



Steelheading



In fall 2012, anglers averaged 13 hours per steelhead caught in the Salmon River below North Fork, and averaged 10.5 hours per steelhead in the Salmon River above North Fork. Fall steelhead fishing on the upper Salmon River typically begins to pick up around the first of October below North Fork (see map below). However, this year, due to river conditions and late run timing steelhead fishing may be slow until mid-October.

During the fall, the majority of bank anglers can be found fishing for steelhead below the city of Salmon. In recent



Resident Norm Ando with a nice hatchery steelhead caught drifting the Salmon River in February 2013.

years, the area of river between Salmon and North Fork has gained popularity with fly fisherman due to the numerous boat ramps and the river's many runs and riffles. The Salmon River below the Middle Fork Salmon River provides excellent opportunity for anglers with large jet boats.

ing below North Fork. In fact, the majority of steelhead caught during March typically are caught below North Fork. As the season progresses, the anglers move upstream following the steelhead as they head toward the Pahsimeroi or Sawtooth Hatchery to spawn. By late April, most of the angler effort is either near the mouth of the Pahsimeroi River, near Ellis, or upstream by Stanley, Idaho.



Little Emma Flinders makes a catch at the Kids Pond in Salmon, a steelhead plant from the Pahsimeroi Hatchery.

Once temperatures begin to warm up in spring, the majority of anglers begin fish-

Dates to Remember

- Oct 10-24: General Deer Season
- Oct 12: Waterfowl Season opens
- Oct 15-Nov 8: General Elk Season
- Oct 19-Nov 30: Pheasant Season
- Oct 22: Trapping Season opens (see rules)
- **Oct 26: Youth Mentored Pheasant Hunt**
- Oct 31: Bear season closes
- Nov 10-Dec 9: Whitetail Short-range weapon
- **Nov 15-16 Youth Mentored Waterfowl Hunt**
- Nov 15-Mar 31: Wolf Trap Season (see rules)
- Dec 1: 2013 Licenses go on sale



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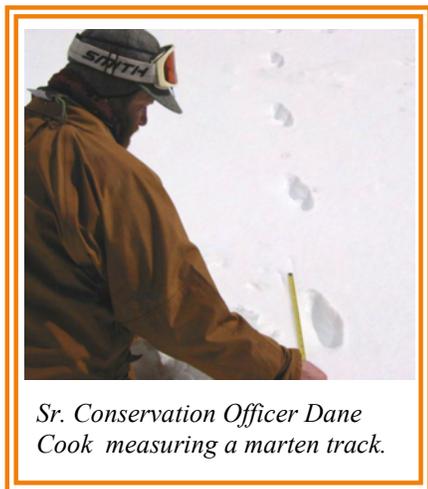
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Snowtracking

by Beth Waterbury, Regional Wildlife Diversity Biologist

Snow tracking is a time-honored means of identifying wildlife in winter through their tracks and sign. It's the stock-in-trade of trappers, hunters, and naturalists who use snowtracking to study animal behavior. It's also a fun detective game to play while out skiing, snowmobiling, or otherwise enjoying the great, snowy outdoors.

Snow tracks leave a series of clues that, when studied, tell a story



Sr. Conservation Officer Dane Cook measuring a marten track.

about the elusive animal that left them. As a track detective, you'll want to start with the big picture – using geographic location, habitat, and season of the year as clues to

narrow down the possible suspects. Next, consider “relative track size”, remembering that tracks will appear smaller or larger depending on snow quality. This will help you learn to judge the overall size of the animal that left the track and differentiate between taxonomic groups. Now examine the track outline. Do you see toes or hooves? Hooves would indicate one of our local even-toed ungulates: elk, deer, moose, pronghorn, mountain goat, or big-horn sheep. If toes are visible, do you count 4 or 5? Four-toed mammals include all canines, felines, and rabbits. Five-toed mammals include bears, weasels, raccoons, and shrews. And just to confound you, the fifth toe of black bears, wolverines, and fisher may not always register in tracks. Presence of claws can be a good clue to identification, but are often lost in fluffy snow. Claws on a four-toed track can help distinguish a coyote from a bobcat, or a gray wolf from a

mountain lion. Cat claws are retractable, so rarely show in prints. Animal gaits and track patterns can also give clues to its identity.

Members of the weasel family have a distinct bounding pattern, while rabbits and hares use a “diagonal hop” where the smaller forefeet are diagonally positioned in front of much larger hind feet. Think outside the track!



Blue grouse flush.

Some mammals – like river otters, mink, fisher, and beaver – travel by sliding over snow. And birds – like the blue grouse – make some of the more fascinating tracks around, leaving beautiful imprints of wings as they flush from their undersnow roosts.

There are dozens of great field guides available to hone your track detective skills. Snowtracking is both an art and science. It takes some practice, but will certainly further your winter enjoyment of the great outdoors.

