

# Wildlife Program

Week of February 1 – February 7, 2016

## **WOLF ACTIVITIES**

### **Region 1 Wolf Activities**

**Wolf Advisory Group Conference Call:** Supervisor McCanna and Wildlife Conflict Specialists Shepherd, Bennett, Earl, and Rasley participated in the Wolf Advisory Group conference call concerning Damage Preventative Cooperative Agreements, non-lethal methods, and the distribution of resources to conduct non-lethal wolf mitigation.

**Wolf - Domestic Dog Incident:** Biologist Shepherd met with the dog owners near Chewelah whose dogs were confronted and engaged by wolves. Mitigation measures were discussed, including dog containment, radio-telemetry, and the criteria for GPS data sharing. Activity of the local wolf pack and general wolf biology were also discussed. Biologist Shepherd also discussed the wolf – dog incident with other area residents throughout the weekend.

**Wolf-Domestic Dog Incident Conference Call:** Biologist Shepherd participated in a conference call with Regional and Olympia staff members discussing a wolf-domestic dog incident near Chewelah and how to proceed with strategies and risk mitigation within current policies and guidelines. Biologist Shepherd discussed the issue with other Regional staff members, including the Regional Director and Conflict/Private Lands Supervisor separately.

**Livestock Loss Claim:** Biologist Shepherd discussed a livestock loss claim with a rancher and the Farm Service Agency.

**Contract Range Riders:** Biologist Shepherd discussed changes to contracts, return of equipment, and new hires with contract range riders.

**DPCA\_L Contracts:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley met with a livestock operator along the Oregon stateline regarding the contract and his invoice for range riding he has completed since July 1.



**Wolf South of Pomeroy:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley and Biologists Jason Earl and Jeff Wade responded to several calls regarding wolf tracks and two wolf sightings south of Pomeroy near our elk fence and cattle operations.

### ***Wolf track***

**OR-29:** Biologist Earl and Conflict Specialist Rasley worked together to inform the residents of Garfield and Asotin counties of the

movements of OR-29 as he continues to frequent private property. Earl and Rasley located his tracks in Garfield County. He appeared to be alone, which was contrary to several reports they had been given. Later in the week, OR-29 was located from the air near a carcass in Asotin County. Biologist Earl responded to the site with Officer Sabo and Biologist Wik. Earl learned from the producer that the cow had passed of natural causes. Earl assisted the cattlemen with the removal of the carcass. Upon arriving at the carcass, Earl noticed that the front shoulder had been consumed and teeth marks could be observed on the ribs and brisket. After getting the carcass loaded, Earl informed the owner of the new account at the Asotin County Landfill for producers to discard carcasses at no cost.

***Carcass of cow which died of natural causes and was visited by OR-29***

Biologist Earl contacted producers in Asotin and Garfield counties to discuss the movements of OR-29 as they pertain to winter feed lots and calving areas.



**Cloverland Wolves:** While hazing elk, Biologist Earl located multiple wolf tracks. Pictures were sent to Carnivore staff members. Specialist Becker and staff members decided to attempt to locate the wolves that had left the tracks via helicopter. After an hour, the search was called off.



***Wolf tracks located along Cloverland Road (green card is 2¼" X 3½")***

***Multiple tracks/animals travelling together South of Cloverland***

**Region 2 Wolf Activities**

**Wolf Management:** Biologist Heinlen was forwarded a recent photograph of two wolves taken where the Loup Loup Pack has previously been documented. This observation, in combination with others reports this winter, are leading to a better understanding of this pack's range. Thanks to the public for reporting these observations. In addition, during multi-carnivore camera deployment, we documented three sets of wolf tracks in traditional winter areas in the Lookout Pack territory for the first time in many weeks. Hopefully the cameras will also capture wolf photos.



**WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**New Journal Publication:** Biologist Gary Wiles worked with Dr. Thor Hanson and Dr. Joe Gaydos (SeaDoc Society) to publish a journal paper titled “A novel public–private partnership model for improving the listing of endangered species” that appeared in the January issue of *Biodiversity and Conservation*. The paper describes the collaborative process used by the SeaDoc Society and WDFW to produce the status review that resulted in the listing of tufted puffins as a state endangered species in 2015. It recommends the model be applied by other jurisdictions that have a backlog of species waiting to be listed.

**Mardon Skipper Working Group Meeting:** Ann Potter, Conservation Biologist, participated in the bi-annual working group conference call for this state endangered butterfly. Participants primarily represent federal agencies managing lands inhabited by Mardon Skipper throughout its range, including the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service, and specifically in Washington, the Naches Ranger District (Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest) and Cowlitz Valley and Mount Adams ranger districts (Gifford Pinchot National Forest). The working group reviewed butterfly monitoring efforts and results from

2015, including a monitoring project using distance sampling methods at a subset of sites, and made plans to assess the usefulness of that methodology. They also discussed ongoing and planned habitat management activities, primarily the removal of encroaching trees from occupied meadows. Within Washington, Mardon Skippers have been found on over 40 sites in the southeastern Cascade Range, but in the last five years, butterfly monitoring has occurred on fewer than half of those sites. Ann reported on butterfly monitoring results for the south Puget Sound region, including continued low numbers of butterflies for the three extant populations in the region, two of which are located on the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area.

**Diversity Citizen Science Initiative (Part 2):** Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally, with input from Wildlife Diversity, Game, and Science species and section leads, as well as district biologists, delivered a draft list of potential citizen science projects for Fiscal Year 16-17. A few are already underway (*italicized in list*). Not all projects on the list will be selected for work in the next year or two. Those not selected for WDFW to lead the work in Fiscal Year 16-17 could be templates for our future work and/or outreach to partners to take a lead role with our support. On the short list for Section Lead consideration so far: *Ferruginous Hawk Productivity Surveys*, *Short-eared Owl Multi-state Breeding Season Surveys* (dependent on C-SWG award, FY17 multi-year), White-tailed Ptarmigan, approximately 17 select birds which would make good eBird Northwest “citizen science marketing” projects, Breeding Bird Survey Route Recruitment, five eastern Washington butterflies, Xerces Society bumblebee watch for three Washington species, *Wood Duck Nest Box Monitoring*, *Moose Reporting App engagement improvement*, African clawed frog detection, *Washington Land Trusts (various)* and *eBird Northwest targeting*, and a couple of programmatic support projects if these can be scoped (e.g. Arid Lands Initiative Shrub-Steppe Wetlands, Wildfire Recovery with emphasis on certain species’ detection, and Science-Wildlife Diversity Citizen Science data collection tool improvements). Additionally, Connally worked with Volunteer Program Manager Christine Redmond and Lands Division’s Ecological Integrity Monitoring Coordinator Janet Anthony to promote new tools and website reorganization for volunteer supervisors.

## **REGION 1**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Moose Surveys:** Wildlife Biologists Annemarie Prince, Carrie Lowe, and Jared Oyster took flight for an afternoon of moose surveys this week. Flights have been grounded because of extremely cloudy/foggy weather this winter, so we were very glad to get in the air. This is the second year using the distance sampling approach to estimate moose abundance in Districts 1 and 2.



*Cow moose spotted during aerial surveys in Pend Oreille County*

**Wildlife Areas/Water Access Sites**

**Rustler's Gulch Logging**

**Compliance:** Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer performed a compliance check of the recent harvest activity that resumed on the Phase 1 wildlife habitat and forest health improvement project on the eastern portion of Rustler's Gulch Wildlife Area. Palmer is pleased with the operator's work and plans to return

one day next week with Area Habitat Biologist Sandy Dotts for another check. The photos below show the thinning results. The left photo is the un-treated portion of a unit, on one side of the road, and the right photo is a portion of the same unit already treated, on the other side of the road. The forest type within Phase 1 was historically dominated by Ponderosa pine, which is being selected to put this forest back on a trajectory toward its historic range of variability and improve forest health. Additionally, thinning this overstocked forest will improve the habitat for the wildlife that use it, with increased browse for deer, elk, and moose. Palmer observed a mature bull moose feeding within a thinned portion of one of the units.



