

Rhys York
Lathrop & Capurro Intern Year End Report
Conservation Aid II

My Summer Journey

As school comes to an end and summer closes in, my excitement builds for this year's journey. It entails projects, surveys and studies all guided to preserve and remember James Lathrop and Wayne Capurro's legacy of being great sportsman in the silver state. Those two set a standard of conservation for Nevada's wildlife. The Department of Wildlife has carried on a tradition of helping conserve and protect the wildlife of Nevada so that future generations of outdoorsmen can enjoy the scenic beauty that the Nevada outdoors has to offer. This internship has opened up a whole new level of the outdoors that I didn't know existed. The opportunity that the Nevada Wildlife Record Book, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited and the Nevada Department of Wildlife have given me is something that I will cherish forever. I am always grateful and thankful to be a Lathrop-Capurro intern as I get to experience firsthand with animals, plants and the amazing parts of each unique ecosystem in Nevada.

Week 1: I reported to the Valley Road office for my first day of work on May 29th. I met with Chris Hampson to get my paperwork and summer truck situated. The biggest surprise for me of this summer occurred on my first day when I found out I would have to drive a manual truck all summer. This task would challenge me for my first week and make this summer one to remember. Chris Hampson took me out to practice driving the manual to teach me before sending me off on my own. The very next day I met Rodney Johnson in Reno to attend a Goose capture meeting that would be occurring the whole next week. To finish off my first week I work with Chris Hampson and Mark Freese on a fence rebuild of Upper and Lower Scott spring in the Virginia Mountains. The project was on a Saturday with help from 80 plus NBU volunteers, but we went up on the Friday before to help fix the washed out road before the big volunteering event. Saturday comes and we lowered and rebuilt the fence to prevent snow from crushing it in the winter.

Week 2: The week of the goose capture started early Monday morning at Virginia Lake with Rodney Johnson, Kyle Neill and Wildlife services. The goose capture begins with us setting up a big funnel made of orange fencing that leads to a cage of sorts to trap the geese. As we push and bait the geese into a big flock on the ground we slowly herd them into the cage. The question you might be asking yourself is why the geese aren't flying away? This is because geese go through a process called molting where they lose their ability to fly for around 30 to 45 days. Throughout the whole week we captured geese in 10 different locations, 9 of which were in a close proximity to the Reno-Tahoe Airport. This is important because it lowers the chance of an interaction between flocks of geese and airplanes. The 10th location was at Edgewood golf course and our main reason to capture these geese is to relocate them so that they get a sense of migration back and don't always stay in the same spot all year. On the Monday after the goose capture we met in

Yerington that morning to transfer the geese from the holding cages in the Mason Valley Wildlife Refuge to a horse trailer so that the geese can be transferred from the Reno-Tahoe area down to the Overton Wildlife refuge outside of Las Vegas.

Week 3: Fallon was my destination from Tuesday to Thursday after helping Chris Hampson with putting new signs on the sage grouse wing barrels on Monday. In Fallon, Jason Salisbury put me to work by instructing me to put rocks around 4 drinkers on guzzlers and to dig out the drinkers that fill up with mud overtime as well as measure water levels. The 4 guzzlers were all located off of highway 50 and highway 31 and traveling to their location would take some time. In Between the two days of guzzler dig outs, Jason and I drove to a guzzler located off of the Navy bombing range to repair the apron and fiberglass tops of a guzzler that was burned by a fire. This project went well and after we finished Jason taught me about some of the seeding of forage kochia and winter kochia around the guzzler.

