

# THE WILD TIMES



## IDAHO CHAPTER THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

October 9, 1996



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### IN THIS ISSUE:

President's Message:	Following The Crowd.
Editorial	Fish and Game Searching For New Director. Forest Health..Failure To See The Fauna Through The Flora. Support Needed For Teaming With Wildlife.
Letters To The Editor	(Still Waiting To Hear From You)
Feature Article	What's Happened To Our Sage Grouse?
What The ___?	Colorado Senate Bill 96-167 Update.
Upcoming Meetings	TWS Annual Conference, Idaho Chapter Meeting, etc. .
Idaho Job Opportunities	IDFG Director, Research Biologist.
Humor Section	You Might Be A Redneck If. . .

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## President's Message

### Following the Crowd

I found Rollin D. Sparrowe's message in the most recent issue of The Wildlifer on leadership challenges very interesting. Sparrowe discussed the increasing roll that polls, market studies, and ballot initiatives have in natural resource management. Over the last several years, natural resource agencies have progressed from making management decisions with little or no "customer" input to gathering and fretting about the interests of every possible person with even the most trivial interest in a decision. I have wondered lately where the balance should be when weighing public opinion in our decision making process. I agreed with Sparrowe when he stated, "We need to respond to this new era of examining the human dimensions of wildlife management with our eyes open. Public votes on complex wildlife management issues can be a threat to responsive scientific management, but should be viewed as one of many inputs to decisions. We must work through education, public involvement, as well as

being reasonably responsive to public attitude-but without giving away the leadership role expected of us as professional resource managers."

You've all heard, "We don't manage wildlife. We manage people." There is considerable truth to this statement, but with very few exceptions wildlife managers don't know how to measure public opinion or interpret the results of professionally designed surveys when they are conducted. I recently saw the results of a survey taken from Montana mule deer hunters. Many of the results of this survey were similar to one the University of Idaho and the Idaho Fish and Game conducted in 1988. The results indicated that there are several types of hunters and they hunt for a variety of reason. Both summaries were packed with tables showing the proportion of hunters in different categories and how their opinions varied on management issues. Individual management strategies were seldom supported by an overwhelming majority. So how do we choose what strategy is best? Do you strive to anger the fewest people or please the most? Do you try to offer something for everyone or do you cater to the most vocal special interest? It is unlikely that any decision

will gain overwhelming general support. The only way for a wildlife manager to win is to choose the management direction that is most likely to enhance or maintain wildlife populations and their habitats.

I believe that the majority of the public has confidence in our ability to make biologically sound management decisions and they look to us for leadership. It is our job to provide workable management options. We need to seek out balanced public input and make decisions supported with the best scientific data possible. In a Science Digest article in 1980, J. W. Hanley put it in more direct terms: "if good science is not taken to the public, then the multitude of pseudo-scientists and 'instant experts' - - who represent every imaginable special interest and flaky idea - - will continue to speak for science in the making of public policy."

James W. Unsworth ☺

## Editorial

### Fish And Game Searching For New Director

After 16 years serving as Director of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game Jerry Conley is returning to his home state

to serve as Director of the Missouri Department of Conservation. Jerry has done some incredible things for this state and has always been a strong supporter of the Wildlife Society. I wish him well.

The Department of Fish and Game is headed towards some challenging times. They are currently faced with a 3 million dollar revenue shortfall leading to a 12.5% cut in license funded budget expenditures. Some of the most popular units to hunt elk in the state are facing declining bull:cow ratios. These same units support a vast majority of the state's non-resident elk hunters who provide the Department a substantial portion of its revenue. These are just a few of the complicated issues that will face the new Director.

The Idaho Fish and Game Commission has begun the difficult task of searching for a new Director and is wrestling with at least 2 philosophies as to the qualities a new Director should possess. One is to hire a natural resource administrator not necessarily having a degree in a biological field to help lead the Department out of its' fiscal problems and improve its' public relations. Another is to hire a person with a strong background in Fish and Wildlife Management. A

concern of mine is that the natural resource administrator approach could drastically change the relationship between the Director and the Commission. I fear it will make the Director more political when that's the role the commission should play. The Society needs to be concerned about the philosophy of the Department leaning more towards becoming a multiple use agency and away from Idaho Code which states the Department's mission is to preserve, protect, and perpetuate all fish and wildlife species found within the state's boundaries.

