

Wildlife Program

Week of December 28, 2015 – January 3, 2016

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Region 1 Wolf Activities

Depredation Investigation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett and Sergeant Taylor investigated a report of a calf found dead three days ago north of Hunters. The scene was canvased and evidence was collected. The calf carcass was transported back to the Region 1 lab so it could thaw out for a full necropsy.



Calf carcass discovered north of Hunters

How reported	Location	Sightings	Camera Work	Depredations
GPS collar	Both GPS collars have been moving between the Spokane Indian Reservation and south of Kettle Falls during this period.	<u>One reported</u> 1. Monumental – Dec. 2015 Two animals reported	No reports in this area for this period.	<u>One reported</u> 1. Monumental – Dec. 2015, two geese. No investigation due to lack of carcasses. Reported via County Commissioner. WDFW followed up with Reporting Party.
WDFW Public Sightings webpage		No reports in this area for this period.	No reports in this area for this period.	
WDFW Staff	Spokane Tribal harvest of three individuals during this period.	No reports in this area for this period.	No photos for this period.	

Table 1: Huckleberry range December wolf update for producers and interested parties

County	Sightings (webpage and contact)	Camera, WCS Bennett and District	Depredations
Lincoln	<u>One reported</u> 1. Sprague – 12/21/2015, unconfirmed One grey and one black adult reported	No cameras out during this period.	<u>One reported</u> 1. Deer Meadows – 12/17, domestic dog Determination: Non-wolf (cougar)
Spokane	<u>Seven reported</u> 1. Spokane – 11/26, WDFW contacted possible coyote, RP unsure 2. Turnbull – 11/30? – unconfirmed single set of tracks 3. Riverside – 12/2, confirmed Deceased domestic husky, non-wolf 4. Eloika Lake – 12/9, unconfirmed Two gray, one black reported 5. Spokane – 12/9, unconfirmed WDFW contacted one gray reported 6. Spokane Valley – 12/13, WDFW responded 6-8 animals reports, likely coyotes due to scat in area of reported sighting 7. Newman Lake – 12/29, unconfirmed One gray animal reported	No cameras out during this period.	No depredations reported to WDFW for this period.
Whitman	<u>Five reported</u> 1. Pullman – 11/30, unconfirmed Four dark colored animals reported, photo inconclusive 2. Pullman – 12/2, confirmed Two animals report, non-wolf based on track size photo 3. Colfax – 12/5, unconfirmed	No cameras out during this period.	<u>One reported</u> 1. Pullman – 18 months ago, domestic dog Determination: Unknown Cause of death (no carcasses available for exam)

	<p>One dark, one gray animal reported 4. Riparia – 12/23, unconfirmed One black animal reported 5. Colfax – 12/28, unconfirmed Three dark animals reported, photo inconclusive</p>		
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Table 2: Spokane, Lincoln, and Whitman counties December wolf update for producers and interested parties

Wolf PowerPoint: Supervisor McCanna prepared a wolf PowerPoint presentation for a producer meeting in Walla Walla County in late January.

Sighting Reported: Natural Resource Technician Wade spoke with Garfield County Commissioner Dixon about a wolf sighting in Peola. Commissioner Dixon gave Wade the name and contact information for the observing party. Natural Resource Technician Wade later contacted the observer and forwarded him the link to enter his sighting on WDFW’s wolf observation reporting page. The observer stated that he watched three wolves (one black and two gray) that were lying in a farm field for about ten minutes.

REGION 1

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

Wildlife Management

Turkey Surveys: Surveys continued on established transects including the Aladdin, Chewelah, Douglas, and Haller Standard Transects covered this week. With daily high temperatures below freezing, along with several inches of snow cover throughout District 1, the turkeys have been mainly observed on their “severe” winter ranges, which include farmyards and residential areas where there are human-derived food sources.



Wild turkeys observed in barn yard and next to stacked hay bales on two different survey transects in District 1 this week

Winter Conditions

District 3: Generally colder temperatures this week, with some light snow in the valley and heavier accumulations in the mountains. Winds have caused drifting snow, and some foothill and mountain roads are impassable.

Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area: A small amount of snow has fallen this week, most of it on the weekend of January 2-3. However, the snow has been dry and fine, and a fair amount of drifting has occurred. Skies have varied from sunny to foggy. Daytime temperatures ranged up to 37 degrees Fahrenheit, then dropped to as low as -2 degrees at night. As of 7:00 a.m. on December 31, snow accumulation at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area was approximately seven inches.

Winter wonderland, at entry road to Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area headquarters



REGION 2

No report submitted this week.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Manager Lopushinsky and volunteer Jeff McIrvin spent a day on snowmobiles posting “no snowmobile” signs along the western boundary of the winter range. Conditions were challenging, with deep powdery snow. Additionally, some routes have not been groomed, as the local snowmobile club has experienced mechanical problems with their groomers this year. Manager Lopushinsky checked in with Don Eckis of the Apple Country Snowmobile Club for an update on this winter’s grooming.

