

# Wildlife Program

Week of October 17 – October 23, 2016

## **WOLF ACTIVITIES**

### **Region 1 Wolf Activities**

**Depredation Investigation in Stevens County:** Natural Resource Worker Weatherman and WDFW Officer Parkert responded to a call of a Holstein calf discovered dead on private property outside of Colville. The newborn calf had been partially scavenged on in the stomach area. A complete necropsy was conducted on the calf and was ruled as Unknown Cause of Death. Wolves were not suspect in the death of the calf. An adult cow that died earlier (July) on the same property from bloat was discussed. The property owner will make arrangements to remove the cow's remains. The private property lies within the home range of the Stranger wolf pack.

**Retrieval of Deterrents from Ferry County:** Natural Resource Worker Weatherman removed fladry from an old Hereford calf carcass in Ferry County that was no longer needed.

**Sherman Creek Compost Facility Delivery:** Natural Resource Worker Weatherman hauled two domestic calf carcasses to the compost facility on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. The removals were a part of the sanitation plus one nonlethal method.

**Fencing Contract Field Visit in Stevens County:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett met with two landowners with fencing contracts for predator fencing. Master hunter volunteers were contacted to aid in the completion of each fence prior to winter.

*Examination of a brace for predator fencing in Stevens County. Additional work is still needed on this project.*



**Monthly Northeast Washington Interested Parties Wolf Conference Call:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett and other WDFW staff members participated in a monthly conference call. The Profanity Peak wolf pack, the lethal removal protocol, and a meeting with Bennett were some of the items discussed.

**Trail Camera Retrieval in Stevens County:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett retrieved a camera from private industrial timber land where there were concerns of wolf usage near livestock. Photos of deer, grouse, bushy-tailed woodrats, and cattle were captured.



*Trail camera photo of a grouse in Stevens County. This trail camera was placed to monitor wolf activity near livestock.*



**Stevens County Cattle Depredation Investigation:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett and Wolf Biologist Roussin looked at a day-old calf carcass brought back to the office by District 1 WDFW Enforcement after a field investigation. After shaving the calf, wounds and hemorrhaging were discovered on the head and face. The wounds were most likely associated with a medium predator. A trail camera was placed on the remaining cow carcass for further monitoring.

*The right side of a day old calf after being shaved from a WDFW Enforcement depredation investigation*

**OR-38:** Biologist Earl and Conflict Specialist Rasley monitored the Oregon collared wolf (OR-38) as it moved through fall calving operations in Garfield and Columbia counties. Earl was contacted by a producer who found a cow carcass in a pasture visited by OR-38. A necropsy was performed. The carcass didn't have any of the signature marks for a depredation. Earl and the producer concluded that the cow most likely had problems while calving in the night and succumbed to those issues.

**Cattleman Contact:** Biologist Earl talked to a cooperator who pastures within the Tucannon Pack territory. The producer has a couple of cattle not accounted for.

## **REGION 1**

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

**Lincoln County Prairie Grouse:** The last GPS-marked male sage grouse in Lincoln County has died. Based on GPS data download, it looks like the predation occurred October 10. Biologist Atamian went and checked out the site on October 19 and found three feeding piles, which appeared to be coyote/s.



**Lincoln Bighorn Sheep:** Biologist Atamian attempted to get a ground count of the herd, but none of the sheep were in their normal hangouts except for one lone half curl ram wandering through the town of Lincoln.

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

**Modern Firearm Deer Season:** Sunday, October 16 was the first hunter check station for the 2016 Modern Firearm Deer Season. A total of 101 hunters passed through the check station at Deer Park alongside Highway 395. These hunters had harvested 21 white-tailed deer (19 bucks and two antlerless) and three mule deer (all bucks). Other game noted included one turkey and a few forest grouse. At the same check station last year (2015) there were 88 hunters checked with 19 white-tailed deer (10 bucks and nine antlerless) and three mule deer (all bucks). Other game noted included one bobcat and one black bear.

A second check station was in operation on Sunday, October 23. One hundred thirty-seven hunters visited the check station (101 visited the second weekend check station in 2015). Successful hunters harvested 27 white-tailed deer (15 bucks, 12 antlerless), two mule deer (bucks) compared to 23 whitetails (12 bucks, 11 antlerless) and six mule deer bucks in 2015.



