



## Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

# NEWS

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### **Bull Trout Redd Counts Completed In The Flathead System: North Fork, Middle Fork About Average; Swan And South Fork Below Average**

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks field crews completed the 2009 bull trout redd (nest) counts between September 29 and October 30. The index sections in tributaries for all three major populations (Flathead, Swan, and Hungry Horse Reservoir) were surveyed this year, under good conditions. The same stream sections are counted each year and represent a portion of the total bull trout spawning-run. According to FWP Fisheries Biologist Tom Weaver, the Middle and North Fork Flathead redd counts were about average for the past decade, while counts in the South Fork Flathead and Swan drainages were below average for the past decade.

**Flathead Lake population:** This was the 30<sup>th</sup> year of index counts for the Flathead Lake bull trout population. These fish spawn in tributaries to the North and Middle forks of the Flathead River. The 2009 index count of 187 redds in the eight standard stream sections is about equal to the average (192 redds) over the last decade. (See accompanying table).

The total count for the four Middle Fork index tributaries (102) was above average while the count in North Fork tributaries (85) was below average.

**Swan Lake population:** This was the 28<sup>th</sup> year of bull trout redd counts in the Swan Drainage. Adult bull trout in Swan Lake spawn in tributaries to the Swan River upstream from the lake. The four annual index stream sections had a total of 366 redds this year, which is well below the average (447 redds) for the past decade (see accompanying table). Biologists are closely monitoring the status of the lake trout population in Swan Lake. Information clearly shows that lake trout have been reproducing for several years and that considerable numbers of large, mature fish are present. If lake trout continue to prosper, changes to the fish species mix in Swan Lake and impacts to the bull trout population are likely to occur. Lake trout have now been noted in Lindberg Lake as well.

**Hungry Horse Reservoir population:** This was the 17<sup>th</sup> year of monitoring for the South Fork Flathead/Hungry Horse Reservoir population. The 2009 total of 66 redds is well below the average over the past decade (96 redds). The four Wilderness tributary index sections were not surveyed this year.

**Table 1.** Flathead bull trout spawning site inventories from 1980 – 2009 in index stream sections monitored annually.

Drainage: Stream	Redd Numbers										
	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
<b>North Fork:</b>											
Big	20	18	41	22	9	9	12	22	19	24	25
Coal	34	23	60	61	53	40	13	48	52	50	29
Whale	45	98	211	141	133	94	90	143	136	119	109
Trail	31 <sup>a/</sup>	78	94	56	32	25	69	64	62	51	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>168<sup>b/</sup></b>	<b>184</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>Middle Fork:</b>											
Morrison	75	32 <sup>a/</sup>	86	67	38	99	52	49	50	63	24
Granite	34	14 <sup>a/</sup>	34	31	47	24	37	34	32	31	21
Lodgepole	14	18	23	23	23	20	42	21	19	43	12
Ole	19	19	51	35	26	30	36	45	59	21	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>173<sup>b/</sup></b>	<b>167</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>Flathead Drainage Monitoring Count</b>	<b>272<sup>a/</sup></b>	<b>300<sup>a/</sup></b>	<b>600</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>341<sup>b/</sup></b>	<b>351</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>305</b>

Drainage: Stream	Redd Numbers										
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
<b>North Fork:</b>											
Big	24	16	2	11	14	6	13	30	34	32	22
Coal	34	7	10	6	13	3	5	14	7	3	0
Whale	61	12	46	32	28	35	17	40	49	68	77
Trail	27	26	13	15	28	8	9	17	21	42	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Middle Fork:</b>											
Morrison	45	17	14	21	28	9	39	35	30	44	40
Granite	20	16	9	18	25	4	12	22	37	26	18
Lodgepole	9	13	9	6	9	8	5	7	11	3	17
Ole	23	16	19	6	16	10	14	22	26	33	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Flathead Drainage Monitoring Count</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>230</b>

Drainage: Stream	Redd Numbers							
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
<b>North Fork:</b>								
Big	12	12	11	15	37	40	21	23
Coal	0	1	3	4	17	4	2	0
Whale	71	34	41	39	56	27	34	43
Trail	26	14	34	30	34	51	49	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>89<sup>b/</sup></b>	<b>88<sup>c/</sup></b>	<b>144</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Middle Fork:</b>								
Morrison	30	21	10	16	11	21	46	34
Granite	18	17	17	8	16	14	27	24
Lodgepole	12	10	6	16	19	17	4	10
Ole	21	21	14	16	31	29	42	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>47<sup>b/</sup></b>	<b>56<sup>c/</sup></b>	<b>77</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Flathead Drainage Monitoring Count</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>136<sup>b/</sup></b>	<b>144<sup>c/</sup></b>	<b>221</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>187</b>

