



ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17



FWF

2016/17

Annual Report

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» Welcome to our
Annual Report
2016/17





From left, Roy Sloan FWF President, Hon Peter Dunne Associate Minister of Conservation, John Brinsley-Pirie, Don Hammond CEO Game Animal Council, Tamsin Orr-Walker Kea Conservation Trust and Lindsay Wilson Department of Conservation. The Foundation hoisted them for a fly around the Wapiti country to discuss the foundation animal management and conservation projects.

Acknowledgement

The FWF has again been well supported by its sponsors and the local community we would like to thank them for their support .

Collaboration and relationships are the reason the Wapiti Foundation is successful. Without the support and people believing in our cause, life for the FWF (Fiordland Wapiti Foundation) would be a struggle.

The relationship of the FWF and the Department of Conservation needs to make a special acknowledgement of the Te Anau people. They are the FWF partners in this project and the people who have trusted us and backed us. They also give us very valuable advice. This relationship is a great example on how community groups and the department should work together to manage our conservation land.

Thanks to the many other people who support this project. There are too many to name, but we would like to mention our sponsors Apparel Master, The Delta, Southern Lakes Helicopters, Fiordland Helicopters and Stoney Creek

Roy Sloan

FWF President 2016



Introduction

The program started with the simple goal of reducing numbers of red deer as there had been no wild animal recovery done in the area for several years which meant red deer were getting out of control.

The FWF then entered into an agreement with the Department of Conservation and in laymen's term that agreement said that the FWF would be responsible for deer numbers in the Wapiti area, so life for us was all about reducing deer numbers and protecting the environment. That has not changed, it's almost become the Foundations mission statement.

Before the FWF does anything in the Wapiti area we must first think about animal numbers and the environment and how our changes or actions will affect that, which is not a bad thing as it keeps us focused. Animal management is our business and the great thing about animal management is it not only protects our environment but it's the right path for getting Wapiti trophies back into Fiordland.

Who would have thought back in 2004 that managing the affects the deer have on the environment would be a win win for both conservation and recreation. Why was this practical

solution never found sooner? Simple- it's called Trust. Who would think that hunters were responsible enough to manage their own game?

Well can we be trusted now? Since 2004 we have removed around 11,000 deer from the Wapiti area and I guess this next sentence sums that up.

In 2015/16 around 1600 deer were shot in the whole of Fiordland and the FWF shot around 900 of those deer. What is one of the FWF main concerns now? Red deer from outside of the Wapiti area infiltrating the managed deer inside the Wapiti area. Haven't hunters come a long way in a short time?

There are some real exciting things on the horizon for the Wapiti. One being herds of special interest which is still slowly creeping its way along. It is underway and hopefully it will end up as promising as we think it is for the Wapiti herd.

The other is the Fiordland National park draft management plan that should be out any day now. Once upon a time these plans made us hunters very nervous but now we must look at them as opportunities

for improving what we already have, however we need to be smart about this and be united. The FWF has been very innovative since the release of the last plan with their animal management program plus the predator control programs that are now operating in 5 river catchments and are also collaborating with the kea conservation trust.

The FWF have a lot of responsibility to ensure they keep this Wapiti resource, as people have invested a lot of time and money into the area. For example the 2017 ballot hunters on average spent \$2,209 per hunter and a total spend for the ballot of \$688,000. (this is not counting the hunters who hunt outside the ballot.) The other side of this is the recovery that the FWF is responsible for, each year around 45 tons of venison comes out of the area, average that out at \$15 per kg and it starts to add up. The Wapiti team does a power of work and the focus for them is always on the important stuff. We are volunteers and volunteer work is better done with lots of helpers so I encourage people to get involved with this great project.

Roy Sloan.

FWF President 2016/17



The Fiordland Wapiti Foundation (FWF) has been conducting animal management in the Wapiti area since 2004.



The Ballot

* Please see APPENDIX Pages 20-21 for more information on Ballot Data.

There is so much emotion around the ballot and all sorts of unwarranted accusations are made.

The objective for the FWF is to remove as much of the human factor from the ballot as we possibly can while retaining the traditional heritage factor to it. Currently we are looking at options around fully online balloting - hopefully this will be up and running for the 2017/18 ballot.

Party & Hunters Graph (see appendix), shows entries again

were around the 300 mark, which is really becoming the norm. The party changes this year were that we had 17 block changes and 23 party member changes.

The biggest amount of work is getting people off the cancellation list to accept blocks. 71 parties off the list were offered blocks to fill the 17 changes we made. It would be good if the parties who wanted to be on the cancellation list actually accepted blocks when offered to them.