***Hunter-harvested white-tailed and mule deer bucks brought to check station on October 16, 2016***

**RGWA Fire Fuel Reduction:** Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer visited the Rustlers Gulch Wildlife Area to retrieve a remote camera and test burn a small hand pile produced by a fire fuel reduction project completed last fall. The test fire went well, so Palmer will proceed with lighting the remaining hand piles when he receives the burn



permit from DNR. While on site, Palmer spoke with a disabled hunter who he authorized to use the two roads available to disabled hunters on this non-motorized site. He also observed the sizable bull moose pictured here, which looks healthy but has an injured left eye.

**Waikiki Springs Tour:** On Monday, Access Manager Dziekan, Habitat Biologist Karin Divens, and Wildlife Area Manager Juli Anderson met three citizens

for a walking tour of WDFW’s Waikiki Springs property, located along the edge of the Fairwood neighborhood in Spokane. One of the three citizens was a trails proponent, and the other two were representatives from nearby homeowners’ associations. This site gets heavy use from dog walkers, joggers, and other citizens due to its forested switchback trail and proximity to the urban area. Although WDFW is not investing large amounts of resources into this property, we will be working with local groups to identify and prioritize safety, maintenance, and repair issues that can be accomplished by WDFW personnel and local volunteers at little to no cost. WDFW regional managers would like to develop a memorandum of agreement to have Spokane County a) take over responsibility for operations and maintenance of the site for now, and b) acquire the property in the future. Dziekan will be organizing a working group this winter to start prioritizing and planning activities. He’ll guide the process until Spokane County takes over operations.



*Spring house and dam, off the trail but a liability risk*



*Tour members at bottom of switchback trail*

## **REGION 2**

No report submitted this week.

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

##### ***Bighorn ram spotted in rocks along Columbia River***

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Natural Resource Technician Hill patched up a few holes in the elk fence at the new electrified creek crossing near the Spiritwind acquisition. The old fence didn't quite meet up with the new steel beams holding the electric fence up. Well-used trails in the fence gap were found by Conflict Specialist Wetzell.



***One side of the electrified creek crossing now with fencing to keep elk out***



***Left bank of the creek showing the gap fix***

**Green Gate:** Natural Resource Technician Hill opened all the enclosure gates in Green Gate. With the cows moving off the grazing parcels, opening the gates will give deer and elk easy access to a readily available food source.



### *One enclosure gate opened*

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman spent extensive time during the week working on the Oak Creek Management Plan. Huffman participated in a conference call with Forester Mackey, Forester Pfeifle, and Planner Vigue on the timeline and materials for the Forest Management Plan portion. Huffman met with Planner Vigue for several hours to go over remaining items for the writing of the plan. They came up with tasks for Huffman to complete and a rough timeline for

completion. The Oak Creek Planning Team met for a day to review and discuss the outline of the forest management portion of the management plan and current and past projects on the wildlife area. The planning team also discussed management actions for Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and goals and objectives. Later in the week, Huffman reviewed old files for information on species inventories and research done on the wildlife area.

### **Wildlife Management**

**Shrubsteppe Conservation Banking Workshop:** District Biologist Fidorra spent three days at the Shrubsteppe Conservation Banking Workshop in Spokane, which was hosted by the Conservation Fund, WDFW, and several partnering agencies. While the workshop focused on the details of conservation bank management and regulation, it was a good primer on mitigation strategies in general and opened up conversation with partners and within the department on needs within our current mitigation strategy within shrubsteppe habitats.

**Taxidermist Meeting:** District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra met with a local taxidermist to provide bear tooth envelopes and assess a very old bear brought into the shop. It sounds as though many hunters are not in compliance with the mandatory tooth submitting requirement.

**Pheasant Release:** District Biologist Fidorra received and released pheasants at three release sites this week prior to the season opening. The birds were in good condition upon release.

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Wildlife Area staff members helped release pheasants prior to opening day of pheasant hunting season. Assistant Manager Sak and Natural Resource Worker Becker released pheasants around the Sunnyside Headquarters Unit while Manager Buser released pheasants at the Hope Valley Unit. District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra released pheasants at Big Flat and Lost Island Habitat management units.

**Kiosk Installation:** Assistant Manager Sak, Natural Resource Technician Medina, and Natural Resource Worker Becker installed two new information kiosks – one at the Giffen Lake parking lot and the other at the Glover Unit parking lot.



