

Wildlife Program

Week of November 9 – November 15, 2015

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Region 1 Wolf Activities

District 1 Wolf Meeting: Biologist Shepherd and Natural Resource Worker Weatherman attended the District 1 Wolf Management Meeting.

Producer Contacts: Natural Resource Worker Weatherman contacted two of the Aladdin producers during the week to confirm removal of all cattle off of federal and private grazing allotments in the Smackout Wolf Pack territory.

Wolf Territory Monitoring: Biologist Shepherd, Natural Resource Worker Weatherman, and Technician Bendixen completed night patrols in Northeastern Stevens County. The producers on federal grazing allotments in the Smackout Wolf Pack territory have completed gathering of all their cattle.

Wolf Advisory Group: Biologist Shepherd participated in a field trip for the Wolf Advisory Group in the Teanaway drainage on the Cascade Mountains. Biologist Shepherd also participated in a Wolf Advisory Group meeting concerning the Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock and other issues concerning northeast Washington.

Range Rider Contacts: Range riders were present on a USFS allotment in the Wedge. Biologist Shepherd contacted range riders working in this allotment.

Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) Field Tour: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett, other WDFW staff, USDA Wildlife Services, and many other NGO representatives went on a field tour near Cle Elum to discuss sheep operations in the area.

Region 2 Wolf Activities

Okanogan Wolves: Specialist Heilhecker met with the rancher to pick up equipment the range rider used. They discussed plans for next grazing season. Specialist Heilhecker and Officer Trautman spent time in the Tunk Valley area looking for wolf sign. Two different landowners believe they saw wolves. However, other landowners in the area believe the animals are feral/domestic dogs. When they stopped to check a trail camera, they were approached by a local landowner. He stated there have been eight dogs running up and down the creek near Synarep killing deer. So far, no evidence has been found to confirm the presence of wolves. This area was hit hard by the Tunk Block fire. Little vegetation remains, leaving animals quite visible. Two trail cameras have been deployed. Biologist Heinlen also retrieved a trail camera deployed in May on a wolf report east of Tunk Mountain. Coyotes were the only canids captured on the camera.

Region 3 Wolf Activities

Wolf Activity: No new activities reported.

Other Wolf Activities: Conflict Specialist Wetzel participated in the WAG field tour of the Swauk Permit Range.

WAG members touring the Swauk Permit Range



Region 5 Wolf Activities

Wolf: Conflict Specialist Peterson has been monitoring game cameras set at possible wolf sightings. Both sites have produced numerous pictures of cattle and wildlife, including badgers, deer, squirrels, grouse, and coyotes, but no wolves. WDFW will continue to work in a partnership with Klickitat County cattle ranchers to monitor for future wolf movement as it occurs.



Wildlife monitoring

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Fish & Wildlife Commission: Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally with Bill Tweit, Special Assistant to the Director, delivered a well-received Wildlife Program Citizen Science presentation to the Fish and Wildlife Commission on November 13. Many thanks to the biologists who provided content that illustrates the potential and depth of the citizen science tool in our program, including Brooke George, Rich Beausoleil, Janet Anthony, Jared Oyster, Matt Vander Haegen, and David Anderson. Thanks are also extended to partners Jocelyn Akins (Cascade Carnivore Project) and Christi Norman (Audubon Washington) for their contributions.

Cascadia Prairie-Oak Partnership Conference: Biologist Ann Potter and Restoration Ecologist Dave Hays attended the 4-day Cascadia Prairie-Oak Partnership conference in Tacoma, along with over 200 folks working on conservation of these Species and Habitats of Greatest Conservation Need from British Columbia to northern California. Dave gave a talk in

the Management Challenges session, and Ann presented in and moderated the Butterfly session (see title slides for both presentations below). The conference also included sessions on birds, oak habitat restoration, soils, and pollinators. In addition the Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture led a breakout session to discuss and coordinate their current initiative to conserve Prairie-Oak birds. Dave also led a conference field trip to the WDFW managed prairie-oak-wetland site, West Rocky Prairie.



Sage-Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse Conservation: On October 28-29, Farm Bill Coordinator Mike Kuttel participated in sharp-tailed grouse and sage-grouse workgroup meetings in Moses Lake. Staff members from WDFW, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Yakama Nation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and university faculty and graduate students made presentations to summarize grouse conservation work over the past year. Kuttel was impressed with the level of cooperation between multiple organizations and the partnership efforts to make the most of limited resources. The main topics included continued population monitoring of sage-grouse using GPS transmitters and VHF equipment, updates on WDFW Private Lands Biologists’ work with producers to implement Farm Bill conservation programs (e.g. State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement), voluntary conservation options that provide producers with assurances (e.g. candidate conservation agreements with assurances and the Foster Creek Multiple Species General Conservation Plan), developing new tools for assessing grouse populations and habitat conditions (aircraft with thermal imagery, drones, remote sensing vegetation, etc.), effects of 2015 wildfires on grouse habitat, and planning work for 2016.

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

Citizen Science Outreach: Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally showcased Citizen Science best practices, data collection opportunities, and the relationship of GIS tools and products to the Advanced GIS Seminar at the Evergreen State College.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas/Water Access Sites

Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area Coordination with BLM: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch worked with three biologists from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Spokane office this week, planting 3,600 sagebrush seedlings on BLM's recently burned "wheat hills," which are adjacent to Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. These hills are very close to the Lincoln County sage grouse lek. The seedlings were scheduled to be used elsewhere, but were made available to BLM's Spokane staff on very short notice the previous week. The plugs, grown under contract with corrections facilities, were planted using a mechanical planter loaned from the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area in Region 2, as well as the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area tractor. In return for the assistance, BLM will donate 5,000 more sagebrush seedlings of the 20,000-plus to be grown next year to Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area, for use on WDFW grounds. The seeder will be kept at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area over the winter for minor repairs and adjustments, and be returned to Scotch Creek in better condition than when received.