All the feedback from parties coming out of the blocks was

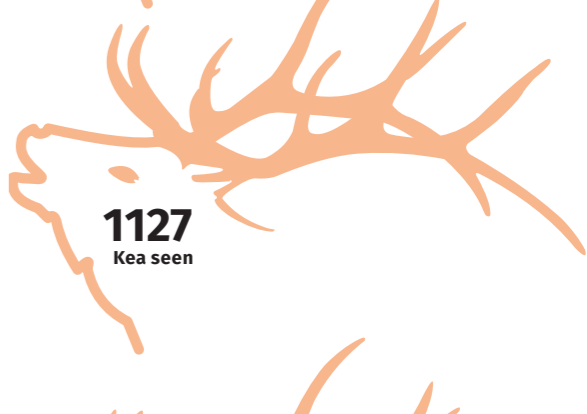
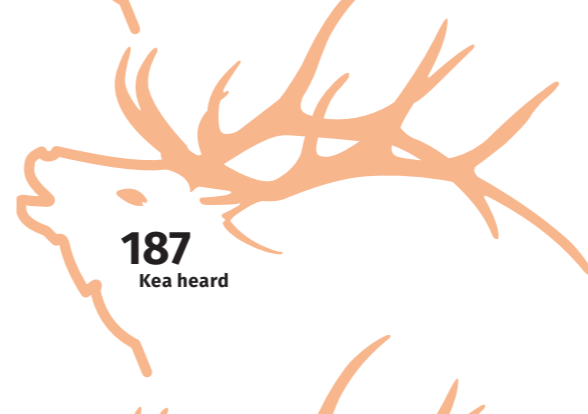
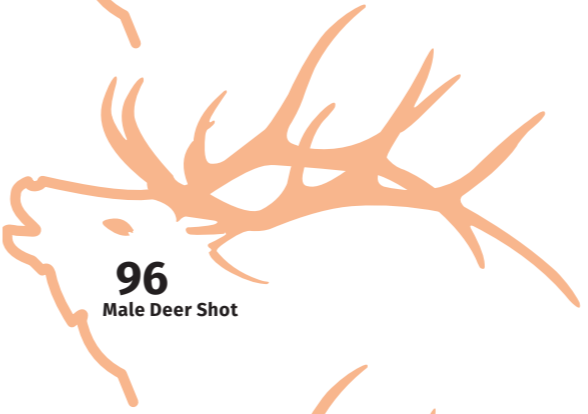
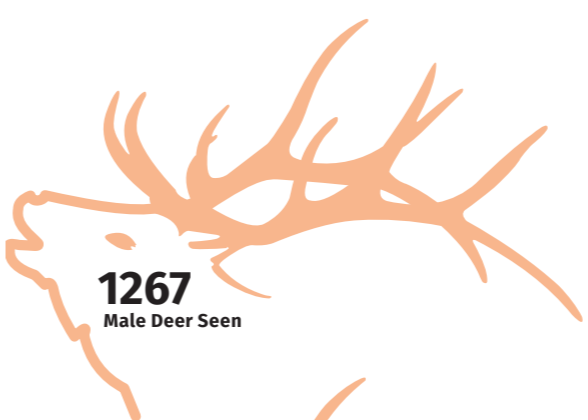
positive, with everyone enjoying their time and they are really happy with the way the animal management is going.

It's great to see hunters are filling in and returning their permits and animal data. However again in 2017 several did not return their information, so they will be getting a letter from the FWF saying they will not be able to enter the 2017/18 ballot. The information from these returns is very important to future of this herd.

The ballot is an area where the FWF keep looking at way to improve.



Ballot Facts



Yearling Project

The yearling project has been well documented with copies of the report available on request from the FWF. The information from this project has been invaluable to the FWF and the future direction of this herd.

For the first time ever we have science to back our direction and this has, and more importantly, added continuity to the people and groups involved with the Wapiti. This should not be understated as history shows us that the common theme that continually stopped Wapiti projects in the past was disagreement with people and groups. What caused this disagreement was Herd management.

This yearling project is planned to be repeated in the 2018/2019 season, as the more data we gather the better our management of this herd will become.

Most people understand and support this program. In fact even through we say it was recommended by Land care, the truth of it is that since 2004 we have had four very well known animal management experts suggesting such a survey.

The number one concern from people is the number of yearlings we are removing at one time, presently 150 every four years, and this is affecting the recruitment of trophies into the herd.

So let's look at it subjectively. The FWF best estimate for the herd size is a population of 4,000 give or take. Around 1,300 to 1,400 calves are born every year and our recovery targets sit around the 900 deer mark.

Our yearling samples are taken before deer recovery starts for the season, 50% of the yearlings are female and 50% are male. Some of these yearlings would be shot during recovery. The key thing to remember with the sampling is we are taking an unbiased sample so this is red deer as well as Wapiti.