**Asotin Creek Wildlife Area –Wildlife Salting:** Biologist Woodall put salt out for the big game animals at the Weatherly Unit. He placed salt at one way elk fence gates and at designated salt sites along the ridge.

***Bachelor group of bulls on the Weatherly Unit***

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

**Private Lands/Wildlife Conflict**

**Access:** Biologist Thorne Hadley was sent a photo of a hunter with his bird dog, Goose, on a Feel Free to Hunt property in Walla Walla County. They were enjoying a last hunt of the season.

***An upland bird hunter enjoying access on private lands that was opened to the public through WDFW's Feel Free to Hunt program***

**REGION 2**

***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE***

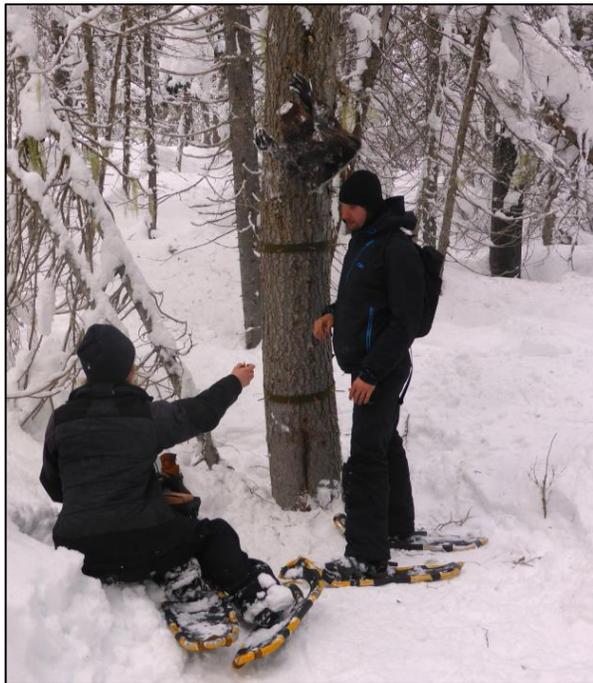
**Wildlife Management**

**Washington Ground Squirrel:** Biologist Finger contacted Sage Hills Golf Course Manager Schnirring to get approval for ground squirrel trapping during May. Schnirring and his supervisor were both very appreciative of the efforts and reported that squirrel numbers were down within tolerable levels and felt the trapping was effective. Finger coordinated with USFWS staff members regarding reintroduction site preparations involving the installation of artificial burrows. Finger has been constructing artificial ground squirrel habitat at his own residence for years and has increased the population from being barely noticeable to a regular presence over a seven year period.





*An ear-marked squirrel watching Finger construct a squirrel fortress from this spoil pile at his residence in Soap Lake. This squirrel was likely marked during DNA sampling during early April of 2014 – Photo by R. Finger*



**Multi-Carnivore Survey:** Biologist Fitkin, Science Technician Erlenbach, and volunteer Vanbianchi continued to deploy baited camera sites in wolverine/lynx habitat as part of a pilot study to evaluate different survey methodologies. We continue to be hampered by deep, untracked snow and downed trees, but with luck and a break in the weather we hope to have the initial deployment completed by the end of next week.

*Installing a multi-carnivore survey site – Photo by Scott Fitkin*

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

**Mule Deer Summit:** As a member, Jim is working with the Okanogan Trails Chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation to organize a Mule Deer Summit. This free event to the public is an educational day, with some very interesting speakers, and features mule deer and their habitat in the Okanogan area. A rifle raffle will also be offered, with proceeds going to habitat projects in Okanogan.

- FREE PUBLIC EVENT -

## MULE DEER SUMMIT

OKANOGAN TRAILS CHAPTER OF THE MULE DEER FOUNDATION



**MULE DEER FOUNDATION**

**MARCH 12TH**  
**1:00-6:00 P.M.**

OMAK ELKS LODGE  
 110 ASH ST S  
 OMAK, WA 98841

Hors d'Oeuvres Provided  
 No Host Bar

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**PRESENTERS:**

Woody Myers, WDFW Mule Deer Research Biologist - *Okanogan Mule Deer Study*  
 Sara Hansen, WDFW Statewide Deer Specialist - *Deer Biology & Ecology*  
 Jeff Heinlein, WDFW - *Okanogan Mule Deer, Status & Trends*  
 Kelly McAllister, WSDOT - *Highway Deer Kill Study, Safe Passage 97*  
 Carolyn Shores, University of Washington - *Okanogan County Fawn Mortality Study*

**INFORMATION BOOTHS:**

Mule Deer Foundation  
 BFI Native Seed Company  
 WDFW Photo Booth  
 Highway 97 Safe Passage



**RIFLE RAFFLE @ EVENT!**

Day of event gun raffle for a Savage 17HMR (or similar) rifle with drawing occurring when (100) \$10 tickets are sold

**Beebe Springs:** Wildlife Area Manager Fox participated in another meeting with consultants from URS Corp, JA Brennan Associates, Cascade Interpretive Consulting, Michael De La Cruz (CAMP), and members of the Beebe Springs stakeholder group to continue work on the last interpretive signs at Beebe Springs. Developing a schedule to get all the signs done by June was the major topic of the meeting. The main entry gate at Beebe Springs was damaged last December, likely by a semi trying to use the parking lot to turn around. Maintenance Mechanics Fidel Rios and Ed Pierson removed the gate and took it to the Wells Wildlife Area shop for repairs. At the shop, Ed and Natural Resource Technician Brad Zabreznik straightened out bent parts and welded the broken parts. Ed and Brad installed the repaired gate but will have to wait for warmer weather to finish the cement and mortar work around the base of the gate



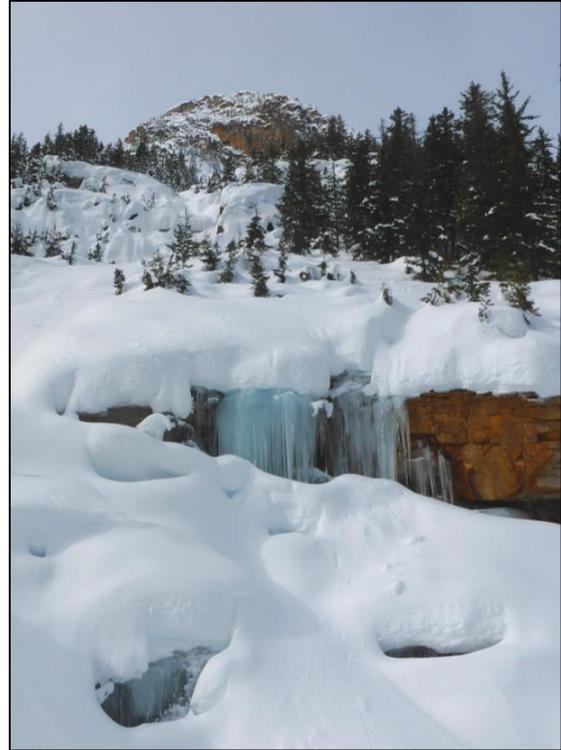
*Gate repair at Beebe Springs*

**Buildings Demolition:** Scotch Creek staff members worked with the Loomis volunteer fire department as a training exercise to burn the Cutchie residence and four outbuildings. The site has been a public safety hazard for years and it is good to get this mess cleaned up. We will work next week to bury the debris and start rehabilitation of the site.