Equipment and sagebrush plugs, ready to go



BLM staff – Photo by Mike Finch out the back of the tractor



Sagebrush seedlings, planted at four foot intervals

Asotin Creek WA – Roadside Weed Control: Biologist Woodall sprayed the roadside along the North Ridge for annual weedy grasses, such as goat grass, using Plateau Herbicide. He noted that the winter wheat crop planted this fall is about 1-2" tall now. Further out on the ridgeline there was a

large herd, over 150 head, of elk foraging on new growth bunchgrasses.

150+ elk on the North Ridge at Smoothing Iron

Private Lands/Wildlife Conflict

Working Group: Biologist Thorne Hadley participated in the Snake River Local Working Group meeting held at the USDA service center in Walla Walla. Many resources were addressed of concern and many practices were added to address wildlife limiting factors. There were three WDFW representatives and one Pheasant Forever member present, which made a difference in bringing awareness to the group of wildlife resources to be addressed.



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

Wildlife Management

Disabled Youth Moose Hunt: Regional Wildlife Manager Kevin Robinette visited Jace Malek's hunting camp at volunteer Jerry Woods' place in northern Spokane County on Saturday, November 14. Jace had harvested a bull moose on a special permit issued by WDFW. Jace is a remarkable young man and his moose hunt was put together by Youth Outdoors Unlimited and numerous volunteers and WDFW staff members. Hats off to Cindy Carpenter and her volunteers at Youth Outdoors Unlimited, as well as numerous other volunteers, including WDFW perennial volunteers Jerry Woods and Mike Curry, for making this hunt happen.

Jace Malek and his moose – Photo by Mike Curry



Northeast Washington Check Stations:

Wildlife Biologists Dana Base and Annemarie Prince conducted the last deer check stations of the year at Chattaroy and Deer Park over the weekend. Weather varied from overcast and drizzling on Saturday to scattered clouds with increasing winds on Sunday. Check stations crews included other WDFW staff members and long term hunter education instructor volunteers, as well as Fish and Wildlife Commissioner Kim Thorburn. Hunters reported good deer numbers throughout the GMUs. These annual check stations are voluntary and WDFW appreciates the hunters who stop. Check station data are limited in their use due to the small

sample size, but give WDFW biologists and volunteers an opportunity to collect biological data and samples, and visit with the hunters who stop. Results from 2014 and 2015 are as follows:

	2014	2015
Chattaroy		
Hunters	52	54
Deer	11	17
Deer Park		
Hunters	93	86
Deer	25	33



WDFW staff and volunteers interviewing a successful hunter and examining his deer – Photo by WDFW

Falconry: Biologist Lowe banded a female goshawk for a Master Falconer in Spokane.

Juvenile goshawk banded for falconry



Private Lands/Wildlife Conflict

Successful Blue Mountains Elk Hunters: Biologist Earl and Natural Resource Technician Wade spoke with multiple successful Blue Mountain elk hunters.



Successful Quality Elk Tag Holders

Field to the Table Turkey Clinic: Supervisor McCanna harvested three turkeys to be utilized during the Saturday turkey clinic at the Spokane Regional office. McCanna assisted with the clinic as students were taught hunting techniques, correct gear, different calls, cleaning, and preparing a wild turkey for dinner, along with recipes. Department staff then took the students to a local gun range in the Spokane Valley to pattern their shotguns in preparation of the November 21 turkey hunt, which is included with the clinic.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Areas

Okanogan Complex Fires

Dozer Line Re-Seeding – Sinlahekin and Methow Wildlife Area: Manager Haug and Assistant Manager Wehmeyer seeded most of the dozer lines on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area using their tractor with seed/fertilizer spreader and hand slingers over approximately 10 miles of dozer line. In addition, Manager Haug, Assistant Manager Wehmeyer, and Maintenance

Mechanic Boulger traveled to the Methow Wildlife Area to assist Manager Furnari with her dozer lines associated with the Twisp River Fire. The group reseeded all of the nearly four miles of line put in during suppression activities.



Clockwise from top left: Assistant Manager Wehmeyer spreading native grass & forb seed using the Sinlahekin Tractor and spreader near Blue Lake, one of many dozer lines cut through a healthy bunchgrass community near the north end of Blue Lake in which the line was never used, and a dusting of snow on a dozer line from the Twisp River fire on the Methow Wildlife Area – Photos by Justin Haug

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

AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Mule Deer: Biologist Gallie completed post-season mule deer counts in the Douglas County portion of the Columbia Plateau Management Zone. The 1,838 mule deer observed represent a 28% increase over numbers recorded in 2014. The 2015 fawn/doe ratio is 62, and the buck/doe ratio is 22, with the buck/doe ratio of legal bucks (3-point or greater) being only four per 100 does. This is the second consecutive year with lower than normal fawn ratios, a herd metric that may be the result of drought conditions occurring again this year. Not only are fawn numbers lower, but many fawns appear to be smaller than what would be expected (no actual measurements of fawn weights were collected). Also of note, this year showed a decrease in overall bucks numbers and escapement of legal bucks. While the overall buck/doe ratio is within recent averages, the number of 3 and 4 point deer is lower than previous years. Once the harvest data comes in, we will examine the contribution of the two additional days of hunting on this portion of the herd. There is anecdotal information suggesting that rut behavior in both Chelan and Douglas counties occurred earlier this year, and that, combined with an extended hunting

season and helpful weather conditions, may have increased the exposure of bucks to harvest in 2015.