Let's look at the 50% or 75 male yearlings removed. DNA shows 50% of them have less than 35% Wapiti genes. If we work from the 35% Wapiti genes we are down to less than 37 potential males.

Normally these animals would be left till the age of 4 years before they are either removed or left. So out of those 37 males left how many would have died through natural causes? How many would be shot by recreational hunters? And how many would be removed at the age of 4 year by recovery?

The yearling project adds far more value to the future of this herd than the loss of a few males. Science is not the only way forward for this herd, but it's needed to answer the tricky questions. We just need to look at the photos in both this and last years report to see how the herd is tracking.

The yearling report is still available from the FWF secretary at fwfsecretary@gmail.com



Animal Management

The FWF put in a lot of time and effort into managing this herd. The Wapiti herd is very complicated and we need to take into consideration things like:

- Management targets to protect the environment
- Cross breeding
- Food to grow bulls
- Antler type
- People
- Phenotype Vs genotype
- Herd structure
- Age

To add to this melting pot of challenges the FWF need to apply all of these applications differently in different areas of Fiordland. If you think this is a challenge then try applying this in practices while flying around in a helicopter.

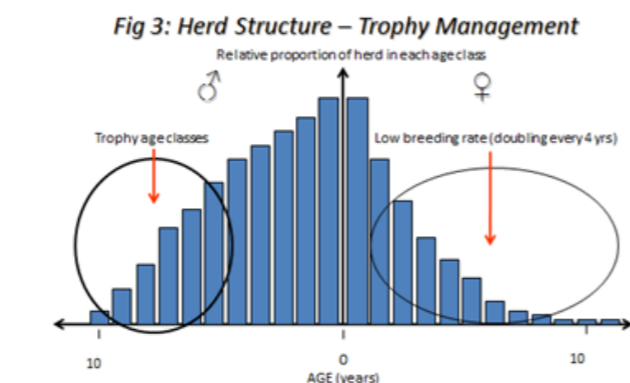
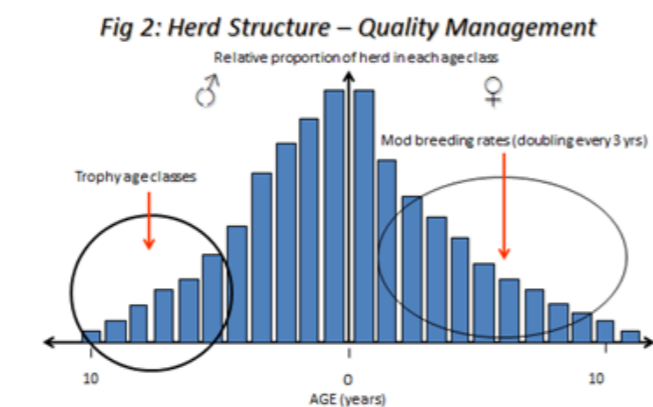
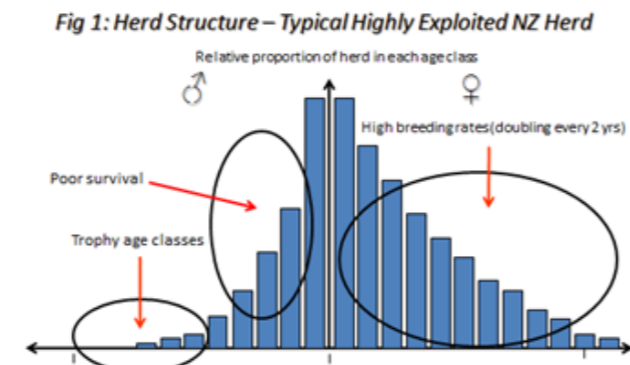
The annual animal target set for 2016/17 was 900 deer. Southern Lakes and Fiordland helicopters held the contracts for the season. The FWF made a couple of changes to the contracts, one setting milestones where contractors had to shoot a set amount of deer per month and shortening the recovery season by one month from August 01 till 30 June.

These changes have been very successful with the 900 target reached at the start of June, one month early. The reason why we have shortened the season by one month was to enable us to carry out special animal management projects controlling areas that may need extra attention. As this report is written, the FWF is making plans to remove more animals from both Southern and Northern boundaries plus the coastal areas. So weather permitting the final totals for the season should be over 1000 animals.

The FWF animal management program has been very well documented. If it's red it's dead. Pressure on the Wapiti female's population and males not harvested until they are in full antler and over the age of 4 years.

The two main reasons for us adopting this strategy are around population and trophy management.

The following graphs explain our directions and graph or Fig 3: Is the FWF goal for the herd.



