

Wildlife Program

Week of February 15 – February 21, 2016

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Region 1 Wolf Activities

Budget and Equipment: Supervisor McCanna worked with Wildlife Conflict Section Manager Simek to address the need for additional staff member time and equipment needs for the upcoming grazing season.

Northeast Washington Interested Legislators/County Commissioners Conference Call: Supervisor McCanna and Wildlife Conflict Specialists Shepherd and Bennett participated in the conference call with interested legislators and county commissioners from northeast Washington.

Range Rider Meeting: Supervisor McCanna and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Shepherd met with a contracted range rider at the Region 1 office to discuss improving the existing range riding program for the upcoming grazing season. We discussed the need for additional range riders and how to deal with the possibility of depredations from different wolf packs at the same time. We also discussed how range riders could assist with calving operations in northeast Washington.

Smackout Area: Biologist Shepherd discussed a livestock loss claim, the future of Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements, and radio-collaring with a rancher. Biologist Shepherd and a contract range rider discussed a calving operation and protective strategies given a high level of wolf sign and presence.

Burnt Valley Livestock Producer: Biologist Shepherd discussed a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement for Livestock with a Burnt Valley livestock producer who has a calving operation occurring presently.

Wolf - Domestic Dog Incident: Biologist Shepherd discussed wolf locations and fencing with dog owners near Chewelah whose dogs were confronted and engaged by wolves.

Wolf Sighting: Biologist Earl received a call from a logger who reported seeing seven wolves cross the Cloverland Road and head towards Harlow Ridge. This was in the same area where Earl located several tracks in the snow a couple of weeks ago, which prompted an unsuccessful aerial attempt to locate the pack.

Wolf Location Questions: Biologist Earl received calls from various producers starting calving across Asotin County. All of them were curious as to where the wolves have been.

Wolves Howling: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley received one call regarding wolves that were heard howling on Jasper Mountain on and near the Rainwater Wildlife Area. The Reporting Party said he thought “there were at least three or four wolves howling at one time.”

Region 2 Wolf Activities

Okanogan Wolves: Specialist Heilhecker talked with the range rider from last summer. He is not able to come back this year due to family commitments. Specialist Heilhecker has started looking for other people who might be interested. However, options seem pretty limited at this time.

Region 3 Wolf Activities

Wolf Reports: While searching online resources Biologist Moore found a new report from early February. Moore called the reporting party and discussed his observations and how best to document any future sightings.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Channeled Scabland Spring Waterfowl Survey: Biologists Lowe and Wilson conducted the first aerial survey of the season, flying 11 transects over the Channeled Scablands and Turnbull Wetlands survey areas. Ground conditions varied from dry to saturated and overall numbers of ducks and geese were relatively low, but they are expected to increase over the coming weeks. Flights will continue through April to assess the importance of the area for the spring migration season.



Aerial waterfowl survey over the Channeled Scablands

Moose on the Loose: Biologist Lowe and Conflict Specialist Bennett assisted Officers Beauchene and Langbehn in capturing a young bull moose that found its way inside a Washington Department of Transportation (WDOT) compound adjacent to I-90. The calf was successfully relocated due to concerns over the potential for a vehicle collision on the Interstate.



Staff preps calf moose for relocation away from I-90

Waterfowl Surveys: On Monday, Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch and Wildlife Area Manager Juli Anderson completed a round of the 2016 Lake Creek and Swanson Lake waterfowl surveys. Water was high at the recently restored water cells near Z-Lake, but extraordinarily low at Coffeepot Lake.



South of Z-Lake at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area



The lake at Bureau of Land Management's Coffeepot Lake Recreation Area

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

Deer Issue: Wildlife Biologist Annemarie Prince, Private Lands/Conflict Technician Bendixen, and Officer Parkert met with the board of a housing development in Ferry County that is concerned about “aggressive” deer in the development. Advice was provided for a long-term strategy which includes discouraging and/or banning feeding of deer within the development.

U.S. Air Force Survival School: District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base and Regional Wildlife Program Manager Kevin Robinette met with representatives from the U.S. Air Force Survival Training Program along with Colville National Forest to help identify alternative areas for Air Force personnel to train. They also discussed related considerations due to increasing logging activities within the Parker Lake closure area.

WT Wooten Wildlife Area – Lakes: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Dingman and Natural Resource Worker 2 Christian opened the inlets to Beaver Lake and Deer Lake and turned on the inlet screens to get the lakes filled for stocking before the March 1 fishing season opener. The river was quite high and the lakes should fill fairly quickly. The walk logs to Big 4 Lake were underwater, so that lake was not checked. Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Dingman or Natural Resource Worker 2 Christian checked the lakes daily the rest of the week. Dingman and Christian cleared the brush and downed trees along the road from Rainbow Lake to Watson Lake for the fish stocking truck to get access. Christian used the new sickle mower on the tractor to cut the brush and grass away from the road between Rainbow Lake and the Beaver Lake inlet.



New sickle mower for clearing grass and brush from the roadside

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

Lincoln Cliffs Bighorn Sheep Public Meeting: Biologists Atamian, Lowe, Oyster, Bennett, Baarstad, Officer Wood, and Section Manager Harris conducted a

public meeting in the community of Lincoln to provide monitoring updates and discuss current and future management of the herd. Twenty-four people attended the meeting, representing a variety of opinions and experiences regarding the sheep.

Reporter: Biologist Thorne Hadley and Conflict Specialist Rasley met with a Walla Walla Union Bulletin reporter to write a follow up article on our collaborative efforts to keep the City of Waitsburg's Watershed open to access for hunting in WDFW's Feel Free to Hunt program.

Palouse Rock Lake Conservation District (PRLCD) Annual Meeting: Supervisor McCanna gave a PowerPoint presentation on habitat and access programs available to landowners in the PRLCD. McCanna covered all farm bill programs available, as well as how the department would assist with enrolling agricultural lands into high quality upland game bird habitat.

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

Ferruginous Hawks: Biologist Thorne Hadley assisted Assistant District Biologist Vekasy in locating ferruginous hawk nesting platforms and identifying property landowners. Several of the platforms are located on properties that are currently in WDFW access programs. Biologist Thorne Hadley was able to identify those that weren't and provided the relevant contact information for Vekasy.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management



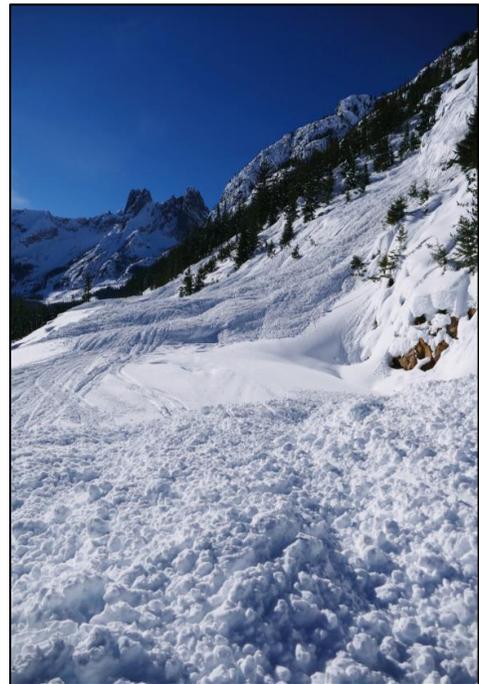


Bobcat, marten with prize, and weasel at remote camera sites – Photos by WDFW

Multi-Carnivore Survey: Biologist Fitkin and Science Technician Erlenbach, along with USFS volunteers, continued to deploy and began checking baited remote camera sites designed to detect wolverine, lynx, and red fox. No target species were found on the first check, but more common non-target species are finding the sites, which is encouraging. To date, avalanche conditions have prevented us from reaching our highest priority sites. However, a break in conditions and weather may finally allow us to access the highest terrain this coming week.