*The new Giffen Lake kiosk*



*The new Glover Unit kiosk*

### **Wildlife Management**

**Snake River DNR:** Private Lands Biologist Stutzman developed a hunting plan for the Snake River DNR near Pasco. The site will be handled through the Hunt by Reservation system with a Register to Hunt requirement as well, similar to the Columbia Basin Corn Stubble access sites. Stutzman entered the sites into the Hunt by Reservation system for approval.

**Corn Stubble Access Agreements:** Private Lands Biologist Stutzman spoke with landowners to finalize the details of the corn stubble access agreements and submitted the sites to the online reservation system for approval.

**Hunter Monitoring:** Private Lands Biologist Stutzman was in the field for parts of two days monitoring hunter use at private lands access sites in Benton and Yakima counties. Hunter numbers were very low relative to past modern firearm seasons.

***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:** Assistant Manager Berry assisted a deer hunter's companion when she rolled in off Bethel Ridge Road into HQ with one of her tires running on the rim. Berry removed the bad tire, aired up her bald spare tire, and installed it onto the truck.

## Wildlife Management

**Elk Distribution:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored elk distribution and movements in Elk Areas 3721 and 3722. Multiple large groups (50+) have been observed leaving Hanford's southern boundary, conducting nightly raids on newly seeded winter wheat fields, and then returning prior to daybreak.

**Rattlesnake Mountain:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with multiple landowners on Rattlesnake Mountain to discuss elk and deer hunting effort and DPP hunting coordination.

**Elk Damage Claim:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand worked with Olympia HQ conflict staff members on the review and approval of a 2016 elk damage claim in winter wheat. A request for final claim documents for a 2015 elk damage claim to an apple orchard was also discussed.



**Thorp Area:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel spent considerable time meeting with landowners, arranging volunteers, and asking for access to address elk in the Thorp area. Several elk groups are in the area, and finding them during the day in an accessible area has been challenging.

*Foxlight and motion-activated alarm placed on elk trail into new hay seeding area in Thorp*

Conflict Specialist Wetzel recovered a camera at a new electric elk gate installed at the Taneum Creek crossing to check for its effectiveness at stopping elk. The new fence appears to be working.

*Elk on the correct side of the newly installed elk fence spanning Taneum Creek*

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



## Wildlife Areas

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Hagan joined CAMP Project Inspector Chris Alston to inspect the first stages of the newly constructed Colockum southern boundary fence. This is an all-steel fence designed to withstand future wildfires.



*Fireproof boundary fence being constructed on Colockum Wildlife Area*

**Sign Replacement:** Assistant Manager Hagan replaced no-vehicle signs on closed roads along the Little Brushy Road.



*Shot-up sign along the Little Brushy Road, Colockum Wildlife Area*

**Boat Launch Maintenance:** Manager Lopushinsky contacted Grant County PUD recreation to determine how they are maintaining their new boat launch and vault toilet at the Apricot Orchard site just downstream from the Colockum Wildlife Area Headquarters. We still do not have a good solution for maintenance at WDFW's Yoyo Rock site and are looking for possible cooperators to take on this site.

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Berry spent time preparing all four of the Vietnam-era deuce and a half military cargo trucks to be picked up for surplus. The trucks were picked up Thursday morning by State Surplus and Oak Creek staff members were left with nothing but memories. Manager Huffman assisted State Surplus in loading the trucks, two of which did not run.



**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Natural Resource Technicians Leuck and Hill shored up some wobbly posts in the elk fence along the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area. They worked in an area that had fallen down last winter and was repaired at that time.

*Leuck shoring up a wobbly post*

**Elk Hazing:** Natural Resource Technician Leuck hazed 25 elk up to and through a return gate. Leuck rode the length of the fence looking for a new hole where these elk could have come

through. He found the elk had walked across a cattle guard near the Spiritwind property along the KRD access road. Leuck worked with KRD to maintain the closed gate over the cattle guard. Several elk walked down into the concrete irrigation canal and were able to duck under the elk

fence with low flows. A contoured cattle panel will have to be put in place to keep out the determined alfalfa addicted elk.



**Cattle Fence:** Natural Resource Technician Hill laid down sections of barb wire cattle fence along the boundary of the Wild Horse Wind Farm and the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area.

*Lay down fence along the Skookumchuck*

**Green Dot Sticker Installation:** Natural Resource Technician Leuck picked up the new Green Dot road name stickers, put them on the white carsonite posts and installed them along the various roads in the L.T. Murray.