Each year the FWF have two full animal management meetings where we invite relevant people important to the future of this herd.

The following two guys help the FWF add some science to the project. Both of these guys are very keen recreational hunters so also have skin in the game.

Cam Speedy

Cam Speedy has a background in Forest & Wildlife Ecology, having worked 20 years in public service for NZ Forest Service and DOC across a range of both native and introduced species, but particularly Sika deer, Kiwi and Whio (blue duck).

He worked as Operations Manager for Epro Ltd for 5 years after leaving DOC, during which time he Project Managed the Maungatautari Pest Eradication Project and helped develop a deer repellent for 1080 possum baits. For the past 10 years he has worked in the Renewable Energy industry as an ecologist, more with a focus on fresh water management – species like Tuna (eels), Whio and Trout, while running his own consultancy business.

A key part of Cam's business is wildlife advocacy, helping communities and interested groups understand a range of wildlife management & environmental issues. He has lived in Turangi for the past 32 years, originally moving there to pursue his passions of deer hunting and trout fishing.

He is still heavily involved in deer research and management through his business, working with a variety of private hunting property owners as Secretary of the Central North Island Sika Foundation and with the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation. He contributes regular columns to NZ Outdoor Hunting, NZ Hunter and Australian Deer Magazines, having published more than 150 feature articles since 1993.

Dave Lathan

Dave Latham is a scientist with the Wildlife Ecology and Management Team at Landcare Research. His research focuses on wildlife management, conservation, and vertebrate pest control, especially large mammals. He received a BSc and MSc in Zoology from the University of Otago, Dunedin, and a PhD in Environmental Biology and Ecology from the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, in 2009.

Dave's PhD research was on wolf-prey (moose, white-tailed deer, caribou, and beaver) relationships in woodland caribou range. Prior to joining Landcare Research in 2011, Dave also did postdoctoral research at the University of Alberta, focusing on coyotes and black bears in woodland caribou range.

Dave's current research projects include updating the distributions and impacts of wallabies in New Zealand, refining operational practice for controlling rabbits on agricultural lands, controlling invasive

The FWF are starting to gather some science to support their programs. The FWF feel it is time hunters got to know these people a little more personally.

mammalian predators to reduce predation pressure on threatened shorebirds, and working with FWF to improve management of wapiti in the Wapiti Area.

As well as these two guys we have a variety of people from other areas who are involved. Helicopter operators, Doc, FWF committee, Game Animal Council, Graham Nugent Land care and NZDA.

The 2017 ballot produced several respectable trophies and the report we are getting back support our animal management program and the direction we are heading.

The average length of the antler has increased. If you look back to 2004 it was very unusual to see antler over 40 inches, now we are seeing a fair number of antler over 40 inches. Mother Nature is healing this herd very quickly.

The other good news story for the 2017 ballot was the average age of the animals shot was 5.5 years which is trending up. However we know that some animals were not reported shot. Examples we have are several very young bulls shot and left. Modern media/face book also shows a number of very young bulls shot and not reported.