Rough sledding on Washington Pass – Photo by Scott Fitkin

Sharp-tailed Grouse: Biologist Heinlen received approximately 6,000 fence markers donated from Michael Brown, Pheasants Forever/Natural Resource Conservation Service biologist, for deployment within the NFWF Working for Wildlife grant area in Okanogan County. These markers make fence lines visible to birds, reducing fence collision mortalities, and will be deployed in areas occupied by sharp-tailed grouse. This donation came about through the grant partners seeking markers. Thanks to Michael Brown, Alissa Carlson, and Jen Watkins for making this happen. Markers will be deployed this spring and summer.



Sage Grouse Initiative: Biologist Gallie has been working with SGI Coordinator Brown on implementing another search effort for undocumented sage grouse leks in Douglas County using aerial infrared (AIR) this spring. This effort was attempted last year, and while we did locate one new lek, overall we had poor results. SGI was notified this winter that a balance was still

remaining on this project, and with added funds contributed from IMWJV and The Nature Conservancy, SGI now has enough funds to conduct a four day effort covering approximately 156 square miles.

We identified several factors with the timing and survey methods that contributed to the poor detection rate last year (implied from missing existing leks we did not tell them about) and will work with the vendor, Owyhee Air Research, and their flight crew to develop new methods and improve detection rates. Also, rather than looking broadly over the landscape, as we did last year, we are designing search areas that are much smaller, have the most recent sightings, and contain high quality nesting habitat. The search areas will also focus on several landowners who currently have contracts with SGI.

Sage grouse population estimates, trends, and occupied breeding range are all determined by lek monitoring, and finding new leks can have big impacts to these parameters. Last year's new lek increased the known population by 6% and extended the known breeding range by 50 square miles. With this new lek location, SGI was able to sign up neighboring landowners for conservation measures, and WDFW was able to extend the range of eligible landowners to SAFE/CRP contracts (based on proximity to leks), which will provide future nesting habitat.

Wildlife Areas

Okanogan Complex Fires: Bids were opened February 11 at 4:00 p.m. at the Sinlahekin Wildlife Headquarters for both the Harvesting Services Contract and the Log Sort Purchasing Contracts by Okanogan Lands Forester Jamie Bass and Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Manager Nathan Wehmeyer. The bidding of the timber sale was unsuccessful due to a lack of interest in timber, the result of a flooding market. Forester Bass contacted mills and was confirmed that pine and pulp would likely not sell. After a discussion with land managers, and a consideration of current inoperable conditions, WDFW has decided to not award the bid. The Okanogan Post-fire Forest Management Project timber sale will not move forward unless there is a change in the market or conditions, and Forester Bass will continue to work with wildlife area managers to manage the burned over forested habitat. Forester Bass continues to work on following up with FEMA on managing hazard trees for all roads and official trails in the Okanogan Complex Wildlife Areas.

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

Wildlife Management

Damage tags: Specialist Heilhecker talked with several customers who called asking questions as to how to use the Landowner Damage Permit. There still seems to be quite a bit of confusion over what licenses and tags are required. Also, in looking at harvest summary data with Biologist Heinlen, they verified people are still inappropriately purchasing damage tags. Hunters have submitted harvest reports for damage tags in GMUs 231 and 218 when Specialist Heilhecker has

not worked with landowners experiencing deer damage in those GMUs. These hunters do not have a valid Landowner Damage Permit to accompany the damage tags.

Observed Environment (District 6 Winter Conditions): Conditions have changed dramatically over the last two weeks at lower elevations ,where much bare ground and some green-up can now be found.

Recent Weather: The district experienced light precipitation (mostly rain) with no snow accumulation at low elevations and significant snow accumulation at the highest elevations, particularly near the Cascade Crest.

Short-Term Forecast: Dry with normal to above normal temperatures 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.



Green grass within the Tunk Block Fire (2015) on the Mcloughlin Falls Wildlife Area





From Top to Bottom – A chipmunk keeping a close eye on me near Loomis, a pair of Red Crossbills above Toats Coulee near Loomis, a Red-Breasted Nuthatch foraging on the ground, a pair of Trumpeter Swans flying over Forde Lake, a wind-swept Douglas Fir tree above the Sinlahekin Creek Valley near Loomis, and Conners Lake at sunrise on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area – Photos by Justin Haug

Big Green Lake Still frozen solid – Photo by M. DeHart

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Elk Feeding/ Winter Conditions: Elk numbers remained similar with 700-800 in Watt and 650-750 in Robinson. Warm temperatures and rainfall have opened up a lot of ground for elk to forage on, and elk are moving into the feed lots later in the morning instead of first light. The melt off has made the road conditions muddy and mucky, with chains required to make it into Robinson. Rain will continue through mid-week, with high temperatures in the upper 40s, and lows in the 30s.



Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Feeding operations continued at all five feed sites, but wrapped up at the sheep feed site mid-week when no sheep were in the area. Saturday was the last day feeding elk at the Junction. On Sunday morning, hay was left and no elk were in the area. Despite ranging during the night and early morning, elk are coming back to the feed site in high numbers at feeding time.

On Thursday evening, Assistant Manager Berry was contacted by a landowner adjacent to the Cowiche Unit about a person driving through their property and onto WDFW property, then driving past the hay barn and up onto the feed site, scattering the hundreds of elk located there. Berry responded to the area and contacted Manager Huffman asking for assistance in contacting WDFW Enforcement. Huffman contacted state patrol, who called Officer Myers. When Berry arrived in the area, he attempted to determine if a vehicle was on the feed site, and located an empty vehicle. While Berry was getting a picture of the license plate, the person returned to the vehicle and said they were trying to locate their friend. Berry escorted them off the wildlife area. Enforcement is following up and continues the investigation.



Forester Mackey, with assistance from Forester Pfeifle, conducted a forest assessment of timber stands in the Windy Point area. Snowmobiles were used to access the area. Plots were taken to assess forest health and to begin developing a treatment strategy.

Photograph of stand being assessed on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area in the Windy Point area

Winter Feeding

Mellotte Feed Site elk numbers: 1,200+ animals.

The elk that moved from private land onto the feed site seem to have stayed, with no elk having shown back up on the private land. With the warm weather, some animals have moved off the feed site, dropping numbers back down to around 1,200. Between the weather and the soft ground, Assistant Manager Taylor has been unable to get a decent count. Assistant Manager Taylor hauled

broken bales from Mount Vale and Mellotte out to the feed site and folded hay tarps up. Manager Confer Morris fed Mellotte elk on February 14 to give Assistant Manager Taylor a break and reduce his exchange time hours.