Volunteer Jeff McIrvin posts no snowmobile signs on Colockum Wildlife Area



Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Oak Creek staff members continued feeding operations at all the feed sites. Schedules were adjusted again to allow for feeding coverage during the holiday. Elk numbers continue to increase at the feed sites. Oak Creek staff members picked up another ton of pellets to feed the big horn sheep.

Peak Elk Counts for Week

Headquarters – 998

Junction – 270

Nile – 289

Sheep – 180 (plus nine elk)

Cowiche – 1600

Winter Weather: There were very cold temperatures this past week with minimal new snow accumulation. Additional snow is expected this coming week with more seasonal temperatures of lows in the 20s and highs near freezing.

Elk Health: Elk are in seasonally good condition.

LT Murray Wildlife Area Elk Feeding/Winter Conditions: Elk numbers grew to 800 in Watt and roughly 600 in Robinson. Cold weather has helped drive in more elk to the feed sites, with high temperatures in the low 20s and lows in the single digits. A few inches of new snow fell this week, and more snow is expected early next week.

Elk Location: Several elk remain on the wrong side of the fence near the Watt feed site, and the popularity of the adjacent sledding hill is making it difficult to get those animals back through the one-way gate. A large number of elk remain on the wrong side of the fence near the Robinson site as well.

Elk Feeding: Manager Winegeart fed elk two days this week. There seem to be a higher than usual number of lame animals on the feed site, many with leg problems or physical abnormalities. One calf elk died on the Watt feedlot over the weekend.

Wenas Wildlife Area Winter Feeding: Elk numbers have increased quickly since feeding began on December 17, with over 1,000 animals on the Mellotte feed site. Multiple snow storms have moved through since mid-December, with over two feet of snow on the ground at mid-elevations.



Mellotte Feed Site



Bull elk sporting the latest look in hay

Elk Hazing: Assistant Manager Taylor had 23 elk in the hay stacks at Mount Vale on Christmas Day. He hazed them out and attempted to look for a hole, but deep snow conditions limited his ability to check the fence.

Dogs Chasing Elk: On December 27, when Assistant Manager Taylor went to feed, he found dogs in the feed site harassing the elk. They had the elk pushed up onto the hill in a tight ball. These are the same dogs, two great danes and a cattle dog, that have been reported chasing elk for the last two winters. Taylor was able to scare them off and they went over the ridge.

Elk Conditions: Elk are in seasonally good condition. One mortality, a cow elk, died within days of reaching the feed site. The cause is unknown, but the body condition was poor.

Wildlife Management

Deer Surveys: Biologist Bernatowicz spent a few days ground surveying for deer in GMUs 340 and 342. Some areas could not be accessed due to the snow, and deer were concentrated in areas with woody browse. One-hundred sixty-nine deer were observed, with 39 fawns and 16 bucks

per 100 does. The total number of deer seen was down from last year, mostly due to fewer fawns. The ratio was the lowest observed in December. Only two legal bucks were seen. Below are pictures of the typical bucks seen while surveying GMUs 340 and 342.



Bighorn Sheep: Oak Creek staff members had a peak count of 240 sheep at the feed site. Biologist Bernatowicz counted 50 lambs (a record high count for Clemans) and found sheep wintering well west of the feed site. The total Clemans bighorn population is probably close to 250 animals. Relocation and ewe harvest is proposed for trying to reduce the population.



Deer Survey: Biologist Moore surveyed deer in PMU 32. Overall, the number of deer observed was low, but more time was spent dealing with accessing areas through the snow. A total of 129 deer were observed and the fawn and buck ratios were 58 and 16 respectively.

A nice buck observed on Wildhorse Wind Facility

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

Wildlife Areas

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Technicians Hill and Leuck drove part of the route that will remain open to motorized travel through the Whiskey Dick winter closure area. They checked signage and observed several hundred elk along the route. State Parks' gate on Recreation Drive is open by default as the lock was found bent and inoperable.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Oak Creek staff members completed snow and ice control around the facilities as needed. This included using the dump truck to sand the parking lot and access ramps.

Visitors to Feed Site: Manager Huffman coordinated with Wildlife Education Corp (WEC) Volunteers and State Parks Rangers on visitors to the wildlife area. Tours of the feed site started on Saturday, with two trucks going out every hour from 11:00 – 2:00. Visitation was extremely high, with rangers selling 379 day passes and 97 annual passes over the three day weekend. On New Year’s Day, Huffman had to direct traffic, which was backed up onto the highway waiting to get into the parking lot. On Saturday, a WEC volunteer spent several hours keeping traffic flowing in two lines to try and keep from blocking the highway. Oak Creek staff members set up more traffic control cones on Sunday and made a couple temporary signs to direct traffic into two lanes to help make more space and reduce confusion for the public. Hopefully with the signs and the holidays being over, visitation will return to a more reasonable level and this major safety hazard can be avoided.