***Removing abandoned house on the Similkameen-Chopaka Wildlife Area*** – Photo by Bryan Dupont

***Deep winter in the high country*** – Photo by Scott Fitkin



### **District 6 Winter Conditions**

**Recent Weather:** District 6 experienced light precipitation and above freezing temperatures at the lowest elevations, with some south facing slopes showing significant melt out. The highest elevations along the Cascade Crest picked up another significant bout of snow. Snow levels are now well above average for this time of year in these locations.

**Short-Term Forecast:** Above normal temperatures and some rain at lower elevations are forecast for the coming week.

**Long-term Forecast:** Significantly higher than normal temperatures and below average precipitation are forecast for north central Washington for February – April. The snow pack depth at middle elevations has likely peaked for the winter and is beginning to decline at lower elevations.

**Snow Depths:** Snow depths on deer winter range vary from bare ground at low elevation, south facing slopes to three feet at the upper limits. Snow pack at higher elevations ranges from three feet in the eastern portion of the county to nine feet at pass level along the Cascade Crest.

#### **Snotel sites\***

Hart's Pass (6500 feet): 108 inches

Salmon Meadows (4460 feet): 36 inches

Gold Axe Camp (5360 feet) (Okanogan Highlands): 34 inches

*\*No snotel sites exist in core deer winter range areas.*



***Snow free deer winter range at the WDFW Eder Unit*** – Photo by Jeff Heinlen

**Habitat:** Forage is limited in areas that burned during last summer’s fires, although some areas are improving as slopes bare up. Outside of the recent fire areas, good winter forage availability exists on snow-free sites and moderate amounts of forage remain available above the snow cover at middle elevations.

**Animal Concentrations:** In general, deer are fairly concentrated across the lower

elevations of traditional deer winter range areas. However, animals are beginning to disperse more widely as snow recedes.

**Animal Condition:** Adult deer generally look to be in fair condition for late-winter. As expected, some fawns are beginning to show poorer condition as winter progresses.

**Mortality:** Some fawn mortality has been reported, which is expected at this point in the season.

### **REGION 3**

No highlights submitted this week.

### **REGION 4**

#### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

##### **Wildlife Management**

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

***Wildlife Research Scientist Kertson begins the climb to lower an immobilized cougar***

**East/West Bear Project:** Biologist Mike Smith assisted the bear project by checking for telemetry signals from bear collars in several areas in preparation for upcoming work.



**Marine Waterfowl Surveys:** Biologist Tom Cyra, along with District 15 staff members and the Marine Waterfowl Specialist, continued flying the 2015-2016 marine waterfowl surveys. These multi-species marine aerial surveys cover the entire shoreline and majority of open water of the Puget Sound and are the longest continuous dataset of their kind. Information is used to inform marine sea duck harvest guidelines, as well as provide trend data for game species and diversity species such as western grebe and harbor porpoise. Continued unsettled weather allowed two days with appropriate conditions for surveying. We completed the western Strait of Juan de Fuca, Haro Strait, and a portion of the San Juan Islands. The remainder of the week was consumed with transcriptions and other data requests.

**Management and Educational Outreach Materials for Nuisance/Conflict Waterfowl Species, within Northwest Washington:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell finalized draft management and depredation education/outreach materials for the Western Washington Agricultural Association. These materials were provided to Regional Program Managers as a packet and include background and status of Wrangel Island Snow Geese, Pacific Flyway Council Management Plans, Washington State waterfowl game seasons and regulations, wildlife conflict management techniques and resources, Revised Codes of Washington and Wildlife Administrative Codes, selected scientific research resources, and federal agency resources. This document is being produced to provide education and outreach on matters related to waterfowl nuisance and conflict management within northwest Washington. The intent of this document will be to improve and guide adaptive and lawful decisions related to waterfowl conflict scenarios on an ever-changing landscape. Upon review from Regional Program Management staff members, these materials will be provided to the Western Washington Agricultural Association for review and possible distribution to interested parties.

**Lowland Pika Project:** District 13 staff members completed the final report and submitted it to the US Navy in fulfillment of the contract to conduct surveys at Jim Creek Naval Station.



**North Cascades Elk:** Biologist Yarborough assisted members of the Point Elliot Treaty Tribes in collaring an adult bull elk. The elk was outfitted with a GPS collar that will monitor its movements for the next few years.

*Tranquilized young bull elk or “raghorn”*

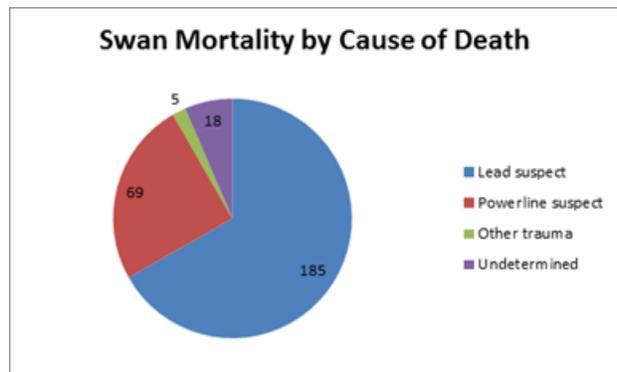
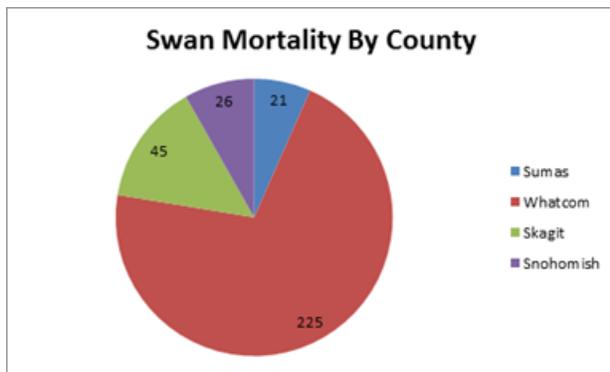
**Puget Sound Energy Forage Plots:** Biologist Yarborough went on a field tour with Puget Sound Energy and members of the North Cascades Elk Technical Committee to look at silvicultural

prescriptions that are designed to provide elk forage plots. These plots are located in the elk core area.

**Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study:** Swan Technician Trejo continued to monitor for swan mortality and morbidity in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties. Private lands and

Enforcement staff members assisted with this effort. In total, 10 mortalities were recorded this week, bringing the season total to 296 mortalities. Trejo began training a volunteer from the Northwest Swan Conservation Association to help take samples from carcasses. One swan with a broken wing was taken to the Whatcom Humane Society Rehabilitation Center and is currently undergoing treatment to heal its broken wing. Trejo got blood lead data from the Whatcom Humane Society Rehabilitation Center and added it to the database. Blood lead testing is being done on all swans that are collected alive. Trejo also began working on a presentation to be given at the Swan Watch, hosted by the Whatcom Wildlife Area and the North Cascades Audubon Society at Tennant Lake at 7:00 a.m. on February 13.