Wildlife Biologists Receive Awards

Mark Hurley, Sr. Wildlife Research Biologist stationed in the Salmon Region, received the Outstanding Monograph Wildlife Publications Award from The Wildlife Society for the publication, “Demographic Response of Mule Deer to an Experimental Reduction of Coyotes and Mountain Lions in Southeastern Idaho.” *Wildlife Monographs* 178. The Wildlife Society Annual Conference took place in

Milwaukee, Wisconsin this October where Hurley has traveled to accept this prestigious award.

At a recent Idaho Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Bureau meeting at Lake Coeur d'Alene, Salmon Region's Wildlife Diversity Biologist Beth Water-

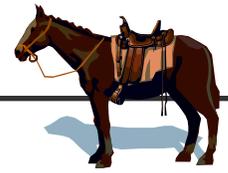
bury received one of two Wildlife Leadership Awards. She was recognized for her agency-wide contributions to the Regional Work Group endeavor as lead for the Idaho Wolverine Conservation Strategy, and for presenting the *Leadership Pathways for Women in IDFG* workshop at the bureau meeting for women colleagues.



Salmon Region's Mark Hurley and Beth Waterbury.

Fishery Efforts in the Backcountry

by Cole Wilkie, Challis District Conservation Officer



Work in the far reaches of Idaho is very rewarding, but is not for the faint of heart! Much of the work performed by Salmon Region Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) staff is in more remote areas such as the Frank Church Wilderness or simply rugged mountains where there is little-to-no road access. We commonly call this the “backcountry”. It may take officers and biologists three to five hours of drive time to access some of this back-

country....and that may be only where the trail starts!

IDFG fisheries biologists spent much of the summer gathering information on fish in the Loon Creek drainage of the Middle Fork Salmon River this year. Officer Justin Williams and I assisted with this project by providing stock support to pack equipment, supplies and food on 44

-mile round trip from the Tin Cup trailhead to the Middle Fork Salmon River.



Officer Wilkie leads the way for the backcountry fishery project in Loon Creek.

Although very rewarding and beautiful, there is no room for mistakes for us or our horses. For five days, we packed camp gear and snorkel gear for six biologists to allow them time to get their work done. They wore the soles off their shoes with day packs and we wore the shoes down on the horses with the rest! Short of a few near wrecks, hornet nests, washed out trails, downed trees and cliffs, the work was completed.

IDFG is also charged with keeping healthy populations of fish in more re-

mote alpine lakes. We stock rainbow and cutthroat trout in many lakes around the State by backpack, stock and plane.

One such chain of lakes is Hat Creek Lakes. The trail in is good, so I chose to take four high school boys and their teacher along me to stock these lakes. These kids were from big cities all across the United States. They were exposed to horsemanship skills, backcountry work, alpine lake fishing, and a downpour rain on the way out!

Lesson learned in Idaho: the weather can change in five minutes, so be prepared for sunburns then snow all on the same trip!

“...there is no room for mistakes for us or our horses.”



High school students assist with fish planting Hat Creek Lakes in the backcountry, September 2013.

Rancher Receives Recognition

Leadore rancher Merrill Beyeler was recognized by the Bureau of Land Management with the Range-land Stewardship Award and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission annual award for his work to improve habitat for salmon and steelhead in the Lemhi.

Beyeler placed conservation

easements on his two Lemhi Valley ranches which cover more than 2,000 acres. He has participated in projects on his land that improve fish habitat by changing his irrigation methods and moving irrigation diversions to reconnect tributaries.

Jeff DiLuccia, Salmon Region Fish Habitat Biologist, has been key

in these landowner cooperation efforts in Lemhi and Custer counties.



Rancher Merrill Beyeler and Jeff DiLuccia, IDFG. ~Cindy Salo photo

New/Improved Angler Access Sites

In recent years, IDFG has been busy either restoring or installing new accesses for boating and fishing enthusiasts. Salmon Region Access Guide can be picked at our Salmon Regional office or go online to find a statewide or regional copy to download: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/fish/guides/anglerGuide.pdf>



CARMEN ACCESS: The newly acquired 12-acre IDFG Carmen Bridge Access provides public boating access to the Salmon River, campsites, bank fishing and wildlife viewing. The construction of an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) fishing platform was completed this fall.

PAHSIMEROI RIVER ACCESS AREA: First photo below shows new ADA fishing platform. A new storage building has been added as well.

New outhouses at the Colston Creek and Elk Bend accesses should be in place by late October.



DEER GULCH: (Photos 2 & 3) In fall 2012, the Deer Gulch boat ramp was replaced with a wider, concrete ramp facing downstream for easier boating access.


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NORTH FORK: A 25 year IDFG/Private lease agreement with the Village at North Fork provides public boating access to the Salmon River and ADA restroom. Food, lodging and camping is available at the Village at North Fork.