testament to this. He has probably hunted every single animal available for harvesting in his home state and across the west. Elk, deer, antelope. Barbary sheep. Oryx on White Sands.

A bison greets visitors in the foyer of his house.

“That little buck above the TV was my first mule deer after I came home from the hospital,” he tells a couple of visitors sitting around his kitchen table in Jamestown, east of Gallup off I-40, where he lives with his wife Michele. The couple had just married shortly after the accident.

Sanders had been working as an outside operator at a refinery when a pump exploded. He was 43 at the time.

“I was injured on April 8, 2004,” he begins the story, noting that 80 percent of his body was burned in the accident. “Spent 16 months in three different hospitals. I lost my eyesight in recovery. I lost the fingers on my left hand. I was a left-handed shooter. So I had to switch.”

He had considered himself ambidextrous but really, at the time of the accident, mostly left-handed.

Sanders is one of thousands of disabled hunters in the state who hunt with a mobility impaired (MI) certification, which is required prior to applying for MI-only pronghorn, oryx, elk or deer hunts.

As a result of his injury, Sanders says he sticks to hunting big game. The animals are larger, easier to target. He doesn’t bother with small game. “I don’t mess with them,” he says matter-of-factly. “They won’t stand still long enough for me to get on them.”

But Sanders doesn’t dwell on that. He has a freezer full of meat and memories and plenty of hunts to plan.

Sanders came home from the hospital the summer of 2005. He started therapy. He started coming to terms with his ability to hunt. He expected he would sell all of his scoped rifles because without vision, he didn’t have any way to shoot them.

A few years later, his buddy Joe Chepin from the refinery came over to have a beer and declared he was going to put Sanders in for a few hunts.

“He put me in for antelope, oryx, elk, deer and javelina,” Sanders says.

They lucked out. They drew four hunts. Antelope, javelina, elk and mule deer.

Well, how are we going to do this now? Sanders asked.

“So he and some of his buddies at the refinery looked for equipment to mount on my scope and they found a gadget called a trophy shot,” Sanders says.

They went antelope hunting in southwestern New Mexico on public land next to the Double H Ranch. It was Sander’s first hunt after the accident.

“We get into these antelope,” he remembers. “And I shot at one, missed him. Shot at another. Missed him. The third was 230-something yards and we dropped him in his tracks... with a .308 Winchester.”

Since then, he has switched from being a left-handed shooter to a right-handed one.

As a mobility-impaired hunter, Sanders said he mostly sits in a truck and hunts from there. His spotter, a hunting buddy, becomes his eyes, using the scope for him, watching on a laptop computer what Sanders is not able to see. The spotter tells him how to move, makes sure nobody’s around, that he’s shooting in a safe direction. “Right, right, right, left, left, right... up, up...”



If they say, “hair to the left” or “hair to the right,” Sanders knows he’s getting close to the next command: “gun.”

If he misses, it’s not the spotter’s fault, Sanders says. He assumes he either jerked the trigger or pulled it too soon.

Sanders shoots and listens for the distinctive thud of the animal falling, the sound one hears after a bullet strikes.

When an animal is down, he approaches it. He uses his hands to understand what he just harvested. “I’m feeling what he’s like,” he says. “I can almost judge how tall they are, especially antelope. I can almost tell the length, I can feel how big the horns or antlers are, how wide they are.”

He remembers a recent hunt. “That one we shot had two little bumps on the back horn,” he recalls. “It was almost as if it was trying to grow another cutter on the backside.”

Michele finds it difficult not to jump up and down and hoot and holler when her husband hunts, she says.

She wasn’t a hunter when they met. Then her husband taught her to hunt after the accident.

Sanders taught her how to shoot with a scoped rifle. “I’d shot handguns before and .22s with my dad when I was little but to shoot with a scope on a rifle, I had never done it before,” she says.

With people like her in his life getting him back out again, Sanders insists he’s not the biggest inspiration in his hunting party.

“You think I’m an inspiration, but it takes all these friends, folks and family to inspire me as well because they’re willing to go out and hunt with us,” he says.

He knows it’s not easy to get friends to do this, he says. They have to make arrangements with their families, go away from them, take time off from work. They deal with his frustration. They don’t get paid. They do it just to help.

And he can be grouchy at times, he says. He used to be so independent, he remembers. He

gets frustrated that people have to do difficult things for him. “Little stuff I can handle,” he says. “Difficult things... it’s kind of hard.”

But there are so many more hunts to come.

He has a bucket list. He’s already hunted oryx on White Sands but would like to go again. He would like to hunt a mountain lion. He wants to get out of the truck.

In his mind, there are so many possibilities.

“I want to sit in a blind somewhere,” he thinks aloud, “and maybe have my buddy call in an elk or something like that.”

Opposite: Mike Sanders with a pronghorn he harvested last August. Department photo by Craig Sanchez.

Center: Using a cellphone or laptop, a spotter helps Sanders focus on his target. Department photo by Craig Sanchez.



Alexa J. Henry is the editor of New Mexico Wildlife magazine.

Mobility impaired hunter information

The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish offers several hunts specifically for people who are mobility impaired (MI).

MI certification is required prior to submitting an application for MI-only pronghorn, oryx, elk or deer hunts. To qualify for MI Certification, an individual must have a permanent impairment that meets one or more of the following criteria:

- Limits his/her mobility to a walker, wheelchair or two crutches;
- Severely restricts movement in both arms;
- Or have a combination of permanent disabilities which cause comparable limitations.

The MI certification form is available online or may be requested by telephone. This form must be signed by the applicant's physician and attest that one or more of the above mobility-impaired conditions apply. The MI card is valid for 48 months from the date approved/issued. The MI card holder must purchase and possess a Habitat Stamp and Habitat Management & Access Validation if applicable. All other laws and rules must be followed.

A mobility impaired card allows a hunter to:

- Shoot from a stationary motor-driven vehicle only when it has been parked completely off of the established road surface and there is no right-of-way fence.
- Have one assistant to help track and kill big game that has been clearly wounded by the MI hunter. The assistant must have written authorization from the MI hunter and must use the same sporting-arm type as the MI hunter.
- Use a crossbow during a bow hunt.

Conservation officer assists disabled hunter

By Alexa J. Henry

During a wildlife complaint call in 2017, Sergeant Andrew Armendariz of the Roswell Supervisory District provided information about hunting opportunities to Richard Cole, a handicapped, mobility-impaired (MI) hunter from Alamogordo.

Cole, a military veteran whose left leg was amputated above the knee, was tasked with fueling 12 ships as a boatswain's mate in the Pacific Ocean when his left and right knees were crushed between a fuel probe and the bulwark's metal railing. Several years of fighting infections resulted in him having to eventually amputate his left leg above the knee.

Sgt. Armendariz assisted Cole with creating a Department of Game and Fish account and also with the paperwork to apply for MI and Disabled Veteran cards. Once Cole's MI status was received, Armendariz explained how the special draw works and helped him understand hunt codes and assisted him with his oryx, deer and elk applications.

