

Wildlife Program

Week of January 18 – January 24, 2016

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Golden eagle monitoring: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy assisted Research Biologist Watson with trapping wintering eagles in the Tucannon Valley. We were able to capture and tag an adult male, who received a GPS transmitter.

WT Wooten WA – Golden Eagles: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman picked up the cameras that were set on roadkill to get pictures of golden eagles coming into the bait. The pictures were transferred to the S: drive for Research Biologist Watson.



Golden eagle, bald eagle, and bobcat on the deer carcass set for the golden eagle study

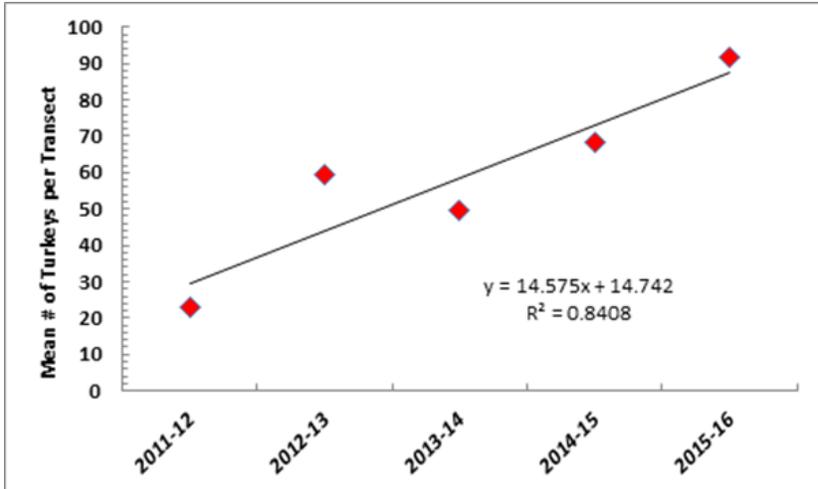
GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL EXPERIENCES

Wildlife Management

Winter Turkey Surveys: District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base compiled turkey survey data and worked with Fish Biologist Brian Walker to apply relevant statistical tests (linear regression and ANOVA) to interpret the data. This was followed by writing a draft annual project completion report. The number of turkeys observed this winter on standardized transects increased substantially from previous years.

Mean number of turkeys observed amongst 12 standardized transects surveyed each winter, 2011-2016

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



Private Lands/Wildlife Conflict

Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock: Biologist Shepherd continued to develop and discuss a process for selecting Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock in order to distribute limited funds to the potential cooperators who are at higher risk to wolf-livestock problems.

Cloverland Elk: Biologist Earl responded to reports of elk damage to fences in the Cloverland area. Biologist Earl observed sever fence damage and also observed more than 100 elk in the area, but was unable to get close enough to haze the elk due to adverse road conditions. Biologist Earl spoke with landowners in the area who were going to use ATVs to try to haze the elk back onto the wildlife area.



Cloverland fence damaged by elk

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery Surveys: Biologist Gallie and Gibbs followed up on tracks/burrow detections made on last week’s aerial survey. We checked five locations and confirmed all five were active pygmy rabbit burrows. DNA samples were collected to determine if these were wild born or captive reared rabbits. We documented an additional three active burrow systems on the

way to these points. What is most exciting with the location of these burrows is that they are outside of the core recovery area, occupying dispersal habitat patches that connect with other large blocks of shrub-steppe.

Biologist Gallie and Gibbs continue to conduct surveys for active pygmy rabbit burrows on the core Sagebrush Flats release area, which should consist mostly of wild surviving rabbits. To date, we have completed only two of the 20 units and have not detected a burrow system yet, although a recent kill site of a mule deer by coyotes was found.

On Thursday, Biologists Gibbs and Comstock, along with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Biologist Danielle Munzing, worked on Safe Harbor surveys on a DNR parcel at the intersection of St. Andrews and Heritage Road, north of Route 2, near the Dormier Enclosure.



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

Wildlife Management

Safe Harbor for Pygmy Rabbits: Biologist Comstock spent one day with Biologist Gibbs and DNR Biologist Munzing completing baseline surveys for pygmy rabbits on DNR property in the St. Andrews area. No evidence of pygmy rabbits was found.



Biologist Comstock surveying for pygmy rabbits in the fog and snow

Mule Deer: Development of crusty snow in the hills around Ephrata appears to have driven hungry mule deer to slightly lower elevations in search of food. This has increased the interaction of deer with

irrigation canals. Tracks in the snow indicate that trapped deer were able to walk out of the canal using the traction afforded by the crusty snow, but as temperatures increased many deer became trapped. Biologist Finger, with assistance from Access Program, the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area staff members, and a reporting party, worked to remove 14 mule deer from irrigation canals. Seven deer were removed using the new traction ramp (snow fence covered with burlap), and seven deer were removed by the traditional method of driving deer to vehicle access ramps or unlined canal sections, where the shallower slope allows deer to walk out. Though the traction

ramp is effective when herding deer isn't a possibility, it is still considerably easier to herd deer to vehicle access ramps whenever possible.



A yearling buck and doe look to the installed ramp with suspicion – Photo by Rich Finger

Josh Harmon and Joe Graves observing deer tracks to confirm that a yearling buck used the ramp to escape overnight – Photo by R. Finger

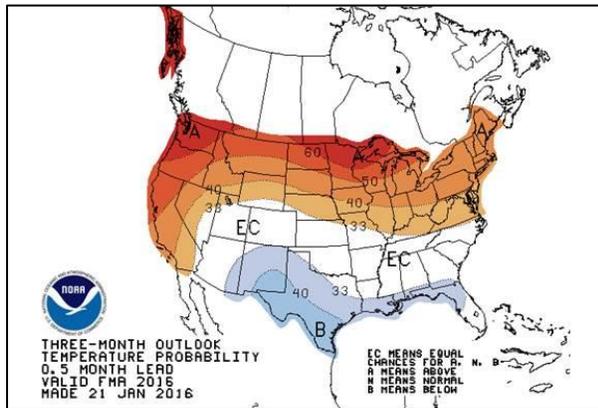


Observed Environment (District 6 Winter Conditions)

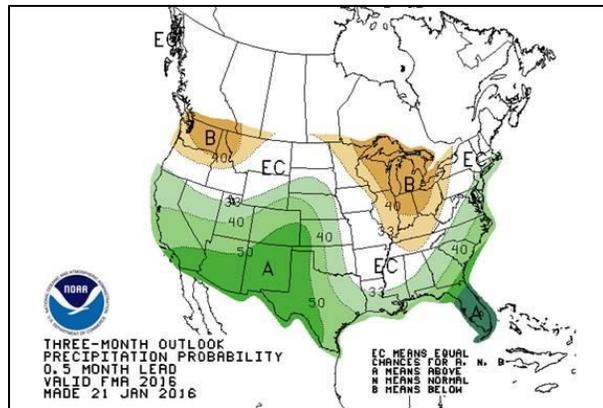
Recent Weather: The lowest elevations in the Okanogan Valley had day time high temperatures above freezing and several days of rain and sleet. This weather reduced the snow depth at the lowest elevations to around four inches. The lower Methow Valley experienced similar weather, as snow melt and accumulation were about even up the valley at Winthrop. Higher elevations experienced significant snow accumulation and the current snow water equivalent is now well above average for this time of year at Hart's Pass.

Short-Term Forecast: Day time high temperatures above freezing are forecast all week at lower and middle elevations in the district. A dry start to the week is expected to transition to significant rain by Thursday that will likely cause noticeable melting of the low elevation snow pack.

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 lower to middle elevations may have peaked for the winter.