Winter Weather: Weather temperatures continued to be above normal, with highs in the 50s and even into the 60s, and lows in the mid to upper 30s. The weather for the coming week is expected to be mostly sunny, with temperatures near normal. Highs are expected to be in the low to mid 50s, with lows in the 20s.

Animal Condition: Elk are generally in seasonally good to fair condition. One adult bull was found dead on the feed site.

Wildlife Management

Ferruginous Hawk: District Biologist Fidorra worked on landowner access and volunteer coordination for the Ferruginous Hawk Survey. Fidorra is organizing a training event for volunteers on March 8 at the Richland Public Library. Several landowners were contacted this week and have granted permission to access their property for the survey. Volunteers were sent sign-up instructions and are formally registering for the project through the CERVIS program.

Burrowing Owl Camera: District Biologist Fidorra coordinated with Biologist Faxla to reset the burrowing owl camera, which went down this past week. Operation was quickly restored.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz received a call from Oak Creek Manager Huffman that the tarps had fallen on the sheep trap and that the winds had caused some damage. Bernatowicz rolled the tarps up and fixed the damage. Results from last week's retest came back negative, but the combination of the tarps flapping in the wind, warm weather, and green-up caused the sheep to leave the feed site. Trapping scheduled for Friday was cancelled and probably won't be possible until next winter. Ewe permits were increased for 2016 in hopes of slowing herd growth. The Cleman herd is now about 250 and growing fast. The herd produced 50 lambs this year. Bernatowicz researched and drafted a bighorn sheep information sheet. The idea is place provide educational materials for the public at the Oak Creek visitor center and sheep feed site.

Colockum Bull Study: Biologist Moore continued working on a presentation for the upcoming Game Management Advisory Council meeting in March.

Colockum Elk Survey: Biologist Moore began preparations for surveying the Colockum population. The survey is scheduled for March 8 and 9.

Bighorn Sheep Risk of Contact Modeling: Biologist Moore reviewed preliminary analyses in preparation for the upcoming district team meeting. Moore was unable to be present at the meeting, but passed the information off to Biologist Bernatowicz and Regional Program Manager McCorquodale.

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

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris provided a map and paragraph on the status of the Wenas target shooting issue for staff member use at the Sportsmen's Show. She also emailed documents, maps, and drawings on the remaining shooting range alternatives to Assistant Habitat Biologists Downes and Bartrand, as requested by Habitat Regional Program Manager Harvester.

Team Meeting and Sportsmen’s Show: Manager Confer Morris attended a district team meeting on Wednesday and worked in the WDFW booth at the Sportsmen’s Show on Saturday afternoon.

Access Program

River Access Sites: Access Manager Garcia checked on river access sites to document any damage or need for closure with the flooding. Access to the Granger Pond boat ramp was closed by the city and the Ringer Loop Road has also been closed due to running water and logs over the road way.



Granger Pond Boat Ramp Flooding



Granger Pond Boat Ramp after high water

Ringer Loop Road during Flood Event

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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman was contacted by the KING 5 environmental reporter about doing a story on elk feeding at Oak Creek. Huffman scheduled a day and time this coming week and coordinated with Captain Mann to be present to answer questions about the public entry closures and shed antler gathering.



Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Sak and Natural Resource Technician Medina assisted SVID with cleanup of hundreds of empty butane cans that had been dumped along Sulphur Creek. The high water had gotten up to where they were floating, and we were worried about them getting to the river. SVID brought in their gradeall and were able to dip all the floating debris out of the creek. The Yakima County Sheriff was notified and determined that it was probably left over materials from a meth lab.



Wildlife Management

Turkey Complaint: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand followed up with monitoring a nuisance turkey complaint at the Kahlotus School. Six tom turkeys continue to reside on the school property or on neighboring lands.

Rattlesnake Mountain Elk Activity: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand patrolled winter wheat fields on Rattlesnake Mountain for elk activity. Wet and muddy conditions hampered access to several areas, but the few that were visited showed little elk use.



Landowner Hunt Permit Lands: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand visited landowner hunt permit properties in the Silver Dollar area for landowner meetings and coordinating late season elk hunting opportunities.

Deer Hazing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand conducted a deer hazing patrol on winter wheat fields in the Kahlotus area. Moderate deer use was observed in many of the fields visited, but with increasing mild weather we should see damage impacts subsiding.

Elk Hazing: Conflict Specialist Wetzel again hazed elk from areas north and south of I-90 several times this week. Most slopes in that area are now snow free. A large group of 500 elk are south of I-90 on the Yakima Training Center. They have made several attempts to cross the roadways. One elk was struck and needed to be euthanized. A master hunter volunteer was called to let down as many of the fences as possible to help elk move back to the north.

Elk Conflict: Conflict Specialist Wetzel and Biologist Wade Jones met with landowners and looked at elk damage areas in preparation for future elk removals in those areas.

Thorp area elk group

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



Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area: Sunday night we had high winds and warm temperatures, losing over a foot of snow at Mount Vale overnight and causing significant flooding along Wenas Creek. Assistant Manager Taylor checked roads and elk fence for problems. Monday he had to use the backhoe to remove a tree, with rootwad attached, that had lodged against the main bridge into Mount Vale and was catching debris, causing significant pressure against the bridge. High water continued through the week, with water over the roads at Mount Vale and Mellotte. On Wednesday morning, Taylor had to remove a tree that had lodged under the Mellotte Bridge and was backing up with debris. Sitting on the bridge, the backhoe just barely had enough power/weight to move the tree so it and the debris could move on downstream. In both cases, Manager Confer Morris received verbal authorization for the emergency removals from Assistant Habitat Biologist Bartrand. Although there is still water over the road at Mellotte, conditions have moderated and infrastructure remains intact. Once things dry out we'll need to do some grading and bring in gravel to address sections of roads that were damaged.



Mount Vale Bridge



Removal of cottonwood tree lodged against Mount Vale Bridge

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart worked on a hiring contract to utilize a WCC crew for six weeks this spring. We received RMEF funding to install/improve elk fencing in the lower Taneum Creek drainage, and the WCC crew will be hired for the fence construction portion of the project.

Tractor Ordering: On Tuesday morning, Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt met with the sales representative at the Ellensburg John Deere dealership (WA Tractor) to review and finalize specs on the tractor and implements we are ordering. Hunt spent much of the balance of the week working through the purchase process with WDFW Purchasing and DES. Paperwork has been submitted and hopefully we will take delivery in May.

District Team Meeting: Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt both attended the district team meeting on Wednesday. Winegeart gave updates on wildlife area grazing leases, the Tapash collaborative Robinson Canyon forest health project, and the implementation of the Naneum Rec Plan.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: This past Sunday warm temperatures and high elevation rain caused rapid snowmelt and runoff in the SF Cowiche Creek. The creek flooded around the bridge used to access the Cowiche hay barn, causing road damage. A hay delivery was canceled, as the road was no longer passable to semi-trucks. Acclimation tanks used by Yakama Nation to release coho into the creek were washed about 40 yards downstream. By the end of the week, water subsided some, but it is still flowing over the road. Huffman contacted the Yakima Construction Shop, who surveyed the damage and is developing an estimate for repairs. Assistant Manager Berry has been driving the Cowiche feed truck to the Oak Creek HQ each day to pick up a load of hay so feeding operations can continue.