Cole successfully drew and hunted in Game Management Unit (GMU) 34 during the October 6-10, 2018 MI either-sex rifle elk hunt. Cole has been hunting since childhood. He enjoyed hunting elk and deer in Oregon and had previously hunted with his disability but only in Oregon. This would be his first time hunting in New Mexico; he had not been hunting in two years since moving to this state.

Sgt. Armendariz took time off from his normal day-to-day duties on the first two days of the hunt to assist Cole. "This was my first time helping a mobility impaired hunter," said Armendariz. "This experience was amazing and who's to say that meeting Richard during a wildlife complaint would foster and develop an unforgettable friendship."

The officer took Cole hunting near Sunspot. Despite the blowing snow and windy conditions, he was able to assist Cole in spotting a few elk, including a 5x5 bull and a cow elk on day one.

On day two of the hunt, Cole, along with his stepson Steve, successfully harvested a cow elk with a 250-yard shot near Agua Chiquita Canyon.

Cole advises other disabled hunters who want to go hunting to "go get someone who can help out, have fun and see the country."



Sgt. Andrew Armendariz contributed to this report.

#MakingMemories

By Tristanna Bickford

Merriam-Webster's defines mentorship as the influence, guidance or direction given by a mentor. To me, mentorship means so much more.

Earlier this year I was driving through Western New Mexico. It was pitch black, the complete cloud cover blacking out any hint of light from the moon and stars. The rural area means that there is no light from surrounding towns. There was no traffic, no cell reception, just me and my co-pilots, two toy Australian shepherds curled up in the passenger seat.

I do my best thinking in these times.

That night I was thinking about mentorship; the people who have mentored me and that I have had the chance to mentor. Several outings popped into my mind: growing up hunting with my dad and evolving to hunting antelope with a former Chief Justice, pheasant hunting with conservation industry professionals, dove hunting with families. One particular outing seemed to consume my thoughts.

My junior year in high school, I drew a deer hunt and a good family friend, Tom, drew a late season bull elk hunt near the town where I grew up. My dad had agreed to show our friend around the unit and point out a few spots for him to try out. The timing was off, dad had to leave and set up camp for my hunt, so I volunteered to show Tom around.

After school, we left town, headed for the mountains. I spent the afternoon showing him the unit boundaries, areas where we had seen elk over the summer and spots where we had hunted in the past. As darkness approached we decided to take a walk and see what we could find. Armed with only our jackets and a small pack, we set off for a quick mile or two.

Not far from the truck, we started seeing fresh elk sign...really, really fresh, steaming even. Tom and I continued onto a meadow. We approached the meadow, and I explained to Tom my theory, based on the sign, wind direction and overall knowledge of the area. I developed a scenario: the elk would enter

the field from that group of trees and feed down the meadow until they were just in front of the fallen trees we chose to sit behind, waiting to see some elk.

We watched as the elk emerged from a group of trees a few hundred yards away and fed up the meadow bottom. The lead cow drifted our way. As I watched her approach, I realized that she was coming very close to our family friend. She fed to within 10 feet of Tom, when he started shaking...REALLY SHAKING...finally he jumped up unable to hold the excitement any longer. I started laughing as we watched the herd, startled by Tom's excitement, run across the meadow and disappear back into the trees.

But mentorship is so much more than you might realize — it's what I get in return. Through these experiences I grow in knowledge and skill. Through their eyes and experiences and learning from a new set of eyes, I change. My skills are evolving from their influence, my memories are greater based on their guidance, I am a better person due to the experiences we have shared.

My memories are crystal clear, based on the mentorship that others have provided to me.

Here are a few tips to introduce someone new to hunting, shooting sports or fishing:

1. Define 'quality'— Many people have different ideas of what they want from the hunt. Do they want to see a lot of animals, hike a lot of miles, or stay in a comfy lodge and do some short hikes? All of these are great answers and can help identify what the outing looks like.
2. Take breaks — It is okay to stop and use binoculars to glass a far off ridge...or one of my personal favorite hunting traditions — take a nice nap under a shade tree on a hill side. I sleep like a baby, even if it's only for a few minutes.
3. Look for people who just moved to New Mexico. Often it can take years for someone to learn new regulations, hunting boundaries and good spots. Help them get a head start.



4. Communication is the key. Above all, make sure they are comfortable.
5. And most importantly HAVE FUN. It is exciting to help someone experience wildlife and wild places for the first time.



Top: Department photo by Tristanna Bickford.

Tristanna Bickford is communications director at the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

Looking for a spring road trip?

Four places to visit

By Art Anaya

New Mexico offers a variety of opportunities to watch wildlife, learn more about our fish hatcheries and visit unique sites that can only be found in our state. Here are four places definitely worth the drive:

River Ranch WMA

Nestled within the southernmost point of the Mimbres Valley, River Ranch Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is a unique 1,000-acre property home to an assortment of wildlife. Originally a homestead and working cattle ranch since the late 1970s, this property is not shy when it comes to wildlife. Deer, turkey and javelina can all be found along its river corridor.

In addition, River Ranch is situated on a migratory flyway where all sorts of bird species can be found. This property has a natural beauty inconceivable to those who have a tainted desert impression.

Since its purchase in 2014, the department has been working towards a successful public opening. Earlier this year, a team of young adults volunteering with the AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian

Community Corps) program helped the department improve and enhance habitat for the benefit of wildlife. The crew spent approximately two months removing fence, clearing brush, removing invasive plant species and building trail, all in the effort to open this property to the public.

The property is now open for non-consumptive recreation- hiking, birdwatching and photography, said Ryan Darr, lands program manager for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, adding that hunting and fishing are not permitted yet due to changes needed in the species rules.

"Partnering with the NCCC has resulted in a unique opportunity to accomplish department objectives and simultaneously provide hands-on experience in the natural resource management field," said Daniel Lusk, southwest regional habitat biologist at the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. "Some accomplishments include the removal of two miles of interior pasture fence, the repair of boundary fence, demolition and cleanup of damaged structures, invasive plant treatment and the cleanup of dead and downed trees in Tigner Grove."

Lisboa Springs Fish Hatchery

Lisboa Springs was built in 1921 as the very first fish hatchery—say that 10 times fast—in New Mexico. Lisboa underwent its first major renovation in 1984 and a second renovation in 2001. The second renovation occurred as a result of a whirling disease discovery in the river water supply. Whirling disease is a parasitic disease that affects the motor skills of trout and salmon at a neurological level. No known cure exists for this fish infection; however, infrastructure was installed to allow for more intense re-circulation of water and the installation of water filters and UV systems. Currently, the hatchery utilizes spring and well water for all propagation.

The facility has a self-guided tour that includes access to a visitor center and viewing windows for culture troughs and exterior raceways. A show pond is also located near the visitor center where visitors have the opportunity to view and feed large trout.

It is located adjacent to the Pecos River in the southern portion of the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range approximately 2.5 miles north of the Village of Pecos along state HWY 63. The hatchery occupies approximately 10 acres.

The hatchery is also proud to have partnered up with the Truchas Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Students of all ages (third grade and up) are able to rear trout in class-built aquariums to learn what it takes to rear healthy fish. "Curriculum that is project-based allows for an interdisciplinary approach to learning," said Kevin Holladay, education coordinator for the department. "This project in particular not only allows for lessons in science, but also in leadership and team building."