Elk feeding and a view of the parking lot from the Oak Creek HQ hay barn

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

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Taylor began receiving phone calls from neighbors that there were 100+ elk out below Wenas Lake, with animals crossing back and forth on North Wenas Road. Taylor made contact with the local ranchers that had elk on their lands and spent time locating elk on both the Clemans and Umtanum sides of the valley. He was able to hike into Kelley Hollow and check the lower breakaways and fence for holes, but none were found. Given the snow and lack of access on the east end of Clemans Mountain, Manager Confer Morris contacted Central Valley Helicopters on Monday and they were able to take Taylor up to fly the elk fence. Both the Clemans and Umtanum sides of the fence were flown, from Mount Vale down around the face of Clemans and past Kelley Hollow, respectively. He located and fixed three holes, all within about a quarter mile of each other on the east face of Clemans. Two of the holes had been cut.



One of holes cut in elk fence



Third hole in corner of fence, wire sections separated

Taylor flew again later in the week in an attempt to herd elk back onto state land. They were able to herd 97 of the elk through a gate on the Clemans side of the valley and 36 elk through a gate on the Umtanum side. Unfortunately, the Clemans-side elk blew through the fence again that same night. Currently, 150-200 elk are below the fence on private land. In addition to the pasture and hay fields, there are also several large cherry orchards on the southeast end of Clemans. The plan is to work with Conflict Specialist Wetzel to use a helicopter to herd them again, but this time push them all the way back to the Mellotte feed site, about four and a half miles away. The feed site is back to the west at a higher elevation, so the elk won't move that direction on their own.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Natural Resource Technician 2 Medina maintained user registration boxes across the wildlife area and entered hunter registration data that was collected.

Pheasant Clinic: Natural Resource Technician 2 Medina assisted with the Hunter Education Pheasant Clinic held at the Sunnyside Headquarters Unit.

Hunter Education Pheasant Clinic





Wildlife Management

Elk Conflict: Snow has moved some elk into damage situations in Yakima and Kittitas counties. Several hundred elk are creating conflict in each county at this time.

Ellensburg and Cle Elum Area: Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by Washington State Patrol several times about elk on I-90. Approximately 20 elk have been involved in collisions at that location in the last two weeks. An effort to haze elk away from the median between the east and westbound lanes using Central Valley Helicopters had limited effectiveness and may need to be repeated.

Elk hazed across I-90 in a joint Washington State Patrol/Department of Transportation operation using Central Valley Helicopters



Elk in Hay Barns: Twelve hay growers and livestock owners in Ellensburg reported elk in hay barns. Hazing and permit hunting have been used to move the elk, as well as baiting elk return gates. About 250 elk are still below the elk fence in that area.



Elk damage to a hay barn

Elk Hazing: Five hay growers and livestock owners in the Thorp area reported elk in hay barns and feeding areas. Hazing and some hunting have moved the elk into the Yakima River area temporarily, but the elk return at intervals until they are hazed out again.

Elk Herding: Central Valley Helicopters were used to fly hay into elk return gates due to deep snow. Elk herding will be attempted in that area this week in an effort to move 250 elk into the Robinson Canyon feeding site.

Using Central Valley Helicopters to fly hay to elk re-entry gates

Re-entry Gates: CS Wetzel used a snow machine and a borrowed sled to bait elk re-entry gates. Snow conditions became too deep to use a sled.



Transporting hay to re-entry gates

Yakima County Area

Elk in Orchards: Orchard owners in the Carvo Road area reported elk inside orchards. Master hunters and landowner permits were

used to harvest six elk. Elk have also been observed in the Palomino road area in other orchards. Landowners have requested more fused rope and salutes, but these are currently on order.

Elk Conflict: Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted about elk in hay and with other livestock in the Wenas, Nile, West Valley, Tieton, and Tampico areas. In most cases, hazing advice and some permits were issued where appropriate. Some master hunters were used in a few of the situations if conditions allowed.

Elk in hay barn, but panels appear to be effective

Elk Conflict: Wenas Wildlife Area staff members moved a large group of elk back to Clemans Mountain using Central Washington Helicopters after they broke through the elk fence near Longmire Road. Wenas Wildlife Area staff members have been very helpful in reducing conflict in that area.



REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Swan Project: The number of swan mortalities in the below-listed project area has reached 114. There are three swans currently being treated for lead poisoning at the Whatcom Humane Society. The number of lead poisoned birds and the number of powerline struck birds are both over 50. The cold and relatively calm weather has led to a decrease in the number of swans that hit powerlines, while the presence of lead poisoned swans seems to be increasing.