February – April Temperature forecast



February – April precipitation forecast

Snow Depths: Snow depths on deer winter range vary from a few inches on 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 eight or more feet at pass level along the Cascade Crest.

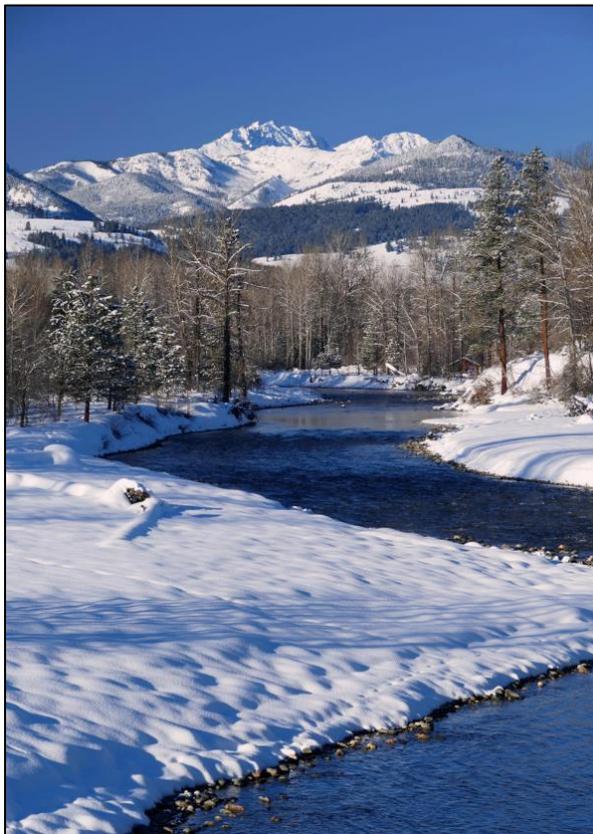
Snotel sites*

Hart's Pass (6500 ft): 98 in

Salmon Meadows (4,460 ft): 38 in

Gold Axe Camp (5360 ft) (Okanogan Highlands): 37 in

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



Methow Valley winter from Winthrop – Photo by Scott Fitkin



Plowing Peshastin public access = happy steelhead fisherman – Photo by Joe Graves



Snow continues to pile up at HQ – Photo by Sherry Furnari



Right – A couple of wintry scenes following up a hoar frost event in the Sinlahekin Valley. The snow is quickly melting in most locations in the valley with some south-facing hill sides near the northern boundary becoming void of snow – Photos by Justin Haug



Sharp-tailed grouse just outside the office door – Photo by Jim Olson

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Areas

LT Murray Wildlife Area Elk Feeding/ Winter Conditions:

Elk numbers were consistent, with 800 in Watt and 600 in Robinson. There was some snow early in the week but a warming trend kicked in and it is melting now. The warmer weather is making it difficult to get around in the slush and the crew is still not able to get into the Robinson bowl to get a count. This weather will continue into next week, with highs in the mid-40s and lows just above freezing.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Taylor flew again this week, herding over 115 elk off private land. Thirty-four elk were moved out of fruit orchards on the south side of Cleman and near Naches back onto state land near the Cleman Sheep feed site. Another 80 to 90 (or more) were again moved out of private land on the west end of Cleman. Deep, crusty snow made it difficult to push them all the way back to the Mellotte feed site. They showed up again at private ranches by the end of the week.

Mellotte Feed Site elk numbers: ~1,100 animals.

Temperatures: Warmer temperatures and rain/snow mix through the week has made mid-elevation snow rotten and difficult for elk and equipment to move through. Rain and warm temperatures made for hard access to the feed site. The ice base is melting to thick slush, making it hard to get the feed truck through and to plow.



Feeding: Manager Confer Morris fed Mellotte elk on Wednesday while Assistant Manager Taylor was flying.

Mellotte Feed Site Winter Weather: Weather temperatures were a bit above normal, with highs in the upper 30s to mid-40s, and low temperatures in the 30s. Temperatures for the coming week are expected to be near normal, with highs in the low 40s and lows in the 20s to low 30s. Rain is possible early in the week, changing over to a chance of snow showers later in the week.

Animal Condition: Elk are in seasonally good condition, although wet conditions and cool nights have been hard on young calves, with three mortalities this week.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Oak Creek staff members continued to feed elk at all sites with elk numbers staying at high levels. Snow on the MLK, Jr. holiday prompted plowing and snow removal from around facilities. During the rest of the week trucks and the dozer were used to try and remove slush and allow for water runoff. Visitation continues to be very high both during the week and on the weekends.

Group of bull elk on the Nile feed site

Elk Conflict: On Monday, Manager Huffman received a phone call from a landowner on Cleman Mountain about a hole



in the elk fence and elk in his orchard. Huffman met with the landowner and checked the patch the landowner had made in the fence. The landowner reported about 30 elk observed adjacent to his orchard. Huffman contacted Conflict Specialist Wetzel and Wenas Assistant Manager Taylor about helicopter time to push the elk back through the fence. A flight was scheduled for Wednesday due to the large number of elk out in the Wenas.

Elk Fence Damage: On Wednesday, Manager Huffman and Forester Mackey worked to get elk back above the elk fence on Cleman Mountain. The landowner had observed elk on the fence that morning and, while waiting for the helicopter, Huffman and Mackey found a small hole in the fence where a couple elk had crossed under. The fence was cut in an effort to facilitate the movement of elk, as no gates are located in the area. The area was searched on foot for elk and tracks were observed going west on the fence towards another orchard. A gate was opened in that section of fence and one elk was observed going back through the re-entry gate. When the helicopter arrived in the area, they located 17 elk and pushed them several ridges over to the hole in the fence. Low fuel and lack of daylight ended the flight on Oak Creek. Additional elk are probably in the area, but most are back inside the fence. Huffman and Mackey patched the fence and closed all gates.



The helicopter pushing a stubborn cow towards a hole in the elk fence on Cleman Mountain

Peak Elk Counts for Week

Headquarters – 1085 total, 68 bulls, 17 spikes and 283 calves

Junction – 362 total, 38 bulls, 9 spikes and 98 calves

Nile – 348 total, 57 bulls, 12 spikes and 65 calves

Sheep – 200 total, with 15 elk

Cowiche – 1760 total, 138 bulls, 42 spikes and 397 calves

Winter Weather

Weather Condition: Weather this past week warmed up with rain and a little snow early in the week. The rain and warm temperatures made for wet slushy conditions in the parking lot and feed sites. Weather this coming week is expected to be in the 40s for highs and around freezing for lows, with a chance of more rain.

Animal Condition: Elk are in seasonally good condition, but elk that arrived with injuries or in poor condition have been dying. A cow with a prolapsed uterus died on the Nile feed site this past week.

Wildlife Management

Ferruginous Hawk Survey: District Biologist Fidorra worked on landowner access and volunteer coordination for the Ferruginous Hawk Survey. Fidorra met with the Audubon Society coordinator of the shrub-steppe songbird surveys to discuss volunteer coordination. Fidorra also contacted DNR regarding land access and discussed survey details with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Hanford contractors, who will monitor territories on Hanford/ALE.

Owl Disease Testing: District Biologist Fidorra collected and prepared a dead great-horned owl for shipping for disease testing.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz collected and shipped samples from a Cleman Mountain ewe that tested positive for *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* (MOVI) last month. The FedEx delivery didn't arrive at the lab until Friday afternoon. The lab had minimal time, but the initial gross findings pointed to no sign of pneumonia. Additional tests and more detailed histopathology are still pending. No sign of pneumonia was noted in any of the 200 bighorn sheep at the feed site.

