

Absaroka Elk Ecology Project

INTRODUCTION

The Wyoming Game & Fish Department, the University of Wyoming, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service recently initiated the Absaroka Elk Ecology Project west of Cody. Objectives of this project are to:

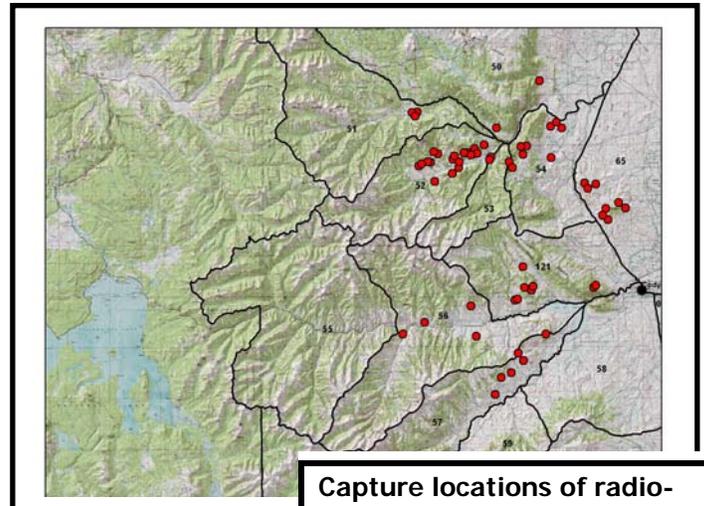
- Determine status of migratory and resident (non-migratory) elk.
- Determine timing of migrations and routes used by migratory elk.
- Increase understanding of elk use (both migratory and resident) of private lands.
- Obtain information on adult elk survival.
- Understand the influence of wolves on elk habitat use and movements.



In late January 2007, 60 adult female elk were captured and fitted with GPS radio collars.

PROJECT AREA

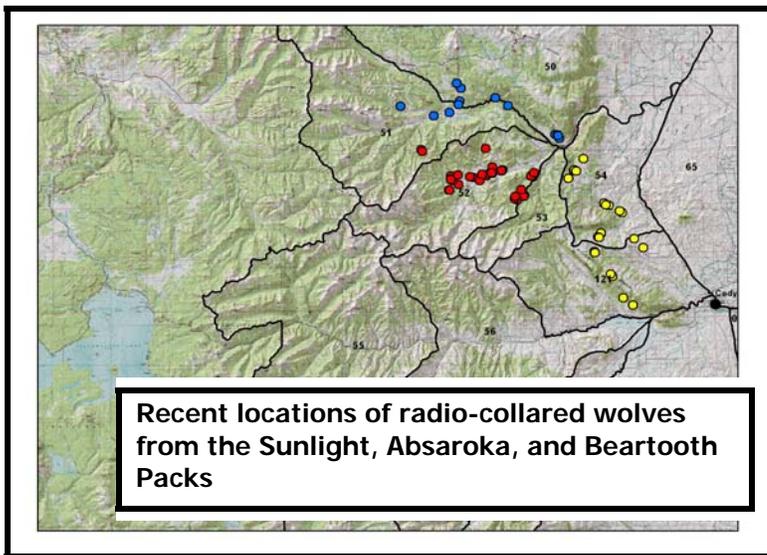
The project area encompasses the North and South Forks of the Shoshone River, the headwaters of the Yellowstone River, the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone River, and the Lamar River within Yellowstone National Park. This includes the entire Clarks Fork elk herd unit (Hunt Areas 50-54, 65, and 121) and a large portion of the Cody elk herd unit (Hunt Areas 55 & 56).



Capture locations of radio-collared elk, January 2007



In January and March 2007, 6 wolves from 3 resident wolf packs were captured and fitted with GPS collars.



PROJECT BUDGET (Phase I 2006-2010)

Total cost of this project is approximately \$500,000. Efforts at gathering funds to complete the project continue. To date we have secured approximately \$350,000.

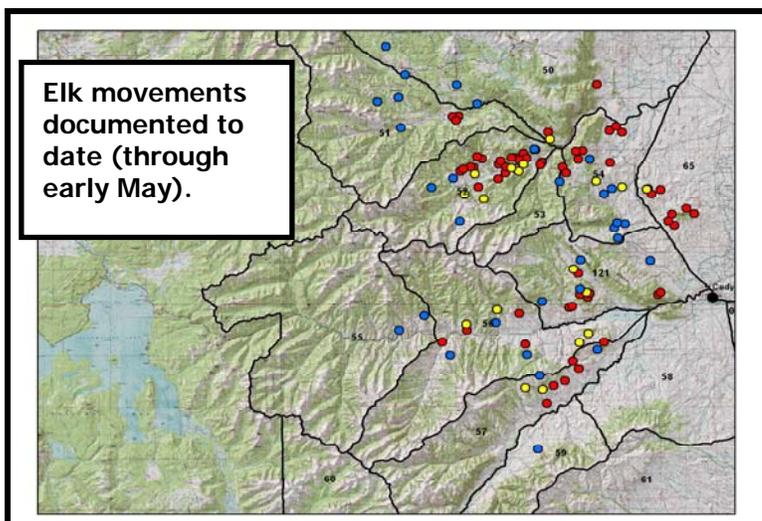
| <u>Item</u> | <u>Cost</u> |
|---|------------------|
| 60 GPS Elk Radio Collars | \$150,000 |
| 12 GPS Wolf Radio Collars | \$ 55,000 |
| 60 elk captures @\$500 | \$ 30,000 |
| Replacement Collars & Captures | \$ 40,000 |
| Relocation Flights | \$ 75,000 |
| <u>UW Student, Techs, Equip (3 years)</u> | <u>\$150,000</u> |
| Total | \$500,000 |

PROJECT COOPERATORS

Wyoming Game & Fish Department
 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 University of Wyoming – COOP Research Unit
 USDA/APHIS/Wildlife Services
 Shoshone National Forest
 Yellowstone National Park
 Bureau of Land Management
 Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board
 Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
 Wildlife Heritage Foundation of Wyoming
 Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife
 Bowhunters of Wyoming
 Cody Country Outfitter & Guides Association
 Pope & Young Club
 Boone & Crockett Club
 Private Landowners

SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

The Cody and Clarks Fork elk herds are extremely important in terms of hunting and cultural values. Over the last 20 years, major habitat changes have occurred within the various seasonal ranges of these elk herds, changes that cross political and institutional boundaries. Over the same period, the influence of large predators upon ungulates in the GYE has increased. GPS technology allows us to evaluate elk habitat use and to assess the importance of various habitats (and habitat changes) to elk management, as well as examine the influence of large predators (in this case wolves) at a scale not previous possible. Due to the complexity of the geographic and land-ownership landscape inhabited by the elk of the Absaroka Mountains, a unique collaboration between State, Federal and University biologists is needed to adequately address the management needs of elk influenced by such a diversity of stakeholders. Such an approach is necessary to provide answers to some of the important questions regarding elk, wolves, and public and private lands along the Absaroka Front.



YOU CAN HELP

COMPLETE THE PROJECT

Although the study has been initiated, we still have a lot of work to do. We are continuing to raise funds for this project and could use your help. Any contribution made to the Absaroka Elk Project would be greatly appreciated and are entirely tax-deductible. We respectfully request that any contributions be sent to:

Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife
 Bighorn Basin Chapter
 P.O. Box 336
 Cody, WY 82414