The facility - with its unique recirculation system, drum filters and UV systems - is the only one like it within the state. "It is a very technical and complicated system demanding 24/7 oversight,"

Background: River Ranch. Photo by
Jeremy Lane.

said Francina Martinez-Valencia, Lisboa Springs Hatchery Manager, who has been with the department for 11 years. Starting out as a fish culturist back in November 2007, Francina, a Taos native, now works as the first-ever woman hatchery manager for the state.

For information about hatchery hours and directions, please visit <http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/fishing/fish-hatcheries/>

Bernardo WMA

One of the few working farms the department owns, Bernardo Wildlife Management Area is located on the Middle Rio Grande corridor just south of Belen and is just close enough for those living in town to get a nice wildlife experience. In early February, a team from the habitat and lands section of the department's wildlife division coordinated a planting effort to improve habitat within this WMA. "The planting of native [plant] species is much better for native wildlife," says Chuck Schultz, Northwest Regional habitat biologist. "The removal of exotic species, such as salt cedar and Russian olive [in discrete pre-determined locations] improves the overall habitat value, integrating heterogeneity across the landscape." The department is excited about this new integrative restoration among a farm setting.

In addition to a three-mile self-guided auto tour loop, Bernardo WMA has three platforms for wildlife viewing opportunities. Interpretive signs are at each viewing platform. Auto tour loop and platforms are handicap accessible.

For more information please visit <http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/conservation/state-game-commission-lands/>

Clayton Lake State Park

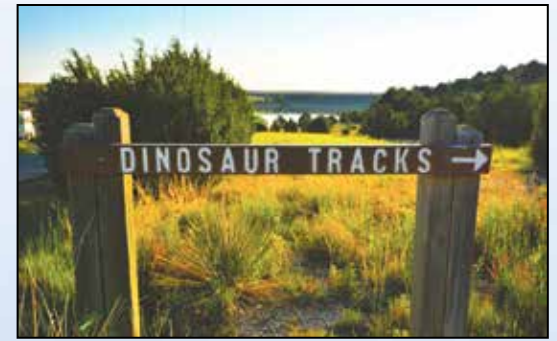
It is not uncommon for the department to cooperate with other state or federal agencies to provide outdoor opportunities for families. One partnership in particular is with the State Parks Division of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department. Back in the early 1950s, the Department of Game and Fish purchased what is now Clayton Lake State Park.

In 2007, the department initiated a programmatic agreement with the State Parks Division whereby the management of Clayton Lake would be under State Parks while still being in the ownership of the New Mexico State Game Commission.

Whether you are planning a weekend getaway or a day out on the lake, Clayton Lake State Park is sure to offer camping, boating, fishing and hiking for visitors of all ages.

"The park is enjoyed by many locals as well as folks from all over the United States and the world," said Mark Funk, park manager at Clayton Lake, noting that the lake has rainbow trout, channel catfish, bigmouth bass, blue gill and walleye. The lake holds the state record for the walleye catch.

For dinosaur enthusiasts, the park has a unique feature: It is one of only two in the United States which have large numbers of dinosaur tracks, with over 500 tracks on the property. The park has made them an attraction with a walkway around the tracks.



Visitors can also find an observatory located on the west side on the park. The dark skies above are one of the darkest in the United States, perfect for stargazing parties the park occasionally holds throughout the year.

Be sure to pick up your Traveler's Companion booklet for all New Mexico State Parks information.

If you would like more information about State Park locations in New Mexico check out their website at <http://www.emnrd.state.nm.us/spd>.

If you would like more information about AmeriCorps programs check out their website at www.nationalservice.gov/programs/ameri-corps.

Above: Photo provided by the State Parks Division of the Department of Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources.



Art Anaya is the land, water and property specialist with the Department of Game and Fish.

Open Gate

Department partners
with U.S. Forest Service
to offer access to
La Fragua Canyon

By Gary Calkins

In the Jicarilla Ranger District of the Carson National Forest, there is an area known as La Fragua Canyon. The canyon lies on the western boundary of the National Forest and adjoining Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and private lands. Access for hunters into this rugged part of the National Forest has been limited for the past decade due to changes in land ownership and lack of road connectivity into the area.

In early 2016, a conversation began between United States Forest Service (USFS) personnel and the New Mexico Game and Fish's Open Gate program to see if there might be a way to open this area back up to the public. At stake, approximately 12 miles of road and roughly 11,000 acres of public land that could not be accessed at the time. The two big questions were, how to gain the access and what would it cost?

The access piece of the puzzle had to be answered first to see if the project was even possible. Access from the west was most likely out since the road system crossed numerous private lands and that many agreements were just not practical. That meant finding an access route from the east which was possible down an existing pipeline right-of-way. This would mean improving the right-of-way into a useable road but that would be a somewhat expensive proposition.

In wildlife management, one lesson that has been true time and again is that more can be accomplished if there are partnerships working towards the same goals. The Forest Service and Game and Fish were already sold on this plan; however, there was a need for non-federal dollars to get the project started. This is where The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) entered the picture. The RMEF has a history of working for hunting access and this project was fortunately one they could put their efforts behind.

The Forest Service completed all necessary ecological clearances in early 2017; in spring 2018, construction began on the La Fragua Re-route project. The project entailed construction of a half mile road segment connecting two existing Forest Service roads that would open this area for public use and hunting opportunities. By the end of May 2018, construction was complete and the La Fragua Canyon area was once more accessible. By having the RMEF funds act as a non-federal match, Game and Fish was able to use Pittman-Robertson (Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act) monies to complete the project bringing in the Wildlife Sport Fish Restoration Program as the final partner.

For more information about the Open Gate program and the La Fragua Re-route access property, visit:

<http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/hunting/maps/open-gate-program/>



Left: The view from a high point on the Jicarilla Ranger District of the Carson National Forest. Department photo by Rex Martensen.

Gary Calkins is the Open Gate coordinator at the Department of Game and Fish.

Salvaging roadkill

Conservation officer assists family with harvesting meat from roadkill

By Storm Usrey

Getting dispatched to deal with injured or road-killed wildlife such as a deer or elk is fairly common in my district, an area in northwestern New Mexico that spans from the Arizona state line east to the community of Thoreau and from the Catron County line north to the southern portion of the Navajo Reservoir. The frequencies of these calls increase during dry summer months where the only green grass seems to grow along the edges of paved roads. I try to salvage game animals that are fit for human consumption before they spoil. During the cooler months it's easier to find people who want to purchase "roadkill" animals to salvage, but when it's hot it can be very tough as most people don't have walk in coolers or enough ice chests to keep the meat cool while they cut it up.

People who find roadkill cannot just pick them up, but must get permission from the local conservation officer for the area who will be able to sell the roadkill and issue a receipt for legal possession of the animal. Monies that are collected go into the Game Protection Fund.

Being a conservation officer for many years, I have dealt with numerous roadkill wildlife situations. When this particular phone call came in, I was at the State Police office in Gallup working on some paperwork. The dispatcher told me there was a report of an injured deer on Highway 264, which goes to Window Rock, Ariz.; this particular stretch of highway is the site of occasional deer and vehicle collisions. There is good deer habitat in the area where mines have received reclamation work and the deer will cross the road as they travel in their home area.