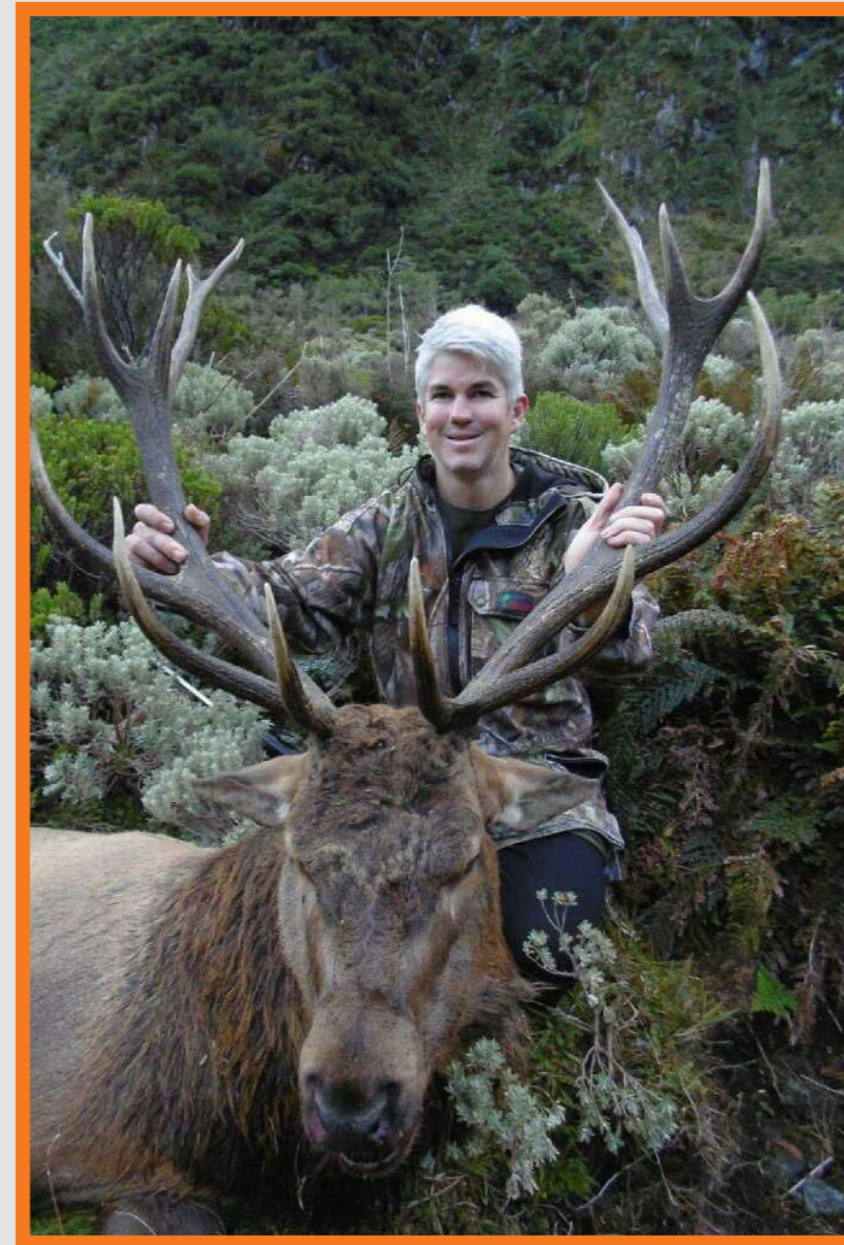




Photo supplied by Mat Cadman

Kea Conservation Trust

The FWF and the Kea Conservation trust have now been working together for two years. During the ballot hunters participate in a kea survey where they record bird sightings and bird calls. The survey is the largest of its kind in NZ.

The next step for this survey is to locate some juvenile birds and put a coloured leg band on them so they can be easily identified. This will allow the kea survey to gather better information on the birds, like home range and distance travelled etc. In the future we hope to be able to provide some predator protection around some nesting sites. The great unknown is the bird population; we get reports from hunters that they are seeing plenty of birds but are they the same birds? As an example there is a documented case of a single bird which had flown 70 kilometres. This bird was able to be identified because of its unique leg banding.

The kea project is a very exciting one to be involved with as these birds are very visual and interactive. But the sad thing about these birds is that their population is declining.

There are some great comments coming back from hunters who have participated in the kea survey. Examples - a white kea was filmed, one particular hunter is missing a lot of rubber from his out board motor, one lost one of his boots during the night and another hunter saw 22 kea's in a single tree on the Edith saddle.

For full report on kea sightings go to hunter data returns Appendix Page .



Predator Control

Because of poor weather the season started later than we planned, however it ended up very successful.

The results this season show a 50% plus increase in stoats and rats caught. A detailed list of the 2015/2016 and the 2016/2017 seasons show the comparison.