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

Wildlife Management

Winter Deer Feeding Plan: Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen worked on a deer feeding contingency plan in response to this summer’s fires that will be implemented if severe winter conditions develop or excessive agricultural damage appears imminent. A small amount of feed has been ordered and will be on hand for rapid response to damage issues as they arise.

Public Meeting: Biologists Fitkin, Wildlife Area Manager Olson, and Conflict Specialist Heilhecker met with local Tunk Valley residents at their request to discuss the wildlife impacts of this summer’s fires and potential restoration/mitigation activities that residents could engage in to assist recovery. Biologist Fitkin outlined the complications that come with feeding wildlife, but offered suggestions on what to feed and how to minimize the negative consequences if individuals are determined to feed deer or other wildlife. Manager Olson offered up some helpful habitat restoration tips and handed out some bitterbrush seed. The information appeared to be well received by the attendees.



Pollinators: Biologist Finger assisted the private lands program with forb planting in the Quincy Area.

Gretchen Fitzgerald (left) and John Cotton (right) enjoying a day afield – Photo by R. Finger



Clockwise from top left: a rutting Mule Deer buck with doe NW of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, the last autumn colors near Loomis just north of the WLA and the first snow of the year within the Sinlahekin Valley on top of Blue Goat Mnt with Blue Lake in the foreground – Photos by Justin Haug

Wottlin on rented equipment and Volunteer Hershenow rehab a fire line before seeding – Photo by Sherry Furnari

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman and Forester Mackey removed “No Trespassing” signs for the Rifle Elk Season closure boundary. Around 100 elk were observed within the closure. They did not enjoy seeing a vehicle in the area and left for Cougar Canyon.

A large group of mostly cows and calf elk leaving the Oak Creek Wildlife Area rifle elk season closure area while the closure signs were being removed

Hand Pile Burning: Forester Mackey and Forester Dahlgreen began burning hand piles from last year’s non-commercial thinning work. Mackey and Dahlgreen completed approximately 40 acres in two days.

Hand piles burning in thinned stand on the Oak Creek Forest Restoration Project





Some hand piles were left unburned to provide cover for the many snowshoe hare observed in the unit on the Oak Creek Forest Restoration Project

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart worked with Assistant Manager Hunt and Conflict Specialist Wetzel to develop a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) grant proposal. There is a hole in the elk fence where it crosses Taneum Creek near I-90. Project will address realignment of the elk fence and installation of a more effective creek crossing structure that will exclude elk but not catch woody debris during high flows.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Managers Buser and Sak, NRT2 Medina, District Biologist Fidorra and various volunteers from the Richland Rod and Gun Club and the Master Hunters Program spent several days planting shrubs at the Sunnyside Headquarters Unit. This is part of the

restoration effort from the fires that occurred on site in 2014.



Staff and volunteers planting shrubs on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area



Wildlife Management

Pheasant Release: District Biologist Fidorra conducted pheasant releases at three sites in Franklin County this week.

Pheasant planting at the Hope Valley Unit of Sunnyside-Snake River, WA

Cougar Seal: District Biologist Fidorra inspected and sealed one cougar brought in by a successful hunter this week.

Sage Grouse: District Biologist Fidorra followed up with contacts made at the Sage-grouse Working Group Meeting at the end of October. Fidorra spoke with the USFWS Field Coordinator regarding grouse conservation efforts, and scheduled a meeting with the Yakima Training Center Wildlife Program Manager.

Shrub Planting: District Biologist Fidorra assisted Sunnyside-Snake River Wildlife Area staff and volunteers with shrub planting at a burned area in the wildlife area one afternoon this week.

Sharp-tailed Grouse Permits: District Biologist Fidorra researched and responded to a request from a game farm for permits to raise sharp-tailed grouse. Such a permit could not be granted under current regulations (WAC 232-12-027).

Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge (TNWR) Hunting: Biologist Bernatowicz investigated water delivery to two USFWS hunt units (Halverson and Webb). The units were purchased for waterfowl hunting and are only open Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday, but currently have no water. The “wetlands” are also completely choked with vegetation. During field tours a few years ago, TNWR staff members said they often couldn’t mow the wetlands because someone kept opening the gates, leaving the areas too wet for equipment. The “wetlands” have been dry at least a few years and willows are encroaching. The delivery system (canal) is shut down after October 15. In previous years, the canal often had water throughout the fall, allowing Halverson and Webb to be filled if gates were opened. The Yakama Nation controls the water rights and believed the diversion should always be shut down after October 15 without their permission. The canal is close to Toppenish Creek and it is possible ground water fills the canal when the creek is higher. Yakama Nation is also working to bring the level of the creek up and fill wetlands to the west of Halverson and Webb. Yakama Nation currently allows other TNWR units to be filled when Toppenish Creek flows are high enough. They also own the parcel between Halverson and Webb. Filling wetlands during high flows in hopes of recharging ground water is part of the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. Yakama Nation also has high mowing capacity and is interested in working with TNWR on wetland management. Returning the units to good hunting conditions does not seem like it will be difficult.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz collected and processed samples from five late season permit holders. One of the late Clemans hunters called in with an issue on Friday afternoon. The hunters had shot a ram, but the animal died in a location that was not safe to access. An active member (Tye Brown) of local sportsman clubs with abilities to retrieve such an animal was contacted, but was at work and not available until Saturday. Tye contacted a friend who was available. The friend immediately hiked into the area, repelled to the animal, and lowered off the cliff. The hunter was extremely grateful for the help.

Pheasant Release: Biologist Bernatowicz released 160 birds at Cottonwoods. The birds again looked small. Nine birds were weighed. The average bird was 2.1 pounds (Range 1.9 - 2.3). None met the contract specification of 2.5 pounds. A few boxes had nine birds rather than 10. The short box syndrome has been discussed with the vendor. The birds are loaded in

complete darkness and they count out loads as birds are boxed. If a bird escapes out of the box while other are being loaded, it wouldn't be notice. Unless boxes are weighted or videotaped, it is difficult to prove boxes are short. Each bird cost \$15, so total dollars can add up fast.

