

winter range is dependent on the severity of weather conditions during the winter period. During light winters, the higher forest lands are extensively used for winter elk range.

During heavy snowfall periods these elk are found mostly within the unit confines. The original acquisition of this range was begun in 1949. It has required a period of years to develop movement of elk from scattered, small winter range sites to this large, extensive range where most of the annual forage growth is retained for winter elk feed. At the present time, excellent use of this range is made by elk which summer within and outside of the Wind River drainage.

Extensive ear tagging and neck banding projects were initiated on winter elk herds in the East Fork unit beginning in 1959. The purpose of this program was to determine seasonal distribution and migration patterns of elk which utilized the East Fork winter range.

As of 1966 we have received ear tag returns on 131 head of elk out of a total of 524 animals marked at the Dennison Meadows trap site. Approximately 37 percent of the ear tags returned have come from elk killed outside of the Wind River drainage. The majority of these animals were killed in the headwaters of the Buffalo Fork River, the South Fork of the Shoshone River and the drainages of Thorofare Creek.

Elk marked with neck bands on the East Fork winter range have been observed numerous times on the headwaters of the Buffalo Fork River and South Fork of the Shoshone River during the summer and early fall periods. Late spring and early winter observations have shown these animals reach these summer ranges and return in the fall through the low passes at the headwaters of the East and West Fork of the DuNoir River.

It is most important to continue this migration pattern to provide hunting opportunity on these elk in the Wind River hunting area and utilize available winter forage on the East Fork winter range. Between 750 and 1,000 elk make this movement each year.

There is limited hunter pressure along this mountain divide at the present time, due to restricted road access. We feel this must be continued to prevent alterations or changes in migration movements through this area.

There is a summer resident population of elk in the east and west forks of the DuNoir River at this time estimated at 250 to 350 head of animals.

The development of road systems in the upper drainage of this area would result in population declines similar to those experienced in other drainages of the Wind River.

We are not opposed to the development of public access into the lower drainages of the east and west forks of DuNoir River. A recommendation to obtain hunter access into this area has been clearly stated in our formal statement.

We are vitally concerned with the elk movement into the East Fork winter range along the Caldwell Creek-Wiggins Fork-Bear Creek divide. This area is presently hunted over relatively rough "jeep" roads which limit hunter access. We are opposed to development of good access roads in this area which would permit increased hunter pressure along a major route to our winter range.