	Lead suspect	Powerline suspect	Other trauma	Undetermined	Feather Pile	Total
Sumas	7	1	1	1	1	11
Whatcom	38	21	1	4	2	66
Skagit	9	12	3	2	1	27
Snohomish	3	17	0	1		21
	57	51	5	8	4	125
Percent	45.60%	41%	4%	6%		

Protected Wildlife Management: Biologist Anderson provided state consultation for Endangered, Threatened, Sensitive and Protected species, including various Priority or Species of Concern needs – most often nest take authorization and/or habitat consideration recommendations. Anderson continues to work with Habitat, local governments, and landowners to provide for documentation and management where appropriate. WDFW provided review and comments regarding Environmentally Critical Areas and Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas to the Seattle Department of Planning and Development. One can assist WDFW with documenting wildlife via reporting at our Wildlife Observation web page at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/observations/>. One can find department management recommendations for Priority Habitats and Species at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/>

East/West Bear Project: Biologist Smith assisted Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil and Biologist Maletzke with ongoing bear den work. This portion of the project entails locating dens, placing cameras to document emergence and cub numbers, recollaring/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.

Attempting to locate a black bear den on a snowy ridge in King County – Photo by Maletzke



Westside Cougar Project: Biologist Smith assisted Wildlife Research Scientist Kertson and others with capturing and marking a yearling male cougar.

Wildlife Research Scientist Kertson fits a GPS collar to young cougar



Aerial Waterfowl Survey: DeBruyn and waterfowl specialist Evenson completed an aerial photo count in Skagit to confirm the above visual survey. Results of photographing 25% of Padilla and Samish Bays came up with an extrapolation similar to the visual count.

Aerial Waterfowl Survey - Port Susan to Drayton Harbor					
1/4/2016	Pilot: Jeff Plane:QQ		Observer: Paul DeBruyn		
Weather:32-35 F N wind 0-10 p.Cloudy		Tide @ Beginning: 7.2		Tide @ End: 8.5	
Location	Mallard	Northern Pintail	American Wigeon	Green-Winged Teal	total
Port Susan Bay	8450	1200	2450	3400	15500
Livingston Bay	930	155	165	810	2060
Skagit Bay	66250	23750	11100	17200	118300
Fidalgo Bay	100	300		75	475
Swin. Reserve	200	1200	600	125	2125
Padilla Bay	8560	18100	19640	1360	47660
Samish Bay	19920	20970	16920	5640	63450
Nooksack Delta/Portage	1200	360	175	185	1920
Lummi Bay	900	5900	4000	800	11600
Birch Bay	125	75	75	0	275
Blaine/Drayton Harbor	100	525	300	0	925
Totals	106735	72535	55425	29595	264290

Private Lands/Access Management

Brant Survey: Technician Deyo assisted District 14 staff members with population surveys and deploying buoys marking the hunting closure in Padilla Bay.

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

Wildlife Management

Brant Surveys: Biologist DeBruyn and Technician Deyo flew an aerial survey for brant starting in Padilla Bay and ending at Drayton Harbor. The hunting season for brant in Skagit County depends on having enough birds to justify a hunt. The results of the count dictated a shortened season of three days. DeBruyn and staff members put out buoys in Padilla Bay to delineate an area with a special waterfowl closure to protect brant as they get gravel.

Location	# of Brant
Fidalgo Bay	0
Swimonmish Reserve	0
Padilla Bay	2445
Samish Bay	1958
Skagit Total	4403
Portage Bay	707
Lummi Bay	1350
Birch Bay	465
Blaine	345
Whatcom Total	2867

Brant Numbers from Aerial Survey

Black-tailed Deer Population Status Review: District 13 staff members reviewed and provided comments and edits to the draft population status analysis for the Islands and North Cascades management zones.

Wildlife Areas

Waterfowl Season: Cosgrove and Meis monitored waterfowl use of areas located within the Cattail Control Project, west of the Island Unit. They walked into small shallow depressions at low tide, now open and accessible for waterfowl within the marsh due to the project efforts over the past two summers. They monitored waterfowl use of these areas, water depth and openness, and vegetation types located within and adjacent to the project area.

Cosgrove monitored waterfowl use, hunter use, and water levels on the Island Unit. Waterfowl use during daylight hours has slowed considerably and water levels have dropped with the lower river levels.

Water levels and field conditions in the Fireman's one field



Private Lands/Access Management

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Units: Natural Resource Technician Deyo and Private Lands Biologist Wingard conducted use surveys of Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties, taking note of and resolving any issues regarding the sites.

Public Comment and Questions: Private Lands Biologist Wingard and Supervisory Biologist Caldwell responded to public comments and questions regarding private land access and hunting for waterfowl species. Information was provided on habitat conditions, waterfowl use, hunting success and web-based access options for reserving and viewing private land access sites across the state.