Colockum Elk Body Condition

Sampling: Moore continued checking barrels for organs that may have been dropped off by disabled, youth, or senior permit hunters. These permits were extended until November 15. Moore also traveled to Wenatchee to pick up samples that were collected and stored there.



Supply and sample collection barrel located at the Coleman Canyon entrance

Colockum Bull Study: Biologist Moore continued making preparations to schedule the final bull capture in the Colockum.

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 Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and responded to a call from an orchardist in southern Benton County who is experiencing deer damage to a newly planted block of specialty apple trees. Multiple hazing strategies have been utilized with some success and two Damage Prevention Permits were issued to assist with reducing the damage impacts. Additionally, the owner is interested in erecting a deer proof fence around the perimeter of the orchard.

Elk Fence: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand traveled to the Cold Creek area to inspect the completion of a section of cost share elk fence at a large wine grape operation. Phase 2 is ongoing, and approximately one mile of new fence is now complete.



New Elk Fence, Cold Creek area in north Benton County

Cattleman and Cattlewoman’s Trade Show: Conflict Specialist Wetzel participated in the 2015 Washington Cattleman and Cattlewoman’s Trade Show in Cle Elum, staffing a booth with DPCA-L information.

Elk Permit Information: Conflict Specialist Wetzel provided information on elk permits to the High Ranches Homeowners for their annual meeting.

Elk Presence: Landowners near Tampico reported elk coming in from the west each night. Several master hunters have been placed in contact with the landowners to help keep elk out of the area.

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

Wildlife Areas

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Technician Leuck recovered the remains of the newly installed Road Management signage at Tamarack Springs. The sign appeared to have been vandalized and parts were missing – it is suspected that the large aluminum sign was stolen for its recycle value. The sign will be redesigned/reconstructed and put back up soon.



Remains of the reader board installed last week at Tamarack Springs on the LT Murray

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Biologist Anderson and Warmwater Fish Biologist Danny Garrett checked and reset the aquatic invasive species “megatrap” for the purpose of invasive species investigation and pathogen testing



Cascade Fox: Tacoma Water staff submitted a photo taken of a fox seen crossing Highway 410 near Chinook Pass. The individual appears to be a Cascade Red Fox, a subspecies of the red fox endemic to Washington. The Cascade Red Fox coat varies in color, but the tip of the tail is always white. More information about this subspecies can be found at http://www.nps.gov/mora/learn/nature/carnivores.htm#CP_JUMP_678743.



Possible Cascade Red Fox crossing Highway 410 near Chinook Pass

Hozomeen Wolf Cameras: Biologists DeBruyn and Yarborough and a biologist from The National Park Service set up trail cameras around Ross Lake. These fifteen cameras will remain all winter to monitor wildlife occurrences within North Cascades National Park. One set of cameras in the back country required a fifteen mile hike on a cold rainy day.

North Puget Sound Waterfowl Survey: Biologist DeBruyn flew an aerial survey of dabbling ducks from the mouth of the Stillaguamish to the Canadian border. He counted over 225,000 ducks in the marine environs. Notable were large numbers of green-winged teal in Skagit County. These small ducks usually move south when cold weather hits and the large numbers present in the bays probably reflect the mild fall we have been having.

Aerial Waterfowl Survey - Port Susan to Drayton Harbor					
11/9/2015	Pilot: Jeff Plane:N4793F		Observer: Paul DeBruyn		
Weather:40-50 F N wind 0-7 p.Cloudy		Tide @ Beginning: 4.5		Tide @ End: 6.0	
Location	Mallard	Northern Pintail	American Wigeon	Green-Winged Teal	total
Port Susan Bay	2450	675	1100	5150	9375
Livingston Bay	600	150	300	450	1500
Skagit Bay	22350	9420	7815	17315	56900
Swin. Reserve	875	875	1750	1500	5000
Padilla Bay	14425	15825	51650	7250	89150
Samish Bay	19380	16880	8440	6100	50800
Nooksack Delta/Portage	1400	1750	900	350	4400
Lummi Bay	2040	3155	1120	510	6825
Birch Bay	400	425	375	130	1330
Blaine/Drayton Harbor	200	100	100	75	475
Totals	64120	49255	73550	38830	225755

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.

One can assist WDFW with documenting wildlife via reporting at our Wildlife Observation Website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/observations/>

One can find department management recommendations for Priority Habitats and Species here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/>

Wildlife Areas

Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP): Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat Planner Theresa Mitchell met with Snohomish County staff to provide updates on PSNERP funding and to discuss a project on Spencer Island. The Spencer Island project involves improving tidal flow to the project area on WDFW and Snohomish County lands by lowering and expanding existing dike breaches and installing a pedestrian bridge over a new dike breach. PSNERP is planning to request funding to examine feasibility and design for this project.

Corson Preserve: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with staff from Department of Natural Resources, Tulalip Tribe, neighboring landowners, and WDFW to finalize the RMAP reporting and the design for the construction work scheduled for summer 2016.

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

Wildlife Management

GMU 485 Special Hunts: Biologist Smith rode along with Enforcement Detachment 10 during part of the deer/elk special draw hunt in GMU 485. Success was had early in the hunt by several individuals. Tacoma Water staff report five elk and six deer permits were filled during the first couple days of the season.