The new Director will most likely bring a different sense of vision and direction to the Department. Changes may include new assistants and bureau chiefs. That means that we as wildlife professionals will be faced with many changes and new challenges. As wildlife professionals we can sit back and deal with whatever happens, or we can make our views and opinions known about this important decision. I hope we choose the latter. DRM ☺

### **Forest Health, Failure To See The Fauna Through The Flora**

After recently reading through the recent Wildlife Society Bulletin, dedicated to

ecosystem management of the Inland Pacific Northwest, and recalling past press articles regarding this same issue; there is still an incomplete message being delivered. Much of the materials being presented to the public and to professional wildlifers concentrates on what historic forests looked like from a tree composition, structure, age, and density stand point. Periodically, wildlife species such as spotted owls, northern goshawks, and pileated woodpeckers are mentioned to round out the healthy forest picture.

An example is the concern for loss of old ponderosa pine forests. These forests historically were maintained by low intensity-high frequency fires. Man's fire suppression efforts have either eliminated or changed what was believed to be a self-sustaining forest. Currently, remnants of this forest type contain a greater amount and diversity of both overstory and understory vegetative types. This diversity is often referred to as fuel load.

A couple of points are worth noting. First, it may be more appropriate to refer to attainment of forest health as a humanly desired condition, rather than ecosystem-warranted. The benchmark that we have

established for what a "healthy" forest should look like generally is no older than a few hundred years. Interestingly, why have we chosen a condition that represents a minuscule temporal fraction of the total age of the landscape and possibly that of the forest. It is likely that this benchmark represents the extent of our historical knowledge and not that of the sustainability of an ecosystem.

Secondly, a few species of special concern have been used as justification for returning to some other form of forest structure. However, little if any information is presented as to what impacts can be expected to the current faunal composition and/or numbers of wildlife.

Back to our example of old ponderosa pine forests. By returning to a forest structure dominated by grass understories and large, well spaced trees, we will have reduced or lost the so-called fuel load and returned to a "healthy, self-sustaining ecosystem". This fuel load represents critical habitat to a variety of wildlife species including lagomorphs and cervids. A loss in this habitat will have a corresponding loss of current wildlife species.

The qualities of an

ecosystem might be better judged by the beholder. Although many current forests may not serve as ecosystems of the past, a strong argument can be made that they indeed are acting as functional ecosystems of today; sustaining a complex of well adapted and niche-oriented species.

We, as wildlife professionals, need a presence in the arena of forest health. The message that is missing regarding current discussions of forest health is that of potential wildlife ramifications and trade-offs that will occur when forest stand structure is changed. It is our obligation to provide this information, not only among ourselves, but to the American public. BBC ☺

#### **SUPPORT NEEDED FOR TEAMING WITH WILDLIFE**

Now that Teaming With Wildlife, the Wildlife Diversity Funding Initiative, has made the presidential election arena it is imperative that those supporting this potential legislation contact not only there national legislators but also major outdoor equipment manufacturers.

Contact me if you are in need of names and addresses to contact. **KEEP**

**THOSE LETTERS GOING! BBC**



Please send all newsletter correspondence to:  
**Brad Compton**  
1345 Barton Road  
Pocatello, ID 83201  
Fax - 233-6430  
Phone - 232-4703  
E-Mail -  
**BCompton@IDFG.STATE.ID.US**



#### **Letters To The Editor**

We're still waiting to hear from you. Any thoughts on the President's Message or Editorials?

If we don't receive any responses - we'll resort to publishing the complete transcripts of Rush Limbaugh's environmental ethic.

DRM & BBC ☺



## Feature Article

### WHAT'S HAPPENED TO OUR SAGE GROUSE?

By: Jack Connelly

Over the last 3-5 years, I have heard numerous comments by both biologists and bird hunters expressing concern about declining sage grouse populations throughout much of the western U.S. The end result thus far has been a change in management philosophy in most western states that puts a higher priority on sage grouse management and has led to more conservative hunting seasons in many states, including Idaho, Wyoming and Colorado. Unfortunately, there is a bit of dogma solidly entrenched within our profession that asserts that game bird populations cannot be negatively affected by regulated hunting (of course "regulated" is never defined). Many bird hunters have also been indoctrinated with this belief. So, changes in sage grouse seasons have a lot of people shaking their heads and wondering what's going on.