Elk Surveys: Biologist Bernatowicz worked with Biologist Moore on selecting survey units for Yakima elk surveys. The Yakima herd has not been surveyed in two years due to mild winters. Helicopter costs have increased since the last survey and it did not look like it was feasible to fly both the Yakima and Colockum herds at the same sampling rate. Section Manager Nelson was contacted and additional funding approved.

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

Wildlife Management

Tri-Cities Sportsman Show: District Biologist Fidorra joined District 4 and Region 3 staff members at the Tri-Cities Sportsman Show over the weekend, where they interacted with the public, provided information on laws and programs, promoted shrub-steppe species awareness, and answered questions. The public appeared to be poorly aware of shrub-steppe issues, with many not familiar with the term "shrub-steppe."

Tri-Cities Sportsman Show: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand worked one shift at the Tri-Cities Sportsman Show. Attendance on the first day of the show appeared to be good with many questions from sportsmen related to hunting, fishing, and habitat protection.

Tri-Cities Sportsman Show: Natural Resource Technician 2 Kaelber spent time at the Tri-Cities Sportsman Show working at the WDFW booth.

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

Wildlife Management

Supply Delivery: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand traveled to Naches to deliver pyrotechnic supplies and assist Conflict Specialist Wetzel with hazing elk.

Deer Damage Complaint: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a deer damage complaint through the Enforcement Program from a small orchard development in the Benton City area. Several non-lethal techniques have been discussed with the owner.

Silver Dollar LHP Contract Amendments: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with the two landowners in the Silver Dollar LHP hunt program to discuss contract amendments and late season hunting opportunities.

DPP Permit Harvest: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored the harvest of DPP permits in Elk Area 3721 & 3722. One antlerless elk was reported harvested this week. The total harvest for the current permit season is 28 antlerless and eight spike bull elk.

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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman continued to deal with internet outage issues all week. On Friday, the internet provider finally repaired the tower and charged the batteries enough to keep internet throughout the weekend.

Discover Pass Sales: Manager Huffman organized deposits for donations and Discover Pass sales and made deposits at the bank. All paperwork was submitted to Olympia to track sales and to transfer funds to the correct accounts.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Hunt requested a go ahead for the purchase of some hand bales to replenish our supply. Most of our stockpile at Joe Watt has gone out for baiting elk that have gotten outside the elk fence back onto the Wildlife Area. We normally keep some small bales on hand in case of a breakdown that keeps us from being able to load the big 1,200 pound bales normally used at the feed sites. Hunt is pricing the hay and transport cost.

Snow Plow Update: Assistant Manager Hunt began looking into what parts, wiring, mounts, etc. it will take to get our snow plow onto a different truck. Our 1998 Chevy 2500 completed its last Wildlife Area task this week as a broken axle was added to the list of issues with it. Manager Winegeart has been working with Chris Miller in Olympia to replace it, and it looks like we have a 2015 Chevy 2500 lined up.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Wildlife Area staff members coordinated with Region 2 Enforcement to make a snowmobile trip to the Coffin Game Reserve Cabin to check its condition and monitor public winter use of the area. A broken window was found in the cabin, but it appears nothing was taken.



WDFW Arthur Coffin Game Reserve Cabin at the Colockum Wildlife Area



Assistant Manager Hagan, Officer Erhardt, and Officer Grant using snowmobiles to access the game reserve cabin on the Colockum Wildlife Area

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Sak completed a state weed report and submitted it, completed OPFs and other office duties, and lined up the necessary paper work to have a flatbed put on the new Ford pickup. The wildlife area can have one installed at a significantly lower cost going with an off-contract vendor, and the vendor is much closer to the wildlife area if service is needed.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Mid-Winter Swan Surveys: Staff members from Districts 13 and 14 and Private Lands, along with volunteers from Puget Sound Energy and the Northwest Swan Conservation Association, counted swans in Skagit, Whatcom, Snohomish, and Island counties. The counts are conducted yearly as part of midwinter waterfowl surveys. Data entry and analysis is ongoing and results will be available soon.



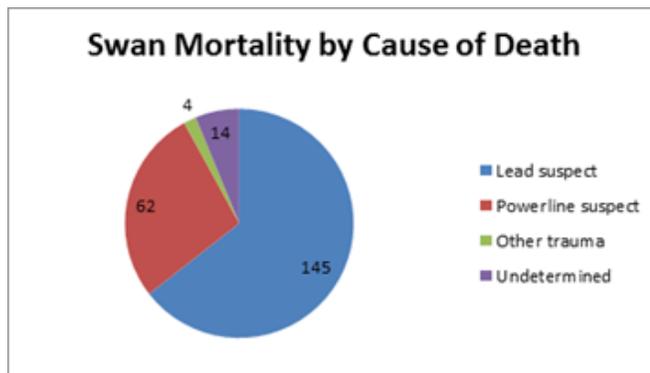
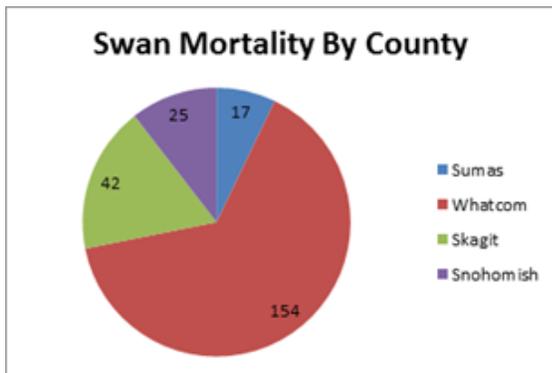
Trumpeter swans in Skagit County

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study:

Swan Technician Trejo continued to monitor swan mortality and morbidity throughout Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties. An additional 36 mortalities were recorded this week, bringing the season total to 221. Liver and gizzard tissue samples are collected from all swans to be tested for the presence of lead.

Surveillance for swan mortality and morbidity has largely been focused on lakes and ponds where swans roost.

TRUS Weekly Mortality Report						
	Lead suspect	Powerline suspect	Other trauma	Undetermined	Feather Pile	Total
Sumas	10	1	1	1	4	17
Whatcom	114	26	1	7	6	154
Skagit	15	17	2	5	3	42
Snohomish	6	18	0	1		25
	145	62	4	14	13	238
Percents	60.92%	26%	2%	6%	5%	100.00%



Sick & dead bird monitoring & carcass tally

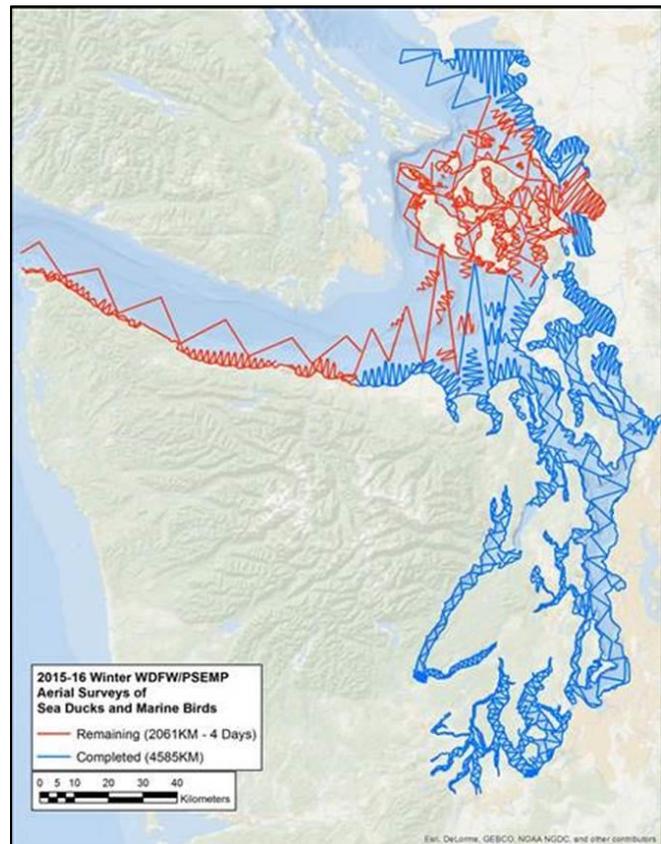
Below is the current tally. Since the last update on January 18, we have collected 40 carcasses, 32 of which are suspected to be lead-related.