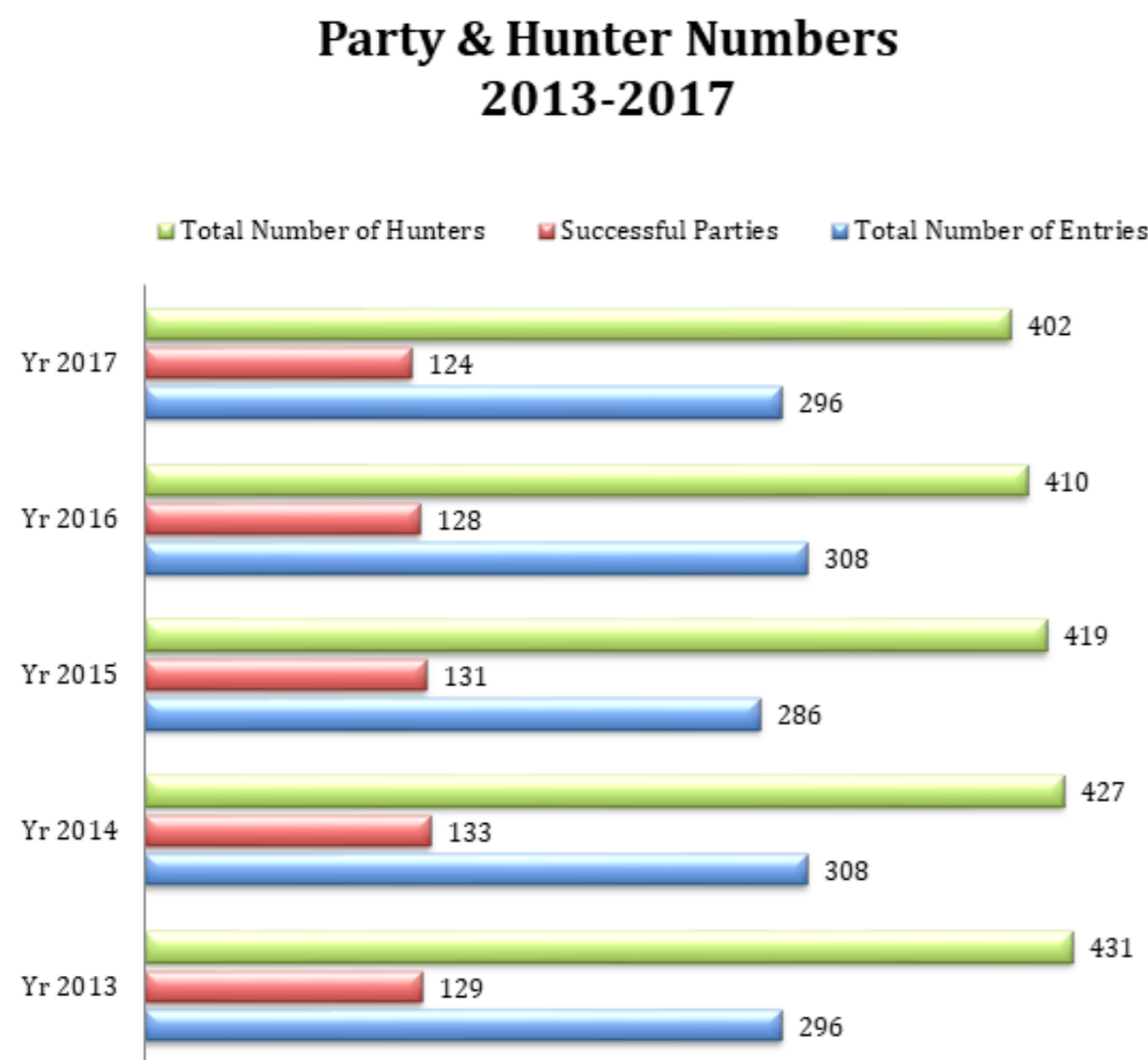
As you can see results indicate the increase in pests caught. This is either caused by an increase in pest numbers due to a good breeding season or by good trapping technique? Maintaining regular trap checks at 4 week intervals is critical to a successful trapping season.

Looking at next season we will need to update our H&S standards, documentation and our volunteer lists. Thanks to all those who participated this season, in particular Liz Scott who has helped with coordination and planning.

RATS & STOATS CAUGHT 2015/16 'V' 2016/17				
AREA	STOATS 2015/16	STOATS 2016/17	RATS 2015/16	RATS 2016/17
UPPER WORSLEY	17	27	15	37
LOWER WORSLEY	23	26	9	43
CASTLE	7	11	8	18
UPPER GLAISNCOK	7	14	4	1
LOWER GLAISNOCK	15	19	13	39
NITZ VALLEY	7	13	1	4
LUGAR BURN	26	39	14	13
TOTAL	102	149	64	155

