

Wildlife Program

Week of December 1-7, 2014

SCIENCE DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Agency Strategic Objectives

- A. The ecological integrity of critical habitat and ecological systems is protected and restored.

Publications: Treg Christopher is a coauthor in two recently published manuscripts:

Creutzburg, M.K., J.E. Halofsky, J.S. Halofsky, T.A. Christopher. 2014. Climate change and land management in the rangelands of Central Oregon. *Environmental Management*. DOI: 10.1007/s00267-014-0362-3

Abstract:

Climate change, along with exotic species, disturbances, and land use change, will likely have major impacts on sagebrush steppe ecosystems in the western U.S. over the next century. To effectively manage sagebrush steppe landscapes for long-term goals, managers need information about the interacting impacts of climate change, disturbances and land management on vegetation condition. Using a climate-informed state-and-transition model, we evaluated the potential impacts of climate change on rangeland condition in central Oregon and the effectiveness of multiple management strategies. Under three scenarios of climate change, we projected widespread shifts in potential vegetation types over the twenty-first century, with declining sagebrush steppe and expanding salt desert shrub likely by the end of the century. Many extreme fire years occurred under all climate change scenarios, triggering rapid vegetation shifts. Increasing wildfire under climate change resulted in expansion of exotic grasses but also decreased juniper encroachment relative to projections without climate change. Restoration treatments in warm-dry sagebrush steppe were ineffective in containing exotic grass, but juniper treatments in cool-moist sagebrush steppe substantially reduced the rate of juniper encroachment, particularly when prioritized early in the century. Overall, climate-related shifts dominated future vegetation patterns, making management for improved rangeland condition more difficult. Our approach allows researchers and managers to examine long-term trends and uncertainty in rangeland vegetation condition and test the effectiveness of alternative management actions under projected climate change.

Burcsu, Theresa K.; Halofsky, Joshua S.; Bisrat, Simon A.; Christopher, Treg A.; Creutzburg, Megan K.; Henderson, Emilie B.; Hemstrom, Miles A.; Triepke, F. Jack; Whitman, Melissa. 2014. Chapter 2: Dynamic vegetation modeling of forest, woodland, shrubland, and grassland vegetation communities in the Pacific Northwest and Southwest Regions of the United States. In: Halofsky, Jessica E.; Creutzburg, Megan K.; Hemstrom, Miles A., eds. 2014. Integrating social, economic, and ecological values across large landscapes. Gen.Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-896.

Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station: 15-70.

Summary:

Land management planning at broad scales requires integrative techniques to understand and synthesize the effects of different land management activities and address socioeconomic and conservation concerns. The Integrated Landscape Assessment Project was developed to support the vital but complex task of broadscale integration of information to assess ecological sustainability at multiple scales. The project supports ecosystem management planning at a regional scale across all lands of Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington by simulating landscape dynamics using state-and-transition models (STMs) and linking model output to management planning considerations such as fuel conditions, wildlife habitat, community economics, and climate change. The stakeholders and target users for the project products include natural resource planners, decision makers, and modelers who can provide additional analyses in support of planning and policy. This chapter reports on the STM component of the project. The STMs were designed for all major potential vegetation types in the study area with a focus on watershed-level prioritization of land management actions. One baseline scenario, depicting vegetation dynamics with no management activity, was applied across the full study area. Other management scenarios were developed for focus areas within the four-state project area. The modeling framework was sometimes linked with other modeling systems (e.g., Forest Vegetation Simulator) and other data sets for validation or calibration, and incorporated expert opinion where data were lacking. The process was flexible and modular to allow alternative data sources for vegetation and other base data to be incorporated. Products resulting from this work include STMs of vegetation dynamics, tools for preparing and initializing models, data summarization and visualization tools, and model output data sets across the four-state study area. Most data, tools, and products will be available online via the Western Landscapes Explorer (www.westernlandscapesexplorer.info).

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Program is hosting the December GIS User group meeting scheduled for Wednesday, Dec 10th from 10:30-noon in the Director's Conference room (NRB Conference Room 537). A Webex session will be available for those folks out in the Regional and District offices (Webex connection information to follow under a separate email).

Agenda Items include:

Joy Paulus (OCIO) will be giving presentation on the new WA State spatial data policies and discuss why they are important to us (20-30 minutes)

ITS GIS staff will provide an update on ArcGIS V10.2 migration plan/schedule (10 minutes)

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Columbia Basin Mule Deer Project: Biologists Atamian, Finger, Lowe, & Duvuvuei began surveys this week by air and ground. No data has been entered yet, but anecdotally the deer appear to be more distributed and in the sage brush than in previous years, perhaps due to some fall green up and no significant snow accumulation.



One of the few mature mule deer bucks seen on flight

Group of ~150 mule deer in spigot field in Crab Creek drainage



Northeast Washington Moose Captures: Blue Mountains District Biologist Wik spent the week acting as lead darter for the moose research project in Districts 1 and 2. Biologist Prince served as the project's mugger. A total of 28 moose were captured between Wik and Biologist Murphy from the westside. Poor weather conditions during the second half of the week made capturing moose very challenging.

Biologists Prince and Wik with the final moose of the capture effort



GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Areas

Z-Lake aeration failure (Swanson Lakes WLA): Finch and Anderson inspected the aeration site this week. The lake had dropped low enough to introduce water into the air bubbler lines, causing them to fill and freeze over the last few weeks. Nothing can be done to remedy this problem right now, as the lake was still pretty thoroughly frozen. Finch turned the compressor off, to avoid equipment burn-out.

Flooded and frozen aeration lines at Z-Lake



Other

Winter Conditions – Wildlife Management

District 1: This week began dry and frigid with overnight temperatures in the single digits Fahrenheit. Late in the week, temperatures warmed up to near freezing with moisture-laden air. Some snow fell, but only about an inch or less per day in the valleys, and then the forecast indicated that it would turn into rain by the week-end as temperatures rise above freezing. The mountains above 3,000 feet elevation currently have about 6-12 inches of snow.

District 2: Temperatures ranging from low 20s to high 40s with sporadic precipitation in the form of rain, freezing rain, and snow, but nothing sticking around for long in the basin and little accumulation in the mountains.

District 3: Warm and drier conditions prevailed at the end of the week. Very little snow is present up to 5,000' in the Blue Mountains. Mild and wet conditions are in the forecast.

Winter Conditions - Private Lands/Wildlife Conflict Observations

District 1: Warmer weather presented itself this week along with rain in the valleys and snow in the mountains.

District 2: Warmer this week with fog, rain and freezing rain.

District 3: A little snow, fog, and freezing rain throughout District 3, warming up to the low 40's later in the week.

Winter weather – Swanson Lakes WLA: Not much winter at Swanson Lakes, mostly damp and hovering at or just above freezing. No snow cover, but earlier cold weather has most of the ponds iced up still.

Winter conditions – Blue Mountains WLA: Light snow and frozen ground conditions prevailed during the beginning of the week. Warming temperatures, along with freezing rain, made travel treacherous on Thursday. Temperatures in the later part of the week have warmed up with rain all the way up to 6,000 feet in the Blue Mountains. With warmer temperatures and rain comes mud and difficult working conditions. Forecasts call for more rain and continued warm temperatures.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Pomeroy Deer: Conflict Specialist Rasley and Jeff Wade were able to meet with the Pomeroy City Council and address their continuing concerns with the ongoing deer problem in town. We put together three more hunts for next week to address their concerns.

Wildlife Areas

Kettle Falls Elementary School Forest Health Education: WAAM Palmer pruned out trails and flagged the routes in preparation for the Kettle Falls Elementary School 4th graders visit to the forest plots at the Sherman Creek WLA forestry education unit. All 45 students were separated into three groups and each group visited up to four plots to collect basal area data using their thumbs (1st photo below), which they had determined the Basal Area Factor for in their classrooms last week. Students also learned about tree identification, forest health, and forest management strategies from WAAM Palmer and DNR Intensive Management Forester Phil Anderson (2nd photo below).



Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Winter Closure Gates: WAM Bob Dice completed closing winter closure gates early Monday morning. Two of the three Forest Service Gates were shut, along with WDFW’s gates on South Fork and Lick Fork roads. The upper gate on Smoothing Iron was torn apart and not functional. Dice informed Ranger Monti Fujishin about the gate and he sent a fire crew up the next day to make a temporary repair to shut the gate. Snow conditions were light, and numerous tire tracks from the previous day were all over within the closure area. A hunter looking for bobcats with a spotlight was encountered in Lick Creek at 2:30 AM and advised to leave before the gate was shut.