- SP – four new, of which two lead-suspect (plus two feather piles)
- WH – 29 new, of which 28 lead-suspect
- SK – five new, of which none are lead-suspect (three powerline, one unconfirmed, one feather pile)

- SN – two new, both lead suspect

Estuary Restoration Bird Monitoring: Final decisions for sampling design, station placement, and land access are underway for this project headed up by staff members from Ecostudies Institute. District 13 staff members participated in field activities geared toward setting up the final sampling protocol.

Marine Waterfowl Surveys: Assistant District 13 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. Continuing unsettled weather has resulted in considerable area left to cover before the end of the survey period.



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

Black bear den in a hollow log



Greater Seattle Woodland Park Zoo – WDFW Annual Urban Amphibian Citizen

Survey Training: Biologist Anderson, along with Woodland Park Zoo Herptile Curator Dr. Jennifer Pramuk and Woodland Park Zoo Community Engagement Coordinator Jennifer Mears,

taught the annual citizen amphibian egg-mass survey to about 50 volunteers (other veteran surveyors did not show, as they are familiar and receive updates annually). The class went over methodology in survey, low-impact non-intrusive measures to be taken, working with landowners, decontamination needs, current amphibian conservation efforts and issues (e.g. chytrid in frogs and salamanders, the recent banning of all salamanders to the U.S., major declines in amphibians worldwide, the desire to establish a baseline landscape level occurrence database via this effort with a long-term survey to provide for occurrence trends, how to provide outreach on amphibians, etc.). A field practicum was canceled due to heavy rains that day. Anderson spent a good amount of time updating protocol and field data sheets to better match WDFW data web entry for the project, simplify methodology to cater towards more broad documentation of species, general habitat characteristics more commonly found in lowlands and urban areas, and examining past data for municipalities. The training and various presentations went well, and a fifth year of this collaborative effort is now underway. More information can be found at <http://www.zoo.org/citizenscience>



Dr. Pramuk and Biologist Anderson providing outreach and training on local and worldwide amphibian declines, conservation, how citizenry can help, and local survey participation

Avian Influenza Monitoring: Biologist Anderson picked up a dead three and a half year old powerline strike eagle from North Seattle. The bird was requested by WDFW Wildlife Health for AI testing, as other raptors in the past have had AI but met demise due to other factors (hit by car, powerline strike, etc.). The bird will be shipped to the USGS National Wildlife Health Laboratory for testing. Anderson fielded two other reports, one of a dead eagle and one of a heron, but they did not meet criteria for AI testing and were left for nature.

Wildlife Areas

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with staff members from Sound Salmon Solutions to discuss restoration planting work along Harris Creek. A number of volunteer-based planting events are planned for February and March. When completed, the right bank of Harris Creek will have a continuous riparian buffer of native vegetation along the entire channel as it winds through the unit. Restoration efforts along Harris Creek began in 2010.

Lake Terrell and Rainbow Pond Water Levels: Recent rains have now filled both Lake Terrell and Rainbow Pond to near max levels. Manager Kessler opened the release valve on the Lake Terrell Dam, and removed boards in the new Rainbow Pond water control to lower the water levels before even more rain comes this week.

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

Wildlife Management

Mid-Winter Waterfowl Surveys:

Biologist DeBruyn wrapped up duck counting on freshwater lakes in Whatcom and Skagit counties. These counts are used by the USFWS to assess duck populations and set hunting seasons.



Eurasian widgeons

2015 Harvest Statistics: Biologists Anderson and Smith examined PMU and harvest statistics to finalize update needs for various data categorizations in working with Biologist Milner, GIS Specialist Whelan, and Deer/Elk Section Manager Nelson.



Eagle in Juanita Bay before going after fish and having two other eagles harass it – standard operation



Drake wood duck happy he was not a fish in that moment. Eagle after getting fish, being harassed by two territorial eagles and going in the drink to row, row, row to shore – not fun.

Wildlife Areas

Ebey Island: The Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager reports that waterfowl hunting at Ebey Island is providing great opportunities for local and distant hunters. Manager Boehm received a call from a hunter in Louisiana who is looking forward to a hunt on Ebey Island. A local hunter provided a photo and positive feedback on the successful season and “kudos” for the layout of the corn, barley, and grass provided for forage.



Ebey Island waterfowler success

Nooksack Unit Agricultural Lease:

Manager Kessler met with the local farmer who has the agricultural lease on the Nooksack Unit. This 120-acre agriculture field is planted with silage corn each year, with 10 acres left standing after harvest for winter waterfowl feeding. The three year lease ended this year, and Manager Kessler is working to renew it for another three years.

Whatcom Wildlife Area Native Pollinators: Manager Kessler met onsite with a new local bee keeper who is interested in placing bee hives on three sites on the Lake Terrell and Nooksack units.

Disabled Waterfowl Hunters: Heavy use of the disabled hunters’ waterfowl blind at Lake Terrell continued this week, with three different disabled hunters using the site throughout the week.

Waterfowl Season: Cosgrove and Meis monitored water levels, waterfowl, and public use on the Island Unit on Friday. Recent heavy rains and rising Skagit River levels have increased sheet water on the unit. Meis and Cosgrove removed a fallen tree located on the dike top trail. Hunter numbers have been good through the weekend as the waterfowl season end draws closer.

Private Lands/Access Management

Private Lands Evaluations and Questions: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Wingard performed site visits to a recently identified property south of Mount Vernon, WA. Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Wingard believe the property has many benefits for wildlife related recreation, especially for the Westside Pheasant Release Program. Information about the property was forwarded to other WDFW personnel for review. Private Lands Biologist Wingard and Supervisory Biologist Caldwell responded to public comments and questions regarding private land access and hunting for waterfowl species. Information was provided on habitat conditions, waterfowl use, hunting success, and web-based access options for reserving and viewing private land access sites across the state.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Units: Natural Resource Technicians Deyo and Otto, along with Biologist Wingard, conducted use surveys of Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties, taking notes and resolving any issues regarding the sites.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Access Meetings: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Wingard met with a private landowner to discuss ADA opportunities for waterfowl hunting and wildlife viewing on their property. The landowner is very interested in the opportunities, and is looking forward to working with Region 4 Private Lands Access Program staff members.

Waterfowl Damage Education and Outreach Materials: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell began compiling and organizing materials that were requested by the Western Washington Agricultural Association on waterfowl related damage to agricultural crops. These materials will serve as education and outreach materials for local farmers who are interested in learning more about migratory waterfowl, damage mitigation strategies, available state and federal resources for qualifying services, and waterfowl conservation and management within Washington State. These materials should be completed soon.

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Wildlife Management

Bald Eagle PDR: A request was received regarding an issue in the late 1990s. District 13 staff members explored old records to confirm that documents regarding the issue do not exist. The requested documents concerned a geographic area where we have no records of a bald eagle nest ever being established. Staff members looked through records for currently existing eagle nests and old nests that have fallen down or disappeared over time.