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Conflict Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to an elk complaint in a residential development in Skagit County where elk have been utilizing a landowner's property for grazing and causing tree damage. The landowner has been hazing the elk off the property and indicated the elk have been returning less frequently. The landowner was advised on steps that can be taken to protect the trees from damage and continued hazing was encouraged. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman surveyed several elk trapping sites for elk activity and found recent elk sign at each site. Private landowners were contacted regarding approval for access during upcoming trapping and collaring efforts. Witman met with a tree farm manager in Skagit County and discussed elk activity and damage on the property. The landowner indicated that elk had been damaging small cedar trees within the tree farm. The landowner has been allowing public hunting and most elk presence and damage has been occurring after sunset. Future sites visits will be scheduled with the land manager to assess damage. Witman and District Biologist Yarborough met with a landowner in the Acme area of Whatcom County to discuss elk damage on owned and leased property. Several fencing strategies were discussed to mitigate elk damage for upcoming corn crops that will be planted this spring. The landowner requested the use of master hunters on his property. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman will coordinate and assign master hunters beginning next week. Witman received a phone call from a GMU 418 archery permit holder who was requesting to hunt a damage property within the open area. The hunter was put in contact with the landowner and granted access to hunt. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell followed up with a landowner experiencing deer damage in King County. Methods were discussed to increase and assure control effort effectiveness.

Biologist Smith continued to work with landowners experiencing elk damage to grass crops and fencing. Non-lethal measures to deter elk from entering the property and hunting safety have been discussed. Smith also monitored remote cameras documenting elk use of agricultural fields in other areas.

Falconry Inspection: Biologist DeBruyn inspected the facility of a prospective falconer and approved it as appropriate.

Newspaper Interview: Biologist DeBruyn spoke with a reporter from Whidbey Island regarding swan issues.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Cosgrove and Meis accessed the southeast corner of the Headquarters Unit from the river to maintain a dike top trail on the eastern side of the unit next to freshwater slough. Cosgrove and Meis cut blackberries, alders, and other vegetation from the trail, making it more open for public access. Meis and Cosgrove worked to remove small logs and debris from the boathouse.

Tidegate Replacement Project: Manager Rotton and Cosgrove worked with Dike District #22 personnel to monitor pumps and water levels on Wiley Slough as part of the ongoing tidegate replacement project. Cosgrove assisted with removal of the Army Corps pump and Wildlife Area tractor from a pumping location. Manager Rotton and Lands Agent Kye Iris met with Dike District #22 personnel to discuss the Wiley Slough real estate agreement. Iris will be researching the existing easements and right of ways. Manager Rotton worked with Public Affairs to extend the construction project closure for Wiley Slough Tidegate. Work is projected to be completed by January 15. The site will be open to public access on the weekends.

Manager Rotton & Technician Cosgrove hard at work in the cold

Leque Island: Cosgrove and Meis toured the Leque Unit, monitoring water levels, public use, and waterfowl use. Cosgrove and Meis picked up litter around the parking lot areas and along Eide Road. They also checked the Milltown boat launch and access road.

DeBay's Slough: Cosgrove continued monitoring waterfowl use on the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit. Meis and Manager Rotton completed and mailed out of the bid packet for the Johnson DeBay Slough Swan Reserve Lease.



Samish Unit: Cosgrove and Manager Rotton toured the Samish Unit to observe where water is leaking out of the area into perimeter ditches. Three major areas were noted. These areas will be targeted to be filled this summer to increase water-holding capacity at the site.

Private Lands/Access Management

Reservation Hunt Analysis: Biologist Wingard continued compiling and analyzing data for the Hunt by Reservation system to assess the rates of booking and use of sites. The results of this analysis will provide a clearer picture of how often the sites are used and how successful hunters are while using them.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator

Instructor Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey activated six new classes during the week. Dazey answered an instructor applicant's questions on the applicant packet. Dazey answered various questions from instructors on end of year issues, the new policy manual, and the posting of classes for 2016.

Contract Reconciliation: District 13 staff members worked with the Fiscal Office to reconcile discrepancies in the Jim Creek Navy contract.

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

Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 Hiring: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell reviewed applicants for the Fish & Wildlife Biologist 2 position out of La Conner, WA. Five candidates were selected for interviews and notified. Interview dates and times and have been selected and will be conducted on January 15, 2015.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Klickitat Mule Deer Surveys: Biologists Bergh, Holman, Stephens, and Deer Specialist Hansen completed four days of mule deer survey flights in GMUs 388 and 382. Some snow and low clouds partially delayed the flights, but otherwise the weather cooperated and the surveys went well. A total of 458 groups of deer were observed and classified by sex and age. This year, for the first time, the surveys were conducted with a sightability model protocol. Additional variables such as snow cover, vegetation cover and type, and activity type were recorded. Data will be analyzed over the next few weeks. Other wildlife observed included elk, coyotes, a bobcat, bald and golden eagles, and three porcupines.



Klickitat Mule Deer Surveys

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area January Elk Survey: Biologist Stephens conducted the monthly winter elk count on the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. A total of 353 elk were observed on the valley floor, which is a considerable increase from last month’s count of 87. The composition consisted of 166 cows, 51 calves, 98 bulls, and 38 unclassified. No mortalities were observed. There was snow on the south side of the valley floor, but there was vegetation exposed on the north side of the unit.