I headed out to the location and upon arrival found the deer in a depression alongside the highway and a short distance from a gas station. It was very obvious she had a fractured hip and was in a bad way. I walked inside the gas station to let the attendant know that I was going to need to discharge my firearm in order to put down the suffering animal.

I assured her that I would make sure everything was safe before doing so.

As I left the gas station to approach the suffering doe, a man asked if he could have the deer. I told him I would be happy to sell the deer to him and that the price would be very reasonable because I knew the temperatures would be rising and I was certain the hind quarters of the deer would have some meat loss due to deep bruising. I explained to him I would collect the money and I would issue him a receipt which would be his possession permit for the deer.

I put down the doe, ending her suffering. This is not the fun part of the job; however, I realize it is necessary. It made me feel better knowing that she was going to be utilized by a family and the money made from salvaging her was going into the Game Protection Fund. The man, a local Navajo resident, walked up to me and said his family was going to use the deer at his grandma's 80th birthday party and the festivities were just a few hours away. The family was expecting over 50 and up to 100 family members arriving for the event. They had family coming in from Phoenix, he noted.

The only truck he had access to was being used at the moment to pick up chairs and tables for the party, the man told me. He only lived about six miles from our location so I told him I could winch the animal into the bed of my truck and follow him the short distance to his residence. By this time the temperatures were getting warm; I was beginning to sweat and could obviously feel the heat.

Once we arrived I filled out a sales receipt with the man and collected the money from him. While I filled out the receipt, the man told me his other family members had butchered a sheep earlier that morning and the family would utilize the entire animal. He told me they would be making Ach'ii, a traditional Navajo dish.



The animal needed to be dressed and cooled as the temperatures kept rising. Together we field dressed the deer using the gutless method. I showed him all of the intricate details of breaking down venison. I recommended his son, a young teenager who seemed interested in the process, to get some ice to put on the meat as it was taken from the carcass.

It was very evident to me that we need to pass along to people every chance we get to teach them about hunting skills, caring for their game and how hunting helps conservation. I hope that day's adventure introduced him to one of the benefits of hunting — eating some of the most natural protein on planet earth!

Above: Deer quarters salvaged from roadkill. Department photo by Storm Usrey.



Storm Usrey is the Gallup district conservation officer for the Department of Game and Fish. Department photo.

The art of the hunt . . .

By Craig Springer

You can hear the quiet — it's that noticeable. Save for the silver tinkle of water trickling over an irrigation head gate on a small ditch several yards behind us, the pre-dawn dark is without sound, without motion. The stillness is as steady as the stars. I'm taken by the moment as night begins to melt into day this spring morning.

I'm settled into a turkey blind at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in central New Mexico with my teenage daughter, Willow. We're accompanied by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife biologist, Jeff Sanchez. Willow is the hunter. Jeff is the guide.

He's an affable man, a New Mexico native. He came of age in Albuquerque, earned a forestry degree at Northern New Mexico Community College and then a degree in Wildlife Biology at New Mexico State University. He worked at refuges in Alaska and Oklahoma and then Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge in southeast New Mexico for nine years, before coming to Bosque del Apache, two years ago. All the refuges have waterfowl conservation in common, among other species.

Jeff has children of his own, younger than mine, but they will soon reach that joyous age where they can learn to hunt as Jeff did with his father and I did with mine. He owns passion for conservation and he's a man eager to share his knowledge.

Willow is eager to absorb that knowledge. She turns 16 soon; clear-headed, an exceptional student and athlete—a state-qualified pole vaulter. Her 100-watt smile lights up a room. She passed the hunter education course several years ago and has hunted deer, quail, grouse and turkey before. After many years of trying, she drew a coveted turkey license at the refuge. The refuge grants by lottery only a handful of licenses each year to youth only. She would be the first child to try and harvest a wild turkey this spring.

A chill comes over us as it often does at first light, as we sit beneath a muscular Fremont cottonwood that stands along the edge of a rectangular field that's flat as a pan. The gnarled tree bark is deeply furrowed like desert canyons. The lowest of its branches drape toward the ground, leafless still, but not for long. Its fat cigar-shaped buds swell with the hope of spring.

Less than a mile away, the Rio Grande courses by, its waters pulled off into ditches like the one that trickles behind us. These are old ditches—the water has been allocated for use by law for a good long time, centuries perhaps, dating to the Spanish colonial period. This ditch water will become wildlife habitat when it spills out into select areas managed to promote native vegetation, and mimic how river water naturally flowed overland. A whole litany of birds from the American Avocet to the Western Grebe will wade the waters. Some species cease their northern migration here and nest, then head back south in fall. They will be supplanted by sandhill cranes and flocks of waterfowl that in masse throw shadows on the ground over the course of the winter. Bosque del Apache is renowned for its feeding of wintering water birds. But for the water, wildlife habitat, including that for wild turkey, would be far less plentiful.

The day begins anew as the eastern horizon takes on a glow that reminds me of the pulp of a blood orange. A few sooty clouds burn off and a breath of a breeze bends the husks of last year's exhausted grasses and sunflowers.

And then we hear it. Across the expanse of the field, a turkey gobbles from a roost tree similar in shape and size to the tree we use for cover. In short order, the fresh light reveals two flocks of wild turkeys on the ground in the distance.

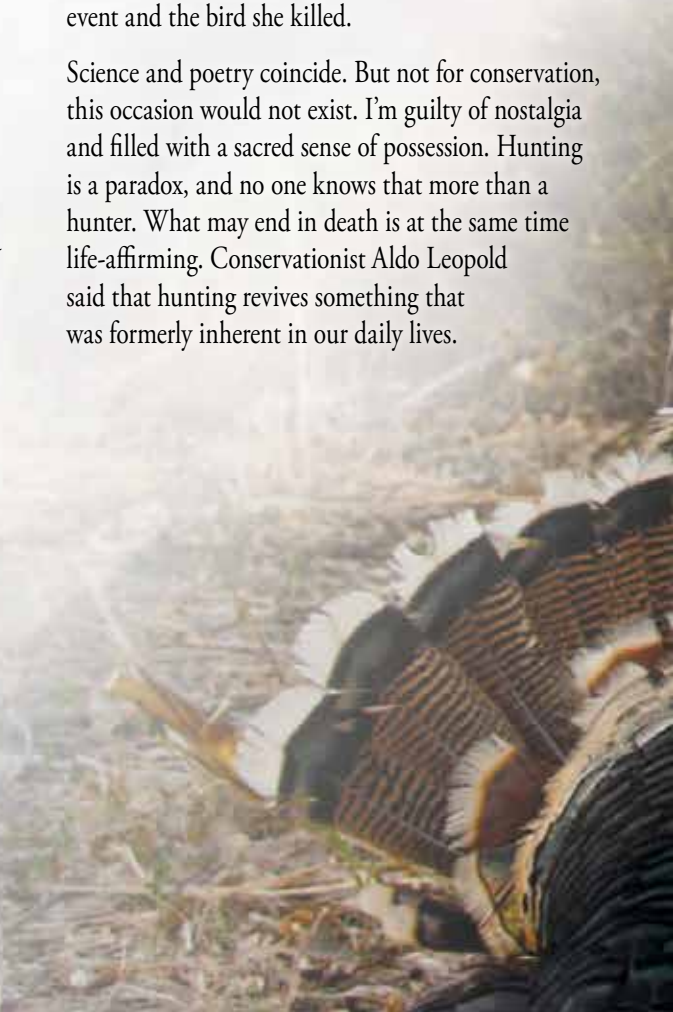
Jeff scratches out with a peg, a calm call of a hen on his "Willy Nelson slate," as he calls it. He's used it so much he's worn a hole in it like the spruce-top of the singer's guitar. He flaps his sweat-stained camo ball cap to mimic the sound of a bird flying off the roost, followed by whelps, clucks and purrs with a mouth

call. It sounds convincing to my ears. Willow waits nervously but stock still as birds numbering in the tens inch toward what they think is other birds. They feed as they go along, with Jeff calling periodically.