Damaged Forest Service Gate on the upper end of Smoothing Iron Ridge

REGION 2

WOLVES

Okanogan Wolf Management: Officer Treser passed on a sighting report with a photo of a single large canine near Green Lake. Several district and regional staff reviewed the photo and all agreed it looks like it is most likely a wolf, although a hybrid cannot be completely ruled out given the relatively low quality of the photo and the proximity to private land. Biologist Heinlen investigated the area and placed two trail cameras with scent attractant. The local newspaper has interviewed other WDFW staff about this sighting. Biologist Heinlen will continue to monitor this area.

The one collared animal in the Lookout Pack appears to be on her own now and has moved into the western part of the Pasayten Wilderness. Tracking and howling reports indicate the remainder of the pack is utilizing traditional winter territory in GMU 242.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Winter Waterfowl Survey: Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei conducted a winter waterfowl survey for the North Basin, which includes all important water bodies (i.e. Columbia River pools, large lakes, wasteways, reserves, and Columbia National Wildlife Refuge) within and adjacent to Grant, Douglas, and Adams Counties. During this two-day flight we documented

over 268k waterfowl, including just under 200k mallards (4% of which were on the Columbia River), close to 30k diving ducks (78% scaup), nearly 9k common mergansers (most at Moses Lake and Potholes Reservoir), and about 10k Canada geese (though this wetland-focused survey misses most Canada geese which field-feed during much of the day).

Most of the waterfowl on the Desert and Potholes units of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area were concentrated in Winchester Reserve, which had nearly 23k mallards. Frenchmen and Potholes Reserves had about 4-5k mallards each. Though the numbers in the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area portion were low, the overall mallard count was very encouraging, particularly with the warming trend predicted for next week. This warming should result in good to excellent waterfowl hunting for the near future as these concentrations of birds look to disperse when water bodies begin to re-open.



Mallards on Royal Lake of Columbia National Wildlife Refuge – Photo by R. Finger



More mallards on Royal Lake of Columbia National Wildlife Refuge – Photo by R. Finger



Mallards concentrated on “corn club” in northern Franklin County – Photo by R. Finger

Mallards on Winchester Reserve – Photo by R. Finger



Mule Deer Surveys: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen conducted three days of post-season aerial mule deer surveys in the Methow Watershed. All told we classified close to 2300 deer and observed buck:doe ratios of 23:100 and fawn:doe ratios of 80:100. These ratios are right at the long-term averages. We saw few deer in the uppermost reaches of traditional winter range, but otherwise deer generally appeared to be well distributed across the landscape in both burned and unburned areas, and the animals looked to be in good physical shape. Beginning last year we switched our survey methodology to a quadrat based sampling approach that should help us generate a population estimate for the survey area when used in conjunction with a sightability model. Last year we discovered that resource and weather limitations make it impractical to sample the entire PMU and thus we have decided to focus on just one watershed (Methow or Okanogan) annually. We chose the Methow this year given the need to also simultaneously monitor conditions and deer activity in the Carlton Complex Fire area. Additional data analysis and population modeling are in progress.

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery:

2014 Pygmy Rabbit Capture Results			
	New	Recap	Total
Kits	793	87	880
Adults	48 ¹	162	210
Unknown age		14	14
Total PYRA Captured	841		1104

2014 PYRA Releases	
Kits released to wild	729
Adults released to wild	65
Unkown age released to wild	13
Total released to wild	807

¹Rabbits eluding capture as kits in previous years

Pygmy Rabbit Enclosure Vegetation Rehab: We began the rehab efforts in the oldest SBF enclosure. Our plan was to plant 2000 grass tublings and as much 6-18” tall sage (harvested from another part of the wildlife area) as possible. A team of dedicated WDFW employees, volunteers, Wenatchee worksource students, and WCC workers made a valiant attempt battling first partially frozen ground and then virtual muddy soup and flooding. As of this week we still have 600 tublings unplanted. Yet another warming spell may allow us to get them in the ground this week (if they are still alive!). As for sage planting, due to less than ideal circumstances, the exact number of plants that were transplanted is unknown, but best estimate would be about 100. Unfortunately the rabbits eluding capture immediately found a good portion of these plants and ate them down to sticks. We will not be attempting further sage transplants until all rabbits are removed.

Wildlife Areas

Carlton Fire Wattles: Area Manager Dan Peterson assisted Construction and Project Coordinator Scott Allen with his Carlton Fire Emergency Protective Measure (EMP) project at the Indian Dan Canyon unit. This involved the installation of straw wattles to control erosion at sites identified as having the potential to cause damage to roads. The installation was done by two WCC crews composed primarily of military veterans. They did an excellent job in less than optimum conditions – frozen crusty snow and frozen ground. For the wattles to be effective, they must be placed into shallow trenches. Shovels are rendered ineffective in frozen ground and so the crews had to use picks and pulaski's to chip out chunks of icy frozen earth. By week end, all sites at Indian Dan Canyon were completed. In the coming weeks the process will be repeated at the Pateros, Chiliwist, and Methow units.



WCC crew at wattle work – Photo by D. Peterson

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Bighorn Sheep: Young hunter Cody Dobbins was the last hunter to harvest his bighorn in District 7 this year. Cody's permit was for the Manson unit along the north shore of Lake Chelan and he harvested a nice ram aged at 8.5 years old.

A successful young hunter with his harvest above Lake Chelan



GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Entiat Road Closures: Biologist Volsen contacted the USFS Entiat Ranger District to further discuss road closures on the ranger district. Following extensive fires in the Entiat Valley this summer, areas surrounding the Duncan Fire and the Mills Canyon fire have had significant road closures in anticipation of mass wasting events. Some road stabilization work has been completed on the 5200 Road in the Mills Canyon area and that road is open. However, roads branching off the 5200 will be closed until work can be completed. A similar situation exists in the Duncan area with a more extensive and restrictive result. The main USFS road leading to Cottonwood and the upper Entiat Valley is closed as well as all other roads within the Duncan fire perimeter.

Private Lands/Access

Washington Cattleman's Association Meeting: Biologist Heinlen attended the Okanogan County Cattleman's Association meeting at the request of conflict Specialist Heilhecker and Officer Christensen, who also attended. The meeting went well with discussions centered on current WSU and UW research projects occurring within the County.



Upper Methow Valley from the air –
Photo by Scott Fitkin

Observed Environment (weather, fire, etc.): During deer surveys in the Methow, we noted that snow conditions varied, with around 15+ inches in the most northerly and westerly portions of traditional winter range, and bare slopes on south aspects in the southern part of the survey area at low elevations. This represents roughly average or maybe even a bit below average snow conditions. Temperature swings have

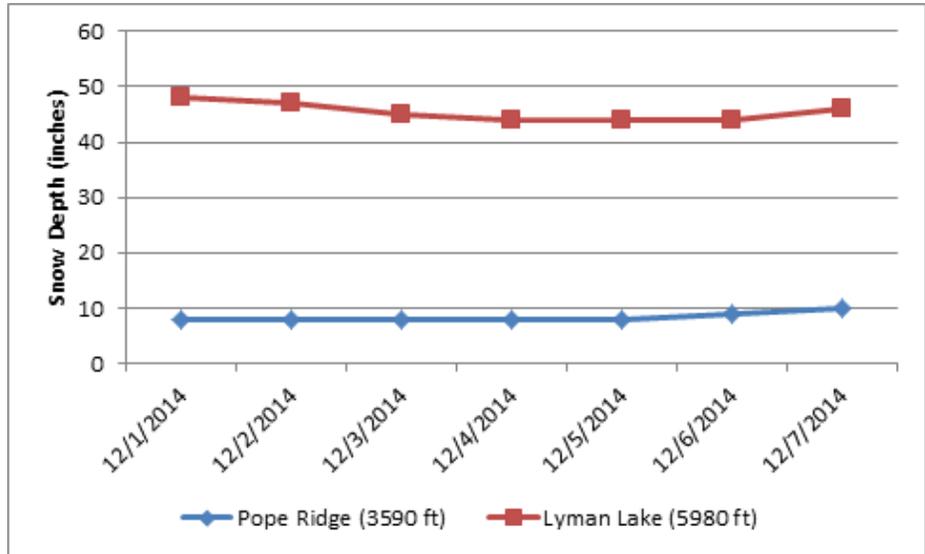
been significant, ranging from several degrees above freezing to several degrees below zero for four consecutive days in the Winthrop area. Despite this, the snowpack has remained soft in areas with significant depth and deer movement did not appear to be hindered at all. Despite little snow at the southern end of the valley, we did note one area of significant deer concentration in or near orchards outside of Pateros, where some damage mitigation is likely needed.