Seattle City Light Wildlife Research Program: Biologist Yarborough served on the Seattle City Lights panel to rate Seattle City Light Wildlife Research Program (WRP) pre proposals. The primary goal of the WRP is to facilitate the development of improved methods for the understanding, management, and protection of wildlife resources in the North Cascades ecosystem, with an emphasis on the Skagit River Watershed.

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist and personnel from WDFW Enforcement have been receiving numerous calls regarding a bull elk that may be sick or injured. The elk has been observed on numerous occasions by personnel from Law Enforcement and Wildlife Program staff members. Staff members have observed that the elk is capable of running away after being approached, can still browse for food, and does not exhibit any obvious signs of physical injury. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman will continue to monitor the animal for signs of suffering. Witman responded to an elk damage complaint east of Concrete, WA in Skagit County, where approximately 50 elk have been utilizing agricultural lands for grazing. Based on evidence observed at the property, it was determined that the

landowner qualified for a WDFW Damage Prevention Permit. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman was able to locate 223 elk on the property.

Witman coordinated hoof collection from an elk harvested by a Master Hunter in the Acme area of Whatcom County. The hooves of the animal will be sent off for hoof disease testing. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman spoke with a representative from the Washington Cattleman's Association and discussed ongoing efforts that are taking place to reduce elk damage in the Skagit and Acme Valleys. Witman received a call from a landowner that was experiencing a large number of eagles on his property. The landowner was beginning calving operations and was concerned about predation events. Witman discussed what resources are available through the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service and preventative measures that could be taken to protect his livestock. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell toured current Elk Exclusionary Fence Projects along Highway 20 and around Acme, WA. All fencing projects are moving along in a timely manner.

Biologist Smith used a trail camera to monitor intermittent nocturnal elk activity on agricultural properties. Smith also spoke with several landowners in the Enumclaw area with damage to fencing and grass crops due to elk. Smith made appointments to meet with each landowner over the coming week.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman is working with landowners and other members of WDFW Wildlife and Law Enforcement to monitor and provide updates on a potentially sick/injured elk in Skagit County



King County-University of Washington Bullfrog Study: Biologist Anderson worked with a student in the UW Wetland Science and Management certificate program examining potential bullfrog eradication at a couple of wetland enhancement sites as a research practicum. Anderson was contacted by a King County biologist for a “bounce off” regarding ideas on the student’s desired efforts. Anderson suggested efforts focus more on habitat examination of supporting native vs. non-native use to build off of research that examines what factors in habitat and wetland type provide for coexistence and productivity in native species. This suggestion is based on bullfrogs being largely naturalized in western WA. Any eradication effort would take ongoing efforts and only affect a given local site. In other words, it is better to see how to sneak past bullfrogs than try to do away with them. They are, unfortunately, here to stay. Examining habitat also gets away from state Scientific Collection Permit needs of capture and lethal efforts in research with wildlife specimens. There have been some local and regional efforts examining habitat and hydrology aspects of wetlands and how that can interplay to provide for native amphibians while making a wetland less preferable for bullfrogs. Efforts could also simply provide for habitat factors that allow natives to coexist at some level. More work in this area is

needed given the widespread status of bullfrogs and commonality of wetland types in lowland areas that bullfrogs use.

Wildlife Areas

Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC): Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm announced the eight members of the 2016 Advisory Committee. A broad range of user groups and stakeholders was selected, including traditional users, local businesses, ADA, Tribes, watershed protection and restoration partners, and Drainage Districts. The WAAC members will play a key role in the development of an updated and expanded Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Management Plan. Manager Boehm also completed a draft Roster and Charter for review by the Planning Team.

Skagit Headquarters: Manager Rotton prepared RCO grant interest forms for the Samish River Unit parking area and the Skagit Headquarters Boat Launch. Rotton also reviewed and commented on the Duck Stamp proposal for hunting blinds and cat-tail control proposal.

Manager Rotton coordinated with CAMP Project Manager William Yarborough regarding Wiley Slough Tide gate project completion and the demobilization of the site by IMCO. The site is open to public recreation. Rotton continues to monitor water elevation levels and pump operations during the transition period from pump operation to gravity flow on Wiley Slough. Meis partnered with the Washington Waterfowl Association on the development of Duck Stamp proposals for the wildlife area hunting blinds and with the WDFW weed crew on a proposal for cat tail management at the Headquarters Unit. Cosgrove graded the Headquarters Unit parking area after the Wiley Slough tide gate replacement contractors removed equipment. Cosgrove and Meis toured areas of the Headquarters Unit off of Teal Slough to note cattail and other vegetation in the intertidal area.

DeBay's Slough: Bids were opened and proposals reviewed by Wildlife Area staff members. The Regional Wildlife Program Manager and the Olympia Lands Program Manger were consulted for the review process. Cosgrove continued waterfowl use surveys at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit and surrounding Nookachamps Creek area.

Skagit Access site: Cosgrove continued weekday car and boat trailer counts at the Headquarters Unit and Conway boat launches. Cosgrove monitored public use, answered public inquiries, and picked up litter at the Headquarters, Johnson/DeBay's Slough, Samish, Jensen, Big Ditch, and Leque Island units. Meis and Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove checked the Game Reserve buoys at the mouth of Deepwater Slough that mark part of the Skagit Estuary Game Reserve.

Private Lands/Access Management

Reservation Use Analysis: Private Lands Biologist Wingard continued analyzing data related to hunter use and success at Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program sites managed as Hunt by Reservation. The results of this analysis will help managers understand how often these Hunt by Reservations sites are used, and how successful hunters are when they use these sites.

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 10 new hunter education classes for 2016. Dazey assisted a new instructor to find a teaching team to hook up with and assisted another instructor to learn how to post classes for his team on Kalkomey. After sending out a reminder of the upcoming In-Service Training for hunter education instructors and also a reminder of the deadline to nominate for the Terry Hoffer award, Dazey started to receive many RSVPs and several nominations from the instructors in Region 4.

Range Safety Officer Training: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey sent a notice out to the instructors in the south of Region 4 of a Range Safety Officer training opportunity. 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 National Rifle Association 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. Both times the class filled and there was a waiting list.

Hunter Education: Coordinator Dazey assisted Coordinator Garcia to conduct a hunter education class. Garcia had scheduled a class at Central Washington University, but was having difficulty getting sufficient instructors to conduct the class. Since Dazey was attending meetings in the area this weekend, he volunteered to assist with the Field Skills Evaluation. Dazey also reviewed the new draft Instructor Advisory Committee operating procedure and offered his comments.

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

Wildlife Management

Oiled Wildlife Response: District 12 networked with the Habitat Oil Spill team regarding a report to Wildlife Health of oiled Canada geese. It was decided the birds have been doing fine and have been monitored (and continue to be) by Habitat Oil Spill staff members. Cross-program networking opportunities for future reports and responses were a benefit of this incident. The birds are from the past White Center oiled bird incident, in which 80+ birds went to rehab for oiling. The remaining birds have not shown any negative effects and are therefore being monitored for behavior, health, and to see if any increase in oiled birds pops up. Report oil spills and oiled wildlife to the WDFW Oil Spill Team at http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/habitat/oil_spill/



Oiled geese still being observed that are likely from an illegal vegetable oil dump in White Center that occurred in November 2015. Various waterfowl in that area are still being monitored by the WDFW Oil Spill team and Ecology and seem to be doing fine – however, they show a bit of a minor disheveled look from that spill.

Wildlife Area Management Plan Update: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm provided draft website updates and corrections to the planning team. Wildlife Area maps were also edited for corrections.