A disabled hunter with a bull harvested during in GMU 485





A young hunter with a buck harvested in GMU 485

Launching the Sky to Sound Water Trail:

Biologist Milner attended the kick off meeting for this group that seeks to establish a water craft trail that runs from the Skykomish River to Port Gardner Bay. WDFW will be represented on the steering committee by Area Habitat biologist Jamie Bails, who will assure that sensitive areas along the waterways are recognized and protected.

Communication with Enforcement:

Biologist Yarborough attended the Enforcement Detachment 12 meeting and discussed bear release sites and protocol, ideas for revisions in the 2016 Big Game

Pamphlet, and other issues related to wildlife enforcement in District 14.

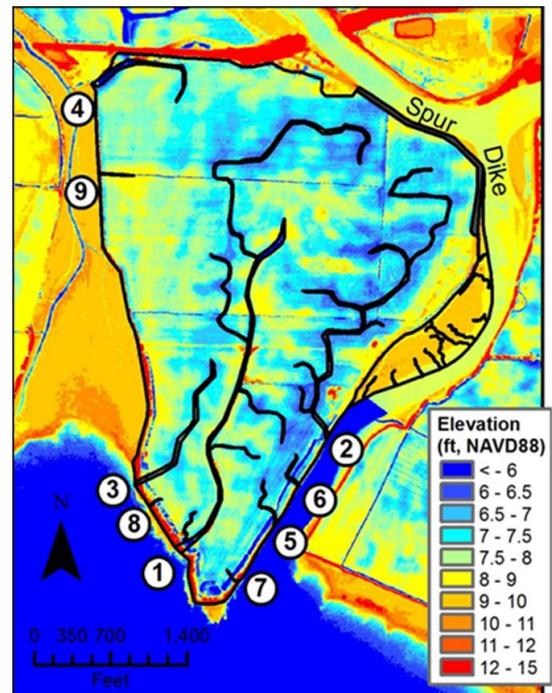
2015 Hunting Seasons: Biologists continue to provide guidance and information to hunters and land managers calling to inquire regarding specific hunt information, guidance, and how to hunt in the district. Calls are concerning how to take animals, cougar and bear hunt methods given other seasons, where to bring bear specimens, scheduling CITES pelt seal needs, GMU boundaries, landowner reference information, and other general questions.

The current pamphlet can be found on the WDFW website at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Estuary Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat Planner Friebel had a teleconference with Ducks Unlimited staff to coordinate project activities and to plan next steps. In the meeting, the group discussed a tidal channel design report, the next phase of hydrodynamic modeling, organizing design and study review teams, future funding needs, and development of a monitoring plan.

Conceptual planform design of locations of potential tidal channels for the Leque Island preferred design scenario. Tidal channels are labeled at their outlets by their size rank.



Snoqualmie Pheasant Release Units: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continues to release over 500 pheasants every week at the four pheasant release units. Volunteers are conducting most of the work, and Manager Boehm fills in where necessary. Feedback from hunters in the field reflects a high percentage of support and appreciation for all of the improvements that have occurred over the past few years.

Waterfowl Season: Cosgrove monitored water levels and waterfowl use on the Island Unit. Water levels are generally increasing with continued rains and higher river levels. Ducks have been feeding in limited numbers during the night, and inclement weather has provided for good hunting. Meis and Cosgrove monitored and adjusted water levels at the Samish Unit to increase water in ponds and other areas. Meis and Cosgrove monitored public use at the Headquarters, Island, Samish, and Johnson/DeBay's Slough units. Meis and Cosgrove posted three informational maps on the Island Unit that explain what plants and crops were grown in particular fields on the unit.



Flooded millet, corn, and bidens in Barn Field on the Island Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area



Informational planting and vegetation map of the Island Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area

Private Lands/Access Management

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Units: Natural Resource Technicians (NRT) Otto and Deyo, and Private Lands Biologist Wingard conducted use surveys of Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish Counties taking note and resolving of any issues regarding the sites. Several Waterfowl Quality Hunt unit signs were anchored due to the potential flooding in certain areas.

Newly constructed Waterfowl Quality Hunt blind at Beaver Marsh #2 in Skagit County



Snow Goose actively foraging at the Beaver Marsh Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites in Skagit County



418 Nooksack Deer Hunt: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo posted walk-in hunting signs in preparation to the 418 Quality Deer hunt allowing hunters some access to Sierra Pacific Industries land. Private Lands

Biologist Wingard coordinated volunteers to open the main gate into Sierra Pacific Industries land. Private Lands Biologist Wingard also answered questions from several special permit holders about the hunt opportunity.

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

Wildlife Management

WHSRN Site Assessment Workshop: Biologists Milner and Rotton attended the Greater Skagit/Stillaguamish Delta Site Assessment Tool workshop sponsored by Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, which maintains the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network program. Our site is a site of Regional Importance in the program and Manomet staff members would like all sites to complete their site assessment process. The workshop had a relatively poor attendance, most likely because of all the various planning efforts that have been completed for the area and the time of year. A positive outcome of the workshop was discussion about increasing shorebird surveys to upgrade our site's level of importance under the program and improving the ownership maps of the site.