Observed Environment: Precipitation came in the form of a rain and snow mix this past week, with little snow accumulation at mid and low elevations. Snows are building along the crest of

the Cascades at higher elevations. However, even areas as far west as Steven's Pass have moderate snow depths. Snow depths on mule deer winter range in Chelan County are low and deer are still dispersed across a large area.

Observed Environment (weather, fire, etc.):

Total snow accumulation for the winter: 20 inches. After last week's rain, we still have one foot of snow remaining on the ground with temps ranging between -8 to 33F.



REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Tech Hill surveyed the breakaway elk fence at the Taneum Creek crossing and Assistant Manager Hunt got some photos when the fence broke loose during recent heavy rains, ice flows, and debris buildup. It was designed to break away, although we hoped for a somewhat longer life on it. We did get through general elk season with no problems there, and will monitor as elk come into the Watt feed site.

Elk fence gap at Taneum Creek breakaway fence

Wenas Wildlife Area: Staff continued drill seeding areas burned in the Cottonwood #2 fire. Between freezing temperatures and now rain, they have been seeding whenever the weather allows. They completed seeding of the previously restored fields, and have moved equipment over to the Buffalo road area where ~80 acres are being seeded. If the weather cooperates, they should finish Buffalo in the coming week, completing the fire seeding planned for this year.



Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Peak Feedsite Elk Counts for the week include the following:

Headquarters - 0
Junction - 0
Nile - 0
Sheep - 0
Cowiche - 0

Winter Weather: Weather was seasonal to mild over the past week. Mild weather is expected this coming week with rain in the forecast for several days.

There are no elk on the feed sites and access to vegetation is good.

Elk are in seasonally good condition.

Wildlife Management

Biologist Bernatowicz communicated with Muckleshoot (MIT) tribal biologist Vales regarding deer harvest. MIT is somewhat concerned over the level of buck harvest and is weighing options for reducing tribal harvest. MIT currently has an “any buck” season and has been collecting age data via harvest. The data is thought to be somewhat representative of the buck population. There are few mature bucks. About 80% of the harvest has been on bucks ≤ 3.5 years old.

Bighorn Sheep Capture: Biologist Bernatowicz contacted Grant County PUD and WA Manager Lopushinsky about releasing bighorn sheep in the Quilomene this winter. Hopefully the pool will be full and there won't be restrictions on boat ramp or shoreline access.

Data Management: Biologist Bernatowicz updated game harvest files that included elk antlerless permits, 2014 Mountain goat harvest, and bighorn sheep pinning.

Colockum Elk: Biologist Moore worked with Yakama Nation Tribal Police to recover a bull elk collar from a successful Yakama Tribal hunter. The collar was at the hunter's home in White Swan. Biologist Moore began initial preparations for scoring organs collected during the modern firearm antlerless elk season.

Golden Eagle Offal Study: Biologist Moore worked a damage area in Thorp in hopes of collecting deer offal to be used in Jim Watson's Golden Eagle work. Deer numbers were limited in the area and nothing was harvested.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman worked with a local rock climber to install permanent monuments on a leaning climbing rock in the Royal Columns Climbing area. Earlier in the spring a rock fell, injuring two climbers. The area was inspected by a DNR geologist who recommended monitoring this leaning column for movement. Some of the technical aspects of this column make it a favorite of climbers and they want to make sure it is safe as well. Rock climbers will measure the column again in the spring to see if frost heave is causing any movement.

Rock Climbers on the Royal Columns looking down at the monuments from the top of the leaning column





Rock Climbers on the Royal Columns completing the first measurement to track movement in the leaning rock

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris set up a December 4th tour for Wenas WAAC members to field review Sheep Company Shooting Range Alternatives 2 and 3. Five WAAC members attended, along with Assistant Manager Taylor and Captain Mann (just prior to tour). We looked at both sites and the WAAC members agreed that Alternative 3 best addressed the needs and Alternative 2 should be used as a backup.

Manager Confer Morris participated on a conference call to review a shooting range power point presentation for the Lands Division workshop. She provided her section of the PPT presentation, incorporated edits, and provided them back to Section Manager Posner.

The new section of the Mellotte elk fence stood up to pressure by elk, who in turn were being pressured by archery hunters. A herd of elk were pushed up against the fence by hunters, with even more archers surrounding them, both Friday and Saturday nights. The Umtanum unit was just added to this late archery this year and runs through December 8th. Officer Myers was advised of the situation.

Wildlife Management

Biologist Stutzman and Access Technician Kaelber were in the field for the goose days to check the new corn stubble sites south of Kennewick for hunter and bird use. So far, there hasn't much use by either, although there was a group of hunters set up in one of the new fields on Sunday morning.

Kaelber did see large numbers of geese using the Finley Register to Hunt site on Friday and apparently the hunters noticed as well because there were five decoy spreads set up on the property on Saturday.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman talked to a reporter from NPR about doing a story on elk and winter feeding. The reporter asked a few questions for background but will follow up

and do a full interview once feeding starts. Huffman contacted RPM McCorquodale about being part of the interview as the reporter is interested in some specifics on elk ecology and the impacts of supplemental feeding. Huffman also received a phone call from a freelance writer who is doing an article for an upcoming issue of Rural Life Magazine, which is produced by Benton REA. Huffman set up a meeting this coming week for this story.

Manager Huffman made a donation deposit after receiving a donation in memory of a local resident who loved coming out and seeing the elk and hunted for years on the wildlife area. The family had requested that donations be made to Oak Creek in memory of Wiley Barrett Sr. in lieu of flowers.

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand traveled to a vineyard in the Smith Canyon area to monitor deer activity and damage in a new planting. Minor browsing by deer was observed, but the landowner thought there has been a reduction in the deer numbers since more of his farm workers have been deployed in the area.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with several landowners near Hanford to discuss elk activity and movement outside the Hanford Reserve. The largest concentrations have been reported on central ALE.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand organized and sent all of the crop damage pictures for the Hamilton damage claim to crop adjuster Van Tassel.

Ellensburg Area: Deer were hazed from an area in Thorp. Activity in this area has reduced deer use but some deer problems are starting again. One Master Hunter has been tasked with hazing on this parcel with the possibility of removing one more antlerless animal. Pyrotechnics have been issued to the landowner to use this week.

Elk were hazed from multiple properties near Green Canyon. One elk was harvested by a Master Hunter. Due to fence damage, harvest has stopped for a period of time to evaluate elk use of the area.

A landowner in Cle Elum called to report elk damage in seeded hay. The landowner wishes to enter into a DPCA and will be met next week to complete the process.

Yakima Area: Conflict Specialist Wetzal worked with an orchard owner near Tampico on cost share fencing this week. Specialist Wetzal and the landowner loaded and hauled salvage fencing from Wenas, WA to the orchard location while the road conditions were passable. More materials will be moved when the weather improves.

Third load of cost-share fencing materials salvaged from Wenas, WA

Wolf Activities

Conflict Specialist Wetzel and Biologist Moore followed up on a wolf tracks reported by Range Rider Ward. The tracks were located in the Coleman Creek area.

A horse owner near Ballard Hill called Specialist Wetzel to report wolves howling for several nights near her home. She called with concerns about her horses and dogs. She lives near an area frequently used by wolves, and was instructed on general wolf biology, behavior, past wolf issues and wolf use patterns, and legal things she could do to protect her livestock and pets.

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Areas

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom began a re-design of the hunter registration cards that are used on the Bailie, Mesa Lake, and Windmill Ranch units. Manager Bjornstrom asked for feedback from biologists and enforcement as to what info they feel most pertinent to the registration system. Changes were made to the harvest data and personal information requested. With help from other departments, a final draft will be developed and sent to the printers for the 2015 season.

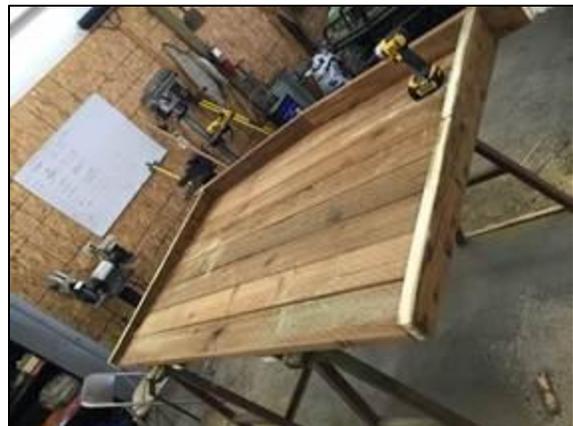
Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman worked on reviewing bids from local contractors for installing some security fencing around the compound. The lowest bid received was a good price so Huffman set up a time for the contractor to install the fence across the driveways.