Swan Weekly Mortality Report (as of 8-Feb-16)						
	Lead suspect	Powerline suspect	Other trauma	Undetermined	Feather Pile	Total
Sumas	10	1	1	2	7	21
Whatcom	152	31	2	10	30	225
Skagit	16	19	2	5	3	45
Snohomish	7	18	0	1		26
	185	69	5	18	40	317
Percent	58.36%	22%	2%	6%	13%	100.00%



**WDFW King County Citizen Breeding Amphibian Monitoring:** Biologist Anderson continues on early season start-up needs, assisting the zoo with landowner contact, updating web reference materials, and working with WDFW Wildlife Data Manager Christopher to capture volunteer data for collation, QA/QC, and an eventual summary of approved “clean data.” Volunteer efforts are falling into order and surveys are initiating, with egg masses of various species being noted. Anderson did make one out-of-ordinary site visit to examine potential D12 trapping on site and converse management needs with the landowner. More information can be found online at <http://www.zoo.org/citizenscience>



*Dead pacific tree frog and a pacific treefrog egg mass noted by WDFW-Woodland Park Zoo citizen monitoring efforts using techniques provided in training to limit intrusion and disturbance while recording baseline observations over time*

**Peregrine Falcon and Common Loon Management - Seattle City Light:** Biologist Anderson worked on warning system tests within the Chester Morse Reservoir and Rattlesnake Lake. The discussion centered on the ecology and local knowledge of use (e.g. site use and typical annual nesting phenology) of territorial pairs at these sites and ultimately the plausible potential effects to these listed species and Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

**Scientific Collection Permit – Cross Program Discussions:** Biologist Anderson brought up a request to “eradicate bullfrogs” on a couple area local wetlands to Scientific Collection Permit Manager Thompson, AIS Manager Pleus, and staff members, as well as Biologist Hallock, Amphibian Specialist. All were in agreement that legal take of this Prohibited species is limited to any life stage, BUT with hand dip nets, gig, jig, or bow/arrow – as outlined in a number of WDFW public references (Living with Wildlife, Recreational Fish Pamphlet, etc.).

However, if one intends to use methods that increase the likelihood of incidental take of other wildlife and likely implement broad scale efforts to control this species in a given effort, a Scientific Collection Permit is necessary. Such efforts would generally involve more invasive and intense amphibian trapping or electroshocking techniques, which are not legal without a permit and not included in recreational harvest methods of this Prohibited species.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Lake Terrell Winter Waterfowl Feeding:** The 65 acres of barley planted last spring at the Lake Terrell Unit is now being heavily used by wintering waterfowl. Thousands of ducks and geese are now feeding in the fields. These waterfowl food plots are partially funded using Duck Stamp funds.

### **Private Lands/Access Management**

**Swan Collection:** Natural Resource Technician Otto and Deyo assisted District 14 staff members in Whatcom County due to the high volume of sick and deceased birds this week.

## Water Access



*Access staff members worked on removal/recycling of more than 50 illegally dumped tires at Lake Kapowsin in south eastern Pierce County*

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**GMU 485 Special Hunt Results:** Results from the deer and elk special permit hunts in GMU 485 (Green River) were reported by Tacoma Watershed staff members. The hunt was very successful for both state and tribal deer hunters. Success was 90% for both tribal and state buck hunters (10 hunters each). State elk hunter success rate was 75%, while tribal hunter success was 38% (six bull and two cow hunters each).

**Elk Damage Complaints – River Bank Erosion:** Biologist Anderson has been contacted twice now regarding regular use and traverse of D12 rivers/streams and concerns over bank erosion and damage to the watercourse. Anderson explained, in both instances, that elk are a common and native species in the area that, just like other wildlife, do and will continue to cross rivers and creeks, swim through lakes, etc. as it is part of their ecology. Altering the watercourse in pretty much all cases would be futile. The best way to manage the situation is with a bit of acceptance that this is the landscape ecology of this herding species, as well as implementing exclusion, hazing (including hunting), and deterrent plantings to encourage traverse elsewhere from areas of concern. Anderson referred complainants to Biologist Smith for any on-the-ground assistance or specialized techniques for the given situations.

**Duwamish Otter Research Advice:** Biologist Anderson provided a requested response regarding otter ecology, overall population presence, and activity to a prospective researcher examining river otter occurrence, non-invasive monitoring, capture of scat, and lab analysis to measure various toxin loads and other biological factors. The goal is to investigate superfund site use by otters as an index to ecosystem health and function. The requesting party is with Conservation, Research and Opportunities in Education International, CREOi, based in Seattle.

*Biologist Anderson assisted a researcher with Conservation, Research and Opportunities in Education International on a future river otter study*



### Wildlife Areas

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Signage:**

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm removed waterfowl related signage at all of the hunting units as the season has closed. Manager Boehm also removed all WDFW signs at the Ebey Unit middle parking lot. The lease period for public parking ended January 31, so the area was re-posted as Private Property, No Trespassing, and No Parking.

**Skagit Wildlife Area Post-Waterfowl Season Projects:** At the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit, Cosgrove rolled down remaining standing corn to make it more accessible to waterfowl. Cosgrove also took down Safety Zone signs at the unit. On the Island Unit, Cosgrove drained the upper fields by removing plywood from the upstream side of two culverts. Cosgrove, with assistance from Meis, re-opened a small surface ditch to drain water from the #2 field. Meis opened up some of the control structures at the Samish Unit to slowly drain the agricultural fields. Cosgrove assisted with the removal of water control boards.

**Nooksack Unit Agricultural Lease:** Manager Kessler submitted the new three year agricultural lease for the farming on the Nooksack Unit. This lease provides food for wintering waterfowl in the form of silage corn left standing after harvest. He updated and revised the HB1309 Ecosystems Standards for the lease.

**Nooksack Unit Hunting Blind Repairs:** Manager Kessler and two master hunters hiked into the Nooksack Unit to survey and assess the condition of several hunting blinds. Two of four blinds were located. Due to high water, further access will need to be done later using a boat.

*Wintering waterfowl feeding at the Lake Terrell Unit of the Whatcom Wildlife Area*

**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 Monitoring & Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to two elk damage complaints in Skagit County. One complaint involved a herd of elk that moved through a property and broke a hydrant and waterline, cutting off water service to the residence. The landowner was able to contact a local repair company and get water restored later the same day. The second complaint involved approximately 50 elk that moved into a livestock producers pasture. After determining eligibility and confirming qualifying damage, a damage prevention contract was completed and signed by the landowner.

**Elk Conflict:** Natural Resource Technician Cogdal responded to a hazing request for an elk herd that had been crossing State Route 20 in Skagit County during the pre-dawn hours. Cogdal was able to locate approximately 35 elk that were grazing and then crossed State Route 20. Traffic was able to stop without incident as the elk crossed the highway. Cogdal was able to haze the elk north of the highway. Since the hazing, the elk have not returned to the area.

**Elk and Deer Hazing:** Witman responded to the Acme area of Whatcom County and signed a pyrotechnic agreement with a landowner who has begun hazing elk with cracker shells. Witman contacted a Master Hunter that harvested an elk on a damage property in Acme. The animal appeared to be in excellent physical condition, but regardless of this observation, hooves were collected from the animal for hoof disease testing. Witman responded to two deer damage complaints, one just outside the City Limits of Bellingham and the other in Skagit County. Preventive damage measures were discussed with the landowners and they were both provided resource documents to assist them on future mitigation strategies.

**Elk Damage:** Biologist Smith continued to work with landowners experiencing elk damage to grass crops and fencing in King County. Non-lethal alternatives (fencing, hazing) were discussed, in addition to harvest options. Several landowners in the area are attempting to exclude elk using electric fladry fencing. Smith coordinated with volunteers scheduled to repair fencing in the area.



***Black-tailed deer watching WDFW personnel in action***

**Cattleman’s Association Meeting:**

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and District Biologist Yarborough attended a meeting with the Skagit County Cattleman’s Association and discussed the North Cascades Elk Herd distribution and damage issues associated with the current distribution. Information was provided to the group on the damage claims process, hoof disease, and current exclusionary fence funding that is available to farmers

experiencing elk damage. Biologist Yarborough further provided information on the current collaboration with the Washington State Department of Transportation to address elk/vehicle collisions. There was positive feedback from the group, who appreciated the updated information.

**Livestock Depredation Investigation:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Smith responded to a livestock depredation complaint on Vashon Island and performed a subsequent investigation into possible causes and animal(s) involved. Evidence at the scene indicated that the animal(s) involved was likely canid. Upon conclusion of their investigation, it was determined that the event should be classified as an unconfirmed depredation event because WDFW staff members could not successfully determine if domestic canines or coyotes were involved in the event. Overall, two sheep were killed by likely candid predation, two sheep were euthanized by the landowner due to injuries sustained in the event, and four more sheep were noted as wounded. Wildlife Conflict staff members provided the landowner with verbal and written information on methods to mitigate future livestock loss. Supervisor Caldwell will follow up with the landowner next week and provide more information.