Toms and jakes puff their chests and fan their tails. Coaxed ever closer to us, they strut and waddle with a symmetry like freight cars tip side to side on rails. The slightest movement or bogus call and it's over. These birds are keen—genetically coded—to be aware of their vulnerabilities.

The ritual and the anticipation that started weeks ago build to this moment; Willow waits with her late granddad's Winchester 12-gauge. She keeps her composure as birds come incredibly close. Amid many skeptical eyes she calmly raises the shotgun and pauses, waiting for the cleanest, surest shot. The safety clicks. The dull thud kicks her wiry frame and the bird falls like a sack. She outwits the wiliest of creatures and is elated. She marvels over the whole event and the bird she killed.

Science and poetry coincide. But not for conservation, this occasion would not exist. I'm guilty of nostalgia and filled with a sacred sense of possession. Hunting is a paradox, and no one knows that more than a hunter. What may end in death is at the same time life-affirming. Conservationist Aldo Leopold said that hunting revives something that was formerly inherent in our daily lives.



A daughter's experience

"There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm," he wrote. "One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other, that heat comes from the furnace."

Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge wildlife biologist Jeff Sanchez guided Willow Springer during a youth hunt. The hunt is available only by annual lottery. Visit www.fws.gov/refuge/Bosque_del_Apache for more information.



Craig Springer is a fish biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He and his wife have three young hunters and anglers.



Out of Range

Moose from southern Colorado
wander into New Mexico

By Alexa J. Henry



Moose have called the Rocky Mountains home for millennia but have never been found as far south as New Mexico, until recently.

Since the 1990s, moose have occasionally been spotted in northern New Mexico around the Taos, Chama and Tierra Amarilla areas. When they do roam across the border, the sightings make it into local media. Over the past two years, locals captured a photo of a lone moose seen strolling along State Road 522 near Costilla, and an earlier photo of two cow moose spotted in a field in Chama.

“Most people think it’s an elk,” said Taos Supervisory District Sergeant Gabe Maes, who has been stationed in northern New Mexico since 2007. “That is the first reaction for most folks. It’s an unusual sighting for the area.”

The natural range of moose, which spans from Alaska across Canada and reaches down to New England and northern New York in the east, extends as far south as Wyoming, Colorado and eastern Utah in the western United States.

The native range of moose has never included New Mexico; however, over the last several years, a few members of the species have ventured south across the Colorado border into the northern part of our state.

“Though these are rare occurrences they do seem to happen especially on dry years,” said Sergeant Ben Otero, who supervises the areas of Chama, Cuba and Taos with the Department of Game and Fish. “The moose seem to follow the river down and come to the irrigated fields for the green alfalfa and water sources.”

In fact, there were never any reproducing populations of moose in the southwest, said Jennifer Frey, a professor in the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Ecology at New Mexico State University. Moose are native to the northern Rocky Mountains but not the southern Rockies, which includes the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo Mountains. The type of moose in Colorado is a smaller subspecies, *Alces americana shirasi*—than the moose in Alaska, she added.

“In New Mexico, the moose we have in the state are undoubtedly wanderers, males or females,” said Frey. “These occasional records of moose in New Mexico are probably not reflective of a breeding population and are just occasional individuals.”

Based on media reports, the first recorded moose sighting in New Mexico was in 1995 when one was found near Taos, said Jim Stuart, non-game mammal specialist at the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, citing media reports. Until the late 1970s, moose were only vagrants in northern Colorado, periodically heading south from Wyoming.

In the 1970s, Colorado Parks and Wildlife transplanted moose from Utah and Wyoming into the North Park area of that state to establish a population for future hunting opportunities, according to the agency’s website. In the early 1990s, Colorado transplanted additional moose to the San Juan Mountains, where the animals eventually established in the southwestern part of the state near the New Mexico border.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife notes on its website that “since the transplants, our moose have thrived and expanded their range into good habitats,” adding that the state’s moose population now approaches 3,000 animals.

Frey suggested animals could simply be following the vegetation through the San Juans. “Anywhere there is a continuous corridor of vegetation, that makes a natural dispersal corridor,” she said.

Still, it is unlikely the animals are, or would ever, expand their range south in droves.

“None of these represent an established population in New Mexico,” said Stuart, who refers to moose in New Mexico as “vagrant” animals. “They’re presumably wanderers coming out of the San Juan mountains. It’s sporadic, we’re not seeing them on a regular basis. Possibly these are young moose dispersing to find mates or to establish a territory. At present, northern New Mexico can be thought of as the fringe of the occupied range that is centered in the San Juans of Colorado.”

Moose are particularly drawn to areas with beaver dam streams, lots of cover and dense riparian vegetation, Stuart notes. “We’ve got some of that in the San Juans and Sangre de Cristos, but we may not have enough to sustain a population,” he said. “But we might still have individuals come out of Colorado, just a few that can find those spots and survive here for a while. It’s possible they eventually wander back into Colorado where the habitat is more suitable.”

Colorado, which has more riparian habitat, has more of the raw material to support a population of moose, explained Frey.

“I don’t think the presence of moose [in New Mexico are] trying to establish a population in this state would be a good idea,” Frey continued. “In New Mexico, we already have a problem with our riparian and wetland systems being degraded. There is effort to try to restore riparian vegetation in our streams. Having such a species here would be counter-productive at this point.”

“Given that we don’t have a huntable moose population in New Mexico, they are protected as a member of the deer family,” said Maes. “We don’t have specific regulations for moose but they are protected under state statutes whether on public or private land. Harassing them or killing them is still unlawful.”

If members of the public believe they have spotted a moose, Maes noted, “Let us know at the Game and Fish Department because we are interested in identifying these sightings and instances when they come down into New Mexico.”

To report a possible moose sighting, please call 1-800-432-4263.

Opposite: Two bull moose browsing willows at Tincup Pass, west of Buena Vista, Colo. Department photo by Mark Watson.



Alexa J. Henry is the editor of New Mexico Wildlife magazine.