Assistant Manager Berry, NRW2 Farias, and NRW2 Steveson checked elk fence from the West Valley Barn to NW Sunset gate, making a few minor repairs and hammering lots of staples. Staff repaired the gate in Frenches Canyon again, as it was off the hinges. The hinges were moved and the gate was re-hung, and “keep gate closed” signs were installed to replace the shot up and missing signs. This gate enters our new NF Cowiche property and will be a continuing problem with ORV use in the area. Finally, staff checked the fence along Cleman’s Mountain to the Wenas Wildlife Area line.



Regional Access Program

Access Manager Garcia worked on securing the Access work truck this week. He moved it to the Yakima Construction Shop until room could be made for it in one of the bays at the Regional office. He also had the driver's side window replaced. Access Manager Garcia and District Fish Biologist Eric Anderson cleaned out one of the bays on Wednesday to make room for the truck. He and NRT2 Medina finished up the reader boards and Manager Garcia serviced the lower valley access sites.



LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart, Tech Schnebly and Tech Hill repaired damage caused by the Corral Fire, which burned this past spring along the Vantage Highway. Winegeart and Schnebly reseeded a portion of the burn footprint and Hill replaced burned sections of the corral.

Tech Hill replacing burned boards at the Whiskey Dick corrals

Manager Winegeart contacted Casey Davison of CAMP to ask about the status of the Skookumchuck/Whiskey Dick fence project. The contractor continues to work on corrections to the new fence, but PSEs front gate is now closed for winter. We provided the crew leader with a gate code to gain entry for as long as needed. The contractor is several months overdue on the project, and is now disputing the contract, so it is unknown how long until completion.



REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Westside Bear Project: Biologist Smith assisted Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil and Carnivore Specialist Maletzke with ongoing bear den work. This portion of the project entails locating dens, placing cameras to document emergence and cub numbers, re-collaring/adjusting collars on sub-adult males, and potentially collaring yearling cubs. Work where newborn cubs are known to be present will be limited (camera placement only) to avoid den abandonment.

Western Washington Black bear den site in a large log

Reports and Data

Management: Milner organized specimens for museum donation, including a sharp-tailed snake, summarized the data for these specimens, and worked on various summaries and reports.

Nooksack Elk Herd: Biologists Caldwell, DeBruyn, and Yarborough met with a biologist from the Washington Dept. of Transportation (WSDOT) to



discuss possible elk trapping locations and strategies along SR.20 near Sedro Wooley. WSDOT

purchased three GPS collars for WDFW to deploy to look at elk movements between mile post 70 and 76 which has been an area of high vehicle-wildlife collisions.

Aerial Snow Goose Survey: Biologists DeBruyn and Evenson flew an aerial snow goose survey from the mouth of the Fraser River to Snohomish County. Photographs taken of all flocks will be stitched together and analyzed using computer software to enumerate wintering snow geese.

Biologist DeBruyn Shooting a flock of Snow Geese near Stanwood in Snohomish County



Swan Mortality and Morbidity

Project: Scientific Technician Sherman Anderson came on board for the season and began collecting sick and injured trumpeter and tundra swans. Anderson also processed and took samples from swans collected by others in the prior two weeks. Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn assisted with the collection of swans.

To date thirty-six swans have been collected, including five that are being rehabilitated. Most swans picked up so far have been victims of power line strikes. Puget Sound Energy is a partner in the project and provided much of the funding to carry out the study.

Wildlife Cameras – Citizen Science: Biologist Anderson met with the Eaglecam landowner to discuss access needs and assess eagle activity. The eagles are back on territory. <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/>

Image from King County bald eagle cam nest



Wildlife Management

Consultation/Permitting Requests;

Municipal, Private Utilities, other:

Biologist Anderson continued work and review for requests of assistance regarding species or habitat management consultation for urban wildlife (e.g. osprey nests, eagle territories, heron colonies) given construction or land-use alteration work, per local municipal code requirements to work with WDFW.

More on WDFW Priority Habitat and Species Recommendations and how WDFW provides assistance at the local and broader planning levels can be found here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/>

Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary – National Wildlife Federation Partnerships: Biologist Anderson provided assistance in preparing for a grant application to NWF Pacific Office staff. These particular local NWF staff work with WDFW to promote and provide outreach related to the joint Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary – NWF Community Wildlife Habitat program. The grant funding, if awarded, will help continue support of Puget Sound area efforts in wildlife stewardship outreach and collaboration between WDFW and NWF locally. One can find information on wildlife stewardship activities as well as certifying with WDFW or both of these entities via our joint program at the WDFW Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/backyard/>

Wildlife Conflict Management



Wildlife Conflict Technician Cogdal and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman assisted a Skagit County landowner with elk damage to a fence and installed an audio deterrent system and fence fladry



While looking for the injured elk, Specialist Witman located a separate elk herd in a small horse enclosure and discussed options with the landowner

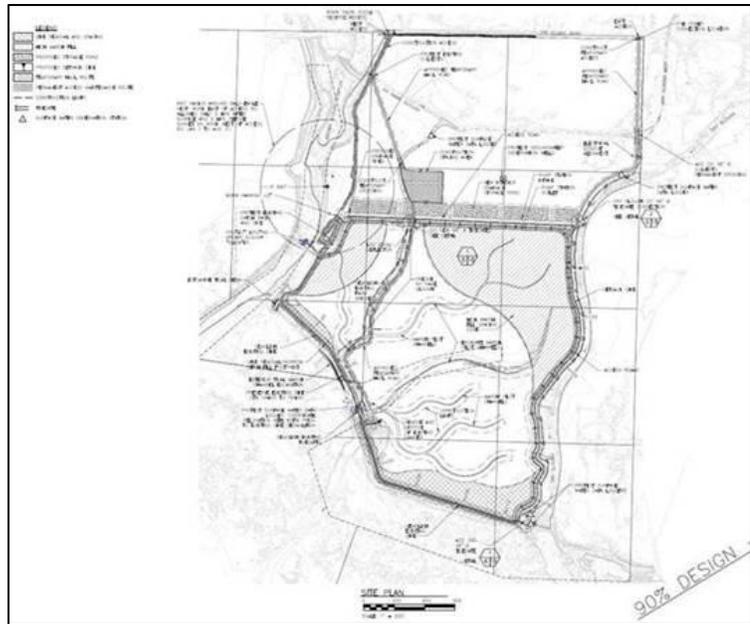
Wildlife Areas

Fir Island Farm Steering Committee Meeting: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Wildlife Area Manager Rotton attended a project Steering Committee meeting. Committee members discussed the 90% design plans for the project and relayed comments to the Project Management Team. This was the final Steering Committee meeting during the project design phase, as construction is anticipated to begin this summer.

The Fir Island Farm Project Steering Committee and Independent Technical Review Team reviewed 90% Design Plans for the project. The full plan set is available [here](#).

Fir Island Farm Independent Technical Review (ITR) Team:

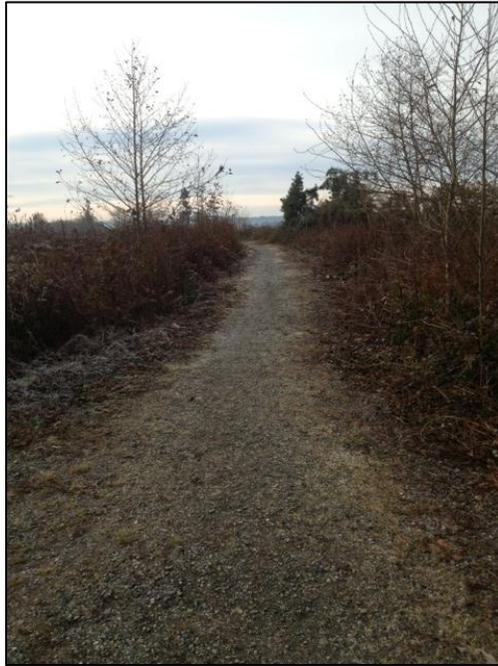
Projects Coordinator Brokaw attended an ITR Team meeting, at which independent consultants hired to review design documents discussed their comments with the project engineers. Most comments from the ITR Team were minor, and all will be able to be addressed by the Project Management Team.



