

WYOMING MIGRATION CORRIDORS



WYOMING
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MIGRATIONS IN WYOMING

Wyoming's ungulates - deer, pronghorn, elk, and moose- are on the move. Following patterns of weather, elevation, and food availability over eons has led to large groups of animals moving from low elevation areas in the winter to higher elevations in the summer. Spring migration offers animals the youngest, tenderest, and most nutritious plant growth at a time when extra energy is needed to produce the next generation. The reverse pattern allows the animals to minimize energy as they forage in deep snow conditions. These annual migrations are why Wyoming's harsh winter landscapes can support the vast herds of ungulates we value today. The seasonal routes allow animals to move from summer to winter range and are critical to maintaining these herds.

Wild ungulates in this region have been following their migration paths for millennia. Today the potential impacts on these paths can affect long term health of these herds.

Some issues are simple barriers, like fences. Others are more complex, like rural development, new roads, and energy development. These do not stop the animals physically but, alter the landscape to the extent few animals are willing to pass through. These semi-permeable barriers can also compromise stopover habitat; the rest stops on the migration routes animals use to refuel and rest along their journey. Bottlenecks, areas of migration routes where many animals pass through a very narrow band of habitat, also need protection. Disturbances in bottlenecks can put the entire migration at risk of being cut off.

The migration routes of ungulates across Wyoming are part of our natural heritage. They are part of what makes our state so wealthy in wild ungulates. Conserving these corridors while reducing and eliminating barriers to migration ensures that we will have healthy herds for the coming years and the next generation.

Wyoming Wildlife Federation (WWF), Executive Director



WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY “DEVELOPMENT?”

“Development” can be simple barriers, like fences, or more complex like rural development, new roads, and energy development. These do not stop the animals physically, but alter the landscape to the extent that few animals are willing to pass through. These semi-permeable barriers can also compromise stopover habitat, which are the rest stops on the migration routes that animals use to refuel and rest along their journey. Threats to migrations have a larger effect when they impact or create bottlenecks, areas of migration routes where many animals pass through narrow bands of habitat. If bottlenecks are disrupted, the entire migration is at risk of being cut off.



WHY DON'T ANIMALS MIGRATE SOMEWHERE ELSE?

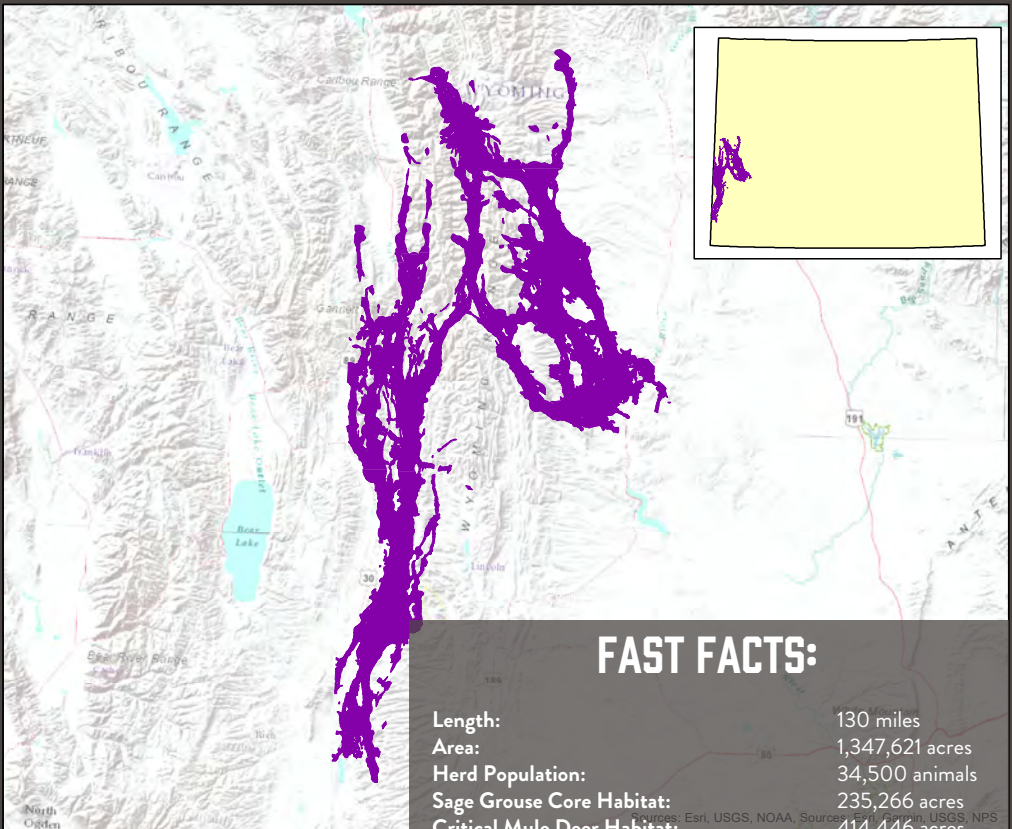
Many animals, including ungulates, follow patterns of weather, elevation, and food availability moving from low elevation in winter to higher elevations in summer. This pattern, following young grasses and forbes, is called “surfing the green wave.”