Mudflow elk count



Mudflow bulls

Wolf Sighting Follow-up: Biologist Stephens and Conflict Specialist Conklin checked cameras set out in the Toutle Game Management Unit a couple of weeks ago with the intention of monitoring for wolf activity after several reports came in from the same general area. No wolves were detected. However, photos of a pair of coyotes were captured, one of which was quite large based on the size of the tracks.



Photo of detected coyotes at the Toutle GMU

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Mudflow Unit Culvert: A culvert was blocked on the 3100 Road (which leads to the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area) last week after heavy rains washed mud, gravel, and rock down the ditch, leading to the culvert under the road. Assistant Manager Sample attempted to clear the culvert of the blockage, but was unsuccessful due to the

large quantity of material that had buried the culvert opening. Water is still flowing in the ditch and had been previously high enough to flow over the road, causing erosion damage to the road surface.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Eagle Feeding Rate Study: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven assisted with an ongoing research project that seeks to document the rate of consumption of big game carcasses by eagles, and thereby assess their potential exposure to lead contamination. A suitable, lead-free deer carcass was available for a new camera set, so Van Leuven worked with volunteers Flick and Fletcher to place the carcass in a snowy field on the Soda Springs Unit. Weather should favor detection of the bait by eagles and subsequent photo record of the activity.

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

Wildlife Management

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt: The 2015-2016 southwest Washington goose hunting season continued this week. WDFW Biologist Butler and Scientific Technician Miller traveled throughout Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties to monitor hunting activity in the field on both public and private land. Saturday was a very productive day, with many hunters shooting their limit of geese in the Woodland area. However, fewer hunters were out during the snowy, cold weather on Sunday and many contacted did not harvest any geese.

As a means to increase hunter contacts, hunters may notice contact cards being placed on their vehicles (photo below). This contact card informs hunters that WDFW personnel are in the area and it invites them to call when they are finished hunting. If possible, WDFW personnel will meet the hunters and check any geese. So far, these cards have been well received and have helped increase the number of hunter contacts. As of Sunday, January 3, approximately 215

hunters have been contacted and 138 geese have been checked. A total of seven dusky Canada geese are known to have been harvested in the area.

As another reminder, the regular season goose hunt closes on Sunday, January 31 within Management Area 2A. The late season goose hunt will open February 10 with significant management changes from previous years. It should be noted that all hunters can now participate in the late season goose hunt on private lands only. It is the hunter's responsibility to acquire permission prior to hunting on any private land. Public lands are closed to goose hunting during the late season. More information on the late season hunt can be found within the Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet, available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>



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

District 10 Wildlife Conflict

Elk: Conflict Specialist Conklin and WDFW Enforcement met a Wahkiakum County farmer who is requesting elk kill permits. The farmer will not sign a DPCA and therefore no kill permits were issued.

District 10 & Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal, with several days of low temperatures in the 20s. Heavy rains during the first half of December did cause some flooding throughout the district. The end of December and early January have been cold with some low elevation snow.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 1,000 to 3,500 feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 day forecast is for above normal temperatures and normal precipitation, and the 8-14 day forecast is for above normal temperatures and precipitation.

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

Habitat: Forage is available at middle and lower elevations.

Snow Depths: Lower elevations currently have minimal snow cover, with snow depths increasing in the middle and upper elevations.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The December monthly elk survey was conducted on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area, with 87 elk being observed. The January monthly elk survey was conducted on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area with 353 elk being observed.

Animal Condition: The majority of animals appear to be in good condition, but a couple observed have been in poor condition.

Mortality: No mortalities have been observed.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

The Public is reminded the portion of the Mount 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, 2015, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Precipitation in District 9 continued to be at record levels for December with a good snowpack above 1,500 feet in the south Cascades and Western Klickitat County. Current snow water equivalent data indicates that the south Cascades are 156 percent of normal. The Klickitat Wildlife Area currently has approximately eight inches of snow and 100% of the area is covered, with no exposed south facing slopes.

Winter Severity: Winter conditions continue to be typical of December weather in the south Cascades and Klickitat River drainage. During deer survey flights this week, snow was observed as low as ~500 feet. Most higher elevation areas had some snowpack, although some south facing slopes were free of snow. There are no current concerns for big game populations in eastern Klickitat County, as most animals came into this winter in favorable physical condition.

Habitat: All habitats in the Columbia River Gorge this week have experienced snow conditions. Clark and Skamania counties are generally snow free or with little snow below 500 feet. There is no concern for the current severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County in the White Salmon River drainage.

Animal Concentrations: Deer are bunched in normal concentrations throughout the District, with deer in Klickitat County seen more in the timber associated with recent snow depths. Deer have been noticeably absent in open areas, including agricultural areas, as snowpack increases.