Fir Island Farm Construction Management Strategy: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat Program staff met with Regional Director Everitt to discuss the proposed strategy for soliciting bids for contractors and managing construction for the project.

Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP): Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Regional Director Everitt had a call with PSNERP managers in Olympia, and discussed additional outreach needs for the project now that the public comment period has been extended to January 8th, 2015. Projects Coordinator Brokaw then drafted a response letter to stakeholder comments and Regional Director sent letters to the Pt. Elliot Treaty Tribes. More information on this process, the documents under review, and how to comment is available at: <http://pugetsoundnearshore.org/outreach.html>.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Grazing Lessee Everett Alexander to issue the 2014 grazing fee invoice. The season was briefly discussed as well as a reminder that the grazing lease has expired and will not be renewed in 2015. Manager Boehm also met with Sno-Valley Farms to discuss the 2014 agricultural lease. Manager Boehm reviewed acres planted, and discussed what went well, what didn't, and what we can do to improve the 2015 season. The biggest issues were muddy access roads, crossings that were too narrow, high water levels that are controlled by the Dike District, and crops harvested beyond the season deadline. All agreed to work collaboratively next season to resolve these issues.



Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that volunteers continue the trail clearing work at Spencer Island

Davis Slough Habitat Assessment: Biologist Milner and Manager Rotton met with staff from the Whidbey/Camano Land Trust to assess progress on tree planting and blackberry clearing at the Davis Slough property and decide on where to focus efforts for the coming year.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Nooksack Elk herd Population Analysis: Biologists Yarborough and Hoenes continued to work on 2006-2014 population estimates for the Nooksack Elk herd.

Wildlife Areas

ESA Restoration and Waterfowl Management (ERWM) Strategy: Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent a complete draft of the ERWM document to Western Washington Agricultural Association (WWAA) for comments. The draft outlines a strategy for WDFW to continue to provide waterfowl hunting opportunity and winter forage, while also supporting estuary restoration projects.

Skagit Wildlife Area: Natural Resource Tech Cosgrove and Natural Resource Specialist Meis checked areas exposed to high river flows during the Thanksgiving weekend, including the Headquarters, Island, and Johnson/Debay's Slough Reserve units and the moorage/boathouse

facility. Water overtopped the spur dike at the Headquarters unit near the Wiley Slough tide-gates and eroded a portion of the dike. No other major damage was found. Cosgrove monitored hunter and waterfowl use and field conditions at the Island, Leque Island, Samish, and Johnson/Debay's Slough units. Hunter and waterfowl use was down significantly at the Leque Island and Samish units with the ponds and sheet water being frozen. The Island and Johnson/Debays' Slough units were very active with both hunter and duck activity. Last weekend, high river flows ponded water throughout the Nookachamps Basin, increasing swan and duck activity in and around the Johnson/Debay's Slough unit. Meis monitored agricultural crops, water levels, and waterfowl use on Fir Island Farms, Padilla Bay and John/Debay's Slough units. Meis received delivery of the billy goat mower to be used for Debay's Slough Duck Pond Enhancement project with the Washington Waterfowl Association. Meis is developing a photo point network to monitor water level management pre and post project on the Samish Unit.

Waterfowl utilizing flood water on the DeBay's Slough Reserve during the Skagit River flooding in the Nookachamps basin



Private Lands/Access Management



Work on the boat launch at Lone Lake

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Surveys & Management: Natural Resource Tech Otto, Biologist Caldwell, and Volunteer staff conducted hunter success and use surveys on Waterfowl Quality Hunt Access sites across Skagit, Whatcom, and Snohomish Counties.

Coopers Hawk utilizing a Waterfowl Quality Hunt unit sign as a perch



Waterfowl Quality Hunt unit blind on Francis road in Skagit County

Flood Survey: Natural Resource Tech Otto toured flood prone sites in Whatcom and Skagit counties. Otto checked for issues and damage to the hunt units. Otto found no major issues

except for two sites that were missing access signs. Otto replaced both signs prior to the weekend. The majority of the waterfowl units will be offering excellent hunting conditions after the thaw.



Damaged Waterfowl Quality Hunt access post. Flooding has taken a toll on several hunt sites.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Outreach – coyote interview: Biologist Anderson provided information on coyote ecology, conflict reduction, and management techniques to a journalist working on a piece regarding local coyotes in Ballard. In late fall and

winter, sub-adult coyotes often get kicked out of family groups and are learning to be independent. They are generally solitary and may, at times, be seen a bit more briefly upon independence as they are not territorial and are trying to find their own spaces while dealing with other territorial coyotes. They are also needing to find food and cover. If one sees a coyote in urban areas, please follow our guidance at our Living with Wildlife – Coyotes website:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/coyotes.html>

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Interwest Construction completed the pipe installation thru the Wiley Slough dike for the pump house being constructed on the site. The dike top trail has been

reopened. Natural Resource Specialist Meis attended the Cooperative Weed Management Area meeting regarding Knotweed control on the upper Skagit River. Manager Rotton attended the Fir Island Farms meeting to discuss the 90% design report. Additional meetings are scheduled to discuss the marsh restoration planting plan currently proposed by Shannon and Wilson.

Skagit River Moorage: Manager Rotton, Meis, and Cosgrove met with local fabricator John Wolden to discuss retrofits to the barge to improve safety and efficiency for the ferry operation necessary for the Island unit management.

Johnson-DeBay's Slough: Cosgrove spent two days mowing blackberries and reed canary grass at the north WWRP planting at the Johnson/Debay's Slough Reserve unit. Meis identified and flagged existing plants to mow around, cleared black berries from these areas and identified locations for additional plantings.

Davis Slough Natural Area: Manager Rotton and District Biologist Ruth Milner met with a representative of the Whidbey Camano Land Trust to monitor previous vegetation control and planting work and to discuss the restoration plans for the site in this upcoming field season.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Manager Brian Boehm reports that all 8-4 hour signs and pheasant related signs have been removed and replaced with "Closed During Hours of Darkness" signs. Manager Boehm also responded to a number of phone calls and email messages from local hunters. With the recent rainy and cold weather, more duck hunters are calling and also visiting the units for waterfowl hunting opportunities.

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Conflict Tech Cogdal monitored cameras, and checking for elk damage/activity. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman contacted Raspberry farmers in Whatcom County and surveyed deer damage on approximately fifty acres of berry's.

Wildlife Conflict Meetings: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman attended a meeting with Tribal Co-Managers to discuss insurance options for landowners experiencing elk damage. A key speaker during this meeting was from the USDA Risk Management Department. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman attended a Day Creek Landowners meeting and discussed mitigation options to keep elk off crop lands. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell attended a Bear Depredation sub-committee meeting in Lacey, WA. Many bear related issues were discussed and motions were set that will progress management decisions. The Wildlife Conflict Supervisor met with District Biologist Yarborough, Assistant District Biologist Debrun, and DOT Staff to discuss elk movements, corridors, science needs, and trapping options along the HWY 20 road system. Several key corridors and movement patterns were recognized. From this, potential trapping locations were determined. These strategic locations will hopefully allow the safe capturing/collaring of elk. These efforts will directly provide managers with elk movement data that will help to guide management decisions that will reduce vehicle collisions with elk and potentially reduce other elk related conflict. Wildlife Conflict Specialist and Supervisor Caldwell met with three landowners in the Day Creek area to discuss conflict issues and answer questions.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination

Hunter Education support: Hunter education coordinator Steven Dazey worked with several instructors to correct problems with Hunter Education cards sent to students who have passed the classes. The cards received by the students had cert #'s that were not valid and they were not able to purchase their licenses through the vendors. This appears to be a sporadic programming issue and is currently being researched. Coordinator Dazey assisted an instructor in finding other instructors in his area to assist with an upcoming class. Dazey also answered questions a new instructor had about finding a new venue to teach in the Snoqualmie area.

Sky Valley Recreation and Planning Meeting: Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator Dazey attended the Sky Valley meeting. Possible venues for hunter education classes were discussed. Also the potential of adding new instructors in the Upper Skykomish Valley led to commitments from a group from Index to turn in applications to become volunteer hunter education instructors.

Volunteer presentation at Dec. Lands Division Meeting: Volunteer Coordinator Dazey finished work on a presentation that will be made at the Lands Division meeting in Wenatchee on Dec.11. This presentation will highlight the benefits of using volunteers. The why, how, and after will be presented to show the attendees the benefits that they gain by working with the volunteer coordinators to recruit volunteers to expand what they can accomplish towards meeting agency goals.