Biologist Milner and Rotton answer questions posed by Meridith from Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences



Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Management:

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman fielded calls regarding nuisance wildlife relating to raccoons and coyotes interfering with domestic animals. Information was provided to the parties in addressing the situation. Witman completed a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) with a landowner in the Hamilton area of Skagit County. The landowner is preparing to graze livestock on his property and is experiencing ongoing fence damage from elk moving onto his property from private forest land. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Smith evaluated a deer damage claim to Christmas Trees in the Renton area of King County. Deer related damage was verified. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell completed a DPCA with a landowner and will be working with the landowner in the coming week on mitigation efforts. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and Natural Resource Technician Cogdal evaluated a deer damage claim to fruit trees on Vashon Island of King County. Based on evidence collected at the property, a damage claim and cooperative agreement were not warranted. Fence repair, constructions, and other deterrent information were provided to the landowner to mitigate future damage.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman fielded a call from a Master Hunter inquiring about the ongoing elk hunts in Skagit and Whatcom counties. Information was provided to the hunter concerning a private lands access site that is open to elk hunting during the general season in GMU 407. The hunter was pleased with ongoing efforts to increase hunter opportunities within the region. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman prepared reports and photographs for a crop adjuster currently working on an elk damage claim in Skagit County. Wildlife Conflict Specialist

Witman and Natural Resource Technician Cogdal began removing temporary fencing in the Day Creek area of Skagit County. The fence has been effective in mitigating elk damage during the growing season and no damage claim has been claimed on the field due to this mitigation effort. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to a deer damage complaint in Whatcom County. The landowner has experienced ornamental damage to flowers and shrubs around his residence. Repellent information was provided to the landowner to help mitigate future damage. The landowner is also going to provide access to his property for archery hunters during the late season.

Witman coordinated three Master Hunter assignments with landowners in Elk Area 4941.

Biologist Smith met with landowners in North Bend, Green Valley, and Enumclaw who have experienced damage to crops from elk. All are using electrified fladry fencing. Additional fencing options were discussed, including upgrades required to permanent fencing at one location and reconfiguration of the fladry fencing at another. Smith also gave a presentation to a farming group (Sno-Valley Tilth) in the Snoqualmie Valley discussing elk and associated damage. A good discussion was had with many interesting questions and observations shared.

Master Hunter Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman coordinated three Master Hunter assignments to address agricultural damage in Elk Area 4941.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Rotton worked with CAMP Electrician Dave Miller and the contract programmer on the Wiley Pump station operation. The Fir Island area experienced five inches of rain in the last week. To manage drainage water from Wiley Slough, Manager Rotton monitored the new pump station operations, and with assistance of a volunteer and Dike District #12 representatives, set up an additional pumping system. IMCO also provided additional drainage pumps.

Wiley Slough tidegate repair continues. IMCO has completed the removal process and has begun the back fill and setting forms for new concrete walls.

Interior photo of the work vault for the tidegate repair project on Wiley Slough

Samish River Unit: Rotton met with Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group to discuss the planting plan concept for the Samish River Unit. Once the planting plan is finalized it will be put out for bid.



Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued with daily monitoring of water levels at the unit. The flood from last week drained off, but there is a lot of sheet water covering the unit. Manager Boehm noticed an increase in waterfowl hunters taking advantage of the great conditions for duck hunting.

Access Program

Orcas Island Fire and Rescue Controlled Burn of the Lake Killebrew Cabin: On November 14, 2015, the Orcas Island Fire and Rescue Department conducted a controlled burn learn exercise on the WDFW owned cabin at Killebrew Lake. This was an opportunity to get rid of an attractive nuisance for the department and provide needed training for the fire department. About 30 fire fighters participated in several trainings related to structure fires and smoke / heat related training and search techniques. The training started at 10:00 a.m. A small controlled burn was done in the bedroom of the cabin to provide training on smoke movement and search techniques. Other training included the use of fans and water to provide ventilation for the structure. The training ended around 3:00 p.m. The structure was set ablaze to finish removal by fire. A big thank you goes out to the Orcas Island Fire and Rescue Department for helping WDFW with removal of the dilapidated cabin.



Orcas Island Fire and Rescue controlled burn of the Lake Killebrew Cabin

Private Lands/Access Management

Hunting Season Preparation: Private Lands Biologist Wingard fielded multiple inquiries about the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program in Region 4. Private Lands Biologist Wingard continued editing information for the GoHunt website. All but one site is open and the sites will be online shortly.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Surveys: Private Lands Biologist Wingard continued organizing volunteers who are very excited about the opportunity to survey Waterfowl Quality Hunt Surveys. These surveys are a tool for managers to determine levels of use for each site and to ensure site rules are being followed. These surveys are an excellent volunteer opportunity. Please contact the WDFW Region 4 office if you are interested in participating.

407 Elk General Hunt: Private Lands Biologist Wingard toured a Private Lands Access elk hunting site in Acme. No issues or concerns were discovered.

Samish River Unit: Over the weekend of November 14, staff members received several complaints concerning too many hunters on the site, people hunting too close to the road, and not hunting from the blinds provided. In response, Private Lands Biologist Wingard prepared and installed additional signage at the Samish River Unit indicating the regulations for hunting at the site and posted safety zone signs along the road. Additionally, Private Lands Biologist Wingard removed a piece of lumber serving as a make-shift bridge. These changes should better control hunting access to the area and relieve concerns for the public.

Ducks Unlimited Meeting: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Private Lands Biologist Wingard met with the western Washington Regional Biologist for Ducks Unlimited to discuss opportunities for partnership and concerns of duck hunters.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination

Women's Only Hunter Education Classes Support: Demand is extremely high for the Women only class being held at the Black Diamond gun club on Sunday, December 6. Coordinator Dazey assisted women who had expressed an interest in the previous class to get registered for the December 6 class.

Customer Service: Coordinator Dazey answered questions from first time hunters who needed to take a hunter education class in order to purchase a license. Questions ranged from class availability, deferral, duplicate cards, bow hunting training, and military exemption. Dazey assisted a Thai student to arrange for a Karin translator for an upcoming hunter education class. Dazey assisted two Lopez Island residents to register for the upcoming class on Lopez Island and helped several students to find available classes in their area. Dazey assisted hunters in obtaining a duplicate card, and answered questions on hunter orange requirements, trespassing, and lost cards. Dazey, with the assistance of Captain Mann in Yakima, was able to answer an instructor's question in regards to an alien possessing and handling firearms in Washington State.

