
New Mexico WILDLIFE NEWS

www.wildlife.state.nm.us

Providing New Mexico
and its wildlife

Year-round
Excellent
Services



Bruce C. Thompson, Director

New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
Contact: Dan Williams, (505) 476-8004
dan.williams@state.nm.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, JUNE 24, 2005:

TWO MULE DEER TEST POSITIVE FOR CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE ANGLER LANDS STATE RECORD BLUE CATFISH AT ELEPHANT BUTTE LAKE

TWO MULE DEER TEST POSITIVE FOR CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

SANTA FE – Two mule deer captured in the Organ Mountains as part of an ongoing research project near White Sands Missile Range have tested positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD), a fatal neurological disease that attacks the brains of infected deer and elk, the Department of Game and Fish announced.

The number of confirmed CWD cases in New Mexico now stands at 11 since 2002, when the disease was first confirmed in a deer found near the eastern foothills of the Organ Mountains. All 11 CWD-infected deer were found in the same general area of southern New Mexico. The origin of the disease in New Mexico remains unknown.

The carcasses of the infected deer will be incinerated, said Kerry Mower, the Department's lead wildlife disease biologist.

Chronic wasting disease causes animals to become emaciated, display abnormal behavior, lose bodily functions and die. The disease has been found in wild deer and elk, and in captive deer and elk, in eight states and two Canadian provinces. There currently is no evidence of CWD being transmitted to humans or livestock.

Mower said the most recent CWD-positive deer showed no obvious physical signs of having the disease. They were captured in April 2005 and tested as part of a 3-year-old research project studying deer population dynamics in southern New Mexico. More than 140 deer have been captured alive and tested for the study, in which researchers hope to find the cause of a 10-year decline in the area deer population. Study participants include the Department of Game and Fish, the U.S. Army at White Sands Missile Range and Fort Bliss, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Geological Survey at New Mexico State University, and San Andres National Wildlife Refuge.

Hunters can assist the Department in its CWD research and prevention efforts by bringing their fresh, legally harvested deer or elk head to an area office, where officers will remove the brain stem for testing. Participants will be eligible for drawings for an oryx hunt on White Sands Missile Range and a trophy elk hunt on the Valle Vidal. For more information about the drawing and chronic wasting disease, visit the Department web site at www.wildlife.state.nm.us.

ANGLER LANDS STATE RECORD BLUE CATFISH AT ELEPHANT BUTTE LAKE

ELEPHANT BUTTE – David Gower raised the bar for New Mexico's state record blue catfish by more than 18 ½ pounds on June 20 when he successfully landed a 52-pound, ¼-ounce whopper at Elephant Butte Lake.

The new state record, subject to final confirmation, was 43 ½ inches long and 30 ¼ inches around. It eclipsed the old record, a 33-pound, 8-ounce blue catfish caught in 1999 by Tubby Oldfield, also at Elephant Butte Lake. The North American record blue catfish weighed 116 pounds, 12 ounces, and was caught in 2001 in the Mississippi River in Arkansas.

Gower, from *Truth or Consequences*, caught his big blue in the North Monticello area of Elephant Butte Lake. He used cut carp as bait on a trotline.

Elephant Butte Lake is known for producing very large catfish. The state record flathead catfish, a 78-pounder that measured 47 ½ inches long, was caught there by Jim Wilson in 1979.

For more information about New Mexico's state record fish, visit www.wildlife.state.nm.us and click on Fishing Information.

###