Volunteer Recruitment and Outreach: Volunteer coordinators Dazey made several presentations to potential volunteer groups. He was at Tyee High School presenting on the availability of service opportunities that benefit DFW and would qualify for Senior graduation requirements. Also, he was in Mt. Vernon to present to the district's Boy Scout roundtable on the availability of projects that would satisfy their Eagle Scout service requirements. Several of the youth who were working towards Eagle Scout expressed interest, as well as several adult advisors. An email was also sent as a follow-up to the senior project advisor at Tyee HS to set up a presentation for the upcoming juniors as they start the planning process for their senior projects.

GOAL 4: SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Areas

Snoqualmie Wildlife Areas: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continues to coordinate with Steve Dazey to match up Master Hunter and citizen volunteers with projects and tasks that need to be completed. In the month of November, this included one Eagle Scout project at Spencer Island, one troop project, and four Master Hunters, all working to improve trail conditions at the Spencer Island unit.

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Materials and Areas: Biologist Caldwell coordinated field time with Conflict Specialist Witman and Biologist Debruyn to familiarize himself with conflict areas, landowners, and other details related to Wildlife Conflict in Region 4.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination

Instructor Questions on Effects of Recent Legislation on Hunter Education: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey continued to field questions on the effects that recent legislation may have on the hunter education. As the possible effects are still being researched, coordinator Dazey advised the instructors to check the hunter education website regularly for information as it becomes available. Following posting on the instructor website of preliminary guidelines for instructors by Program Manager Whipple midweek, the volume of concerns from instructors was greatly reduced.

Inactive Instructor Notifications: Hunter education coordinator Dazey sent out decertification letters to the hunter education instructors who had not responded to previous notices warning them of this possible action. Upon receiving decertification notices several instructors were finally motivated to contact Dazey and arrange to continue their instructor certification. The rest of the inactive instructors were removed from the on-line Kalkomey system. Cross referencing the orange gun check out list showed that two of the decertified instructors were listed as having orange gun sets. Dazey will follow up on this.

Terry Hoffer Award Nomination: Hunter Education coordinator Dazey prepared a nomination to be presented for one of the Region 4 instructors for the Terry Hoffer Award. The Terry Hoffer award is named after enforcement officer Terry Hoffer who was tragically killed while working in the Buckley area. The award recognizes a hunter education instructor who has gone above and beyond during the previous year in delivering the hunter education program to the students in this state.

Thank You Letters Sent: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey sent thank you letters to the couple on Lopez Island that made their guest house available for Dazey and volunteer Bill Vincent to stay in during their recent trip to the Island to assist in teaching hunter education on Lopez Island. The class taught was a traditional class so required a two night stay. Off season lodging rates on Lopez Island run around \$225 a night so the donated use of the guest house was much appreciated.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtles: Biologists Anderson and Bergh met with Oregon Zoo staff member Dave Shepherdson and Veterinarian Tim Storms, as well as the Conservation Director, to discuss options for the western pond turtle program during the upcoming 2015 field season. The Oregon Zoo has long been partnered with WDFW in working towards the recovery of the western pond turtle population in the Columbia River Gorge. For this next field season, we are discussing the merits of continuing the head start program as well as evaluating a strategy for the treatment of select adult western pond turtles that are currently experiencing shell disease.

Mount St. Helens Mountain Goat Survey Review: Biologist Holman met with staff from the Cowlitz Tribe, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and the St. Helens Institute to review the survey of mountain goats on and around Mount St. Helens conducted in August of 2014. Goats have recolonized the area in the decades following the 1980 eruption. Prior to the survey, goats were thought to number 20-40. Results will be finalized and corrected for any double observations, but initial results tallied 65 mountain goats on St. Helens and in the associated Mount Margaret Backcountry.

Thanks to all who participated in the initial year of the Mount St. Helens mountain goat survey. The project exemplifies the importance and value of cooperation among Tribal, State, Federal, and private stakeholders related to this valuable wildlife resource. A similar effort is anticipated in 2015 and federal funding may be available for a complementary aerial survey.

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

Pasture Mowing Completed at Shillapoo: The pasture mowing was completed this past week on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area to improve winter forage conditions for waterfowl and to control invasive vegetation. Wildlife Area staff began pasture mowing in July of every year, after ground nesting birds have fledged, and finish most years in early December. This task takes up the vast majority of staff time during the summer and fall months in which about 500 acres are mowed to control unwanted vegetation and manage stubble heights that are favorable for wintering waterfowl trying to feed. Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Hand took over the task of mowing when he started working for the agency on October 1st, and became very proficient in operating the tractor and unfamiliar mower in a very short amount of time.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Fuels Reduction Project: Project layout work continued this week and Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis completed more squirrel nest survey work for Phase II of this project.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Wildlife Management

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt: The 2014-2015 SW Washington goose hunting season continued this week. As of Sunday, November 30th, 213 hunters have checked a total of 481 geese at three check stations at a ratio of approximately 2.26 geese per hunter. At the moment, all zones remain open for Management Area 2A. A total of 80 duskies are distributed amongst five zones in Management Area 2A and 2B. Zones may close to hunting geese if dusky quotas are exceeded. Hunters should also note the mid-season closure. Goose hunting will close at the end of the day on Sunday, November 30th until the beginning of the day on Wednesday, December 10th. This break in season allows geese to reacclimatize to their wintering grounds and WDFW to offer a longer regular goose hunting season. Information on the mid-season closure can be found in the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet on page 6. For information regarding up-to-date zone closures, hunters can call the Region 5 office at (360) 696-6211 and follow the menu options for hunting and waterfowl. Hunters interested in participating in this season can refer to pages 3, 6-7, and 9-10 of the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet for further details regarding requirements for participation <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01535/wdfw01535.pdf>.

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

Shillapoo Watchable Wildlife: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Hand had a lot of wildlife sightings over the last few weeks on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. Most noted was a Columbia White-tailed doe and twin fawns observed in the Pencil Lake area. The doe was captured as an adult, collared, tagged, and transported to Ridgefield NWR from Julia Butler Hansen NWR on March 6, 2014. Observing her with twins helps inform Managers that she responded well to the human handling/ relocation process, made a new core area on Shillapoo, and was able to maintain adequate nutrition through the completion of the gestation period and fawn rearing. Also, the Bald eagles that nested at Shillapoo this past spring appear to be back and were observed in their nest preparing it for the upcoming nesting season. This was the first pair to nest on the Wildlife Area in more than 20 years. In addition, Manager Hauswald and Assistant Manager Hand observed a large number of snow geese using the northern part of Shillapoo last week, during the mid-season goose hunting closure period. Hunters may have a shot at taking a snow goose as long as the birds stay around until December 10th, when goose season reopens. A few Sandhill cranes are still in the area and the number of ducks using the area appears to be increasing with the increasing amounts of standing water in the Vancouver lowlands.

Shillapoo Pump Operations: Wildlife Area staff turned on the pumps to inundate the wetlands of the South unit of Shillapoo on November 25th. Staff will maintain operation of the pumps throughout the winter and spring months to facilitate favorable conditions for waterfowl, while they try to suppress the growing of reed canary grass in the wetlands. Due to the lower water level of the Columbia River, only the small pump is currently in use, but as the river level rises

the larger pump will become operational, allowing staff to fill the wetlands at a faster rate. At the current pumping rate the wetlands should be fully inundated by the end of the month.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Pheasant Release: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis worked with volunteers Morrison and D. and R. Wheelhouse to release pheasants on November 26th. Twenty-three birds were released at the Finn Ridge Road site, 34 at the Gun Club property, and 56 at the Hatchery Unit. Weather was mild and there were no significant problems with the release.

Private Lands

Access to Hunt: Conflict Specialist McDonald assisted hunters seeking more information on the Trout Lake Elk Area hunt. She directed hunters to landowners with 100+ elk visiting their property.