Bald eagles of the Four Corners

Article and photos by Conservation Officer Brad Ryan

The Four Corners area is an often overlooked spot for wildlife viewing and photography. People are surprised by the variety and amount of animals that call this area home, spend part of the year or pass through on their migration. Having worked in the area for the past 20 years, I have been able to explore the various habitats and seldom seen spaces. In turn, this has allowed me to encounter many wildlife species that a lot of people, even the locals, aren't aware of. One of my favorites is our national symbol, the bald eagle.



Soaring over Navajo Lake.

Opposite: Bald eagle chick in the nest.



Our area is made up of parts of Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico and supports a good number of bald eagles during the winter time, as well as many full-time residents. I have photographed bald eagles during all parts of the year.

Few people realize that this area also supports many breeding pairs that nest here year round. Finding an occupied nest can be very exciting and offers the photographer some unique opportunities to capture family behavior. It's important to remember not to disturb the eagles while they are on the nest; adult eagles will abandon their home if they feel too much stress, leaving their young eaglets behind. Bald eagles nest high in trees; therefore, finding one that you can see into is a real challenge. I typically use my longest lens and a very sturdy tripod because I am shooting from pretty far away so as not to disturb them. I have found two nests in the area that offer some great photographic opportunities.

Whether you are photographing eagles on the nest or wintering birds it usually pays off to spend time watching them and getting to know their habits. I have found that they typically have a favorite perch to land upon and if you take the time to figure that out you will have an opportunity to set up on that spot and let them come to you.

There is one local eagle that is always on the same tree and is very tolerant of people so you can get very close, as long as you stay in your car. This bird is so comfortable with people that it will sit there for hours, even when you are within 20 feet. It is an awesome opportunity that I regularly take advantage of. I have hundreds of pictures of this eagle sitting in its tree; I feel bad about getting bored with this unbelievable opportunity. I started trying to get more creative and really zoom in on specific parts. I began with the eye because they are incredible when you can really see them up close. I then moved to the talons because they are an incredible expression of this bird's lethality.

Left: Young adult. If you look you can still see the remnants of brown feathers on the tail and behind the eye.



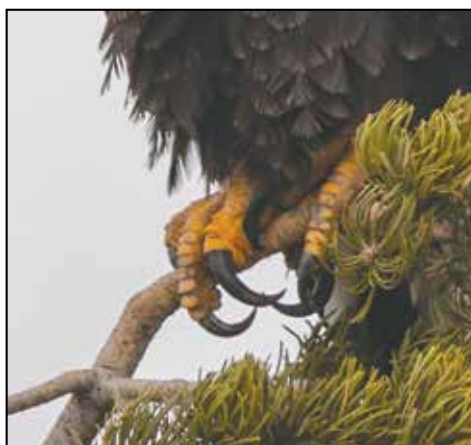
Getting to know the eagles that spend time in this area has given me opportunity to get pictures of parents feeding their young, eagles scrapping with each other and eagles taking off and landing. I still have not caught my "Holy Grail" of shots— the eagle catching a fish— but I am confident that that I will be able to get this picture if I continue to spend time with my local birds. As the famous street photographer Arthur "Weegee" Felling said when asked, "How do you take a great picture?" he answered "f8 and be there." You will not get the shot if you don't put in the time.



Conservation Officer Brad Ryan is a corporal in the Farmington Supervisory District with the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. He has been with the department for 24 years. Brad

received his Bachelor of Science in Biology/ Zoology from San Francisco State University in 1992.

He enjoys spending time in the outdoors, fly fishing and wildlife photography. See more of Brad's photos at bradryanphoto.com. And follow him on Facebook at "Brad Ryan Wild Enchantment Photography".



Left: Feeding time at the nest.

Top right: Juvenile and adult sorting things out.

Center: Close-up of talons.

Bottom right: Cruising for fish.



What is in a dog?

Article and photo by Tristanna Bickford



For some, the answer is everything. A dog can be a person's best friend. A dog can also be used for work or therapy, service assistance, search and rescue and so much more.

One dog profession that I am fond of is hunting.

Hunters, mentors and guides gather on a brisk winter morning. They all pile into a truck with guns, ammo, hunting licenses, bottles of water and coffee cups. You would think we were leaving for a week instead of just a few hours.

A crate also sits in the truck. A quick glance inside shows a sleeping creature. Cool, a German shorthair pointer, lays there without a care in the world.

The short drive passes quickly. You can feel the shared excitement and nerves for the experience laying just ahead. We arrive in a field of knee-high grass, a low ridge on our left, a small pond with large trees on the right.

Everyone excitedly gets out of the truck, gathers their gear and has a quick safety briefing, preparing for the adventure lying just ahead. The excitement within Cool is building, you can see an intensity in her eyes, her tail is wagging, thumping the crate. She knows the plan: we are going hunting.

The crate is opened. Cool rushes out, directly to her owner, Greg. You can read the anticipation in every muscle twitch. After a quick drink of water, we enter

the knee-high grass still wet with morning dew. Cool begins working the field, her head buried to the ground as she makes quick lines, about 20 yards in front of us. She works left to right and back to the left again. Occasionally, you see her lift her head and glance at Greg for direction. He offers a quick signal by a quick lift of his left hand; no words are spoken. Cool immediately puts her head back to the ground, heading left, the whole exchange taking a mere second.

Cool begins to narrow her path, slowing and becoming more precise in her movement. Greg announces, "she's acting birdy." Suddenly she stops, her tail locked above her body. She is on point. Every muscle is fully engaged but doesn't twitch as she points at a bird directly in front of her.

I am always amazed at the relationship that is built between a hunting dog and his/her person, the connections, the ability to communicate with just a glance and a quick hand signal, so quick a person may not notice it. I can't imagine the amount of time they spend together training, living, eating, walking side-by-side. The connection is one that is unbreakable, an amazing amount of trust and love.

What is in a hunting dog. You have to experience it to know.



Tristanna Bickford is communications director at the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

If you are an angler new to New Mexico fishing, there are a myriad of choices facing you. This goes for resident and non-resident anglers. These choices can be quite daunting to a newbie. I am sure that more than a few potential anglers “stalled out” and never pursued this hobby because they were confused by so many choices. I will attempt to end the confusion.

Selecting the best fishing opportunity

By John Martsh

One of the first choices facing a beginner will be cold water or warm water. Specifically, does the angler wish to pursue cold or warm water species of fish? Cold water game fish include: salmon and trout (brook, brown, cutthroat, Gila, lake and rainbow). Warm water game fish include: black bass (largemouth, smallmouth and spotted), catfish (blue, channel and flathead), northern pike, panfish, striped bass, tiger muskie and walleye. Whether you target cold or warm water species will usually dictate where you will fish. In general, warm water species can be found in lakes, ponds and reservoirs. Cold water species are found in ditches, rivers and streams. Although exceptions to this rule do exist.

Another choice posed to anglers is what species to fish. Some are very easy for the beginner to catch and others can be quite hard. In general, the smaller, more plentiful species are easiest to hook and land. Some species, like the tiger muskie, may require hundreds of casts with a lure to hook one.