In brief, (Editors Note- Jack and brief may be mutually exclusive terms) here's the story. Sage grouse historically occurred throughout western North

America in habitats dominated by sagebrush. This range included at least 15 states and 3 Canadian provinces. During the last 50-75 years this species has been extirpated from 3 states and 1 province. Moreover, their distribution and abundance has been reduced in all geographic areas of their present range. Long term studies in Colorado and Idaho suggest population declines of 50-90% since the 1950's. Despite a large body of literature documenting the population ecology and habitat use by sage grouse, many of these declines are relatively recent (i.e., within the last 20 years). Some populations have declined because of habitat loss. However, others have declined as a result of habitat degradation or fragmentation leading to low nest success and recruitment of juveniles to the breeding population. The total amount of sagebrush rangeland treated with herbicides to reduce sagebrush has decreased over the last 20 years but fires (both wildfire and prescribed burns) have increased in many areas. For instance, in the upper Snake River valley of eastern Idaho >76,000 ha of rangeland were eliminated or badly degraded from 1980 to 1994, largely by fire.

Recent work in Idaho suggests that burning during drought conditions can lead

to sage grouse breeding population declines of 90% and modeling efforts suggest that hunting may have negative impacts during years with poor production. Sage grouse are a long-lived species with one of the lowest reproductive rates of any gamebird in North America. Thus, they are unlikely to show a quick recovery if habitat conditions stabilize and weather is favorable for production.

Management of sage grouse and their habitats should proceed cautiously, using a series of experiments designed to stabilize and then increase populations. The new hunting season framework in Idaho has been established to allow us to compare population changes (and hopefully recovery rates) among hunted and non-hunted populations. At the same time, the Department of Fish and Game is developing a research program aimed at understanding mortality patterns of juvenile grouse and, with the help of other natural resource agencies in the state, is developing a conservation plan for this species. With a little luck and a lot of work, this approach should allow sage grouse populations to stabilize or hopefully increase as we move into the 21st century.

Jack is currently a Principle

Research Biologist with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game stationed in Pocatello.

(Editors Note- the Big Desert area of southeastern and eastern Idaho was chosen as one of the non-hunted control areas across southern Idaho. Unfortunately, 200,000+ acres burned this August, which will compromise the ability of this control area to provide meaningful population data with regard to the impacts of hunting.) .



What The \_\_\_\_?

## COLORADO SENATE BILL 96-167: UPDATE

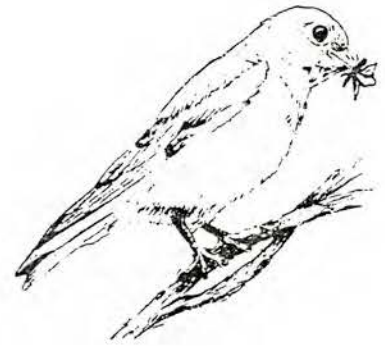
This article by T.M. Pojar was excerpted from Wildlife Tracks, newsletter for the Colorado Chapter of the Wildlife Society.

Senate Bill 96-167 has energized and polarized entities on both sides of the trapping issue. Governor Romer has stated that he believes that a trapping initiative on the November ballot "is a bad idea". There are 99,600 Colorado residents that disagree with him. This is the number of signatures filed to put a trapping initiative on the ballot: 54,000 signatures were

required. What are the provisions of the initiative?. In general, if passed, it will amend the state constitution to prohibit the use of traps, snares, and poisons on public and private land for taking of wildlife. There would be exceptions that would "...allow for the use of such methods by certain governmental entities for the purpose of protecting human health or safety or managing fish or other non-mammalian wildlife...".

The Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA) was given broad authority under SB 96-167 for the control of animals that prey on agricultural products and livestock. Trapping is a component of the arsenal for controlling these animals, thus the initiative on trapping. The CDA has held field trips and roundtable/stakeholder meetings in an attempt to reach a consensus on how SB 96-167 should be implemented. Agriculture, sportsmen, environmental, and nonpartisan interests were represented. After the first 2 roundtable meetings, 3 environmental groups (SINAPU, Colorado Environmental Coalition, and the Sierra Club) walked out in protest. Following the walk-out the Colorado Environmental Coalition returned to the table after some of the process issues related to the way the

meetings were run were cleared up. ☺



## Annual Meeting Idaho Chapter Of The Wildlife Society

The annual meeting of the Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society will be held in Boise, Idaho at the Red Lion Downtowner on February 27, 28, and March 1, 1997. Sessions will be held at the Red Lion.

If you wish to organize a special session or a presentation that is longer than the standard 20 minutes, contact Kerry Reese at 208-885-6435 or [kreese@uidaho.edu](mailto:kreese@uidaho.edu).