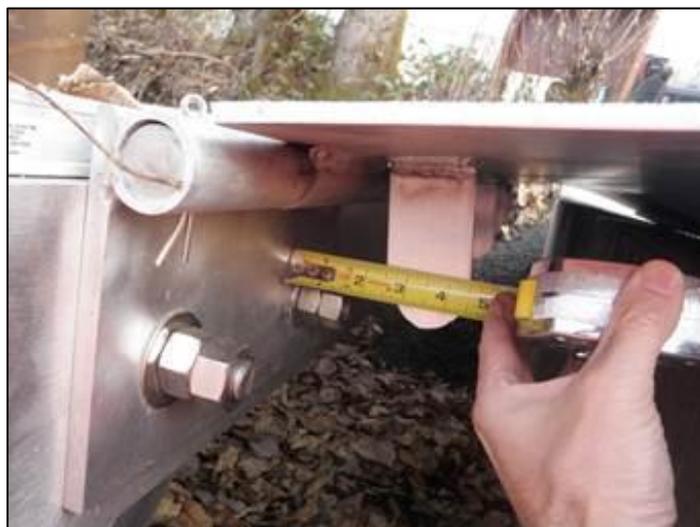
Elk on Trout Lake property

Access

Vancouver Lake and Shillapoo: A Department of Corrections crew of 10 worked on both sites; leaf blowing, weed eating, and picking up litter.

Langsdorf Landing: Theft of the new boat tie downs was discovered this week on the new floats that were installed last month. Unfortunately, this is the second theft and vandalism incident within the last two months. The Department's Engineering team is looking into methods to prevent future thefts and is working on site to make some adjustments and finish up on the project this week.

Langsdorf Landing



GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Wildlife Conflict:

Wildlife Conflict – D-10: Conflict Specialist Conklin issued three damage permits this week to three different land owners experiencing elk damage.

Conflict Specialist Conklin spoke with a land owner who had three sheep missing in the past few months. He has no sheep left and just reported the last one depredated recently. The land owner did put up a trail camera and has not captured any information from the camera yet. Conklin gave advice such as lighting, locking up the sheep at night, and thinking about the amount of cover that surrounds the pasture where the sheep graze.

Conflict Specialist Conklin met with a new land owner in the Randle area. He is a commercial producer of hay and has approximately 80 acres. Advice was given, including hazing, and using other non-lethal methods. The land owner will continue to document the number of elk on his property.

While in the area, Conklin drove by other lands in the Randle area that have been experiencing damage. Conklin counted 42 elk on one of the farms that she works with. There was one elk taken from the adjacent property three days previously by a disabled youth hunter, where the land owner issued his Landowner Damage Permit to the disabled youth hunter.

Partial herd of 42 elk on landowner property in Randle

Wildlife Conflict – D-9: Conflict Specialist McDonald signed a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement with a Goldendale farm and nursery experiencing deer damage. Recently wind blew down a fence, and 24 deer were found inside the nursery the next morning. One deer broke into a greenhouse and tore



open bags of organic soil with her hooves. Hunters will be directed to the property in January and February and Critter gitters and scarecrow sprinklers will be used in the spring when the most damage occurs. Damage prevention permits were issued. In addition, Conflict Specialist McDonald provided pyrotechnics and depredation prevention permits to Klickitat County agricultural producers with Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements.

Missing Livestock: Conflict Specialist McDonald visited a Skamania County farm that has lost three sheep due to unknown causes over the last six weeks. Four Great Pyrenees dogs have greatly reduced livestock loss to coyotes over the last several years. No predator sign was found during the site visit and three of the dogs and one pig found a breach in the field fence during the site visit. Game cameras were installed to monitor for predators, but no predators were observed on the cameras. Living with Cougars literature was provided to the landowner.



GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Management

New Assistant District Wildlife Biologist for Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, and Lewis Counties (District 10): Nicholle Stephens has changed work duties and is now the District 10 Assistant District Wildlife Biologist. Nicholle has been with WDFW since 2010, and most recently was the Wildlife Conflict and Private Lands Supervisor for Region 5 facilitating hunting access on private industrial timberlands and implementing the new wildlife conflict program in the Region, as well as providing excellent response to both hunting, access, and conflict issues. Prior to coming to WDFW, Nicholle earned a B.S. in Zoology from Oregon State University and then worked as a seasonal wildlife technician for six years. She was employed by several non-profits and Universities and worked in various regions of the country banding passerines, waterfowl nest-searching, counting and banding migrating raptors, and surveying for spotted owls and marbled murrelets. With her diverse range of experience related to hunted and non-game species, Nicholle brings many great skills and abilities along with a terrific, positive approach to her new job. Please join us in welcoming Nicholle in her new role within the Region 5 Wildlife Program Team.

Supervisory/Leadership Training: Several members of the Regional Wildlife Program participated in the latest round of the WDFW supervisory training. The December session featured units on coaching Staff for improved productivity, performance evaluations, and disciplinary actions. Relevant Staff have now completed 4 of 5 sessions.

Winter Conditions:

D-10 & MSHWA Winter Conditions

Past Weather: November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal. Light accumulations of snow fell on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area the last weekend of November.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 4,500 to 7,500 feet during the first full week of December, with rain likely every day. The 6-10 and 8-14 day forecast are for above normal temperatures and precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The December and three month forecast is for above normal temperatures with an equal chance for either above average, below average, or normal temperatures.

Habitat: Forage is available at all elevations.

Snow Depths: Lower elevations are currently snow free, with minimal depths at the middle and upper elevations

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. While conducting other work on the Mudflow unit on December 3rd, 28 elk were observed. The first winter elk survey will be conducted on December 8th.

Animal Condition: Animals appear to be in good condition

Mortality: None reported to date.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

The Public is reminded the portion of the Mt. St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle, and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30, 2014, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9

Past Weather: Weather in the South Cascades this past week has been marked by cold dry periods transitioning into warmer wet weather. Snow pack is below normal and most areas below 3,500 feet have little snow.

Winter Severity: The Klickitat Wildlife Area is snow-free and forage habitat is available. There is little concern for the current severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County. The eastern portions of Klickitat County have no snow and deer are reported in good condition as it is still early in the season.

Habitat: Habitat is open and forage available below 3,500 feet in most of the south Cascades.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations seen due to inclement conditions.

Animal Condition: Animals appear to be in good condition and numerous deer have been seen in the past week with healthy fawns. Elk have been seen in normal concentrations in the Lower Trout Lake Valley.

Mortality: None documented this week other than a few road kill deer off Highway 141 and Highway 14 in Klickitat County.

Public Contacts: No concerns raised by the public this week.

REGION 6

Wildlife Management

Oregon Spotted Frog Black River Watershed Landowner Outreach Workshop: Biologist Tirhi and staff worked with USFWS, NRCS, and Thurston County to host a workshop for all landowners within federally designated Oregon spotted frog critical habitat of the Black River Watershed. Of the 300 households that were sent invitations to the workshop, approximately 25 landowners attended, including several key landowners owning property in the Allens Creek vicinity, on which spotted frogs' oviposition (breed and lay eggs). Tirhi and staff will be having a follow up meeting with these landowners to discuss land management and funding opportunities.

Electrocution of Two Trumpeter Swans: Biologist Ament received a call on December 3rd from a woman who reported finding two dead trumpeter swans in a ditch along Kirner Road in Sequim. She quickly mobilized and met the Reporting Party on site. The two swans were found directly below a power line on the west end of a pond that serves as an evening roost area. The swans were actually covered with some snow so it is believed that they had died sometime between November 28th and 29th. The pond was mostly frozen when Biologist Ament was on site. She retrieved and examined each swan. Both birds were adults with no bands. They were found approximately one meter apart from each other and there was no evidence of predation on either swan. The recent cold weather had helped preserve both carcasses. One of the swans had a large opening in its upper chest area that had a distinct burnt odor, along with a smaller opening along the neck. It was obvious that this swan had died from being electrocuted. The other swan had no obvious injuries to assist with determining the cause of death. Biologist Ament consulted with WDFW Vet Assistant Ella Rowan regarding the mortalities to determine if gizzard and liver samples should be taken. She took both swans to the Greywolf Veterinarian Clinic in Sequim for further assessment. Radiographs were taken of each swan. No metal fragments were observed in the gizzards of each swan. Both swans were healthy weights and Dr. Tyler reported that the general body condition of each swan was good. There was no evidence of chronic disease with either swan and there was no obvious evidence to suspect lead poisoning as the cause of death. He confirmed that the one swan died from electrocution. There were no obvious burns on the other swan but electrocution is expected. Martha Jordan was contacted and reported that she certainly knew of other cases where swans were electrocuted and there was no visible signs. The swans were likely flying close together when the one swan closer in front hit the lines. The gizzards were removed from each swan and liver samples were taken. These will be frozen and may be submitted in the future for testing for lead poisoning. One swan has been frozen and will be provided to the local Dungeness River Center to be mounted for an educational display. The wings and head of the other swan were removed and were also frozen. They will also be used for educational purposes.