Water flowing over the road on the Cowiche Unit north of the creek



Water flowing over the road on the Cowiche Unit south of the creek

Yakama Nation coho acclimation tanks washed downstream by flood waters on the Cowlitz Unit



REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Marine Waterfowl Surveys: District 13 and District 15 staff members, along with the Marine Waterfowl Specialist, completed flying the 2015-2016 marine waterfowl surveys. Over 6,600 kilometers of track lines were flown during December, January, and the first week of February. 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. Data transcriptions of the nearly 16,000 observations were completed and submitted. Once again, Kenmore Air provided exceptional service and pilots for this demanding survey, and their commitment to safety and maintenance of the aircraft used is greatly appreciated by WDFW staff members. These flights are only possible with the assistance and watchfulness of our dedicated core of flight followers, and we genuinely appreciate their professionalism and interest in the crew's safety.

2015-2016 Marine waterfowl survey crew and Kenmore Chief Pilot Perry with primary survey aircraft N900KA (Maggie), the last de Havilland DHC-2 Beaver ever built



Harbor Porpoise Publication: The Marine Waterfowl Specialist, with assistance from the District 13 and 15 survey crew and cooperators from Cascadia Research Collective, completed a WDFW publication on the population trends of the harbor porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*) over the past 20 years using data from the marine waterfowl aerial surveys. The publication has been made available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01787/>

Brant population

monitoring: District 13 staff members assisted the Marine Waterfowl Specialist with fabricating a vessel mounted net gun mount for use in upcoming capture attempts. If captured, transmitters will be attached to birds in an attempt to monitor changes in wintering and breeding locations.

Washington State Parks Index Peregrine Eyrrie Meeting:

District 13 staff members met with Washington State Parks at Wallace Falls State Park to discuss protecting breeding peregrine falcons at the Index climbing wall. Falcons have nested on the wall for many years, but recently have been moving their eyrie to different locations. WDFW works with the local climbing community and Parks staff members to close certain

sections of the wall during the nesting period. Staff members discussed plans for moving forward as we monitor the site and try to determine where the birds are nesting so disturbance from climbers can be minimized.

DNR Peregrine Falcon Consultation: District 13 staff members consulted with DNR about a timber sale that is near a peregrine eyrie. Although the bird is no longer listed as threatened or endangered, DNR staff members frequently seek our advice to develop plans that protect the birds from disturbance.

STATE OF WASHINGTON  JANUARY 2016

**DISAPPEARANCE AND RETURN OF HARBOR PORPOISE TO PUGET SOUND:
20 YEAR PATTERN REVEALED FROM WINTER AERIAL SURVEYS**

Evenson, J.R., D. Anderson, B.L. Murphie, T.A. Cyra, and J. Calambokidis



Technical Report



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**



Cascadia
Research
Collective 
non-profit research and education since 1979

North Cascades Elk: Biologist Yarborough attended the technical meeting with tribal co-managers. The group discussed fencing, hoof disease, and upcoming trapping and survey efforts.



Conflict Specialist Witman and District Biologist Yarborough attended an elk hoof disease workshop with Dr. Mansfield. The workshop was “hands on” and included examining elk hooves in different stages of disease. The information will be beneficial to help identify the presence of hoof abnormalities when examining hooves in the field.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity project: Biologist DeBruyn and Swan Technician Trejo continued to monitor for swan mortality and morbidity in northwest Washington. Twelve of the 15 mortalities reported this week came from Whatcom County. Total swan mortalities have now reached 324. With nearly 100 more mortalities this season than last, swan mortality has increased 42% compared to the 2014-2015 swan season.

One rehabilitated swan was captured off of Lake Terrell after it was found incapable of flight. After being taken back to the Whatcom Humane Society, it expired with the cause of death unknown.

DeBruyn began preparing documentation needed to export swan samples to Canada for analysis. The Canadian Wildlife Service is a partner in the project and takes responsibility for testing swan parts for lead levels. All live swans captured are also tested for blood lead levels by staff members at Whatcom Humane Society Wildlife Rescue.

TRUS Weekly Mortality Report (as of 22-Feb-16)						
	Lead suspect*	Powerline suspect	Other trauma	Undetermined	Feather Pile	Total
Sumas	11	2	1	4	9	27
Whatcom	160	33	2	19	30	244
Skagit	18	20	2	5	3	48
Snohomish	8	20	0	2	2	32
	197	75	5	30	44	351
Percents	56.13%	21%	1%	9%	13%	100.00%

*Does not include one lead suspect from King County

East/West Bear Project: Biologist Smith assisted Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil and Biologist Maletzke during the final week of bear den work for this season on the west side. This portion of the project entails locating dens, placing cameras to document emergence and cub numbers, recollaring/adjusting collars on sub-adult males, recollaring/adjusting collars on adult females, and potentially collaring yearling cubs. Work where newborn cubs are known to be present will be limited (camera placement only) to avoid den abandonment.



GPS collar replacement on the west side during the East/West Bear Project

Westside Cougar Project: Biologist Smith assisted Wildlife Research Scientist Kertson and others with an attempt to capture and mark a cougar.

Cougar in large tree during capture attempt



Black Bear Management Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman attended a black bear management phone conference to discuss new management feedback and recommendations on black bear management across Washington State. Statewide staff members expressed,

defended and provided their critical science-based reasoning for their top priorities, recommendations, and opposition to executive recommendations.

PHS and Growth Management: Biologist Anderson and King County area habitat biologists (Biologists Heller and Peace this week) continue to collaborate, when needed, on various municipal wildlife management requests provided via the State Growth Management Act and housed under the WDFW PHS program. Biologist Anderson has sent out a few requests to municipalities and landowners regarding their needs and the shift in wildlife management



consultation and guidance from Wildlife to Habitat.

Union Bay, Lake Washington, and the University of Washington Arboretum – natural spaces that are considered an urban winter waterfowl concentration area (up to 3-5,000+ individuals based on long-term trends) and an urban Biodiversity Areas and Corridors under the Habitat PHS program –
Photo by Biologist Anderson

Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary: Biologist Anderson responded to a number of inquiries regarding the program, outreach, and

partnering. Anderson discussed moving the program forward into the 21st century with Manager Link and reinitiated contact with Olympia staff members regarding the different aspects. The WDFW Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary and Living with Wildlife website/programs were apparently mentioned in this month's issue of Birdwatching Magazine (Five Yards that Birds Love). This information came from a citizen collaborator that works with Biologist Anderson. The article can be found online at <http://www.birdwatchingdaily.com/>

WDFW-Woodland Park Zoo Urban Amphibian Monitoring: Biologist Anderson continues to assist volunteers with ID and data capture, as well as network with NGO, municipal, and private landowners regarding efforts and collaborations. Anderson has found some internal efforts of others (e.g. municipalities) that have captured amphibian data and is working to obtain this information for DFW.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Estuary Restoration Project: Project Coordinator Brokaw and Ducks Unlimited staff members discussed upcoming grant funding opportunities that are potential good fits for the Leque Island project construction funding. Projects Coordinator Brokaw began drafting materials for an application to the Stillaguamish Salmon Recovery Funding Board.