Week 4: With the hot summer months ahead, guzzlers needed water as much as possible in their tanks. Jason Salisbury, Kyle Neill, Kenny and I all worked together on water transports to fill up guzzlers around Fallon and Mina Nevada. The first day we filled up the Santa Fe guzzler and the Clavada guzzler. I saw about 30 bighorn sheep that drank right from the guzzler while we were filling it up and that was an unforgettable moment. We used 5 trucks, 3 with 250 gallon tanks and 2 with 325 gallon tanks to transport the water to the guzzler and pumped out of our tanks onto the apron. The tanks would be refilled by two big tankers, a navy tanker that held 6,000 gallons and an old fire tanker that held 4,000 gallons. Day two would be the first day that Josh Kirk started, one of the two new Lathrop-Capurro interns. He rode along with me in my truck to help pump the water from tank to apron. This day we filled up the Gillis pay low guzzler and saw a few bighorn sheep running up the hill near the guzzler. On our last day of water transport we used our 5 trucks to fill up the Gabbs Butte guzzler and the Schnyder guzzler, this concluded our three day transport of over 27,000 gallons of water. Josh and I had also noticed our tire leaking air and had to hurry back to Mina to change out the tire and made it back to change it just in time. To finish this week, Josh and I were sent off to check water levels of the Murrietta and Mine Pad guzzlers. It was cool to me that I could see the mountains in Yosemite from the Mine Pad guzzler. On our way to those guzzlers we used GPS to locate a collar of a ewe that had been killed by a mountain lion.

Week 5: This week was a very exciting week for me because Josh and I had been sent off for a bear snaring project in the Pine Nut range outside of Carson valley. I met Heather Reich in the morning and followed her up for about an hour to the camp I would stay at with Joe Bennett and Josh Kirk for the week. Joe, Heather and I had checked 8 snares in 7 sets. Our first snare we checked had a 100 pound yearling male caught in it, all wrapped up around a pinion pine. We jab stick the bear to inject him with 1 cc of Telazol 18-15. This drug puts the bear in a state that they are still aware of stuff moving around them, but their nerves are suppressed so that us as

biologists are safe. It takes about 10 minutes for the bear to fully go under. We then approach the bear with caution and tag the bear with 3 ear tags. One tag is a number tag which this bear was #31, the other two were a vet number tag and a do not consume tag. The do not consume tag is there for safety just in case the bear is killed in the hunt requiring hunters to call us before they eat the bear. We check vitals and rectal temperature every ten minutes to make sure the bear is in a healthy state while under the drug's effects. The bear's joints and coat are looked over for health making sure there are no broken bones or anything abnormal. We lastly take hair and blood samples on the bear and place a pit tag at the base of their skull. We then wait for the bear to show some sign of waking up which includes ear sensitivity and eye twitching, then we place it in the shade and leave it alone to wake up. The snare is reset that night around 5pm and all sets are rebated with marshmallows and liquid smoke. Joe and I woke up and checked 4 snares in the morning and found a bear caught in a snare, so we head back to camp to wait for Heather and Josh to arrive. Immediately upon their arrival we went straight to the bear to put it under and injected 1 cc of Telezal with the jab stick and the bear didn't go down after 10 minutes so we injected another .5 cc of Telezal. The bear was a 3 year old female that had a pit tag. We can age bears by looking at their head size and the coloration/ware of their teeth. We then tagged her ears with the 3 tags, checked its health and took blood and hair samples before leaving it to wake up. Our other 6 snares were empty and so we returned that night to reset and bait the snare that bear dug up and the one that it got caught in. We also took a tissue sample of this bear and a picture was taken of the white patch on its chest for a genetic study. The next two days stumped us in the Pine Nuts, so we pulled the traps on Thursday and made our way over the Hobart reservoir in the Sierra Nevada's Carson range to help Sam O'Berto and Cooper Munson finish their week of bear snaring. We did however get a flat tire before making our way to Hobart. Thursday night we were unfortunately out of luck on catching bears. Friday morning we woke up to pack up camp and wait for Carl and Heather to meet us. That bad luck carried over to Friday and every snare was empty and my bear snaring experience was over.