Biologist Ament collecting the dead swans from below the power lines



Wounds from electrocution clearly visible on one of the swans

Meeting with PUD (Swan Electrocutions): Biologist Ament contacted staff from the local Clallam County PUD to report the electrocuted swans and requested a meeting on site as soon as possible. She had worked with the PUD last year to have some lines marked and modified that were hazardous to swans. She met with Senior Electrical staff Kelli Carr at the Kirner Road pond on December 5th. The PUD did have a power outage reported and repaired in the area on Saturday, November 29th. This outage was likely caused from the trumpeter swans hitting the lines. The PUD is not able to modify the lines at this time but they are willing to install reflective flappers to make the lines more obvious to the swans. Biologist Ament and Carr discussed the locations where the flappers should be installed on the lines. The devices will be installed early this week. While in the area, Biologist Ament talked with some landowners in the vicinity to get more information about swan use at the pond. Two separate parties reported that there had been four juveniles with the two adult swans roosting at the pond in the evenings around Thanksgiving. The landowners then only observed the four young swans on the pond. One landowner did contact Biologist Ament late on December 5th to report that the four juvenile swans were observed flying in the vicinity of the pond. The volunteers monitoring the swans in the Dungeness Valley will be advised of this electrocution incident. They will be requested to monitor the Kirner Road pond and provide further information on swan flight movements in the area. More flappers may need to be installed in the future on lines on Woodcock Road directly south of the pond. See photos below.

Dead swans along Kirner Road with evening roost pond in the background



Photo taken by Catherine Mix of the four juvenile swans on Kirner Pond Nov. 29th

Trumpeter Swan Project: The Swan Monitoring volunteers reported the following swan counts for December 3rd. We saw a total of 53 swans (38 adults and 15 juvenile). We saw two groups of swans off Lamar Road. There were twelve adults in one group and in the second group there were one juvenile and twelve adults. In the fields off Anderson road we saw three adults and six juvenile. North off Port Williams Road in the back of the field we saw eleven adults and eight juvenile.



Spokane Moose: Bio Murphie assisted section manager R. Harris and Region 1 staff in their moose collaring activities near Spokane. Bio Murphie darted on day one and provided some training for newly certified aerial darter Bio Wik on day two. He reports that a total of 14 cow moose were collared during the two days he assisted with additional collaring efforts continuing after his departure.



An immobilized cow moose cradled by saplings prior to collaring



A calf moose stands next to its mother awaiting her recovery from the immobilizing drugs. This photo was taken upon our initial approach to secure the cow moose for collaring

Sea Duck Surveys: The annual winter marine bird and sea duck surveys began this week. Bios Murphie, Evenson and Cyra conducted surveys in portions of the North-Central Puget Sound region. This effort will sample all the inland marine waters of Washington and take approximately 20 days to complete.

Dungeness Elk Composition Count: Biologist Ament completed a composition count data for the herd on November 25, 2014. Total Elk = 26 (eleven cows, ten calves, three spikes and two branched bulls). This count did match a count completed on November 18, 2014 by Point No Point Biologist Tim Cullinan. The elk were located within the Cedar Ridge Development just north of Highway 101. The GPS and VHF collars on cows are functioning properly.

Dungeness elk herd foraging in Cedar Ridge Development



GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

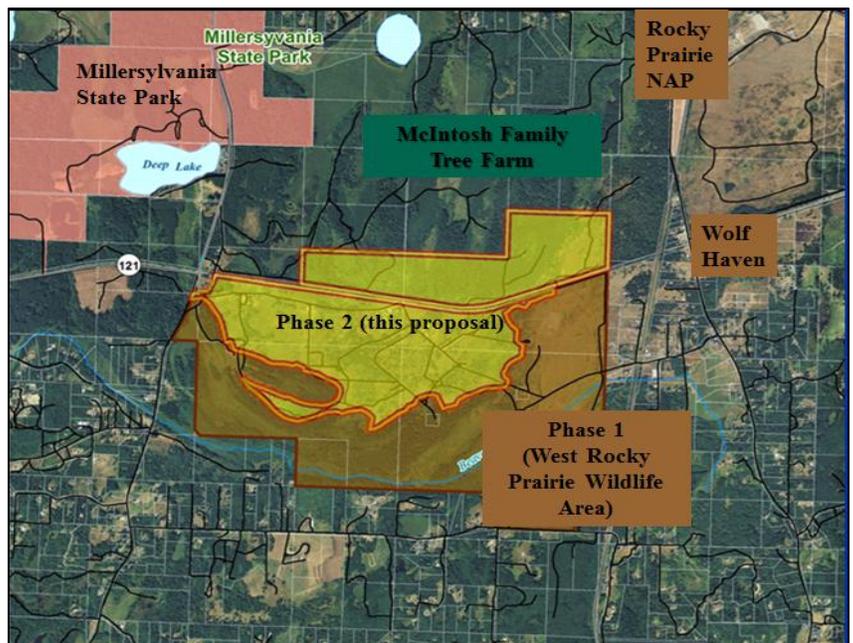
West Rocky Prairie Land

Acquisition: Biologist Tirhi spent considerable time finalizing a USFWS Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund Recovery Land Acquisition draft to meet deadline. The request is for \$2M to match an existing \$3M grant that has been obtained thru WWRP towards the purchase of 745 acres of extant prairie directly north of the West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area. The property supports and/or has the ability to support a multitude of federal/state listed and WDFW priority species. The draft has been submitted thru WDFW Lands Division to USFWS, who will review and provide feedback by mid-December. The final grant is due to Washington DC in late January.

West Rocky Prairie Phase 2 acquisition proposal (745 acres; Tirhi 2014)

Goose Area 2B – Check stations:

On Wednesday, December 3rd, Scientific Technician Capelli checked a total of four hunters with a total of fourteen geese (four Taverners and ten Lesser).



On Saturday, December 6th, Scientific Technician Capelli checked a total of four hunters with a total of thirteen geese (five Taverners, two Cackling, five Lesser, and one Aleutian. No Dusky Canada geese were reported as being harvested in goose management Area 2B.

Biologist Sundstrom worked the Raymond check station this week. Harvested geese numbers were somewhat low for the week but four Dusky geese were checked due to Enforcement efforts (Table 1). There are twelve remaining goose hunt days in Area 2B for the 2014-2015 season; comparing total number of geese harvested from the 2013-2014 season to this season at the same number of hunt days (16), the Raymond station has checked over twice as many geese (Table 2).

Date	Species																Totals
	# Hunters	Cackler # Banded	Aleutian # Banded	Taverner # Banded	Lesser # Banded	Dusky # Banded	Western # Banded	Vancouver # Banded	GWF # Banded	Snow # Banded	Other # Banded						
12/03	3	3	0	3	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	10	
12/06	4	1	0	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	
Totals:	7	4	0	5	1	4	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	17	

Table 1: Raymond station Geese checked this week

RAYMOND CHECK STATION	Species																Totals
	# Hunters	Cackler # Banded	Aleutian # Banded	Taverner # Banded	Lesser # Banded	Dusky # Banded	Western # Banded	Vancouver # Banded	GWF # Banded	Snow # Banded	Other # Banded						
2014-15 Season	82	104	1	7	3	54	8	7	29	2	2	4	2	2	2	219	
2013-14 Season	46	53	1	1	22	2	1	8	5	0	3	4	0	0	0	94	

Table 2: Current and past season numbers after 16 hunt days

To date, a total of eight (8) Dusky geese have been checked in Area 2B. As a reminder, Goose Management Area 2B has a Dusky goose quota of ten (10). When that quota is reached, the season could be shut down unless unused quotas can be transferred from other areas. Currently, some quota is available for transfer.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Areas

Manager Belson coordinated with the DNR Creosote Removal Program to begin the clean-up of large marine debris from the Union River unit of the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area. Work was conducted in the saltmarshes of Lynch Cove, located at the terminus of Hood Canal at Belfair. During a two-day period, crews from the WCC Puget Sound Corps removed from the estuary a total of 9,380 lbs. (44 yds³) of creosote, styrofoam, garbage, tires, and other

miscellaneous debris, including six derelict dock structures. Another two days of work are scheduled for later in December, following which an assessment will be made to determine if additional effort is needed to complete the job. The results and benefits of this interagency project will be shared with the Belfair community through local media, partners, and other means.

Examples of marine debris at Lynch Cove: Floating dock (foreground) and boat hull (background)