***Sheep depredation on Vashon Island***

**Migratory Waterfowl Damage**

**Communications:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell received several phone calls this week from a landowner asking for assistance with crop damage related to snow goose and swan species damage. Supervisor Caldwell provided the landowner with a multitude of options to assist in mitigating current and future problems related to waterfowl damage. Supervisor Caldwell also provided the landowner with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Department of Agriculture resources to assist him further. Wildlife conflict staff members will make reasonable accommodations to further assist the landowner if the problems persist.

**Waterfowl Data:** Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn began compiling and analyzing all historical waterfowl data in District 14. District 14 staff members are working to have all waterfowl data in a centralized location that will allow easier access to long term data trends and information.

### Wildlife Areas

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Drainage District 1 Commissioner Bagwell to discuss 2016 activities on Ebey Island. The district will continue mowing and treating invasive vegetation on the dikes. Manager Boehm discussed the agricultural and drainage needs for the WDFW farm land, of which the district is in favor. Manager Boehm also discussed working together to resolve ongoing issues with the tide gate and pump house. Both are in need of repairs or replacement. The district is open to discuss options of doing some of the work using restoration partners so they will not have to fund the entire project.

Boehm met with Sno-Valley Farms to discuss last year's crop yields and crops for the 2016 season. Sno-Valley Farms leases portions of the Ebey Unit and provides food and cover for wildlife.

**Volunteer Opportunities:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with the Snohomish Sportsman's Club to discuss volunteer opportunities for club members. They are interested in working at the Spencer Island and Corson units doing maintenance work, trail clearing, tree planting, and bench building over this next year.

**Skagit Headquarters:** Manager Rotton completed the lease update for the Moberg Road lease. The seven acre parcels are leased to the Boon family, who lease neighboring Wylie Farm. Rotton continues to monitor the Wiley Tidegate project water levels and coordinate with the CAMP program for project adjustments.

**DeBay's Slough:** Cosgrove continued monitoring waterfowl use at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit and surrounding Nookachamps Creek area. About 200 swans were feeding in the hunt field on the unit on Friday, with about 40 more in the adjacent slough. Good numbers of mallards and wigeon were also in the slough. About 15 swans could be seen in the far side of the game reserve field. Cosgrove took notes of all fields in the survey area, including what crops were grown last summer and what post-harvest manipulations, if any, had been done. Cosgrove mowed the northern WWRP planting area along the Skagit River at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit.



**Skagit Access Site:** Meis removed safety zone signs at Leque, Samish, Headquarters, and Jenson Access. Meis also removed reserve boundary signs at Fir Island Farms.

**Island Unit:** Cosgrove coordinated with a local high school senior who made four wood duck boxes as part of his senior project. Cosgrove and the student hung the four boxes at the Island Unit. Cosgrove also identified four more trees and brushed out around them to hang four more wood duck boxes that a volunteer donated to the Wildlife Area. Cosgrove and Meis emptied the Wildlife Area garbage trailer at the transfer station in anticipation of the Washington Waterfowl Association trash pickup day on the Island Unit.

**Samish Unit:** Bird watchers have been coming out in full force on sunny days. Raptor and waterfowl numbers are high in the Samish Flats and a number of organized birding groups were observed enjoying the show.

**Samish River Unit:** Manager Rotton met with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Biologist Kathy Smith to discuss the planting plan for the Samish River Unit. A field visit is scheduled for next week to discuss planting sites and species mix for locations.

### **Private Lands/Access Management**

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard organized and entered data collected this waterfowl season at Waterfowl Quality Hunt Unit sites. This information was gathered by Region 4 Private Land Access Program staff members, volunteers, and waterfowl hunters who filled out harvest reports and hunter satisfaction cards at the sites. The analysis of this data will allow Private Land Access Program staff members to determine use and success at each of our sites. This information will provide data signifying which sites are productive and how different management styles lead to differences in hunt quality. Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo collected Waterfowl Quality Hunt parking lot signage and began cleaning these items for storage during the offseason.

*Natural Resource Technician Otto cleaning Private Land Access Program signs, survey boxes, and posts for storage during offseason*

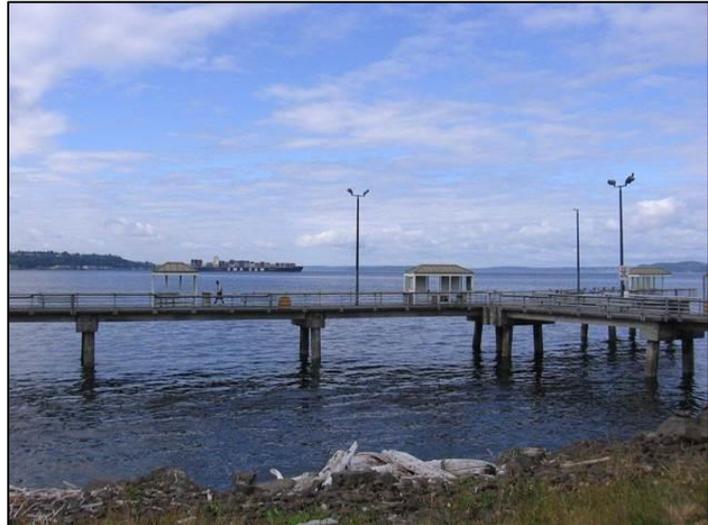


### **Region 4 Lands Access Program Manager:**

Derek Hacker attended the Fall City Recreation Float Task Force Meeting. Issues discussed at the meeting related to several public access sites owned by WDFW, PSE, and King County along the Snoqualmie River upstream from Fall City. Items included how to deal with the summer influx of recreational users and the issues that come from it, including litter issues, illegally parked vehicles, and the quality of facilities. To deal with the increase of litter / floater related trash, the owner of Fall City Floating, Simon, has agreed to step up with employees from his company to service the trash and recycle receptacles at the put in and take out access sites

downstream from Snoqualmie Falls. These sites include WDFW's Plums 1 & 2 access sites and the WDFW Zurfleuh site located by confluence of the Snoqualmie and Ragging rivers. WDFW Region 4 access staff members will also continue to service the sites at regular intervals.

Access Program Manager Hacker met with Ronn Kess from Fish on Bait and Tackle to discuss continued issues with vandalism at Pier 86 in Seattle. The Pier has had several problems with the homeless and criminals related to the theft and removal of trash containers and wires from electrical outlets and lights. New trash cans and liners were installed and locked onto the Pier to prevent removal. Repairs to the overhead lighting and thirty year old electrical system will be accomplished later this year.



*WDFW owned Fishing Pier 86 in Seattle*

**Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator**

**Hunter Education Instructor Support:** Hunter Education Coordinator Steven Dazey continues to encourage instructors to return their Policy Agreement Forms, and for those who have been certified five years, to return their five year background authorization forms. Coordinator Dazey activated six new hunter education classes for 2016. Dazey answered instructor questions about the process to become a hunter education instructor from several potential applicants. Dazey sent out one new instructor applicant packet. The packets are sent out to applicants after their application clears the background check. The packet contains addition paperwork and a prospective instructor exam that the applicant needs to complete. Dazey assisted several instructors in obtaining training supplies, including ammunition, for their upcoming classes. This also included spotting the Region 4 hunter education trailer for one instructor who had over sixty students sign up for his class. The instructor needed additional inert gun sets and also planned on setting up an addition field course to be able to get all the students through prior to dark. Dazey assisted to get student numbers and participation numbers for Terry Hoffer nominations that did not have the 2015 stats included. Dazey sent invites to new instructor applicants to attend an upcoming pre-service training at the Black Diamond Gun Club in March. After successful completion of the pre-service training, the applicants will become certified instructors and start working with teams in the south King County area.