General sessions will be held and members are encouraged to present papers on all aspects of the ecology and management of wildlife and habitat. The annual auction and buffet will be held on Friday evening.

Reservations can be made at the Red Lion Downtowner by calling 208-344-7691. A block of rooms has been reserved through January 30, 1997. A special rate of \$61 single and \$71 double has been arranged. Identify yourself as attending the Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society when you make the reservation.

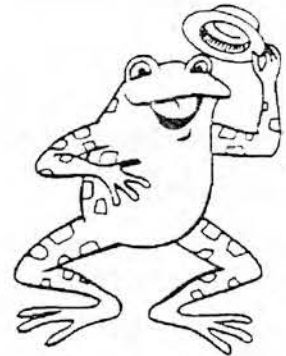
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### SUBMITTING ABSTRACTS FOR PAPERS

Deadline for receipt of abstracts is January 20, 1997.

Abstracts should be of the informative type, containing:

- 1) A specific objective statement.
- 2) A brief statement of methods, if pertinent.
- 3) A summary of results.
- 4) A statement of conclusions.
- 5) Follow abstract format.
- 6) Submit 2 photocopy ready copies.
- 7) Send presenters biography with abstract.



Abstracts must be photocopy ready. Single spaced letter quality print only. Type the abstract to fit within a 3.5 inch wide x 5.5 inch long rectangle. The abstract should not be surrounded by lines. Use the abstract submittal form on the next page.



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**ABSTRACT SUBMITTAL FORM**  
1997 Annual Meeting  
Idaho Chapter Of The Wildlife Society

Type of presentation: \_\_\_\_\_ Paper      \_\_\_\_\_ Poster      \_\_\_\_\_ Display

Subject of Contributed Papers

\_\_\_\_\_ Big Game      \_\_\_\_\_ Upland Game/Waterfowl      \_\_\_\_\_ Nongame  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wildlife Management      \_\_\_\_\_ Habitat Management      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

If first author not presenter, name presenter \_\_\_\_\_

The time limit for contributed papers is 20 minutes, including questions.

Send original plus 1 copy of the abstract and biography with this form to:

Kerry P. Reese, Fish and Wildlife Resources, College of Forestry, Wildlife and Range Sciences, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83843

**DEADLINE FOR ABSTRACTS IS JANUARY 20, 1997**

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**SAMPLE ABSTRACT**  
**(Measures 3.5" x 5.5")**

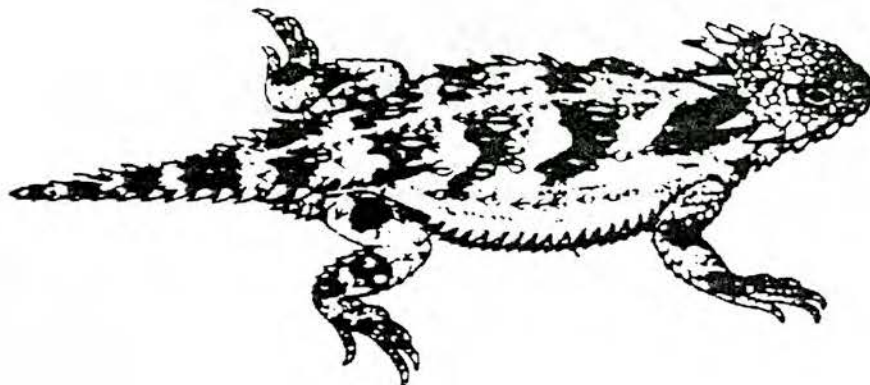
**THE EFFECTS OF INTELLECTUAL ISOLATION ON THE LIFE HISTORY OF SHORT, RED-HEADED, AND BIG WILDLIFE BIOLOGISTS. Woody Pine, Samantha Snag, and Billy Goat**  
Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Good Grief.

Identification of the components of isolation that effect the intellectual regression of wildlife biologists in remote outposts is critical if natural resource agencies are to maintain control over employees and prevent idiosyncratic localism from dominating management decisions. We compared the life style requirements of 3 wildlife biologists (*Homo sapiens grieffus*) with similar food habits, but very different life histories, to those of biologists in less remote outposts. The independent variables we analyzed were: horse and/or mule ownership, size of pick-up truck, contentment, biologist weight, number of firearms, fly rods, or dogs owned, operas and/or ballets attended, and espresso consumption. Intellectual regression was positively correlated to horse and/or mule ownership, contentment, biologist weight, and size of pick-up truck. Number of firearms owned and number of fly rods owned were not statistically significant predictors of intellectual regression. Dog ownership was marginally significant and positively correlated. Operas and/or ballets attended and espresso consumption were dropped from the analysis due to small sample size. Biologists stationed in remote locations are likely to be fat, dumb, and happy.