In spring animals make use of the youngest, and most nutritious plant growth. At this time extra energy is crucial to producing the next generation. The reverse pattern allows animals to minimize energy use while traveling in deep snow conditions. This movement pattern dictates a herds “migration corridor.” These are not just point to point journeys but are vital habitat areas ensuring the survival of Wyoming herds. Animals spend almost 1/3 of their lives, when they are most vulnerable, on these corridors and pass this food knowledge to the next generation.

CURRENTLY DESIGNATED OR IDENTIFIED MIGRATION CORRIDORS

WYOMING RANGE:

Rather than a single path, the Wyoming Range mule deer migration corridor is a highly braided set of routes that deer use to pass between the Hoback Rim above Bondurant south to Kemmerer. The corridor crosses two mountain ranges, the Salt River Range and the Wyoming Range. The primary management agencies for this corridor are National Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). There are 1,531 existing oil and natural gas wells in the corridor, which has been affected by human resource development for almost 100 years. The corridor is impacted by Wyoming state highways 30, 89, 189, and 232.

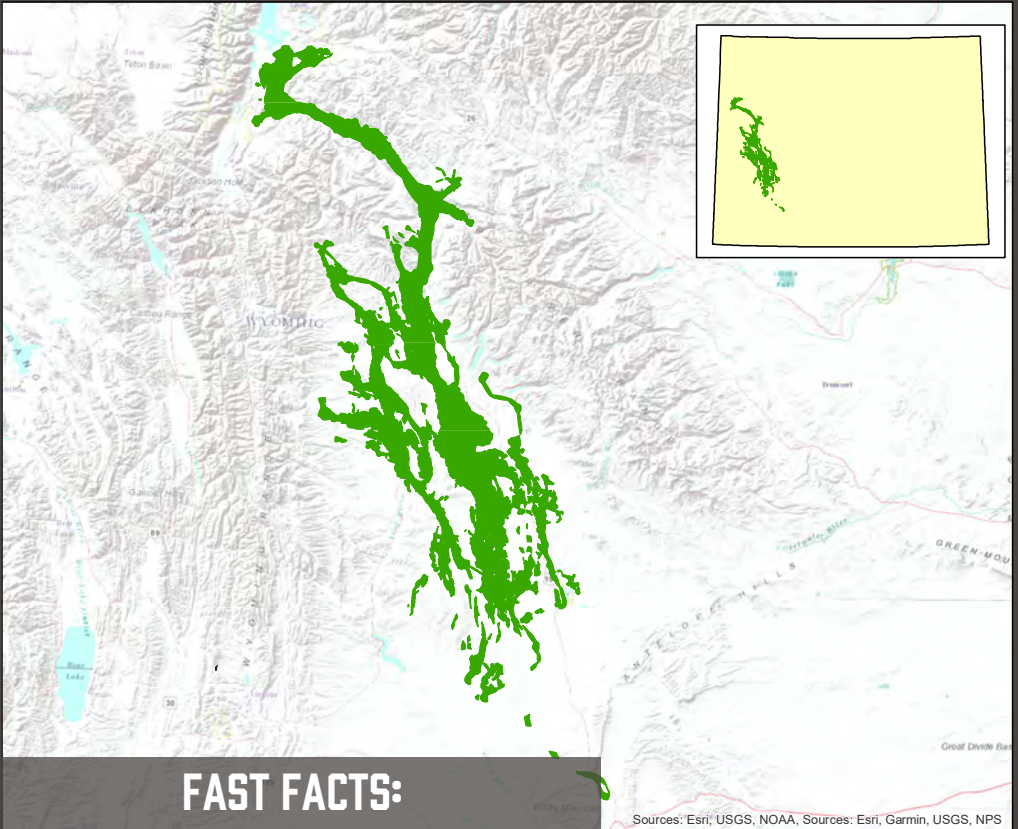


Resources:

- Wyoming Range Project Video
- Wyoming Mule Deer Project 2018 Update
- Wyoming Migration Initiative Migrations Viewer
- Wyoming Game and Fish Proposes New Migration Corridors

SUBLETTE PRONGHORN:

The Sublette pronghorn migration corridor spans Grand Teton National Park, south and east through the Bridger-Teton National Forest, through BLM and private land along the upper Green River basin and Red Desert to wintering areas near Rock Springs. It includes a core route and equally important side routes. There are 4,911 existing oil and natural gas wells in the corridor and this area has the potential to be heavily impacted by future development leases. The corridor is impacted by Wyoming state highways 191, 189, and 351.



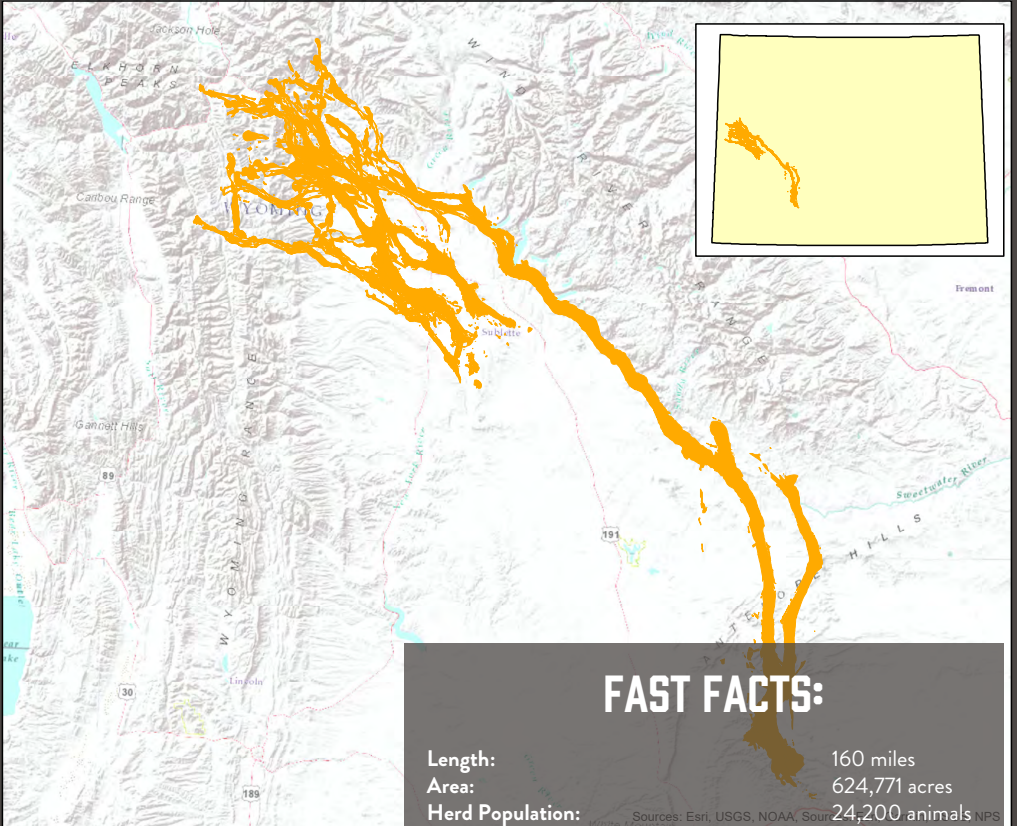
FAST FACTS:

Length:	190 miles
Area:	837,895 acres
Herd Population:	35,000 animals
Sage Grouse Core Habitat:	506,958 acres
Critical Seasonal Mule Deer Habitat:	120,065 acres
Critical Pronghorn Habitat:	286,951 acres
Critical Elk Habitat:	167,019 acres

Resources:
BTNF Corridor Designation
Path of the Pronghorn Video
Wyoming Migration Initiative Migrations Viewer
Wyoming Game and Fish Proposes New Migration Corridors

SUBLETTE MULE DEER (RED DESERT TO HOBACK):

This mule deer migration route is the original migration that revealed the importance and extent of ungulate migration corridors. It is the second longest mule deer migration corridor in North America. This route parallels the Sublette pronghorn migration, ranging from the low-elevation winter ranges in the Red Desert to the high mountain slopes surrounding the Hoback Basin. The corridor runs through Bridger-Teton National Forest and BLM land as well numerous private holdings. It is relatively free from historical oil and gas development with only 134 existing wells in the corridor. This is likely one reason for the length of the corridor and its consistent high-use. Recent efforts by WWF and others have deferred parcels within the corridor marked for development. The corridor is impacted by state highways 28, 191, and 189, with highway 28 bisecting the corridor at a narrow point.

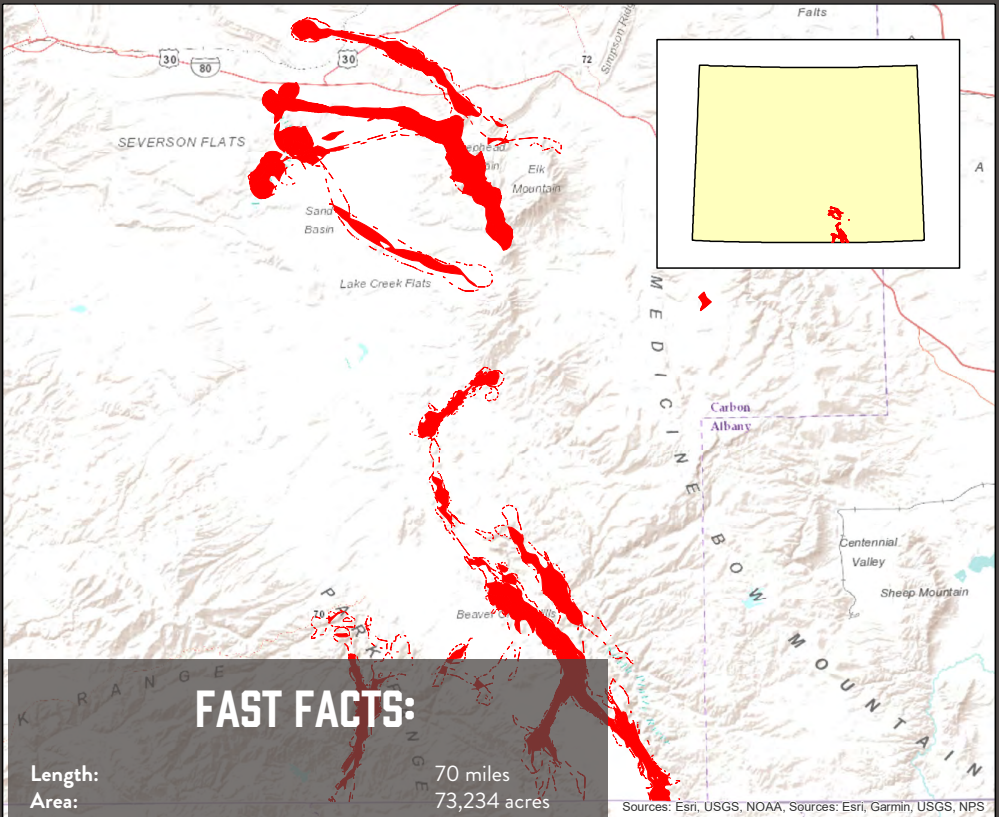


Resources:

National Geographic Video
UWYO Migration Assessment
Wyoming Migration Initiative Migrations Viewer

PLATTE VALLEY:

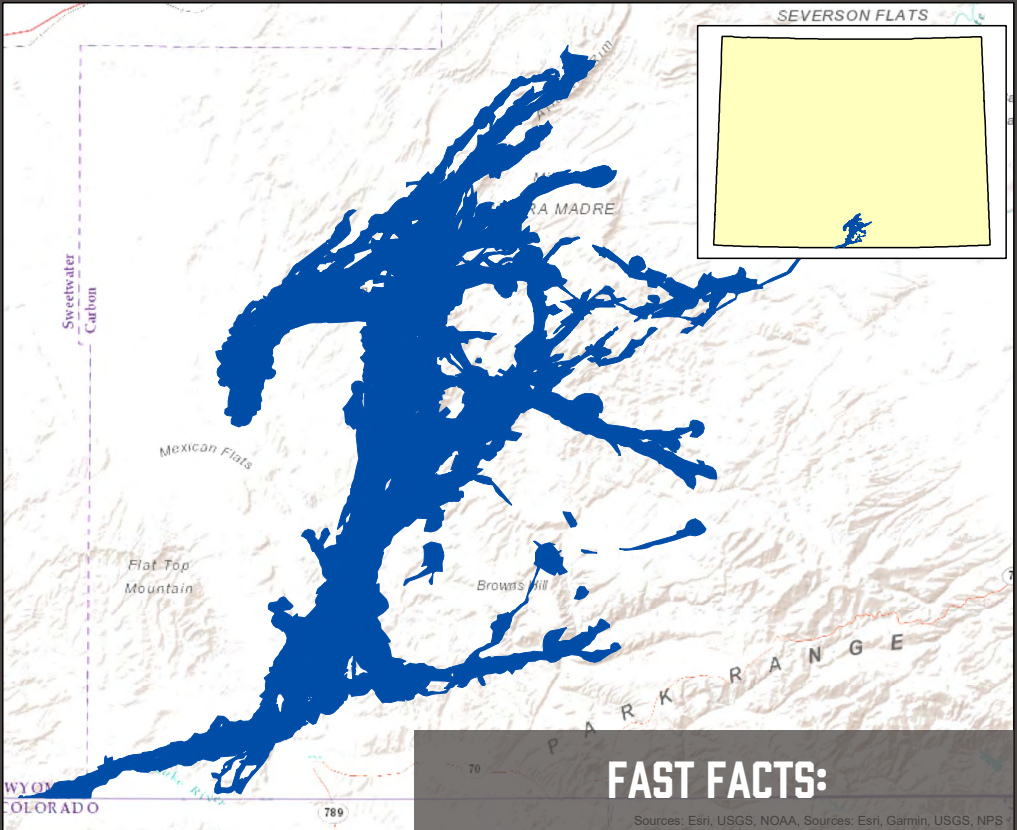
This corridor is unique. This herd does not move from a single wintering area to a single summering area. Instead, mule deer are moving from various wintering areas in the Platte Valley, Sierra Madres, the Snowy Range, and North Park, CO. The paths are diffuse, but mule deer studied in the region had a high fidelity to their given corridor. This suggests these routes are long established and unimpeded passage is critical to the movement between ranges. This corridor runs through a mosaic of landowners – mostly private with some BLM included. Unlike corridors in the western portion of the state, this corridor is relatively un-impacted by oil and gas development, with only 2 wells in the corridor area. In Wyoming, the migration path crosses I-80, a principle threat to deer travel and motorist safety. The corridor is also impacted by state highways 130, 230, and 287.



Resources:
National Geographic Video
UWYO Migration Assessment
Wyoming Migration Initiative Migrations Viewer

BAGGS:

The Baggs migration corridor is the shortest of the identified migration corridors in Wyoming, but mule deer use the same path to move from winter range along the Atlantic Rim to summer range in the Sierra Madres. The corridor runs through a checkerboard of BLM and private land. There are currently 137 existing oil and gas wells in the area and proposed leases in the corridor were deferred in 2019, so it is potentially impacted by future oil and gas development. This corridor is also impacted by state highway 789.