Animal Condition: Deer and elk appear to be in good condition and no winter stress/mortality has been reported.

Mortality: Mortalities this week were primarily associated with road kills. No reports of deer in poor condition.

Public Contacts: No concerns raised by the public this week related to winter conditions.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management:

Goose Season Monitoring: On Sunday, Biologist Michaelis conducted goose hunter bag checks in Goose Management Zone 2B. No geese were reported as being harvested and the number of goose hunters was low that day. Two brant hunters and six duck hunters were contacted in the field.

Black Tailed Deer Study--Capitol Forest: A possible mortality on an adult doe was investigated and turned out to be false. The doe's internal "VIT" transmitter ceased emitting a vhf and communication with the collar had stopped.

Black-tailed Deer Study—District 16

Separation Event – Biologist Ament spent some time on December 30, 2015 following up on a separation event message she received the previous evening. The Vectronic's monitoring system had detected the lack of contact between the doe collar (ID 10700) and the fawn collar (ID 6173). The deer are located in the Olympic foothills on Department of Natural Resources land located between Sequim and Port Angeles. Biologist Ament confirmed live signals for both the doe and fawn when she visited the site. Both signals were coming from the same vicinity but no visuals were obtained. Researcher Rice later confirmed that a live = true message had been obtained after the original separation notice.

Doe Collar Download – Biologist Ament conducted a download from the doe collar on December 30, 2015 when she was on site to investigate a separation event. She was able to obtain GPS, activity, and sensor data for the doe.

Dusky Goose Survey: Biologist Michaelis surveyed for dusky Canada geese and examined a total of 484 birds, with 23 of those being marked. In addition, he observed a dusky marked with a green/white collar and this bird has now been seen several times since last year.

Trumpeter Swan Aerial Surveys: Biologist Ament assisted Martha Jordan from the Northwest Swan Conservation Association with aerial surveys conducted for trumpeter swans on the Olympic Peninsula. The funding for the flights was provided by WDFW and the flights are conducted every five years. One survey was conducted on December 28, 2015, and included areas in east Jefferson County, a portion of Hood Canal, and the Dungeness Valley. There was some low cloud cover during this survey that limited access to a few higher elevation ponds. A

lower number of swans were found along Hood Canal, but average numbers were found in other areas. One pair of swans was found in a small new pond in east Jefferson County. Another survey was conducted on December 30, 2015, and included some searching east of Port Angeles plus the usual route covering the Washington coast from Quinault to Neah Bay, including numerous inland lakes, ponds, and wetland areas. A low number of swans were observed during this flight and no new swan locations were identified. Martha was certainly disappointed about the low number of swans in the Quinault area. She has seen twenty or more swans at the lake in a past survey. Only one pair was located during this survey. Excellent habitat areas were searched between the lake and the coast, but no swans were observed. See the total counts by location and photos for each flight below. All photos were provided by Martha Jordan.

East Jefferson/Hood Canal/Dungeness Survey

Locations	Total Swans	Adult/Juvenile
Beaver Valley	4	2/2
Chimacum Center Road	52	42/10
Price Lake	5	4/1
Quilcene Bay	2	2/0
Rice Lake	2	2/0
Unnamed wetland	2	2/0

Sequim Area	Total Swans	Adult/Juvenile
Port Williams	3	2/1 (one adult and one juvenile observed from the ground)
Lamar Road	2	1/1
Sequim Airport	98	68/30
Complete Totals	170	128/42

Group of 98 trumpeter swans located in field near the Sequim Airport





Swans at Short Farm near Chimacum



New location for a swan pair in E. Jefferson

West End/Coast Survey

Locations	Total Swans	Adult/Juvenile
Ponds below Kelly Ridge off Highway 101	2	2/0
Lake Quinault	2	2/0
Sooes River upstream of bridge	4	4/0
Waatch River mouth	5	2/3
Waatch River upstream	6	4/2
Complete Totals	19	14/5



View looking up Quinault Valley



Lone pair of swans at Lake Quinault



Mouth of the Waatch River



Group of swans in the Waatch River

Investigation of Lone Swan: During the aerial survey conducted for trumpeter swans on December 28, 2015, a lone swan was observed in a farm field in the Port Williams area near Sequim. Biologist Ament went directly out to the area following the flight. She was unable to locate the swan in the field. However, she did observe two adult swans and one juvenile swan in an irrigation holding pond located adjacent to the field. This is a usual night roosting site identified for the local swans. All three swans appeared healthy and were joined in the pond by more than 200 wigeon. Biologist Ament talked with the landowners directly adjacent to the pond about the swan. She gave them her card and told them to contact her if they observed any sick or dead swans. She has not been contacted to date.

Lone trumpeter swan located on far right side of farm field (below triangle pond)



Other

Clearwater Cooperative Road Closure: Eyes in the Woods Volunteers attempted to recover remote camera equipment this weekend. Snow prevented them from reaching all the equipment. Looks like a snow machine recovery may need to be planned.