**Range Safety Officer Training:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey assisted NRA RSO instructor Bob Palmer to verify instructor status on the signups for Bob's RSO class being offered at cost to hunter education instructors. The instructor policy manual directs that when live fire is offered in a hunter education class, at least one instructor be assigned to supervise the activity. The Range Safety Officer training is designed to give the instructors the training to be better able to accomplish this. Hunter Education Instructor Bob Palmer is certified by the NRA

to provide their Range Safety Officer training and conducts these classes just for hunter education instructors at only the cost of training materials. Bob has offered this class two times previously and both times the class filled and there was a wait list.

**Master Hunter:** Coordinator Dazey assisted to find volunteers for a fencing project in the Enumclaw area. Dazey picked up small mammal snap traps that a master hunter had applied finish to so as to extend their life in the field. The biologist plans on using the snap traps to capture voles for DNA analysis.

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

**Leadership Training:** Biologist DeBruyn attended the Employee Performance Management leadership training.

**Wildlife Area Weed Control:** Manager Kessler renewed his annual Pesticide License.

**Private Lands Biologist Interviews and Hiring:** Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and a group of selected interview panel participants completed the final round of interviews for the Private Lands Access Biologist position out of La Conner. The selected candidate is set to start February 16.

**Training:** Deyo completed Fire Extinguisher training through LMS.

**REGION 5**

***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

**Wildlife Management**

**Beacon Rock Peregrine Falcon Management:** District Biologists Anderson and Bergh met with Washington State Parks representatives from Olympia and Beacon Rock State Park to discuss past and current peregrine falcon management activities. WDFW and State Parks have had a 20 year working relationship for the protection of a peregrine falcon nesting site and the management of public recreation associated with this site. This meeting's emphasis was to discuss updating the technical rock climbing and peregrine falcon management plans. Discussions were also centered around restoration of the hiking trail on Beacon Rock, which took significant damage during one of the severe rain storms in the Columbia River Gorge this winter.

**Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area February Elk Survey:** Biologists Holman and Stephens conducted the monthly winter elk count on the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. A total of 141 elk were observed on the valley floor. The composition consisted of 51 cows, 16 calves, and 74 bulls. No mortalities were observed. The snow level was at around 3,000 feet.

**Black-tailed Deer Research Project:** Regional Wildlife Biologists continued with work on the black-tailed deer research project. Currently in the Coweeman cluster, three adult does that were captured in 2014 remain alive with functional satellite and VHF collars. Additionally, two fawns remain alive (out of three captured in the summer of 2015) in the Coweeman Study cluster. Data stored on the does' satellite collars was downloaded and all deer were confirmed to be alive in



the field. Data management was completed and equipment was prepared in advance of additional adult doe captures scheduled for later this month.

***Black-tailed doe 435 in the summer of 2015***

**Dusky Canada Goose Survey:** Scientific Technician Miller conducted a dusky Canada goose survey this week in Clark,

Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. Important goose wintering areas were examined throughout the area to document the presence of neck-collared geese. Areas surveyed included Shillapoo Wildlife Area, Woodland Bottoms, Kalama, Willow Grove, Puget Island, and areas near Grays Bay. Many flocks of cackling geese were observed, but only two yellow collars were detected and they were too far away to accurately read. A few scattered flocks of dusky Canada geese were observed within Clark County in the Vancouver Lowlands, but none of them were collared.

**Osprey Nesting Platform:** Biologist Bergh visited a site in Camas along the Washougal River where a railroad bridge is being replaced. Ospreys currently nest on top of the bridge, which is scheduled to be removed and replaced in August. The railroad is planning to build an alternate nesting platform and is looking for guidance on the location and design of the platform.

**Shillapoo Wildlife Area**

**Tree Plantings:** Last week, WDFW staff members finished the 2016 tree plantings on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. A total of 2,500 trees were planted to include Oregon white oak, Oregon ash, pacific crabapple, red elderberry, blue elderberry, red osier dogwood, black hawthorn, cottonwood, and serviceberry.

The first phase of the new Chapman's Slough tree planting was completed as well. The slough in Chapman's Pasture was historically a lush riparian area, but through decades of cattle grazing it was diminished to a handful of trees absent any understory vegetation. The new tree planting's goal is to restore the riparian area by about 150 feet on each side of the bank and prevent livestock access. Other places on the Wildlife Area where trees were planted include "fill-in" spots in the Old Ag and Lake River planting. These were places that were planted in the spring of 2015, but with last summer's drought they had ~50% mortality. The bank along Lake River was also heavily planted in cottonwood and dogwood in hopes of adding more bank stability to combat against erosion.



*Assistant Manager Hand planting at the new Chapman's Slough site*

### **Klickitat Wildlife Area**

#### **Fence Repair / Culvert and Road**

**Inspection / Agricultural Fields:** Natural Resource Technician Davis worked on fence repair on the Sondino Unit, concentrating mainly on fences along Old Highway 8 and Balch Road. In addition, Davis checked culverts on the Soda Springs Unit to make sure that runoff water is flowing through culverts instead of over the roads. He had to

clear dirt and debris from one culvert to improve drainage. While out, Davis visited Agricultural Fields 1 through 6 on the Soda Springs Unit and observed four deer in the fields. No deer were seen outside the fields. The fields where the deer were foraging are planted to haybit barley, an alternate crop being used for erosion control and hay production.

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Turkey Season:** District Biologists Anderson received calls from two different hunter groups in the Puget Sound area that wanted information on hunting Merriam's Turkeys in the upcoming spring season in Klickitat County. Klickitat County is the best area for hunting turkeys in Region 5 and is popular with folks from around the state. This year's season opens on April 2-3 for a youth only hunt, and the general season is open from April 15-May 31.

**Elk:** This week marks the end of the Trout Lake Master Hunter hunts. There were three separate hunts beginning mid-December and ending January 31, with a total of 15 hunters. Hunters reported a high rate of success due in large part to the support of private landowners. Area landowners worked closely with WDFW staff members and hunters to create a positive and successful hunt. While providing a unique hunting opportunity, the Trout Lake hunts also fill a crucial wildlife management role addressing elk damage in the area.

#### **Private Lands**

**CP33 Field Borders:** Private Lands/Conflict Biologist Meyer (Region 5) and Private Lands Biologist Stutzman (Region 3) discussed a landowner in eastern Klickitat County who is applying for the CP33 field border program. The landowner owns property in both Regions 3 and 5. Meyer and Stutzman agreed to collaborate on the CP33 planning process for this property and will touch base and schedule a site visit after the landowner has submitted his application.

## Access

**Beginners Hole and Hand Access Sites:** New gravel was hauled and spread out to repair the flood damage at both Beginners and Hand Access sites. Access staff Spangler and Rhodes also installed fence posts to attach danger tape around the area that's eroding away into the parking lot.



*Taping off bank erosion at Beginners Hole*



*Spreading gravel at access sites*

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

## Wildlife Management

**Middle School Presentation:** Biologist Bergh gave a presentation to two sixth grade science classes at Daybreak Middle School in Battle Ground. The students have been studying populations and this week had a lab activity on mark-recapture population estimation. Bergh presented information on our mark-recapture estimation of western pond turtle populations in the gorge. She also gave background information on turtles, the recovery program, and Ulcerative Shell Disease. The students were very engaged and had lots of great questions.

***Biologist Bergh giving a Middle School presentation***





**District 10 Wildlife Conflict**

**Elk:** Conflict Specialist Conklin deployed a youth hunter to a farm in the Cispus area of Randle. When adjacent landowners found out about it, they offered their lands for the youth to hunt as well. All three landowners currently have Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements with WDFW to deter elk damage to their crops and were more than willing to allow access. This is the first year the three landowners have ever hosted a youth hunter. The young hunter was able to harvest a nice cow elk on his first day.