Fir Island Farm Water Data Download: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat Planner Friebel downloaded a portion of the water level data loggers on the site. Most of the loggers were unreachable due to high surface water conditions on the site, so they will return to finish the procedure at a later date.

Hovander House Bat Colony: Manager Kessler met with the Ferndale High School wood shop teacher to discuss having students make the two Bat Rocket Roost boxes for the Hovander House

bat colony. The teacher and students were excited to work on this project. Manager Kessler will supply the materials for the Rocket Boxes. The Rocket Boxes will be used by the male bats, while the females will use the Maternity Roost boxes which will also be installed near the Hovander House.



Bat Rocket Box

Lake Terrell, Rainbow and Intalco Ponds Water Levels: Manager Kessler monitored the high water levels in Lake Terrell, as well as Rainbow and Intalco ponds. Both lake and ponds are at flood levels due to the recent heavy rains. Boards were removed from both the Rainbow and Intalco ponds water controls to help lower the high water levels in each.



Rainbow Pond full at the Whatcom Wildlife Area

Nooksack Unit Flooding: Manager Kessler monitored the Nooksack River flooding on the riverfront dike on the Nooksack Unit near Marietta. Heavy rains caused the river to rise and overflow the dike, which flooded the Marietta parking area on the south end of the Nooksack Unit. The river once again scoured out parts of the riverfront dike trail, but did not cause much more damage than was already present from previous larger floods. These dike scours are scheduled to be repaired this spring in conjunction with the Whatcom County River & Flood division.

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Sound Salmon Solutions staff members to review the planting plan for the Harris Creek Salmon Restoration Project. Sound Salmon has four volunteer planting events scheduled in the coming weeks to complete this project.

Private Lands/Access Management

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

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

Wildlife Management

Brant Capture Project Preparations and Management: Biologist DeBruyn worked with Waterfowl Specialist Evenson and District 13 staff members to prepare to capture western high arctic brant in Padilla Bay. Several capture scenarios were developed and prepared. The purpose of the captures is to equip several birds with satellite transmitters to monitor their seasonal movements to the breeding grounds and examine winter habitat use in Padilla Bay. Biologist DeBruyn and Science Technician Trejo (with the help of Enforcement) picked up buoys and anchors that delineated the boundaries of the Swinomish brant reserve. Due to loss of markers, it was decided that they would be removed for the offseason.



Western high arctic brant – Photo by Tim Moser

Spring Bear Hunt Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell spoke with Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Northwest Regional Silviculturist Hurd and several large private industrial timber companies about private land access, upcoming hunting efforts to

mitigate timber damage, potential strategies moving forward, and how the Wildlife Conflict and Private Land Access programs can be tailored to assist them with future bear related mitigation work. Coordination and field meetings are being established from early March.

State Prohibited Species Needs – Management Planning Collaboration with Fish Program Aquatic Invasive Species Unit– Region 4 Efforts: Biologists Anderson and Milner provided comments on a proposed management plan regarding Prohibited Species. Anderson worked with AIS staff members to provide outreach.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Planning: Biologist Anderson examined “Sensitive Areas” of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Management Area, where specific areas of units are being examined for providing more guidance to lessen disturbance to wildlife during periods of , for example, breeding. The suggestions and mapped areas were submitted to Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm.

Wildlife Areas

Island Unit/North Leque Meeting: WDFW staff members met with the Swinomish Tribe, Skagit River Systems Cooperative, and NOAA Fisheries to discuss project concepts proposed at the Island Unit and North Leque Island. The Island Unit project involves replacing a failing tidegate and the North Leque project involves creating additional tidal channel connection points

into the portion of Leque Island that is north of Highway 532. The groups discussed whether or not the North Leque project could be eligible as compensatory mitigation for the tidegate replacement project.

Samish River Unit Parking Lot Funding: Projects Coordinator Brokaw drafted a project description and provided a map needed for a funding opportunity through the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

Intalco Unit Archery Range: Manager Kessler met with the new representative from the Custer Sportsmen’s Club who will be managing the Intalco Unit Archery Range. This archery range consists of a loop trail of 30 targets that goes through woods, fields, and wetlands on the land adjacent to and owned by the Alcoa Aluminum Plant. The course is open from March to the end of August. Several weekend 3-D target events and a Biathlon are also held throughout the summer. Several parts of the archery course are also wheelchair accessible.



Post-waterfowl season on the Skagit Wildlife Area

Private Lands/Access Management

Samish River Unit: Region 4 Private Lands Access staff members met with Skagit Wildlife Area staff members to discuss the future of hunting opportunity on the Samish River Unit. They discussed specific issues, including how to guide the restoration plantings this upcoming spring, how to plant crops to enhance the area for waterfowl, and how to manage hunting access. Staff members will be meeting again soon to look over map details and discuss yearly and more long-term strategies.



Pictured here is a westerly view of the newly restored Samish River Unit from the north end of the property

Wildlife Viewing Opportunities and Coordination: Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell spoke with a local Hawk Watch International representative about wildlife viewing opportunities in Region 4. Supervisor Caldwell is planning on meeting with the representative in the future to view sites and discuss any issues that may exist. Supervisor Caldwell also contacted San Juan Island and Seattle Audubon Society representatives about upcoming meeting



coordination efforts. These meetings are set to occur in March.

WDFW owned Pier 86 will soon be given a facelift with funding from the Department's Capital Asset Management Fund

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator

Master Hunter: Coordinator Dazey assisted to find volunteers for a fencing project in the Enumclaw area.

Volunteer Support: Volunteer Coordinator Dazey assisted a new volunteer with signing up on CERVIS, the Department's volunteer portal. Dazey also met with a representative of the Snohomish Sportsman's Club from Snohomish High School and discussed projects that they could accomplish to help WDFW. Much thanks to Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm, who has been very supportive of this group's efforts to assist WDFW with accomplishing their goals.

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

Wildlife Management

Mountain Goat: Biologist Yarborough attended the Seattle Puget Sound Chapter of Safari Club International's Annual Banquet and Fundraiser. The statewide mountain goat tag was auctioned off and the attendees were very supportive of the Department's efforts towards mountain goat research and conservation.

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to the Acme area of Skagit County to discuss elk damage on agricultural lands with several landowners. Witman spent the afternoon with a member of the Swinomish Tribe touring elk damage properties and meeting several landowners in Skagit County. Witman coordinated scientific collection efforts to collect biological samples from limping elk in the Acme area. The efforts were unsuccessful, but further attempts are ongoing. Witman responded to the report of an elk that was struck by a vehicle near the Baker Lake Store on State Route 20. The yearling elk was located and donated to a local tribe.

Elk Damage: Biologist Smith continued to work with landowners experiencing elk damage to grass crops and fencing. Smith continued to coordinate with volunteers and landowners involved in ongoing fence repair work.