Department of Natural Resources Recreation Planning Open House: Manager Kessler attended an open house held by DNR to announce their new recreational management planning effort for the Bellingham to Baker DNR lands in Whatcom County. This process will take two years, and will finish with a 10-15 year recreation management plan for these DNR lands.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Mount St. Helens and Willapa Herd Elk Surveys: Biologist Holman continued work to prepare for upcoming elk surveys in the St. Helens and Willapa Hills elk herds. Coordination and scheduling with helicopter vendors and WDFW staff members has progressed well and surveys are scheduled for March. Each survey involves aerial sighting of elk within prescribed survey units, as well as counts and compositions of all elk. Additionally, identification of variables related to “sightability,” which includes percentage of vegetation, vegetation cover type, etc., are noted and recorded during the survey. Following the survey, corrections for unseen animals are calculated and population estimates for the surveyed areas are generated. Those interested in reviewing the results of past year’s elk population surveys for St. Helens or Willapa Hills should visit the elk chapter of the Game Status and Trend Report located at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01769/>

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

Shrub Planting: Last week Assistant Manager Hand, Assistant Manager Sample, and Technician Fox began the 2016 planting season on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. The shrub planting locations coincide with the previous year’s tree plantings and are intermixed between trees on a 1:2 – 1:3 ratio. WDFW staff members planted a total of 3,300 shrubs consisting of

three species: Douglas spirea, Nootka rose, and snowberry. A majority of the shrubs were planted in the North Unit at the Old Ag Field, McBride, and Lake River tree plantings.



Shillapoo shrub plantings

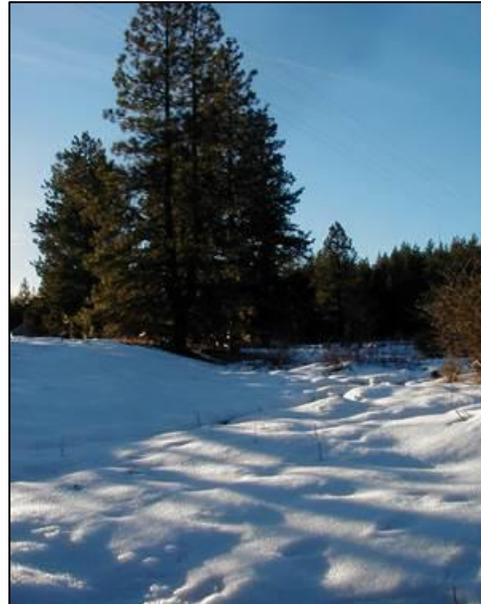
Cowlitz Wildlife Area

Peterman Ridge Unit: Wildlife Area staff members met with Tacoma Power’s forester to discuss forest management projects for this upcoming spring. Forest management prescriptions are shared between WDFW and Tacoma Power under the wildlife settlement agreement. Items discussed were road abandonments, new road realignments, RMAP issues, and a spring contract for up to 400 acres of pre-commercial thinning.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Forest Management Planning: WDFW Forester Pfeifle conducted a field visit to the Klickitat Wildlife Area this week to discuss alternatives for harvest operations, plan work flow, and look at stand characteristics. Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis showed Pfeifle some of the areas where thinning of timber is planned for 2016. Mobility was limited due to heavy, wet snow, but viewing the project area was good for overall planning purposes.

Fence Repair: Technician Davis took advantage of favorable weather to repair fences on the Sondino Unit over three days this week. This low elevation site has no snow and many birds were present on the sunny days. Davis reported seeing bald eagles, a blue heron, and many western bluebirds. Poison oak is in winter dormancy and ticks are not yet out so this is a good time to work on brushy fence lines.



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 goose hunting season continued this week. WDFW Biologists Butler, Holman, Stephens, Scientific Technician Miller, and multiple Law Enforcement Officers worked together to conduct a waterfowl emphasis patrol this weekend. Hunters were checked throughout the area on both public and private lands. On Saturday, hunters were having success harvesting both geese and ducks in the Vancouver lowlands and along the parts of the Columbia River. Sunday brought clear skies and fewer hunters were observed out in the field. Only a few geese were observed in the Woodland area, but many geese were observed flying near Bachelor Island.

As of Sunday, January 24, approximately 325 hunters have been contacted and 185 geese have been checked this season. During this weekend's waterfowl emphasis patrol, four dusky Canada geese were checked off Bachelor Island. This brings the total number of dusky Canada geese known to have been harvested in the area to 13. It also serves an important reminder for hunters to use caution to avoid harvesting dusky Canada geese.

Thanks to the many Law Enforcement Officers from both WDFW and USFWS for this emphasis patrol effort this weekend. As a reminder, the regular season goose hunt closes on Sunday, January 31 within Management Area 2A. The late season goose hunt will open on February 10 for all SW Washington goose card holders on private lands only. Public lands are closed to goose hunting during the late season. More information on the late season hunt can be found within the Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>



Biologist Holman during waterfowl emphasis patrol



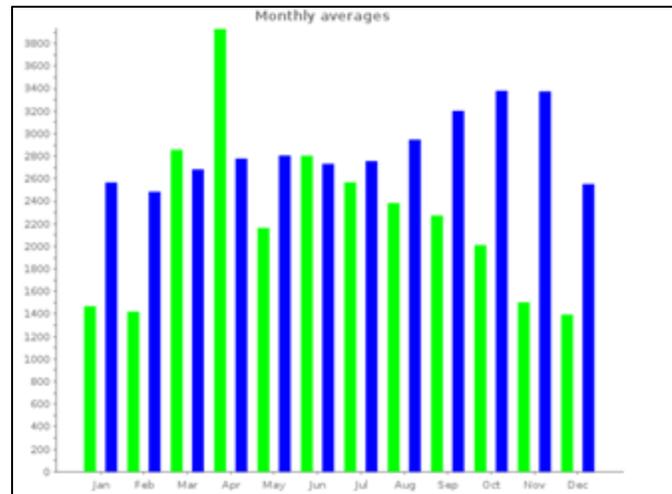
Dusky Canada geese checked off Bachelor Island

Access

Vancouver Lake: Access Manager Spangler dug up and removed vehicle counters that were set in place for a full year and monitored the amount of vehicles using WDFW sites. For Vancouver Lake, the year's totals averaged 93 vehicles a day and 2,858 vehicles a month, with a grand total of 34,426 vehicles that used Vancouver Lake. For Martin Access site, the year's totals averaged 72.5 vehicles a day and 2,218 vehicles a month, with a grand yearly total of 27,050 vehicles using Martin Access.

Monthly average vehicle count for 2015 for Vancouver Lake and Martin Access

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



District 10 Wildlife Conflict

Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin escorted a youth hunter onto property in Randle to address elk damage. Unfortunately, the youth was not successful. In addition, Conklin deployed a disabled damage pool hunter to a property in Randle. This is the first time this landowner has hosted a disabled hunter on his property to address damage.

District 9 Wildlife Conflict

Elk: A dairy owner in Trout Lake called to report ongoing elk damage to his covered silage. Conflict Specialist Peterson and the dairy owner decided on a new hazing technique and will be monitoring it for success. In addition, the dairy owner has been instrumental in the Trout Lake Special Hunts. He frequently calls to give updates on elk movements and works with public hunters to put them in the best areas. Over the recent weeks, hunters have expressed their gratitude for his assistance in packing elk out of deep snow with his tracked equipment.