One of the easiest and cheapest warm water fish for beginners to target are panfish. Panfish are delicious game fish that fit perfectly inside a frying pan, hence the name. These fish are as colorful as their names—bluegill, bullheads (look like catfish), crappie, green sunfish, longear sunfish, pumpkinseed, redear sunfish, spotted sunfish, warmouth, white bass and yellow perch. These species have a variety of different body shapes and make up the majority of the game fish biomass in any body of warm water.

Tackle can be one of the most challenging choices for the beginner fisherman. Panfish can be readily caught from the shore, and will bite just about any bait or small lure presented to them. You can catch these fish with a #6, 8 or 10 baitholder hook, split shot and a waxworm or mealworm dangling below a bobber. Ultralight rods, spinning or spin cast reels and 4-6 pound monofilament fishing line make catching these scrappy fighters fun and sporting. For the lure fisherman, 1/64, 1/32 and 1/16-ounce crappie jigs and tiny curly tailed grubs would be perfect. Popular colors are chartreuse, yellow, white, black, smoke and pink.

Location is another choice anglers face. Lots of bodies of water in New Mexico hold panfish. A partial list consists of: Abiquiu Lake, Navajo Lake, Caballo Lake, Cochiti Lake, Conchas Lake, Tingley Beach, Eagle Nest Lake, El Vado Lake, Elephant Butte Reservoir, Fenton Lake and Ute Lake. A popular technique to catch these fish is to cast to shallow water structure. Structure is defined as underwater rocks, trees, boulders, humps, depressions, tires, points, piers, docks, boat ramps, marinas, weed beds, lily pads and other vegetation. Panfish usually wait in or near structure to ambush their meal. Depending on the size of the structure, you may be able to catch multiple fish from one location.

The most popular cold water fish to catch in New Mexico is the rainbow trout. This fish is stocked from department hatcheries into bodies of water across the state during the winter months. These torpedo-shaped fish have silvery sides, black spots and a pinkish streak, mid-body on both sides.

Fishing for them can be as easy as bait fished on the bottom to as advanced as hand tied, custom dry flies fished floating on top. Common baits for rainbows include: corn, salmon eggs, PowerBait, worms, roe sacks and dough bait. In-line spinners, plastic worms, spoons and all sorts of artificial fly patterns will catch rainbow trout. Rods can be light to medium action spinning or bait casting rods coupled with spin or spin cast reels. Fly rods, fly reels and floating or sinking fly line can also be used. The most standard pound tests of monofilament fishing lines for trout vary from 4, 6, 8 and 10 pounds.

It would be a good idea to pick up a Fishing Regulation and Information Booklet (RIB) wherever you purchase your license or go online to <http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us/home/publications/>.

A few things to keep in mind before you start fishing:

- A yearly fishing license is valid from April 1st till March 31st of the following year.
- If you are twelve and over, you need a New Mexico fishing license to go fishing.



- A non-resident junior fishing license is \$15, and an adult one is \$56.
- In addition to the license, anyone between 18 and 69 years old needs to purchase a Habitat Management and Access Validation stamp (\$4) to fish.

For more information about fishing in New Mexico, visit www.wildlife.state.nm.us/fishing/

Top: Tingley Beach. Department photo by Ross Morgan.



John Martsh is the recruitment, retention and reactivation program manager and a conservation officer with the Department of Game and Fish.

Elk green chile stew

By Alexa J. Henry



With a freezer full of green chile pods from last fall's harvest, this recipe is a nice way to use of some of those bags because the seasons change and green chile vendors are offering up fresh roasted chile. I typically make this stew with ground bison; using fresh elk instead is a great way to enjoy a traditional New Mexican dish with wild game from our state.

If you are having several guests over, keep in mind—this recipe can be easily be doubled or tripled.

Prep/Cook Time: 2 hours
Serves 4

2 tablespoons of olive oil
½ large onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, diced
½ pound of cubed elk roast, sliced into ½ inch cubes.
10-12 peeled green chiles, diced
3 roma tomatoes, diced
2 cups of beef broth
2 yellow potatoes, diced into ½ inch chunks
½ cup of frozen or fresh yellow corn
½ cup water
pepper
salt

Instructions

Heat olive oil in the bottom of a stew pot. Sauté garlic and onion until soft. Add elk, brown for 5 minutes. Add green chile and tomatoes, stir occasionally. Pour in beef stock and ½ cup of water and stir.

Simmer for 1 ½ hours. Add in potatoes and corn and simmer for another half hour or until potatoes are softened and slip off a fork. Season with salt and pepper. Serve with fresh tortillas.

Department photos by Alexa J. Henry.



Ferrets & Weasels

What's the difference?



Last year, the Department of Game and Fish released eight black-footed ferrets on a ranch in northeast New Mexico. Black-footed ferrets are endangered.

Black-footed ferrets, probably the rarest mammal in North America. It can be easy to mistake black-footed ferrets for other animals in the same family that look very similar: the long-tailed weasel and the European ferret.

How can you tell the difference between these three animals?

The black-footed ferret is approximately two feet long including its tail. It is yellowish in overall color. It has a black face-mask and a white snout. It is most often found in prairie dog towns. It has not been found in New Mexico in many years.

The long-tailed weasel looks very similar to the black-footed ferret. It may also have a black face-mask and black tail tip, but the feet are light colored. The body color is often yellowish to reddish brown with a light belly. It is about half the size of the black-footed ferret. The long-tailed weasel is common in New Mexico, usually in rocky or wooded areas, where it hunts rodents.

The European ferret, also known as a polecat, is about the same size as the black-footed ferret. However, it has a more pointed muzzle, or nose, more black on the tail and bushier fur. The European ferret is domesticated, meaning it can live with humans. It is a popular pet.



When a species is **endangered**, that means that it is in danger of going extinct, or disappearing forever.

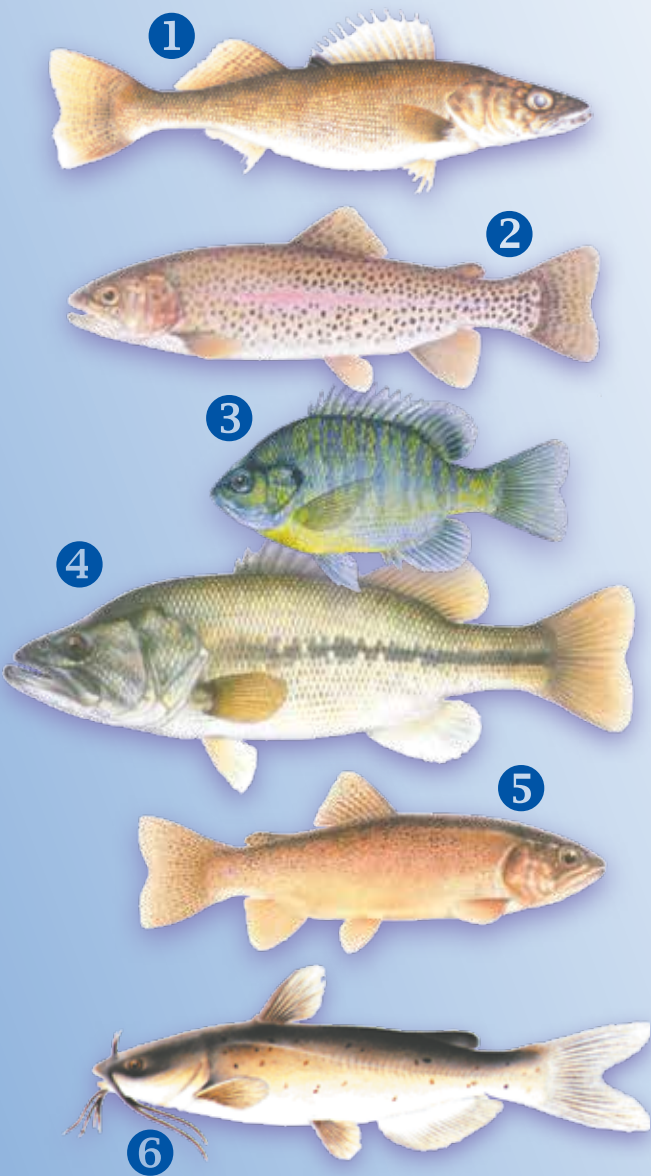
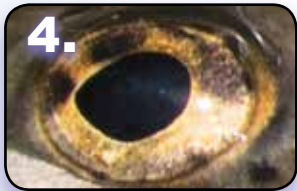
Right: European ferret.