## Upcoming Meetings

October 23-26	6th Biennial Watershed Management Conference	Sue Enos, UCA-Davis, Centers for Water and Wildland Resources, 1323 Academic Surge, Davis CA 95616 916-752-8057.
October 24-25	Ecosystem Management For Wildlife Conservation in the Pacific Northwest	Las Vegas, Contact Scott Stenquist, 503-231-2364
November 14-15	Watchable Wildlife Conference	Huntington Beach, CA. (1-800-SAY OCEAN or fax 714-969-5592; Internet <a href="http://www.gorp.com/wwildlife/confnce.htm">http://www.gorp.com/wwildlife/confnce.htm</a> .)
November 14-15	Natural Resource And Environmental Policy For The 21st Century: Shaping The Vision	YO Holiday Inn, Kerrville, Texas. (TX Agric. & Natural Res. Summit Initiative, 113 Administration Bldg., TX A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-2142; 409/845-8484; FAX 409/845-9938.
Feb. 27-Mar. 1	Idaho Chapter Of The Wildlife Society	Red Lion Downtowner, Boise Reservations call 208-344-7691 Kerry Reese 208-885-6435 <a href="mailto:kreese@uidaho.edu">kreese@uidaho.edu</a> .
May 5-7	6th Western Black Bear Conference	Ocean Shores, WA. Contact Steve Pazzanghero 360-902-2521
May 15-17	Northwest Section, TWS	Juneau, AK. Contact Ellen Campbell 907-586-7919
May 27-28	4th International Moose Symposium	Fairbanks, AK. Contact Chuck Schwartz 907-262-9368
June 4-7	Bison Ecology & Management	Bozeman, MT. Contact Montana Extension Service 406-994-3252



## Idaho Job Opportunities

Idaho Department Of Fish And Game

Director, Announcement #96-E-22  
Closing Date: October 25, 1996  
Contact Idaho Personnel Commission  
208-334-2263

Idaho Department Of Fish And Game

Wildlife Research Biologist  
Announcement #96-00944-0574  
Closing Date: October 18, 1996  
Contact Idaho Personnel Commission  
208-334-2263

### Humor Section

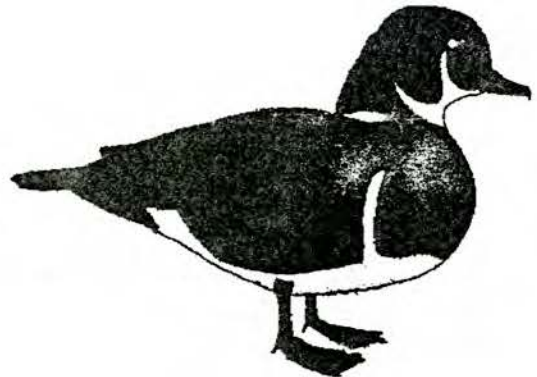
You Might Be A Redneck If:

You've ever hit a deer with your car  
deliberately..

You have an above ground pool and  
you fish in it.

You think A-1 Sauce tastes great on  
'possum.

You can distinguish between the  
taste of 'possum and groundhog,  
blindfolded.



**DEADLINE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS - JANUARY 31**

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## IDAHO WILDLIFE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I want to join the Idaho Chapter of the Wildlife Society, and enclose \_\_\_\_\_ \$10.00 (1 year), \_\_\_\_\_ \$20.00 (2 years), or \_\_\_\_\_ \$30.00 (3 years) in payment of dues. This is \_\_\_\_\_ new or \_\_\_\_\_ renewal membership. It is not necessary to be a member of the parent The Wildlife Society to be a member of the Idaho Chapter of TWS. Membership is by calender year. Make checks payable to: "Idaho Wildlife Society" and mail to Idaho Wildlife Society, c/o Robin Garwood, Treasurer, PO Box 76, Shoshone, ID 83352 (Telephone 208-726-7672)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

- - - - Clip-And-Send - - - -

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*Idaho Chapter The Wildlife Society  
1345 Barton Road  
Pocatello, ID 83201*

BULK RATE  
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Clarkston, WA  
99403

IDAHO FISH AND GAME  
PO BOX 25  
BOISE, ID 83707

OCT 25 1996