*New road labels*

#### **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**North Cascades Elk Herd:** Biologist Yarborough sent out objectives of the North Cascades Elk Herd Plan to tribes and stakeholders for their review. In addition, he collected hunter harvest information and prepared hoof disease samples for shipment.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman was contacted by WDFW Enforcement regarding a hunter report of harvesting a bull elk with hoof deformities. The hunter was advised to collect the hooves for further inspection. The hooves were collected and preserved for testing. Observations of elk with deformed, broken, or missing hooves have increased dramatically in southwest Washington over the past decade. Tests conducted by scientists in the U.S. and abroad show these abnormalities are strongly associated with treponeme bacteria, known to cause digital dermatitis in cattle, sheep, and goats. Occurrences have also been detected in north Puget Sound. For more information, see [wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof\\_disease](http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease).

**Common Loon Nesting Platforms:** Biologist Smith assisted Biologist Anderson in winterizing loon nesting platforms on several lakes in District 12. Platforms were removed from the lakes and secured to prevent winter damage. During the operation, one wayward snow goose was observed resting on a log at one of the lakes. The bird may have been blown off course during recent storm activity. The goose did fly from the lake, hopefully to locate a flock.



***Example of loon nest platform***

**Swans:** Biologist DeBruyn prepared all protocol and equipment for upcoming swan collection season. District 14 leads the annual effort to collect swans for lead testing. Several utilities and volunteers also participate. Biologist Smith hooked up and tested a remotely accessed camera used in the past to monitor swan activity on a lake in Whatcom County. The camera will be used again this winter for the same purpose.

**Sharp-tailed Snake Proposal:** District 13 provided input to the San Juan Islands National Historic Park regarding the sharp-tailed snake. Staff members are

developing a grant proposal to better understand the impacts of fire on this species within the park. District 13 also worked on maps and tables to summarize what is currently known about this species in the San Juan Islands.

**Whidbey Island Naval Station Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan Review:**

District 13 provided annual review and comments to the draft prepared by the U.S. Navy as required by the Sikes Act.

**Wildlife Areas**

**Leque Island Estuary Restoration Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw submitted information to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to request funds for the project through the USFWS Coastal Program. He also prepared a project summary sheet in preparation for a meeting with adjacent landowners.

**Wiley Slough Adaptive Management:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, Habitat Planner Friebel, and Program Manager Link spent time gathering documents and preparing for a meeting to develop a short term and long term plan for fortifying the levees constructed during the 2009 Wiley Slough Restoration Project. Rotton and Friebel



submitted a funding request to USFWS for repair funds.

**Spencer Island Restoration Project:**

Projects Coordinator Brokaw updated project webpage materials. A Spencer Island Restoration Project webpage should be posted on the WDFW website within the next month.

***Spencer Island during the 2006 flood***

**Fir Island Farm Estuary Restoration Project Visit:** Region 4 hosted the Managing Director at the White House Council of Environmental Quality, Christy Goldfuss, along with several other State and local politicians and organizational representatives at the restoration site. The group toured the site and discussed the project. Following the visit, Federal, State, and Tribal leaders announced a commitment to recover Puget Sound through increased funding at a press conference. More information about the announcement is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2016/10/18/taking-action-protect-puget-sound-watershed>.

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

**Natural Resource Conservation Service Northwest Local Work Group Meeting:** Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Private Lands Biologist Wingard attended a meeting of the Natural Resource Conservation Service Northwest Local Work Group and listened to presentations on the priorities and accomplishments of the Local Work Group. Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Wingard provided input and feedback, as they were the only wildlife representatives at the meeting.

**San Juan County Land Bank:** Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell coordinated with San Juan County Land Bank on future project assistance for Wildlife Viewing at restoration projects. Access management options were also presented for consideration.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Pheasant Teams:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with staff members and volunteers to continue managing the pheasant program for the 2016 general pheasant season. Manager Kessler monitored the pheasants in the pheasant pens at the Lake



Terrell headquarters. He received 375 pheasants for this week's releases. Kessler and volunteers performed the releases Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday evenings.

#### ***Pheasant exiting farm field***

Terrell headquarters. He received 375 pheasants for this week's releases. Kessler and volunteers performed the releases Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday evenings.

**Marine Waterfowl Surveys:** District 13 discussed training needs, personnel issues, equipment needs, and scheduling with the marine waterfowl survey specialist for the upcoming winter survey season. These long-term surveys are used to collect trend data on hunted and non-hunted marine waterfowl species for use in management decisions.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Hamilton Landing Boat Launch Design Grant:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw worked with Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) Engineer John Hansen and the City of Stanwood

to develop grant application materials for a boat launch and parking facilities at the Hamilton landing site on the lower Stillaguamish River near Leque Island.