*Left: (top) Black-footed ferret;
(bottom) Long-tailed weasel.
Department photos by Jim Stuart.*

Animal eyes

Whose eyes are these?

Take a look at the six pairs of eyes. Can you tell what animal each pair belongs to?



Cold water fish vs. warm water fish

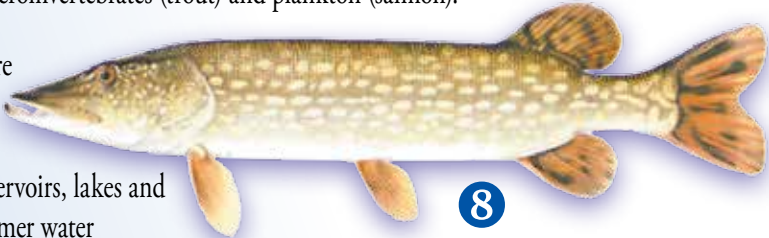
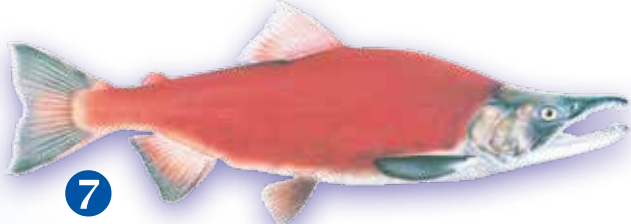
New Mexico's lakes, river and streams are home to many different kinds of fish. There are two different types of fish in our state—cold water fish and warm water fish.

Cold water fish are fish in the Salmonid family. They occur in higher elevation cold water lakes and streams" with water max temperatures less than 65°F and prefer water much cooler.

Ideally 40-50°F range water with high dissolved oxygen. Cold water fish can be omnivorous but general feed on aquatic macroinvertebrates (trout) and plankton (salmon).

Warm water fish are also called spiny ray fish.

Warm water fish occur in lower elevation large reservoirs, lakes and ponds and rivers with summer water temperatures >65°F. Warm water fish are primarily piscivorous — meaning they eat other fish — when adults but can feed on a diverse diet including crayfish, small mammals, amphibians, etc.



Can you identify these fish?

Cold water: Kokanee salmon, Gila trout, rainbow trout. Warm water: largemouth bass, walleye, Northern pike, Channel catfish, bluegill

Fishes: ① Walleye; ② Rainbow trout; ③ Bluegill; ④ Largemouth bass; ⑤ Gila trout; ⑥ Channel catfish; ⑦ Kokanee salmon; ⑧ Northern pike.

Animal Eyes: 1. Great blue heron 2. Mule deer 3. Pronghorn 4. Rio Grande cutthroat trout 5. Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep 6. Western diamond back rattlesnake

Hello! My name is Kevin Holladay. I am the conservation education program manager for the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish.

I was very fortunate to have parents that loved spending family time outdoors; fishing, tent camping and hiking out West. In 5th grade our family moved out of town to an old farm with a creek and pond to fish and prairie to get lost in. Joining Boy Scouts, I learned that some scientists don't wear white lab coats but go outside to study wildlife through radio collars, trap and release, tracking, scat, pellets and other signs.

I majored in biology at the University of Kansas and took a few field natural history classes where we banded birds and caught rattlesnakes. After graduation, I volunteered with the Student Conservation Association at Glacier National Park and then Canyonlands National Park. Those positions helped me get park ranger jobs at Zion, Yosemite, Olympic, Katmai, Glacier Bay and Arches National Parks. During that time, I earned my master's degree in education with a minor in wildlife.

I always wanted to see Africa, so after I finished my master's degree I wrote a few letters and was accepted for an internship with the Kalahari Conservation Society in Botswana. After a year travelling in Africa, I came home and wanted to settle down.

When I got this job at the department, I felt like I had won a big lottery! One of my main tasks is to share with students and teachers how to fish; spin casting and fly fishing while developing a strong conservation ethic. I have been able to teach teachers how to incorporate fishing and wildlife field studies into their lesson plans and school grounds.

One thing I love about my job is that I am part of a noble mission going back to 1903 when our department was created—to conserve wildlife for future generations.

Right: Kevin Holladay, former conservation education program manager, checks a bluebird nesting box. Department photo by Martin Perea.

Cool Jobs at Game & Fish

Meet Kevin Holladay





Turn tips into cash by calling **Operation Game Thief**

By Ross Morgan

Operation Game Thief (OGT), a New Mexico Department of Game and Fish program, offers rewards to citizens who turn in poachers. The OGT program is a Crime Stoppers program for wildlife that began here in New Mexico in 1977. In fact, the program was modeled after the first Crime Stoppers program, which was originally created by the Albuquerque Police Department. Today, Operation Game Thief, or a similar program, has now been adopted by nearly every state in the U.S.

The OGT hotline is set-up to receive information 24 hours a day, seven days a week to ensure that we capture any details someone may have about a wildlife crime or violation. All calls to OGT are confidential and the reporting individual has the option to remain anonymous. If you are unsure

you witnessed an actual violation, the best thing to do is report it and let a conservation officer make a determination.

If a poacher is arrested or issued a citation based on the information provided by the caller, a reward is authorized. The payment is arranged to protect the anonymity of the caller. Rewards can be paid in cash, check or money order. We have found in many cases wildlife enthusiasts do not expect the reward; they just want the criminals stopped.

The key to successfully catching poachers is to report the information quickly and give as much detailed information as possible. However, you should never put yourself in danger trying to report a violation and you should never, under any circumstance, confront a poacher.

For more information on how you can support OGT or if you suspect a wildlife crime has occurred, please call Operation Game Thief at (800) 432-GAME (4263), or visit <https://onlinesales.wildlife.state.nm.us/public/ogt>.

Remember, poachers steal your wildlife.

Below: In 2017, officers confiscated more than a dozen elk and deer skulls from a poacher in Bloomfield, N.M. Department photo.