***Youth Hunter***



This experienced young hunter has harvested many deer but this is her first elk! Elk was taken from a farm in the Boistfort Valley area using a damage prevention permit.

***Youth Hunter***

**Pigs:** Conflict Specialist Conklin and Private Lands/Conflict Biologist Meyer were conducting landowner site visits in the Randle area when they observed two pot-bellied pigs running down the shoulder of Highway 12. Meyer and Conklin tried to lure in and capture the pigs to hopefully transport them to a safe location. Conklin called a nearby landowner to come and assist. All three were chasing the pigs on the public roadway. After the pigs became bored with the game they started running up a road and straight to a farm, which they most likely originated from in the first place.

**Pigs:** Conflict Specialist Conklin and Private Lands/Conflict Biologist Meyer were conducting landowner site visits in the Randle area when they observed two pot-bellied pigs running



***Persuading pigs to cooperate***

## **District 9 Wildlife Conflict**

**Coordinated Resources Management Plan (CRMP):** Private Lands/Conflict Biologist Meyer, Conflict Specialist Peterson, and Biologist Bergh attended the CRMP meetings near Glenwood, WA this week. Conflict Specialist Peterson fielded questions from members of the group and will continue to provide support for issues with wildlife in District 9.

**Elk:** Commercial producers in west Klickitat County are continuing to report elk damage. Conflict Specialist Peterson and the effected producers will continue their ongoing efforts to reduce elk damage through the use of non-lethal and lethal measures.

## **District 10 and 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. December temperatures were slightly above normal and the month had record high precipitation, causing some flooding throughout the district. January temperatures were average and precipitation for the month was above average.

**Short-Term Forecast:** Snow levels will fluctuate between 4,000 to 12,000 feet during the upcoming week, with temperatures in the valleys ranging into the 60s. The 6-10 and 8-14 day forecasts are for above average temperatures and precipitation.

**Long-Term Forecast:** The February forecast is for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation, and the three month forecast is for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

**Habitat:** Forage is available at middle and lower elevations, with the Wildlife Area being heavily utilized.

**Snow Depths:** Lower elevations are currently snow free below about 3,000 feet, with snow depths increasing in the middle and upper elevations. Snowpack is about average.

**Animal Concentrations:** No unusual concentrations noted to date. The third winter elk survey was conducted on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area on February 2, with 141 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:** One mortality has been observed while conducting other work on the Wildlife Area so far this winter.

**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, 2016, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.*

### **District 9 Winter Conditions**

**Past Weather:** Temperatures have moderated this past week with milder conditions across the district. Rain and warm temperatures started melting the snowpack and creeks are full, but not flooding. Current snow water equivalent data indicates that the south Cascades are 109 percent of normal. The Soda Springs Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area has approximately 30% snow cover, with most of that under trees and on the north facing slopes.

**Winter Severity:** Winter conditions continue to be typical of February weather in the south Cascades and Klickitat River drainage. Snow coverage is primarily above 2,000 feet in elevation. 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:** 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. Deer are generally absent from open areas above 2,000 feet, as snow conditions have pushed deer into dense forested habitats.

**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. Elk are reported in some agricultural areas associated with Trout Lake and in the Gilmer Valley, which is common this time of year.

**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 WILDLIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

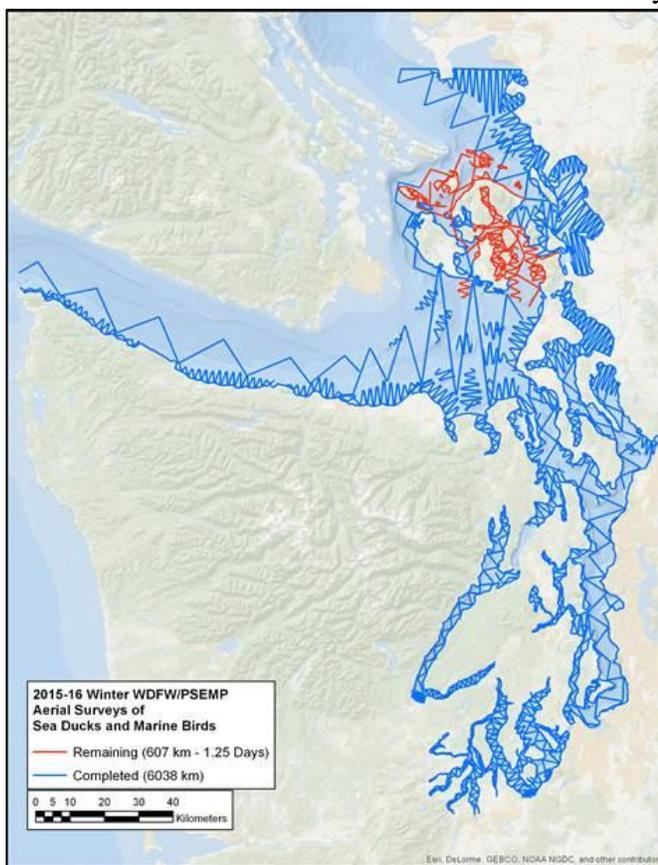
**Avian Protection Plan:** Biologist Ament has been working with staff members at the Clallam County Public Utilities District #1 to complete an Avian Protection Plan (APP). The document outlines the district's plan to reduce avian injuries and mortality along with improving electrical reliability to customers. She had met with PUD staff members on a few occasions last fall and then reviewed a draft plan that was developed. She submitted comments on the plan and

provided contact information for WDFW staff members and local wildlife rehabilitation centers for the document. The PUD finalized the plan and provided Biologist Ament and USFWS staff members with a copy of the final plan. WDFW is very pleased with the PUD's efforts to work collaboratively to develop the plan. APP's are not a requirement and very few utility companies in the state actually have Avian Protection Plans. The local PUD understood the concerns expressed by Biologist Ament regarding bird electrocutions in the county, including the three trumpeter swans that were killed on lines last year. They were voluntarily willing to complete their new APP.

**Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Habitat Restoration:** Biologist Ament met with Biologist Hays at one of the known Taylor's checkerspot butterfly sites west of Port Angeles on February 3, 2016. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will employ a WCC crew that will be working at the site for two weeks later this month. They will be continuing work on TCB habitat improvement projects. The biologists reviewed the site and identified a unit of dense shrubs and trees that will be removed to improve habitat conditions for the butterflies. The unit was heavily flagged so the WCC could easily identify the work area. Biologist Ament had hoped to complete some re-marking of survey transect flags at the site, but the rainy conditions presented problems for this task. She took some field notes on various items to discuss with DNR before the WCC crew initiates their work.

**Sea Duck Surveys:** As part of a long-term, multi-species monitoring effort, Biologists Murphie, Evenson, and Cyra continued their annual sea duck, marine bird, and marine mammal survey effort in Puget Sound. Last week, they conducted surveys in the San Juan Islands and the Strait of Juan de Fuca before weather conditions prohibited the completion of the survey. Approximately 1.25 surveys days remain.