Week 6: Heather Reich met up with Josh and I so that we can help the Animal Health Specialist Peri Wolff perform a necropsy on a yearling female that had a broken pelvis. The bear had X-rays taken of it and an overall check to determine the condition of the bear. The next two days we helped Heather sand and paint the trailers that have the bear traps on them so that they look more appealing. We then went to Shakespeare Ranch in Glenbrook to set a bear trap for a massive bear that was getting into trash. We finished that day by putting bear stickers on Garbage Cans in Sand Harbor and Cave Rock. The final day of this week, Josh and I drove up to the Tahoe Rim trailhead to hike in to find two bear dens. We hiked eight miles in the Slide Mountain area and ended up finding a bear den that was located in a big 150 foot pine tree that had a three foot opening with a six foot den inside for the bear.

Week 7: Josh and I started the week off with a bang; we met at a house in Carson Valley that had a bear in one of its trees. I surprisingly arrived and saw a bear with a really dark black coat. That

was amazing to me because only 5% of all black bears in Nevada have black coats; the other 95% have brown coats. The bear wouldn't come down so we left a tarp and left it alone. We then set a trap at Clear Creek golf course and re-baited a trap in Incline Village. That trap was surprisingly closed when we pulled up and we found a big male bear inside. We then hurried back to Carl's house to keep the bear safe overnight. The next morning we met at Carl's house to put the three ear tags and pit tag in the 200 pound three year old male. We also took hair and blood samples and checked the vitals. We also had caught a female up in Glenbrook that was tagged already and was lactating. We then did a soft release on this bear so it would find her cubs by nighttime. We eventually set another trap in Incline at the same location. We started Wednesday by driving up to Mt. Rose to release that male bear to release it on top of Mt. Rose summit. The Karelian bear dogs were used to chase off the bear once the trap was opened. The bear release was the coolest thing I have seen and it made me love bears and how they live even more. We hurried down the mountain to meet Chris Hampson and set a plan for Thursday and Friday in Hays Canyon. We hurried up to Northern Washoe to look for Bighorn sheep and Deer. All together we only saw 4 ewes and 3 lambs with 3 ewes having red ear tags. 3 doe and 2 fawns were also located in Hays Canyon. Surveys at Big point and The Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge did not show us any sheep, but we did see 5 bucks, 2 doe and 1 fawn which were fun to watch lay down right in front of us.

Week 8: Worked with Jason Salisbury in Fallon and 5 of the high school interns from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service on placing two new tanks in the Sand Springs 22 guzzler. We then dragged out the old tank through Tarantula hawk infested bushes to the trucks. We finally seeded the ground around the guzzler. The second project of the week was driving out to Dixie Valley with Jason, Kenny and Josh to tear down an old barb wire fence with wood posts that was collapsing around a natural spring. We set the posts for our pipe rail fence and returned the next day to finish the job. After placing all rails in the fence and seeding the ground around the spring, we knew that the wild horses wouldn't be able to disrupt the spring anymore.

Week 9: Cody Byrne and the fisheries crew in Winnemucca would need our help with stream surveys in the Santa Rosa Mountain Range. We would drive up to camp out at the base of Able Creek and would electroshock and take stream surveys of the upper part of Able Creek for Brook Trout and Lahontan Cutthroat Trout. Our goal for the week was to remove as many Brook trout as possible to help Lahontan Cutthroat Trout thrive in the upper part of the stream. The first day, I headed with Chris and Whitney to shock the lower part of our survey area. We removed a total of 287 Brook trout that day and only found 2 Lahontan Cutthroat Trout, from which we took a finclip for DNA testing. The second day, Abe, Whitney and I hiked a mile up to start our electroshock of the upper half of our survey area. We only found 13 Brooks trout and didn't want to shock enough to maybe get a LCT. The bottom team removed 107 Brook trout. All together we removed 500 brook trout in those 2 days. We finished the week by driving to Falls Canyon in the Santa Rosa range. We hiked to a beautiful 15 foot waterfall to electroshock the pools below it

for any Lahontan Cutthroat Trout. We capture 4 cutthroat trout, one being 13 inches long and transported them a ½ mile up the canyon from the falls so they can be away from the Brook trout.