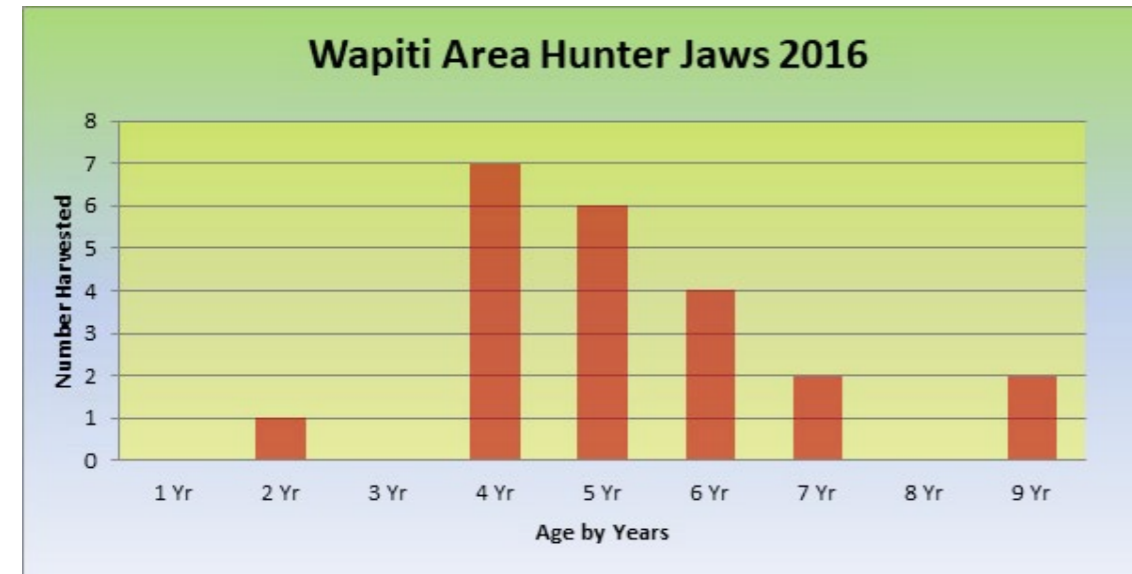
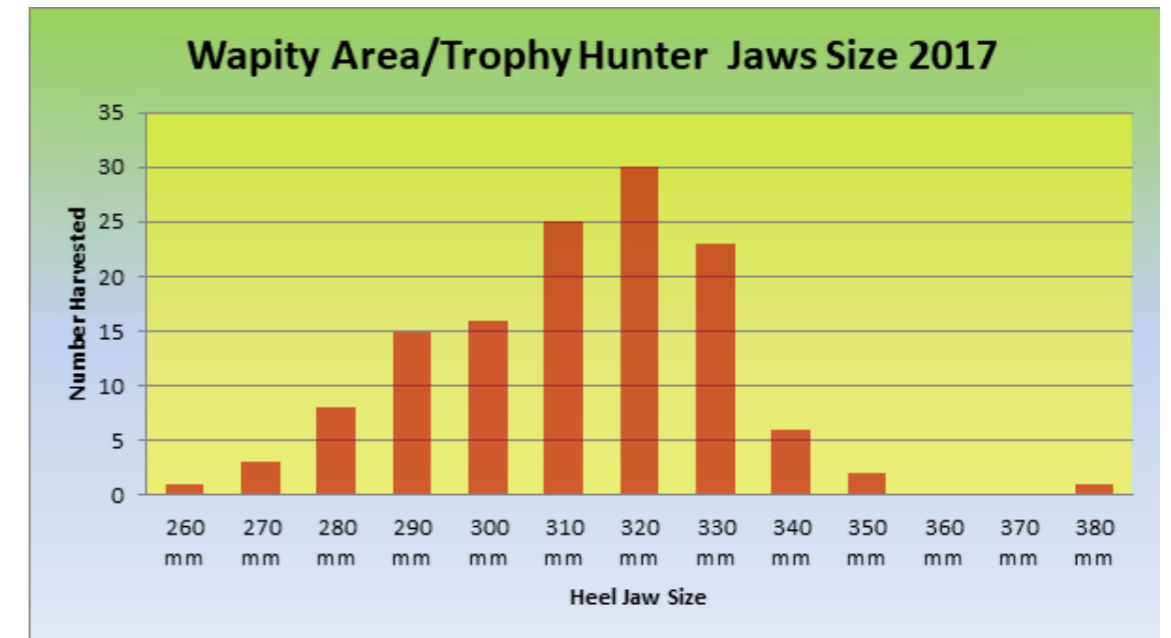
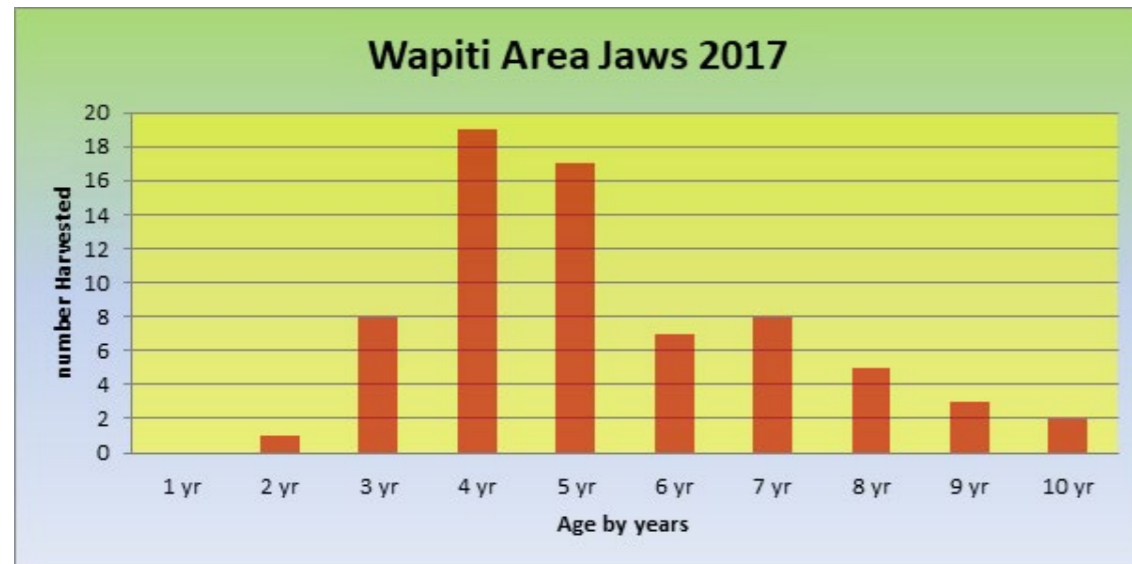
Appendix