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

Monitoring and Adaptive Management Webinar: Projects Coordinator Brokaw called into a webinar to learn more about monitoring and adaptive management techniques being used on estuary restoration projects in San Francisco Bay.

Westside Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program: Biologist Anderson continues to work on coordination and processing needs for the joint National Wildlife Federation-WDFW certification option for the Backyard Sanctuary. In this joint option, one can be certified both nationwide with the National Wildlife Federation and locally with WDFW. More information can be found at the BWS website: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/backyard/>

Priority Habitat and Species (PHS) Riparian Review: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Program Manager Link participated in a video conference to learn more about updated PHS Riparian Guidelines that the Habitat Program is drafting. A review process is currently being set up so that a broad array of staff with varying backgrounds will provide comments and edits.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Scotch Broom Mowing on Mudflow Unit: Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Staff have begun mechanically mowing large densities of dead scotch broom plants near the Oxbow Lake area of the Mudflow Unit of Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. The Scotch broom plants were sprayed with herbicide last fall and have since died, however the dead plants remain standing. By mowing this dead plant material down, native grasses and trees will be able to take root. Several acres have been mowed so far and work will continue until the remaining areas, totaling roughly 10 acres, are complete.

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

Wildlife Management

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A Goose Hunt: November 14 and 15 marked the opening weekend for goose hunting in area 2A and with it brought noteworthy management changes. These changes include the closure of the hunting season for dusky Canada geese, the elimination of the check station requirement, and the extension of hunting hours. Hunters interested in participating in this season can refer to the Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet for further details.

Wildlife Biologists Holman, Stephens, Bergh, and Butler, as well as Scientific Technician Miller, Law Enforcement Sergeant Wickersham, and Officer Van Vladricken, worked together to monitor hunting activity in the field. Over the course of opening weekend, approximately 30 hunters were contacted in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. A total of 61 geese, including one dusky Canada goose, were checked. Hunter checks will continue to be used to monitor the effectiveness of the 2015-2016 management strategy.

Biologist Bergh accompanied Sergeant Wickersham and Officer Van Vladricken on patrol of opening day of the Zone 2A goose season. No dusky geese were taken among those birds that Biologist Bergh checked, but she used the opportunity to talk about subspecies identification and goose management in southwest Washington (see photo taken by Sergeant Wickersham).

Hunters were generally happy with the stormy weather that had moved in and the increased activity of geese in the area.

Discussing subspecies identification and goose management in southwest Washington with hunters on opening day



Cougar and Sheep Checks: As various hunting seasons throughout Washington continue, certain hunters are required to visit a WDFW regional office to have their animals checked. During the past week in Region 5, Biologists Holman, Stephens, and Hauswald checked four cougars and one bighorn sheep. The animals are evaluated for age and sex and detailed measurements are taken of the sheep horns.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Late Modern Firearm Deer Season: Technician Davis encountered a good number of hunters on the Soda Springs Unit during the course of checking roads, signs, and campsites. No problems were found, and one hunter had tagged a 2 X 3 buck.

Pheasant Release: Wildlife Area staff and one volunteer distributed pheasants to the three Klickitat County sites this week. The birds were allocated as follows: 54 to the Hatchery Unit, 29 to the Gun Club site, and 15 to the Finn Ridge Road site. Many thanks to volunteer Morrison for his help in enhancing the pheasant hunting in our county!

Access

Vancouver Lake: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes worked with the Clark County Corrections crew to pick up litter, hauling away six tires and around 300 pounds of trash and junk. In addition, a three man barrier rock was dragged into the middle of the lower parking lot and had to be reset. Ruts also had to be filled in.



Clark County Corrections crew picking up litter



Resetting the barrier rock

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

D-9 Wildlife Conflict

Deer: Conflict Specialist Peterson met with multiple landowners and residences off of Rimrock Road near Goldendale. The local residents have been expressing their frustration with the large number of deer that have become fixtures in the fields and yards. Peterson is working with the larger landholders to promote greater public hunting access and will be issuing damage prevention tags as needed.

D-10 Wildlife Conflict

Elk: Conflict Specialist Conklin met with a land owner in Randle regarding continued elk damage on his property. The landowner allows public hunting and has agreed to use Damage Youth hunters on his property during the holiday season if WDFW will escort the hunter onto the property.

In addition, Conflict Specialist Conklin and Biologist Grabski coordinated hunters who had cow permits for the Mossy Rock Unit to hunt a local dairy's land that had extensive elk damage this year. Conklin also fielded numerous calls and emails from anxious hunters wanting to know when they or their youth hunters will be called to hunt farm land damaged by elk.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Taylor's Checkerspot Technical Committee: Biologist Tirhi attended the checkerspot butterfly scientific technical committee meeting. The tech committee is designed to assist the project lead (Biologist Linders) with decision making as regards the captive rearing and reintroduction

program. Linders provided a season summary of reintroduction sites and survey data. The group spent time brainstorming where to release the 2016 cohort and merits of each location.

Dead Bald Eagles: Biologist Ament was hopeful that she could transport numerous dead bald eagles to the USFWS Lacey Office on November 10, 2015, since she planned to be in Olympia for First Aid Training. She contacted various staff from the USFWS Office, but they did not have sufficient freezer space to accommodate the eagles before they would be shipped off to the eagle repository in Colorado. She will make arrangements next month to deliver the dead eagles. On November 13, 2015, she spent time gathering dead eagles from local wildlife rehab facilities and vet clinics. All eagles were transported to the freezer located at the WDFW Dungeness Fish Hatchery. She already had several eagles in her freezer. A total of 12 dead eagles will need to be provided to the USFWS. Causes of death for the eagles included collisions with vehicles, injuries from fighting with other eagles, illegal shooting (closed enforcement cases - no suspects), trauma from collisions, medical issues, and a few “unknown CODs”.