Week 10: Ed Partee met us in Winnemucca to make a plan for Josh and me to conduct brood surveys all week long. We would work in the Pine Forest range on Monday to count mostly chukar. We counted chukar in Cherry creek, Big creek and Pass creek, which in total added up to 165 chukar and 5 ewes. The next day we searched Alberson Basin in the Pueblo's and we counted 37 chukar and saw 17 antelope on Big creek ranch. Wednesday started out special at Bilk creek reservoir where we saw 68 quail and a bachelor group of 10 mule deer bucks drinking from the water. However, Moonshine canyon stumped us on birds and only granted us 2 buck antelope. The last day was the most exciting day just because I knew about the beautiful country of the Santa Rosas. All together in the Santa Rosas we drove through Windy Gap, Hinkey Summit and the Buckskin loop all the way down the backside. We in total saw 22 quail, 58 chukar and 10 sage grouse.

Week 11: The final week Josh and I finished our summer adventure in familiar country in Northern Washoe, where we would be looking for California Bighorn Sheep in Hays Canyon, Big Point, Coleman Canyon, Stevens camp and The Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge. Chris Hampson had provided us with UTM's and collar location points of the bighorn sheep that we would look for. We started out to Hays canyon on Monday and Tuesday. We camped out at a BLM campground while we looked for sheep. The two days in Hays canyon we hiked around the collar locations and found a total of 28 California bighorn sheep, which included 4 collars and two orange ear tags which read #140 and #146. There was a smaller ram that was in the group and it was our first ram we had seen in Hays Canyon. These sheep were close enough that we got to use the telemetry equipment for the first time which was exciting to see the sheep in real life that had just been orange and green dots on a paper. We also saw a total of 3 Antelope and 29 mule deer which included a nice 3 point. After successfully finding the bighorn sheep in Hays Canyon, we packed up camp and headed out to Big Point, Coleman Canyon and The Sheldon. We saw a collared ram 10 yards off of the road in the Little Sheldon and we got some great photos and got to use the telemetry equipment once again to confirm the ram was the one we were looking for. Just past the Sheldon road we found 3 rams, 3 ewes and 2 lambs on a rocky face Bedded down. Coleman Canyon guzzler was our destination after passing the Sheldon. We hiked up to the guzzler and put a trail camera on the guzzler to check the amount of use the guzzler was getting. Just 100 yards off the guzzler we saw 14 bighorn sheep with 2 pink ear tags and 1 yearling ram. We also flushed 15 chukar out of some brush by the guzzler. The Calcutta lake bed had 4 antelope on it. We hiked down and headed back on 8A to Stevens Camp for the night. Stevens camp and its history was so interesting to me and I loved how it was a hidden oasis in the desert. On our way back home on highway 34 we were to look for antelope and sage grouse. We found a total of 84 antelope in a 3 mile stretch south of Fern point and near Grassy

point. We also scared up 37 hen sage grouse that flew in a big flock all together. It was an amazing sight to see such a big bird glide along in the air. We did see one hen have blue and yellow markings on her feet which was crazy to see that it had been captured before and marked for some kind of research. After heading back after our long road trip through Northern Washoe County, we returned to Valley Road for the last time of our summer 2018.

My second summer with NDOW as a Lathrop-Capurro Intern was one that I will never forget. I never imagined that I could learn so much about Nevada's wildlife in 3 months in an area of Nevada that I spent 19 years in. I am forever thankful to NDOW, Nevada Bighorns Unlimited and The Nevada Wildlife Record Book for giving me an opportunity to learn, study and be a part of the conservation of Nevada's outdoors. Being in the same region two years in a row really showed me that I will always have new experiences and will always learn something every second that I am surrounded by the beautiful outdoors. I am always ready to learn something new every day and because of that I am excited for the journey ahead of me in the final two years of this internship.