Elk damage to covered silage



GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Wildlife Management

New Private Lands Wildlife Conflict Biologist: Tara Meyer joins the agency after earning her Master's degree at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, where she studied wildlife ecology, conservation, and conflict mitigation. While at Yale, Meyer led a collaborative team of scientists from Panthera and the National Academy of Sciences in Tajikistan to survey snow leopards in western Tajikistan using non-invasive techniques. Meyer and her team were the first researchers in the area to both document snow leopards and examine the social and ecological drivers of human-wildlife conflicts. Prior to completing her Master's, Meyer conducted research and worked on wildlife conflicts in the Northern Rockies and East Africa. Meyer's previous field work and studies have covered large predators including wolves, cougars, and bears, as well as African elephants, a suite of African carnivores, elk, pronghorn, and other game species. Meyer is passionate about finding creative solutions for building human-wildlife coexistence across rapidly changing, human-impacted landscapes. She is thrilled to be joining WDFW and we are very excited to have Tara join the Region 5 wildlife team.

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. There was some low elevation snow the last week of December, with depths of perhaps a few inches on the valley floor of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. The area has since been snow free.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 4,500 to 8,000 feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 day forecast is for above average temperatures and precipitation, and the 8-14 day forecast is for normal temperatures and above normal 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.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The second winter elk survey was conducted on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area on December 31, with 353 elk being observed. This is the highest survey count since the winter of 2011-12 on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area.

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.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

The Public is reminded the portion of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle, and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30, 2015, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Weather has moderated in the past week with milder conditions. Current snow water equivalent data indicates that the south Cascades are 109 percent of normal. The Klickitat Wildlife Area currently has snow throughout most of the basin with a few lower elevation south facing slopes opening up.

Winter Severity: Winter conditions continue to be typical of January weather in the south Cascades and Klickitat River drainage. Snow coverage is primarily above 1,500 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 1,500 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 Trout Lake 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

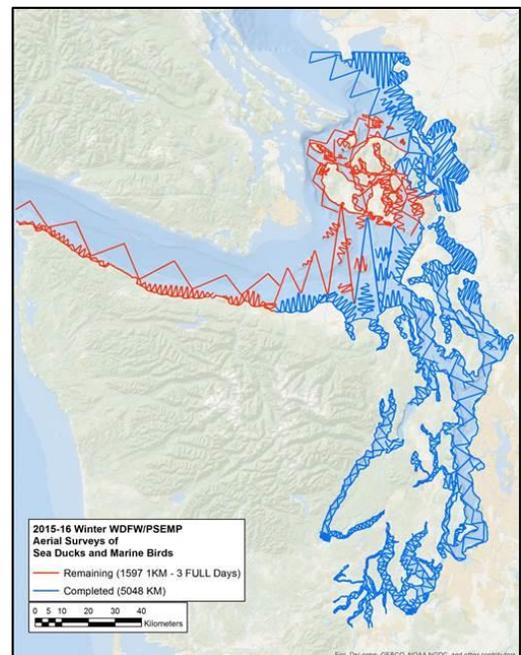
Wildlife Management

Matheny Habitat Project: “Eyes in the Woods” held their first work party for 2016. Twenty-three volunteers participated over the two day project. The work party included first aid training for all who stayed at the US Forest Service (USFS) barracks Saturday night. Five volunteers took the two day sawyers training and eight were recertified. Jeff Neal from the USFS provided the sawyer training. They cut and piled slash on several acres, improving habitat conditions for many critters. Efforts were concentrated on stands near areas affected by spotted owl and marbled murrelet restrictions later in the year. USFS Biologists Betsy Howell and Susan Piper and WDFW Biologist Harris attended briefly on Saturday morning to welcome and thank the volunteers. The well trained and organized volunteers are performing so well that very little supervision is needed!



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 of Puget Sound. Areas in northern Puget Sound were covered this week. They have an estimated four days remaining with surveys to be conducted in the San Juan Islands and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Purple Martin: Biologist Tirhi presented on the ecology, biology, status, and identification of western purple martins (*progne subis*) at the request of the City of Olympia Stream Team to a group of approximately 40 participants. Tirhi collaborates with the Stream Team on a volunteer Purple Martin Monitoring Program, which trains volunteers to assist with maintaining and monitoring purple martin colonies each year. Following Tirhi’s 40 minute presentation, the participants worked with Stream Team staff to build new martin boxes that will replace aging ones installed on pilings on East Bay in Olympia. Participants were also encouraged to sign up for the monitoring training conducted by Stream Team.





Volunteers building purple martin boxes for installation in Olympia, WA

Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologist Tirhi represented District 11 at the annual Oregon spotted frog working group meeting held at Nisqually Wildlife Refuge. Participants include three zoos, WDFW, USFWS, one prison, DNR, two wildlife refuges, academia, and private volunteers who work collectively on the recovery of spotted frogs. This year’s meeting included season reports from all locations in Washington on surveys conducted and results, habitat, and spotted frog research findings and implications, habitat management, and recovery. The biggest change to the recovery program is the closure of the spotted frog captive rearing program that has been in place since 2008 and has involved WDFW delivering eggs from the wild to the three zoos (Oregon Zoo, Woodland Park Zoo, Northwest Trek) and one prison (Cedar Creek Correctional Center). Those places reared them until release as juveniles later in the year. Unfortunately, the program has failed to establish spotted frogs (as evidenced by successful egg laying) at the reintroduction location on Joint Base Lewis McChord and has thus been cancelled. The working group will continue to partner on other recovery and management needs of spotted frogs.

Spotted frogs in amplexus near a newly laid egg cluster – Photo by K. McAllister



Snowy Plover: Biologists Sundstrom and Michaelis conducted the annual winter snowy plover surveys, which are required and scheduled by USFWS. Surveys this year were to be

conducted during the week of January 17 through January 23, but can be conducted the week before or the week after this window based on weather conditions and surveyor availability. Due to logistics and weather conditions, only two locations were completed during the window week: Midway Beach and Graveyard Spit. Other coastal areas including Copalis Spit through the Damon Point area will not be able to be surveyed during the given time period, based on the projected weather forecast. A total of 31 wintering snowy plovers were observed, of which eleven were marked. Three of those 11 were locally banded birds while the others hail from either California or Oregon. Plover totals from the Long Beach area are not yet available.

Injured? Bald Eagle: Biologist Murphie responded to a possibly injured bald eagle report near Olalla in Kitsap County. Residents in the area were concerned about the lack of movement of a bald eagle perched in an alder tree near Olalla Creek. Biologist Murphie did not note any obvious signs of injury or trauma, and the eagle appeared attentive and alert to his presence. He opted to monitor the status of the eagle for the time being. A local wildlife rehab center was notified and local residents will be in contact if its status changes.



Dusky Goose Survey: Biologist Sundstrom conducted a Grays Harbor County only goose survey this week. The table below shows an increase in the number of all Canada subspecies typically observed, comparing the two surveys conducted in the month of January.