**Trumpeter Swan Monitoring:** There were no reports of sick or injured swans last week. The swan monitoring volunteers conducted a count last week and counted the highest number of swans ever recorded for the Dungeness Valley. The volunteer reported the following: *I surveyed today (February 3, 2016) between 11:00 and noon and saw 157+ of the big guys. Lamar and Sequim airport—NONE. Nash's on Andersen – 24 total with two juveniles, on Schmuck south of PT Williams – 133+ total between the west group of 98 in the fenced veggie area and 35+ in a pasture to the east of Schmuck south of the wind turbine (as Bob P. had seen). Those to the east were close enough to count but the rolling topography may have made it impossible to see some if they were*



*laying on the ground. Even for some standing up I could only see heads and a little neck. Also noted that small groups of swans were freely flying back and forth from the west group to the east and vise-versa. As I was counting over 10-15 minutes, about 10-15 swans traded places but they stabilized enough that I did not double count. I do not have my numbers in front of me (already posted in the Swan Box), but of the latter big group at Schmuck, there were about 28 juveniles.*

**Dead Sharp-shinned Hawk:** Biologist Ament was contacted by Biologist Rowan on February 1, 2016, who reported getting a call about a dead small hawk that a landowner near Port Townsend had found on the porch. There was no evidence that the hawk had hit a window, so the cause of death was unknown. She requested that the hawk be collected and sent to the National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) for a necropsy and AI testing. Biologist Ament contacted the landowner and collected the sharp-shinned hawk on February 2, 2016. The hawk is presently frozen and will be sent off to NWHC.

**Dead Bald Eagle:** Biologist Ament was contacted again by Biologist Rowan on February 2, 2016, after she had gotten a call from a woman in Forks who reported that her husband found a dead bald eagle on property they own along the Bogachiel River. Biologist Ament promptly contacted the reporting party and gathered information regarding the dead adult bald eagle. The bird had been dead a few days, but the cause of death was unknown. The reporting party's husband was willing to collect the dead eagle and provide temporary storage in a freezer. He saw no evidence of any specific cause of death for the eagle. Biologist Ament will check in with Biologist Rowan to see if she would like the eagle sent to the NWHC. If not, the eagle will be taken to the USFWS for the eagle repository. Biologist Ament presently has a dozen eagles that need to be transported to the USFWS office in Lacey.

**Snowy Plover:** Biologist Sundstrom made one more visit to the Damon Point/Oyhut location to survey for wintering snowy plovers. Reports from ebird indicated snowy plovers in the area.

### Wildlife Areas

**Morgan Marsh RMAP Site Visit:** Manager Belson met with several Habitat staff members (Zweifel, Dominguez, and Gordon) at the Morgan Marsh Unit (Kitsap County) of the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area to assess the current hydrologic conditions of forest road stream crossings and discuss long-term management of the site. The unnamed tributary of Stavis Creek intersects the road at a culverted crossing that in recent years has been impacted by beaver activities and recently required dam removal. Factors under consideration include fish passage, wildlife area management access, maintenance obligations, public access, road and culvert management plans at the adjacent NRCA, and hydrologic impacts upstream within the Hintzville Beaver Ponds.

***Biologist Zweifel (Habitat) measuring stream characteristics***



## **Private Lands /Conflict**

**McCormick Woods Deer—Final Chapter:** For the past month, Conflict Specialist Blankenship and Enforcement Officers have received reports of a deer with an object on its hoof in the area of McCormick Woods near Port Orchard. Efforts to locate this deer have been very difficult for officers and Conflict Specialist Blankenship due to the large, densely forested area that the deer inhabited. Thanks to the cooperation of several homeowners in the area, Conflict Specialist Blankenship and Officers Czebotar and Summit were able to locate the deer in the backyard of one of the homeowner's properties. The deer was successfully immobilized and the storm drain cover was removed.

**USFWS Section 6 Land Acquisition Grants:** Biologist Tirhi continued to work on two Section 6 applications, which are due internally on February 8. The first is a request for \$2 million in USFWS funds to be matched with a \$2 million request thru WWRP (due in spring) for the final funding for full acquisition of the 745-acre prairie property abutting our West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area in Thurston County. Tirhi and team successfully obtained \$5 million in 2015 towards this same acquisition. The second application is a request for approximately \$700 thousand towards a 93-acre conservation easement of a working farm inhabited by state and federally listed Mazama pocket gopher.

**Cell Tower Construction Permitting:** Biologist Tirhi has reached out to the WDFW Habitat Program Major Projects section in an attempt to get guidance on cell tower development permits that are routinely received in the district for review and comment. Tirhi has also received a request to be witness at an upcoming hearing on a new cell tower and impacts to wildlife. Unfortunately, WDFW has not addressed cell tower construction at a landscape level, including our position on siting new towers, impacts of radiation on wildlife, and modification of towers to be wildlife/habitat friendly. Lacking such guidance, it's left to the district biologist team, who typically are only able to comment as to the project's direct impact to species existing on site at the time of the permit (e.g. very limited and partial response). WDFW does have guidance for the removal of nests from structures, which is different than a response on new construction of structures. At minimum, Tirhi has placed the need on the Major Projects radar with hopes that WDFW will ultimately formulate a position.

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

## **Wildlife Management**

**Pierce County Biodiversity Alliance:** The Alliance held its monthly planning meeting which was attended by the newest member, WDFW Habitat Biologist Wiedemeier, Forterra's Green Cities South Sound Project Manager Matt Mega, and ROSS senior planner Ikuno Masterson. This month's meeting was focused on reviewing city and county comments that were received on the draft Lower White River Stewardship Plan, setting a schedule for the release of the final, and drafting a letter of response to the proposed Sumner Manufacturing & Industrial Center (MIC).

**Coastal Listening Session:** Regional Program Manager Calkins and Biologist Novack participated in the Coastal Listening Forum at South Bend, which is a component of WDFW's Wild Futures Initiative. A large crowd attended and provided an immense amount of comments about WDFW's management of Fish and Wildlife resources in the area. Overall, the public expressed general appreciation for the opportunity to engage with the agency.

### Wildlife Areas

**Olympic/Willapa Hills Wildlife Area—Winter Maintenance:** Most of the annual project work finished up the end of January, with the completion of prairie restoration work at Scatter Creek and West Rocky invasive weed control. Staff members mowed dense areas of Scotch Broom at West Rocky and Scatter Creek. Following mowing operations, the equipment was returned to the Olympic Wildlife Area. During the last couple of weeks, emphasis has been on equipment maintenance. Tractors and mowers were pressure washed and cleaned thoroughly inside and out to prevent the spread of invasive weeds from one Wildlife Area to another. During the winter, equipment is checked over for maintenance needs, cracked and leaking hoses are replaced, gear boxes and hydraulic systems are checked, and oil is changed if necessary. Implements are checked for cracked, worn, or missing parts and serviced for the next season. This annual extensive maintenance has paid off with the longevity and dependability of project equipment. Two of our tractors are 1972 models, and we have some equipment dating back to 1966 that is still in use. The Olympic Willapa Hills Wildlife Area covers several landscapes, from prairie lands, to upland forage areas, to wetland estuarine forage areas that we do restoration work on. Making sure equipment is clean of invasive vegetation and equipment is not leaking oil is important when working in so many different types of landscapes.



### Private Lands /Conflict

**Meat Donation:** Conflict Specialist Blankenship, with the assistance of a landowner that has been sustaining elk damage to his private property, donated a harvested elk to the food bank in Orting. Orting Food Bank volunteers were very appreciative of the charitable donation.

**Elk Conflicts:** Conflict Specialist Blankenship continues to work with landowners and master hunter volunteers to prevent elk damage on private property in Tenino, Eatonville, and Buckley by conducting non-lethal and lethal damage prevention techniques.

Conflict Specialist Blankenship met with landowners in Centralia, Chehalis, and Rochester who have had damage to pasture lands and agricultural crops from elk. On some of these properties, Blankenship has counted up to 75 elk out in the fields grazing on crops. Blankenship will continue to work with these landowners to help prevent further damage to their property.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Sentinel Landscape Working Group:** Biologist Tirhi attended the monthly Sentinel Lands meeting, the highlight of which was a presentation by Kevin Connally of USFWS on ESA Section 10 conservation tools, including safe harbor agreements, HCPs and Section 7. Although Tirhi has seen similar presentations over the last several years related to various federally listed species in the district, she continues to learn new and helpful information about the ESA process.