Elk in grass crops – Photo by landowner



Wildlife Areas

Agricultural Lease Requirements:

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian

Boehm delivered the 2015 Agricultural Lease Excise Tax forms to each of the farmers with agricultural contracts. Manager Boehm also met with the Sky Valley Tractor Club to discuss a new lease for the Crescent Lake Unit.



Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm installed seasonal educational and informational signage to all of the Snoqualmie Area parking lots

Wildlife Area Advisory Committee:

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm scheduled the initial 2016 Advisory Committee meeting for

February 24. The agenda and meeting notes were prepared in advance of the meeting.

Fir Island Farm: Rotton toured the Fir Island Farms restoration site to monitor the field planting response in preparation for the year two construction planning meeting next week. Rotton participated in a brief WDFW conference call to prep for the FIF Year 2 construction calendar discussion with IMCO.

Skagit Headquarters: Natural Resource Technician Curran Cosgrove and Assistant Manager Meis attended a two day session with a local farm supply store to earn continuing education credits for their WSDA Pesticide License. Rotton continues to monitor pump station and tide gate operations while coordinating with Dike District #22 on drain needs and the pump station agreement. Cosgrove worked with Dike District #22 personnel to coordinate pump house monitoring and operation during the substantial rain event last weekend. Rotton is continuing to work through the bid process with Procurement Specialist Chris Cohen to acquire a new trailered fuel tank to be purchased with the State Treasurer's loan program. Meis and Cosgrove picked up logs from a nearby pole company as part of the boom log project for the new pump house at the

Headquarters Unit. Cosgrove monitored logs and other debris lodged against the Wildlife Area moorage facility on the Skagit River during this week's high river levels.

DeBay's Slough: Cosgrove continued monitoring waterfowl use at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit and surrounding Nookachamps Creek area.

Samish River Unit: Rotton, Meis, and Cosgrove met with Region 4 private lands staff members to discuss hunting blind placement post project, the shrub and tree planting plan, trails, and the potential location of moist soil management areas (10 acres). Manager Rotton will clarify the constraints of the moist soil unit with NRCS.

*Skagit Wildlife Area
Manager Belinda Rotton on
the Samish River Unit
analyzing the placement of a
moist soil management area
(10 acres), trails, and blinds
post enhancement project on
the unit*



Private Lands/Access Management

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program Analysis and Post-season Management: Private Lands Biologist Wingard continued entering data collected this waterfowl season at Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites. This information was gathered by Region 4 private lands staff members, five volunteers, and waterfowl hunters who filled out harvest report and hunter satisfaction cards at the sites. The analysis of this data will allow private lands staff members to determine use and success at each of our sites. This information provides private lands staff members a clearer picture of which sites are productive, and how different management styles lead to differences in hunt quality. Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo continued unit breakdowns throughout Skagit, Whatcom, and Snohomish counties. With recent heavy rains this past week, it has made for some challenging conditions out in the field. Deyo and Otto were able to get a few of the dryer units completed.

Volunteers: Private Lands Access Biologist Wingard met with a volunteer who assisted with surveys of waterfowl quality hunt units. The volunteer signed the mileage reimbursement form and is looking forward to more opportunities to volunteer with WDFW.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Staging Material Staging: Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo continued work on cleaning, organizing, and staging waterfowl hunting equipment at storage areas in Whatcom and Skagit county field offices.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator

Hunter Education: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey evaluated the teaching team at the Issaquah Sportsman club. Following the class, Dazey conferenced with the chief instructor and discussed recommendations for improvement for one of the presenters.

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 five new hunter education classes for 2016. Dazey updated the Kalkomey database and removed two instructors from the active list who had retired as volunteers. Dazey answered questions from a potential instructor about the process to apply.

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 that 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.

Region 4 Hunter Education Instructor In-Service Training: Coordinator Dazey sent out reminders to Region 4 instructors about the upcoming In-Service Training and encouraged them to send an RSVP so that a sufficient amount of food can be ordered. Dazey reviewed the Power Point presentation prepared by Olympia for the upcoming IST.

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

Wildlife Area Management Plan Update: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continues to coordinate with the Wildlife Area Management Planning Team in preparation for the first stakeholder meeting.

Training: Natural Resource Technicians Deyo and Otto attended a two day growers meeting in Skagit County. This was put on by the Skagit Farmers Coop and updated growers on a variety of topics, including new safety and health products, pesticide and herbicide management, and a wealth of other information. Otto and Deyo were able to receive classroom credits to remain current on their pesticide applicator licenses. Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell explored professional development and training options for staff members in the Learning Management System. Several good opportunities were found involving the most up to date Microsoft Office Software Suite, Geographic Information Systems, CPR/First Aid/Blood Borne pathogens, and entry-level and advanced leadership trainings. Supervisor Caldwell will work with Region 4 personnel to provide these training opportunities as soon as possible.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle Annual Meeting: Biologists Anderson, Bergh, and Butler, along with Regional Program Manager Jonker, attended the annual Western Pond Turtle Working Group meeting in Lacey. Reports were given on the past year's activities from the Columbia Gorge and South Puget Sound populations, as well as from the Oregon and Woodland Park Zoos and the Sustainability in Prisons Program. Much of the day was spent discussing the results from last year's investigations into Ulcerative Shell Disease and plans for the coming year. Disease remains the top priority for this state endangered species and experts from across the country are partners in the investigation into the etiology and treatment of the disease.

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Jenny Creek: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Sample cleared the parking area of the Jenny Creek Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area to remove scotch broom plants. The plants were cut near the ground and an herbicide was applied directly to the cut stump. She also cut and treated several large English ivy vines that have established and are growing up tree trunks and on the ground. Sample will treat any scotch broom or ivy that was missed or still alive in the next several months.

Mudflow Unit Riverbank and Channel Stabilization: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald met with Habitat Engineers Smith and Corwin from Headquarters to evaluate previous projects on the Mudflow Unit to stabilize banks and the river channel of the North Fork Toutle River. They evaluated the performance of past structure types, checked them for damage from this past winter's storms, and discussed locations to place and fix structures on the upcoming project that will be constructed later this year. Overall, considering that the high flow event on the North Fork Toutle River in mid-December was greater than the 1996 flood event that hit the Region, the structures did a very good job in protecting the riverbank from erosion and lessened the impact of habitat loss. In 1996, the Mudflow Unit lost over 400 acres of habitat and this past winter the loss was less than 10 acres.