Grays Harbor County - Goose Surveys																
Month	Cackler	# Banded	Alentian	# Banded	Tav/Lesser	# Banded	Dusky	# Banded	Western	# Banded	Vancouver	# Banded	GWF	Snow	Unk/Other	Totals
January 1st half	390		0		405		395	2	647		0		17	0	108	1,962
January 2nd half	514	1	0		837		538	2	773	3	0		34	0	45	2,741

Table 1: Goose survey representing the first and second half of January, 2016

Swans of Sequim-Dungeness Valley Presentation: Biologist Ament and local Audubon member Bob Boekelheide gave a presentation on trumpeter swans at the monthly Audubon meeting that was held on January 20, 2016. A total of 107 people attended the meeting, which is one of the highest turnouts for a chapter meeting. Bob provided general biological information about swans and a summary of results of four winters of monitoring from 2011-2015 by the Audubon volunteers. He provided some highlights from data review, such as how the number of juvenile swans counted in the Dungeness Valley remained fairly stable through each winter, whereas the number of adults increased a great deal through each winter. Comparing the

numbers counted in early December with the numbers in early March, the number of juveniles stayed fairly constant or slightly increased in these years, whereas the number of adults usually more than doubled, sometimes more. The number of adults was also much more erratic. This implies that the family groups with juveniles stay put once they are here, whereas the big increase we see through each winter is due to movements of adults without juveniles, and likely sub-adults, from other areas. The number and proportion of juveniles in the first two winters were much higher than in the last two winters, suggesting the relative number of young produced was much lower in the later years. Biologist Ament focused much of her presentation on issues related to swan management. She provided a summary of swan mortality in the valley and discussed habitat use. Her work with the local PUD to prevent electrocutions was discussed, along with other topics related to protecting swans when they are present in the valley. The meeting provided a public forum for her to express appreciation on behalf of WDFW to all the volunteers who have assisted with swan monitoring. Despite a major power outage that left the building completely dark halfway into the presentation, only two people left. Biologist Ament and Bob were pleased that there was so much interest from the public in the local swan population.

Flyer Advertising Swan Presentation at Audubon Meeting

Trumpeter Swan Monitoring: The swan monitoring volunteers reported the following for last week:

Bob and I completed our survey today (1/18 and found 136 swans (all Trumpeter) scattered among four of the usual sites, including:

- East of Sequim Airport – 73 adult, 33 juvenile*
- Clapp Farm (Nash’s Carrot Field) – six adult, five juvenile.*
- Schmuck Road – three adult, one juvenile*
- Lamar Road – 12 adult, three juvenile*
- Nothing particularly interesting to report other than high numbers*

Investigation of Reported Injured Swan: Biologist Ament conducted a field investigation on January 19, 2016 after she received report of a possible injured trumpeter swan in the swan group that has been frequenting a field near the Sequim Airport. She contacted the swan monitoring volunteers and was able to secure information that they had not observed any swans that appeared to be injured or sick during their counts completed on January 18. Biologist Ament saw this as an opportunity to meet some landowners that own the field the swans have been

Swans of the Sequim-Dungeness Valley



Chris Perry photo

They're the heaviest birds native to North America and have a wingspan of up to eight feet. Some of them winter right here in balmy Sequim. When are they here? What does our area provide? Where do they go? Intrepid volunteers from the Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society have been collecting data on these magnificent birds for a number of years and will present their findings in this fascinating presentation.

January 20, 2016 7:00 pm

Dungeness River Audubon Center

2151 West Hendrickson Road, Sequim

Presented by:

Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society



using daily this season. She first met the landowner's son and requested permission to observe the swans to see if any may be injured or sick. His mother then arrived and began to express her frustrations over all the "swan looky loos" who have been trespassing on their property. The woman was obviously unhappy and reluctantly agreed to allow Biologist Ament 10 minutes to look over the swans and then leave. After observing the swan group (total of 106) with her scope she then continued discussions with the woman. Her husband then arrived. The three talked for over an hour about the swans and other topics. The tension was defused during the conversation. The woman apologized for her earlier behavior and actually gave Biologist Ament a hug before departing. During the discussion, Biologist Ament was able to watch small groups of the swans fly off to roost for the night. There were no lone swans remaining in the field when the last group flew off at 1720. The landowners and volunteers have been notified to contact Biologist Ament if a sick or injured swan is observed.



Farm field near the Sequim Airport where a swan was reported as injured

Bald Eagle Electrocutation: Biologist Ament spent time on January 19, 2016 following up on a report that Biologist Rowan had received about a bald eagle that was electrocuted in Silverdale. She talked with the reporting party and found out the adult eagle was landing on an electrical transformer near an apartment complex. The eagle was killed and was last seen by the reporting party in some bushes below the transformer. Three others witnessed the incident. The reporting party said the eagle was not present the next day but she had no idea what happened to the carcass. She will contact Biologist Ament if she obtains any further information. Biologist Ament plans to contact Kitsap County Utilities (Puget Sound Energy) and will also report the incident to the USFWS. The reporting party was willing to assist Puget Sound Energy by showing them the transformer where the eagle was killed.

Elk Calf in December (say what???): Biologist Ament was on the phone with staff members at the Center Valley Animal Rescue to discuss coyotes and another very interesting story that is worth sharing. Just before Christmas they apparently treated a two week old elk calf that was rescued by a landowner near Forks. Staff members met with the reporting party along Highway 101 to collect the calf. The center had never rescued an elk calf. Unfortunately, the young calf had several puncture wounds (possibly from a dog attack) and died before any treatment was initiated. Biologist Ament told the staff about "Rosie" the elk calf that was raised at the NW Raptor Center and released successfully in the Green River Watershed.

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

Wildlife Management

Prairie Survey Protocol Review: Biologist Tirhi met with Biologists Hays and Azzerad to address final comments received on the draft WDFW Prairie Protocol. The protocol is designed to be used by PHS users to determine when and where they have prairie on properties as defined by the WDFW PHS Prairie Definition (note—Westside Prairie is a priority habitat under the WDFW PHS program). The three biologists also discussed and reviewed a prairie survey protocol submitted from Thurston County which contains most of the elements of WDFW’s version but in a different format. The county devised their own based on their need to implement in 2016. Tirhi is hopeful that all jurisdictions in the south sound can agree on one prairie survey protocol that can begin implementation in 2016.

Wildlife Areas

Luhr’s Landing Bank Erosion: In response to recent bank erosion at Luhr’s Landing (Nisqually Unit of the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area) that posed a safety hazard to vehicles using the Water Access Site, Region 6 and Lands staff members teamed up to provide both short- and long-term corrective measures. With the weekend weather shaping up to be prime for boating, Manager Belson and statewide Water Access Site Coordinator Sherlock gathered up materials on Friday morning to install high-visibility safety fencing where the parking lot abuts the steep, eroded bank. Then, on the following Monday morning, Water Access Site Manager Mitchell coordinated with CAMP to install six ecology blocks that created a physical barrier to the eroded bank. The site will be monitored for additional erosion and appropriate measures taken to minimize damage and risk.



Private Lands /Conflict

Grayland Cranberries: A permit holder harvested an antlerless elk out of one of the cranberry munching groups. The picture contains strong evidence she was one of the offenders.



Biologist Harris and an “Eyes in the Woods” volunteer worked on some maintenance issues with the remote camera system guarding cranberries. The system has turned out to be a great non-lethal tool.

Bears: Biologist Harris is still receiving occasional bear reports. All reports are of cubs. One cub with porcupine quills in its face and paws has been reported in several locations in the North River/Artic area. The cub has been quite mobile covering several miles between some reports. Because of this no effort has been made to capture it. Video of the cub provided by a citizen shows what appears to be a healthy, but a little unhappy cub.

Deer with Object Attached—Continued: Conflict Specialist Blankenship continues to work with enforcement personnel, Master Hunter volunteers, and homeowners in the Port Orchard area to locate a deer with an object on its hoof. Blankenship will continue to monitor the condition and respond to reports of this deer.

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

Wildlife Management

Joint Base Lewis McChord Coordination Meeting: Biologists Tirhi and Linders represented District 11 at the multiagency coordination meeting attended by JBLM, Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM), and WDFW. Several species and habitat projects involving WDFW, USFWS, CNLM, and academia occur simultaneously, often at the same location on JBLM involving listed prairie species. The intent of the meeting was to discuss current needs for coordination of these projects and staff members. A good discussion took place, but resolution (in terms of a process) was not reached and will likely need future meeting(s).