PARTY & HUNTER NO.s 2013-2017

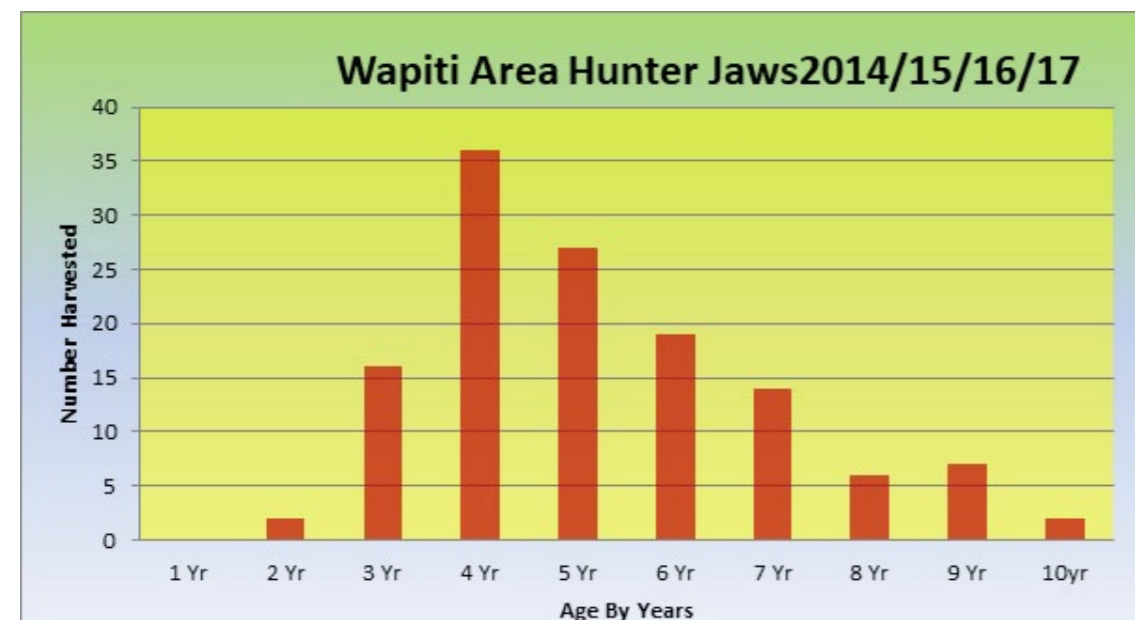


ANIMALS SEEN 2017 - Ballot Data Returns

Block	Males seen	Females seen	Males Shot	Females Shot
Edith	88	114	6	0
Luger Burn	57	90	4	0
Doon	36	67	7	4
Stina Burn	13	4	1	0
Mt Tanilon	70	103	3	0
Wild Natives	93	126	11	0
Wapiti River	96	59	6	0
Wosley	41	76	8	0
Large Burn	43	72	9	3
Lower Glaisnock	88	112	3	0
Lake Katherine	4	15	0	0
George River	88	102	3	0
Upper Glaisnock	116	141	6	0
Billy Burn	67	111	2	1
Stillwater	54	100	4	0
Whitewater	49	43	2	1
Loch Burn	47	67	3	0
Mid Burn	46	95	0	0
Catseye	42	37	9	0
Looking Glass	36	50	0	0
Narrows	35	80	1	0
Dark River	25	34	2	0
Charles	17	31	4	0
Mt Longsight	16	42	3	1
Light River	5	9	0	0



WAPITI AREA HUNTER JAW SUMMARY - Red/Wapiti by Jaw Size/Age							
YEAR	RED < 310 mm	RED AVE JAW SIZE (mm)	RED AVE AGE (Months)		WAPITI TYPE >310MM	WAPITI TYPE AVE JAW SIZE	WAPITI TYPE AVE AGE
2014	6@30%	298	62		14@70%	324	68.5
2015	5@27%	299	72		13@72%	324	70
2016	10@45%	295	62		12@54%	330	74
2017	25@36%	295	67		44@64%	327	68





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