Riverbank and channel stabilization structures on the Mudflow Unit

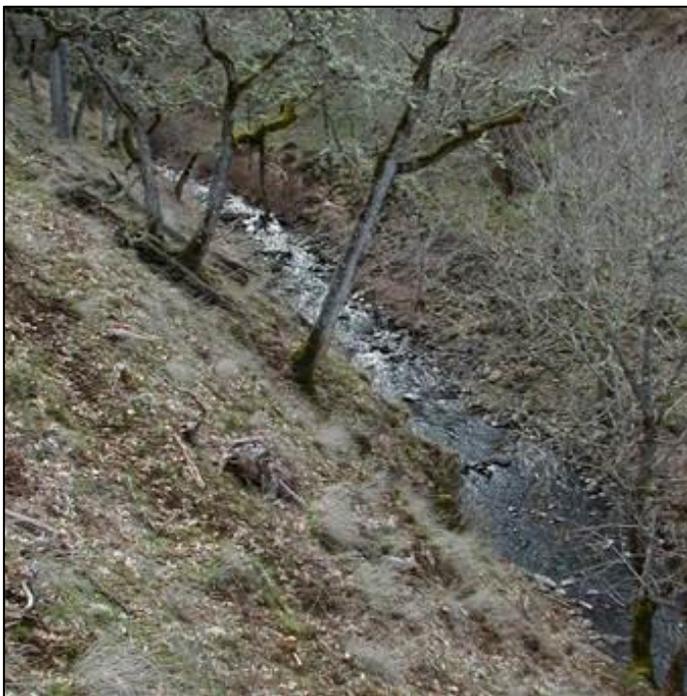




Habitat Engineers Smith and Corwin discussing upcoming project strategies

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Environmental Evaluation of Grazing Permit Area: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven conducted a site visit to two parcels within the lower Klickitat River Canyon that are grazed under permit to check the condition of the rangeland. Fish Biologist Byrne also toured the site, where we found creek flows to be high. No issues were observed.



Knight Creek

Forest Management Planning: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis researched the history of the parcels that are planned for a timber thinning project in order to identify priority areas where archeological surveys should be done. Staff members reviewed the statutory warranty deeds for the properties, property ownership maps from 1934, and 1969 aerial photos to learn a few details of historical use. Also, Technician Davis did a walk through Unit 1 to look for significant features.

Access Reconnaissance: Technician

Davis checked on the road access to a remote parcel on the Mineral Springs Unit and found that it is readily accessible by vehicle. A volunteer group is planning rare plant surveys in the area soon and staff members wanted to ensure that they can get to this location.

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

Wildlife Management

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt: The 2015-2016 SW Washington late season goose continued this week. WDFW Biologist Butler traveled throughout Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties to monitor hunting activity in the field on private

lands. Following a very productive opening week, hunters reported seeing a lot of birds in the area, but fewer birds coming into range. However, with a little patience, many hunters came out successful.



Successful SW Washington late season goose hunters

As of Sunday, February 21, approximately 43 hunters were contacted and 84 geese were checked during the late season. No dusky Canada geese were known to have been harvested in the area this week. This leaves the total number of dusky Canada geese known to have been harvested in the area at 16. Hunters need to continue exercising caution to avoid harvesting a dusky Canada goose, as there are currently many throughout the area. The late season goose hunt continues on only private lands until Wednesday, March 9. Anyone interested in participating in the late season can refer to the Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet for further details. The pamphlet can be found on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Possible Property Acquisition: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Conflict Specialist Conklin met with a property owner along Silver Lake who has property adjacent to the Canal Road Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area to conduct a site visit. Conflict Specialist Conklin had been contacted a couple of months ago by the landowner and asked if the Agency would be interested in acquiring about 50 acres of wetlands on the eastside of Silver Lake. The property is wet most of the year and has a salmon bearing stream flowing through it as well. Several hundred ducks and several small flocks of geese were seen on the property during the visit. The landowner was interested in the possibility of a land swap with the Agency and Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald will look into this option as a means of acquiring the property.



Looking north towards the Canal Road Unit



Looking south away from the Canal Road Unit

Private Lands

Hunt by Registration: Biologist Meyer and Assistant District Biologist Stephens met with staff members from the Columbia Land Trust to discuss current agreements and two new access contracts in Wahkiakum County.

Access

Stinson Flats and Kress Lake: This winter is continuing to affect the Region’s access sites. The Klickitat River collapsed the bank at Stinson Flats, causing the boat launch to wash away and slide into the river. At Kress Lake, more sinkholes are forming around the large one that already formed over the winter. The area is swampy and wet and might need to be closed temporarily for safety reasons until repairs can be made.



Collapsed bank at Stinson Flats



Additional sinkholes at Kress Lake



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

District 10 Wildlife Conflict

Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin coordinated with several disabled hunters this week interested in participating in the Grays

River area damage hunt. In addition, Conklin sent a master hunter to a dairy in the Mossy Rock Unit after she received multiple calls about elk damage from two farms. The green up of fields is beginning to attract large numbers of elk. The master hunter was successful the first morning on the property.

District 10 & Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal, with several days of low temperatures in the 20s. 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 3,000 to 7,000 feet during the upcoming week, with temperatures in the valleys ranging into the 50s. The 6-10 and 8-14 day forecasts are for above average temperatures and normal precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The March 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. Snowpack is about average for the Region.

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: Three mortalities have 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 remained moderate this past week, with mild conditions across the district. Rain and warm temperatures continue to melt the snowpack and creeks are full but not flooding. Current snow water equivalent data indicates that the south Cascades are at 97 percent of normal. The Soda Springs Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area no longer has snow cover.

Winter Severity: Winter conditions continue to be typical of February weather in the south Cascades and Klickitat River drainage. Snow coverage is primarily above 2,500 feet 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 2,500 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 the Trout Lake and Husum areas, 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

Concern for Three Swans: Biologist Ament was contacted on February 17, 2016 by Matt Heins, who is the manager of the Dungeness Farms Hunting Club. He expressed his concerns over the fact that two adult swans and one juvenile trumpeter swan had not left a common night roost pond by 10:00 that morning. The pond is on hunt club property and Matt was aware that most swans fly off from the pond to their feeding areas by 8:30 or so. He reported that a field the swans are currently feeding in for carrots each day was part of historic hunting range for the club. He believed that there may be residual lead pellets that are now exposed due to recent plowing of the field. He was worried that the feeding swans may ingest lead pellets when feeding in the field. Biologist Ament was given permission to enter the pond property. She hiked around the pond in the late afternoon and found no swans present at the pond. A pair of Canada geese and a variety of other waterfowl were present at the pond. The local swans are frequenting this night roost area now that hunting season is over. She conducted a swan count at the field where the swans feed and the count did match counts from earlier in the week.

Trumpeter Swan Monitoring: There was a concern reported about three swans on February 17, 2016, but no injured or sick swans were located. The swan monitoring volunteers reported the following for last week: *Sequim Valley Farm gave permission for counting access. Between upper and lower fields east of Schmuck Road, there were 96 adult and 19 juveniles. Across the road west were 10 adult and four juveniles. Clapp farm had 22 adult and four juveniles and the airport had 4 adult and three juvenile. No swans at Medsker, Kitchen-Dick, or Lamar. 162 total for the day.*

This is now the highest day count of swans recorded for the Dungeness Valley.



Pair of trumpeter swans in sheet water site east of Sequim

Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Habitat Improvement Review:

Biologist Ament spent time on February 16 meeting with DNR staff members, along with a WCC crew leader and his crew at a Taylor's checkerspot butterfly site located west of Port Angeles. The crew will be employed for the next few weeks to work on clearing a new habitat improvement unit. The crew will be working to complete more tree removal and cut back brush within the unit. The crew also may complete some cutting/ spraying of scotch broom. Biologist Ament reviewed the unit with the crew and provided comments to the crew leader related to the work completed last fall. She also educated the crew on the biology of Taylor's checkerspot

butterflies and explained the sensitivity of working in Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly habitat. She was back on site February 20 and observed some of the brush cutting and piling completed.