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

Wildlife Management

Mid-Winter Waterfowl Surveys: Biologist Michaelis conducted two mid-winter waterfowl surveys. The first was near the town of Humptulips and the second was in Ocean Shores. The Ocean Shores survey had near normal numbers of divers but was very low in the total number of dabbling ducks. Areas are monitored long-term and coordinated throughout the Pacific Flyway. The Humptulips site at this point is being monitored and will not be included until after two years of consecutive numbers above a total count of 50.

Private Lands /Conflict

Youth Damage Prevention Permit Hunt – Part One: Biologist Harris and Sergeant Alexander assisted on a youth hunt sponsored by Youth Outdoors Unlimited. Youth Outdoors Unlimited is a non-profit corporation that takes youths who have been diagnosed with a life threatening illness and/or physical disability and who have a dream to hunt or fish on their own outdoor adventure. A producer gave a damage prevention permit to a young female hunter. Pretty much every producer with elk damage in Grays Harbor County gave permission for her to hunt on their lands. The morning started in the dark with the young huntress accompanied by her guides attempting to stalk into position to harvest a cow elk in the Wynoochee Valley. The elk did not cooperate. They crossed the river to another part of the producer’s property that is normally only accessible at low flows. A quick call to a large timberland owner gained permission to cross the property to try and locate the elk. Once again, the elk did not cooperate. While this was going on, Sergeant Alexander was out spotting for elk. He located a group in the Satsop Valley and contacted the hunters. Biologist Harris contacted the producers and they started in that direction. While in route, Biologist Harris received another call from Sergeant Alexander about an orphaned bear cub. It was quickly determined that we could not leave the cub at its present

location and trapping would likely not work without someone on site most of the time. The young huntress opted to participate in the bear rescue.



Getting Started

Bear Cub: Biologist Harris, Sergeant Alexander, local hunter Brad Johansson, Youth Outdoors Unlimited, and the young huntress captured an approximately 20-pound bear cub at the Preachers Slough

access parking lot. It was quickly located and then ground darted. It was then placed on a pile of hay in a culvert trap and transported to the Montesano office.



Bear cub

Youth Damage Prevention Permit Hunt – Part Two: While Biologist Harris was finishing up caring for the bear cub, Sergeant Alexander guided the crew to the area where he located the group of elk. A short stalk and a well-placed shot and the young huntress had harvested her first elk, a large cow that was in exceptionally good

condition. After tagging and a few pictures the young huntress completed her hoof survey and provided it to Biologist Harris.

The picture says it all

All things considered, she had an exceptional day. Not only did she harvest an elk, she got to participate in citizen science and helped rescue an orphaned bear cub. More pictures are available on the Youth Outdoor Unlimited Facebook page. WDFW Hunter Education staff members and volunteers should also be recognized for assisting the young huntress in her hunter education training.



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

Wildlife Management

Deer with Embedded Arrows: Biologist McMillan fielded emails and calls reporting a deer with arrows in the Dungeness area. She made an effort to recruit assistance from other WDFW staff members with capture gear, including what is needed for the option of euthanizing. A number of Wildlife and Enforcement staff members have become involved in addressing this issue, which has become heated within the neighborhood.

Private Lands /Conflict

Ocean Shores Coyotes: Biologist Harris received a call from a resident who lives just outside of the city limits of Ocean Shores regarding aggressive coyotes. Advice was given. Shortly after the call, he was copied on an email the resident sent to Grays Harbor County Commissioners and the Sheriff's Department. This is the only report he has received and Enforcement had not received any recent reports. Time permitting, he will follow up on a later date.

The next day he received a report from a citizen who observed three coyotes following people up the beach approximately a mile from the aggressive coyote report. A picture was sent of one and it appears to be a coyote. However, the photo quality was low.

Reported Wolf Sighting: Biologist Harris received a call from a citizen in Copalis Crossing reporting a wolf sighting. He requested that the observation be reported online, but the citizen does not have internet access. He listened to the citizen and responded that based on the description, it was highly unlikely it was a wolf. When he asked if the tail was up or down the citizen stated that he thought it was up.

Grayland elk: The elk are continuing their occasional excursions into the Cranberry Bogs. Producers have been on them quick thanks to the Remote Camera System. So far, it appears it is just a small group of less than 20, which is still too many, but better than 40+ elk. With the cold weather, the elk are breaking the vines when they walk on them. This effectively kills the vine. Plans are in the works to ramp up pressure on this group.

Elma Elk: Biologist Harris visited landowners regarding a cow elk with a lower leg injury that has taken up residence in their yards for the past two weeks. This elk is part of a problem group that is very difficult to get at due to outside conditions. Overall, the cow looks to be in good condition, with the exception of a very swollen joint above the hoof. He will follow up on this elk next week, as she is likely starting to become habituated. She is likely to become a public safety problem.