<sup>a/</sup> Counts may be low due to incomplete survey

<sup>b/</sup> High flows may have obliterated some redds

<sup>c/</sup> Minimum count due to poor conditions during survey

**Table 3.** South Fork Drainage bull trout spawning site inventories from 1993 – 2009 in reservoir annual index stream sections and wilderness tributaries monitored regularly.

	Reservoir Tributaries											
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Wounded Buck	22	29	34	41	14	5	3	3	9	5	10	3
Wheeler	12	10	1	3	1	4	12	23	25	12	17	15
Sullivan	25	8	--	52	50	54	55	45	51	18	45	62
Quintonkin	5	3	7	4	0 <sup>b/</sup>	11	15	15	17	21	4 <sup>c/</sup>	18
<b>Totals</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>65<sup>b/</sup></b>	<b>74</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>98</b>
	Wilderness Tributaries											
Youngs	40	24	34	74	43	--	85	--	61	--	--	100
Gordon	35	44	46	58	30	--	99	--	120	--	--	140
Little Salmon	56	47	43	134	100	--	138	--	111	--	--	71
White River	39	60	45	86	31	--	76	--	76	--	--	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>381</b>
<b>Combined Total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>210<sup>a/</sup></b>	<b>453</b>	<b>269<sup>b/</sup></b>	<b>74<sup>a/</sup></b>	<b>483</b>	<b>86<sup>a/</sup></b>	<b>470</b>	<b>56<sup>a/</sup></b>	<b>76<sup>ac/</sup></b>	<b>479<sup>b/</sup></b>

  

	Reservoir Tributaries				
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Wounded Buck	5	47	40	31	14
Wheeler	14	23	27	4	12
Sullivan	24	56	74	27	26 <sup>c/</sup>
Quintonkin	21	48	20	12	14
<b>Totals</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>66</b>
	Wilderness Tributaries				
Youngs	--	132	--	--	--
Gordon	--	142	--	--	--
Little Salmon	--	50 <sup>a/</sup>	--	--	--
White River	--	90	--	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>
<b>Combined Total</b>	<b>64<sup>ac/</sup></b>	<b>588<sup>a/</sup></b>	<b>161<sup>a/</sup></b>	<b>74<sup>a/</sup></b>	<b>66<sup>c/</sup></b>

<sup>a/</sup> Counts may be low due to incomplete survey.

<sup>b/</sup> High flows may have obliterated some redds.

<sup>c/</sup> Minimum count due to poor conditions during survey.

**Table 4.** Swan Drainage bull trout spawning site inventories from 1982 – 2009 in the annual index sections

Stream	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Elk	56	91	93	19 <sup>ab/</sup>	53	162	201	186	136	140
Goat	33	39	31	40	56	31	46	34	27	31
Squeezer	41	57	83	24	55	64	9 <sup>a/</sup>	67	42	101
Lion	63	49	88	26	46	33	65	84	58	94
Total	193	236	295	109 <sup>ab/</sup>	210	290	321 <sup>a/</sup>	371	263	366

Stream	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Elk	143	139	195	150	176	186	259	261	209	165
Goat	17	64	66	32	52	85	71	46	71	91
Squeezer	115	106	91	149	117	125	141	59 <sup>a/</sup>	105	114
Lion	100	123	141	170	181	190	141	135	120	132
Total	375	432	493	501	526	586	612	501 <sup>a/</sup>	505	502

Stream	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Elk	152	168	157	159 <sup>b/</sup>	178	187	175	134
Goat	54	80	67	65	62	75	69	72
Squeezer	122	85	94	103	113	123	59 <sup>b/</sup>	60
Lion	102	92	117	75 <sup>b/</sup>	136	136	92 <sup>b/</sup>	100
Total	430	425	435 <sup>a/</sup>	402 <sup>b/</sup>	489	521	395 <sup>b/</sup>	366

<sup>a/</sup> High flows may have obliterated some redds.

<sup>b/</sup> Minimum count due to poor conditions during survey.