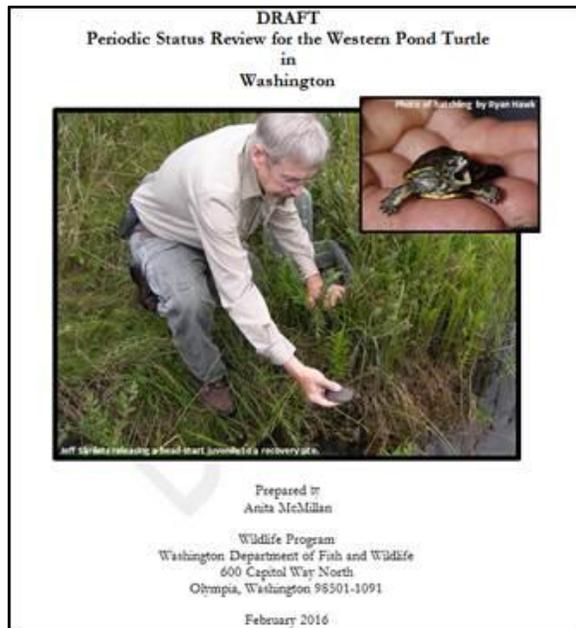
Shrubs and trees proposed for removal in the habitat improvement unit



Shrub removal and piling initiated last week at known Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly site

Western Pond Turtle Periodic Status Review: Biologist McMillan submitted the Draft Periodic Status Review for the Western Pond Turtle in Washington for internal review.

Peregrine Falcons in Tacoma: The new peregrine falcon box placed at the Heritage Building in Tacoma last year has been found by the resident pair of peregrines and they seem to approve! The female (named Harriett by locals) was photographed perched on the box while the male (Murray) stood guard on the buildings corner ledge. This is great news for Tacoma peregrine enthusiasts and the peregrines themselves. The previous box was deteriorating and young eyasses had to be rescued several times over the previous years from having fallen to the street level after taking early flights. The new box was built and installed by local volunteers Fergus Hyke and Martin Muller. The box is more weather resistant, with walking ramps that will hopefully help keep eyasses from jumping out the front and landing on street level several stories down.





New box installed 2015



Female (Harriett) perched on her new box February 2016

Western Pond Turtle: Biologist Tirhi and staff members, along with Wildlife Area Manager Belson, toured the Lakewood turtle property to discuss and plan a possible expansion of the ponds used for recovery of western pond turtles. This expansion is needed to accommodate an expanding turtle population and to meet recovery goals.

Biologist Tirhi and staff members represented District 11 at the annual Western Pond Turtle Working Group meeting. The meeting is used by WDFW to plan internal turtle activities for the coming year(s) and meet with captive rearing facilities and other partners to discuss long-term recovery of pond turtles. Excellent presentations and discussions were held related to Ulcerative Shell Disease, site management at both the Lakewood and Columbia River recovery sites, and captive rearing at the Woodland Park and Oregon zoos.

Oregon Spotted Frog: District 11 staff members met to plan the 2016 season and have begun egg surveys in the Allen Creek drainage in Thurston County. Surveys will begin in much of the remainder of the county this week and continue into March.

Wildlife Areas

Chinook Estuary Restoration: Olympic Wildlife Area staff members assisted the Region 5 Columbia River Estuary Team at Chinook Wildlife Area during the week. Staff members moved willow stacks and plants to sites only accessible by boat as part of a large restoration project for fish passage. Areas that were disturbed during channel work are being planted with native plants and shrubs, which are some of the last steps to finish the restoration project.





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

Wildlife Management:

Sealing of (Collared) Cougar Pelt (Update): Biologist Ament sealed a cougar pelt on February 13. This female cougar contained a collar that had been deployed as part of the Makah Cougar Research Project. The hunter had contacted Tribal Biologist Rob McCoy and was notified that the collar had apparently quit working. Biologist Ament contacted Rob to get more information about the cougar. He provided some interesting information. He reported:

We caught her in January of 2015 when we were trying to capture back our long term adult male whose collar was in recovery mode. She was a bonus as he was courting her. We caught her right off 112 north of the 112/113 junction, and she treed within sight of the highway. I don't know if Shannon has a picture or not. I'll ask. After so many cougars, we weren't so diligent about taking pictures. We only received about four months of data and it wasn't very good as the collars were a new type (cheaper) and only collected two points per day (most days none). I got reimbursed for both I purchased as the one we put on our male the same week also failed. She was a young cat, and I'll be surprised if she ages out at much over three years old. If you ask Kim Sager Fradkin, she has pictures of this cat eating one of her fawns from a game camera, if you need something in the near term. Thanks for the help on this.

Biologist Ament provided this information to the hunter. See photos provided below from Shannon Murphie and Kim Sager Fradkin.



Makah Biologist's Murphie and McCoy with female cougar collared January 2015



Collared cougar captured on a trail camera after killing a collared deer fawn

Dusky Goose Survey: Biologist Sundstrom conducted hunter goose checks over the weekend in both Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. One goose hunter in Grays Harbor County was invalidated for harvesting and hiding a dusky goose.

Biologist Michaelis and Sundstrom conducted the survey for collared dusky Canada geese on Wednesday. Biologist Michaelis observed a total of 39 collars and was able to get reads on all but three. This is the most collared dusky geese he has observed in one single day. In the same vicinity, the number of collared dusky geese observed has been between 12 and 15.

Disgruntled Hunter Response: Biologist Tirhi and Customer Service Representative Jim Frye wrote a response to a hunter drawn for the new 6014 permit hunt in Buckley/Enumclaw that was unhappy with elk availability and access to property. Tirhi provided an estimation of the amount of open hunt land, hunt success rates for the past several years (twice that of state average), and reference to the comment in the hunting pamphlet that alerts hunters that access may be limited.

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

Private Lands /Conflict

Elk Hazing: Conflict Specialist Blankenship has created a master hunter service project to nonlethally haze elk off of a dairy operation in Tenino. Currently, five master hunters have volunteered their time to assist this landowner in keeping the elk off of the fields. Blankenship and a master hunter volunteer assisted hazing the herd of 40 elk off the landowner's property and up into DNR forest lands. The elk have not been seen since. Master hunters will be assisting the landowner daily by monitoring the fields and hazing the elk if they show up again.

Elk Donation: Conflict Specialist Blankenship and a landowner in Roy harvested an elk to reinforce hazing efforts to reduce elk damage to commercial crops. Blankenship and the landowner agreed that this elk would be donated to the Nisqually Tribe. The Nisqually Tribe appreciated this donation from DFW and the landowner, as they are underway preparing for their annual Canoe Journey.

Fawns "Trapped" in a Garden: Conflict Specialist Blankenship received a report of two fawns that were stuck in a fenced off garden near Rainier. The reporting party was driving past the residence and noticed that the two fawns seemed unable to get out of the fenced garden. Blankenship arrived at the residence and noticed the two fawns still in the garden area eating the plants inside. The homeowner advised Conflict Specialist Blankenship that they were not stuck in the garden and that the gate was accidentally left open overnight. The rescue mission of two fawns quickly turned into a hazing mission by the homeowner to stop them from eating his garden.