Samples from Moose Head: A hunter stopped by Biologist Ament’s home office on November 9, 2015 to report that he had harvested a young male moose in northeast Washington the previous day. He had been sent paperwork that requested the head be processed for biological samples, but he was not able to coordinate with staff from the WDFW Region 1 office over the weekend. He knew that Biologist Ament worked for WDFW and requested that she assist with taking requested samples. She contacted WDFW Veterinarian staff member Rowan to determine what samples would need to be taken. She was advised that there is concern about the atrial worm *Elaeophora schneideri*. Apparently, this worm has not yet been found in Washington, but increased sampling is very important. Biologist Ament continued communications with Rowan and initiated contact with Biologist Harris and Oyster. She retrieved the head of the moose on November 12, 2015, and took a requested tooth sample. A stem of vegetation was found in the mouth of the moose during the tooth extraction process. The head was frozen and will be delivered to Biologist Oyster in December for further biological testing.



Tooth samples and vegetation removed from mouth of moose



Impressive size of young moose head submitted for sampling.

Dusky Goose Closure Monitoring: Biologist Sundstrom worked the Pacific County area since the goose hunting season resumed. Although multiple hunters between southern Grays Harbor and northern Pacific county were contacted, only one hunter had geese. Most of the waterfowl hunters were focused

on ducks.

On Saturday, Biologist Michaelis conducted goose hunter bag checks in Goose Management Zone 2B. Officer Dielman and Biologist Michaelis checked a total of seventeen geese, and an additional eight were reported as being harvested in Pacific County. Officer Dielman checked hunters and limits of geese in the northern portion of the county. Hunters contacted seemed to be very supportive and favored the extended number of days allowed for goose hunting, as well as added late season hunts that are new this year. No dusky Canada geese were reported as being taken in Pacific County that day.

Several days of steady rain combined with a high tide found the North Willapa Bay Wildlife Area (aka Potter's Slough) a little hard to access other than by boat. Duck hunters were not complaining.



Dusky Goose Survey: Biologist Sundstrom found time to compile and complete the data from the most recent survey. Surveys are now being conducted twice per month instead of one. The more frequent surveys serve as one substitution method for the removal of the dusky goose check stations.

Elk Hoof Disease Monitoring: Biologist Sundstrom checked the elk hoof barrels that have been placed at three locations. Hunters deposited eleven samples that were collected from the barrels. The samples will be tested for the presence of elk hoof disease. Biologist Michaelis collected four additional samples. Samples had to be relocated to another freezer due to lack of space at the Montesano office.

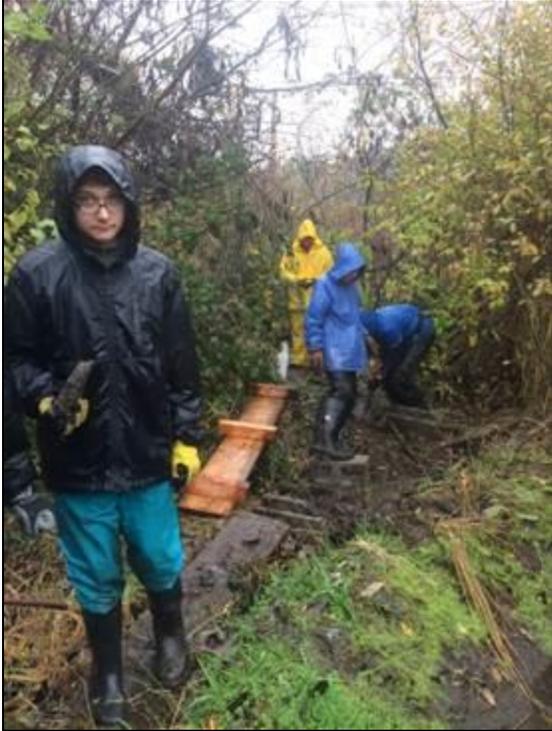
Peregrine Falcon Tacoma: Biologist Tirhi was sent additional photos of the newly completed and installed falcon box built by volunteer Martin Muller and installed by Muller and volunteer Fergus Hyke. Tirhi included the plans and need for the box in a weekly in October.



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

Wildlife Management

Eagle Scout Project: Biologist Tirhi hosted aspiring Eagle Scout Michael Larson and his crew for his eagle project at the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area. Michael successfully collected money and donated materials to buy supplies to extend a walkway that surrounds three ponds used for monitoring turtles as part of the turtle recovery program. The area routinely floods and becomes dangerous for staff and volunteers to walk during the turtle nesting season. The scouts worked thru pouring rain to install and stabilize the walkway, which will be used throughout the spring and summer season to monitor turtles. Great job, Michael, and good luck on reaching Eagle Scout, the highest level of scouting.



Eagle Scout Michael Larson and his crew building walkways

Private Lands /Conflict

Assistance to State Parks: Washington State Parks personnel and Conflict Specialist Blankenship continue to work together on helping to reduce wildlife conflict on Blake Island State Park. Blankenship will meet with Parks personnel within the next week to discuss techniques to minimizing conflict with wildlife.

Elk Damage: Biologists Sundstrom and Harris completed the fladry fencing, which is now energized in the Satsop area to deter elk damage in a bulb field.

Deer Relocated: A report of a juvenile blacktail buck stuck in a fenced compound in Lakewood for the past two weeks was received by Conflict Specialist Blankenship. Enforcement Officer Summit and Blankenship discussed herding the deer out of the compound, but herding it into heavy traffic areas would not only put the deer at risk, but also the people commuting on the roadways. Blankenship, with the assistance of Biologist Harris and Officer Summit, was able to successfully immobilize the deer and relocate it to more suitable habitat.