FAST FACTS:







Sources: Esri, USGS, NOAA. Sources: Esri, Garmin, USGS, NPS

Length:	60 miles
Area:	305,785 acres
Herd Population:	18,800 animals
Sage Grouse Core Habitat:	185,627 acres
Critical Seasonal Mule Deer Habitat:	94,186 acres
Critical Pronghorn Habitat:	29,666 acres
Critical Elk Habitat:	104,216 acres

Resources:

Record of Decision on Lease Deferrals
Wyoming Migration Initiative Migrations Viewer

MIGRATION CORRIDOR TALKING POINTS

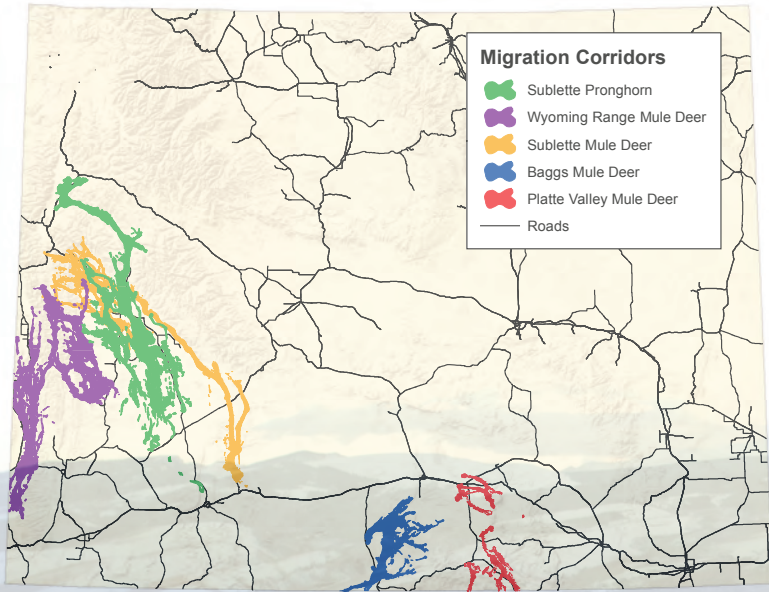
-  Sublette Mule Deer, Platte Valley Mule Deer, and the Baggs Mule Deer corridors are officially designated as migration corridors. Wyoming Range Mule Deer and Sublette Pronghorn are proposed for designation but have not yet been officially designated as migration corridors.
-  Wyoming has studied ungulate migration for decades and has the largest collection of scientific data in the world, the maps found in this booklet represent that.
-  Big game migration corridors are considered vital habitat for pronghorn, elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, white-tail deer, and moose.
-  The Western Governors' Association has a policy resolution (2019-8) regarding the importance of big game migration corridors. This policy supports western state efforts to identify and conserve these corridors.
-  These corridors are subject to the Department of Interior issued Secretarial Order 3362, "Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors." This means identifying corridors, reviewing existing data about herd health and identifying additional research needs for each is a priority. The order also directs federal agencies to work with the state wildlife agency in an effort to improve habitat, sustain big game herds and create hunting opportunities.
-  There was a process in place for designating corridors. Research could be presented to Game and Fish who would conduct further study and then open their findings to public comment. This also allowed Game and Fish to comment on private interests in "vital habitat" areas and ensure equitable use by multiple user groups. This process is currently on hold due to corporate lobbying. Without this process Game and Fish is unable to comment on what private interests do with your public land.

PROTECTION PROVIDES

- A balanced and transparent process for the development of public land
- A channel for public comment
- Vital habitat for Wyo. ungulates

HISTORICALLY, PROTECTION HAS

- NOT prohibited development from taking place nearby
- NOT prohibited recreational use of land
- NOT prohibited hunting in migration corridors
- NOT prohibited motorized sports near corridors



KEEPING WYOMING WILD



Wyoming Wildlife Federation works to conserve Wyoming's wildlife, habitat and outdoor opportunities.

DONATE:

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