**Island Unit:** Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove and Natural Resource Specialist Meis monitored water levels, field conditions, and waterfowl use on the Island Unit. Despite not yet installing boards to begin intentionally holding water on the unit, water levels are high and sheet water has formed in most of the fields due to recent rain and high river levels.

**Samish Unit:** Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove manipulated boards to adjust water levels on the unit. Salinity levels were also monitored at several locations within the ditches and ponds related to the manipulations.

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

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard continued preparing the Region 4 Private Lands Access site webpages for public view. These sites will go online as they become available to hunt. Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo and Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Officer Mcquoid met with multiple landowners in Snohomish County while setting up waterfowl and snow goose quality hunt units. Biologist Wingard met with a landowner and completed their access agreements for the upcoming season. Otto and Deyo built waterfowl quality hunt program sites by installing parking posts, signage, and blinds. After this week's efforts, there are now 45 units open to the public.



*A perspective view that local waterfowl hunters are enjoying at a Region 4 waterfowl quality hunt program site*



*Happy hunters after successfully hunting a snow goose quality hunt program field in Snohomish County*

**BP Safety Zone Signs:** Manager Kessler removed the extra safety zone signs posted to protect environmental workers performing weed control work. The weed control and surveying work on the area within the hunting area has been completed.

**Disabled Hunter Waterfowl Blind:** Manager Kessler coordinated with disabled hunters to use the Lake Terrell ADA waterfowl blind. The blind was used several times this week by disabled hunters.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Osprey Nest Removal:** District 13 provided authorization to two companies to remove osprey nests from man-made structures and continue to recommend that osprey nest removal permits be centralized to one person out of Olympia for maximum customer service.

**Wildlife Areas**

**Corson Wildlife Preserve:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Manager Brian Boehm joined WDFW staff members from CAMP and Region 4 to tour the recently completed fish passage project at the Corson Unit.

**Wildlife Management Plan Update Meeting:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm participated in a conference call meeting focused on advancing the progress of updating the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Management Plan. Manager Boehm also contacted four new Wildlife Area Advisory Committee members to announce they have been selected. Manager Boehm will provide orientation information shortly and introduce them to the existing members.

**Fir Island Farm:** Manager Rotton is continuing to monitor the site for storm effects and manage the pump station operations with the assistance of Project Manager Jenna Friebel.

**Leque Island Unit:** Meis and Cosgrove constructed a sign board and posted signs in the Davis Slough parking lot. Meis toured the south end of the Leque Island Unit looking for any storm damage from the weekend weather event. No additional damage was apparent, but further examination will occur during upcoming low tides.

**Skagit Headquarters:** Manager Rotton continues to coordinate with Dike District #22 (DD #22) regarding storm risks and flood fight responses. Rotton is working with Lands Agent Kye Iris on the land transfer agreement with DD #22. Manager Rotton and Habitat Biologist Jenna Friebel developed a draft plan regarding the long-term repair of the Wiley Slough dike infrastructure. Natural Resources Technician Cosgrove posted informational signs. Meis placed safety zone buoys at the Headquarters Unit running from the new pump station location towards the east. Meis and Cosgrove checked the Skagit Delta Game Reserve, adding four new reserve boundary signs and one buoy at the mouth of Deepwater Slough. Natural Resources Technician Cosgrove graded roads and dike-top areas at the Headquarters Unit with the John Deere 5300 and box scraper. Cosgrove cleaned up scour marks on the spur dike adjacent to the Wiley Slough tidegate from recent overtopping due to high tides and river levels.

**Sinclair Island:** Manager Rotton, Wildlife Program Manager Russell Link, CAMP Project Manager Webster Bergford, and Officer Ralph Downes went to the Sinclair Island Unit to investigate safety issues related to the stairs, historic post office, and well on the site. The group was able to evaluate the stairs and building, but not able to locate the well. An island neighbor reported falling in the well some time ago and is concerned about the issue.



*Early post office located on WDFW's Sinclair Island Natural Wildlife Area*



*Wildlife Area Manager Belinda Rotton*

### Private Lands/Access Management

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo coordinated with Private Lands Biologist Wingard to identify which waterfowl quality hunt program sites would be ready for public use by the weekend.

**GMU 418 Elk Hunt:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard fielded several calls from GMU 418 special elk permit holders. Biologist Wingard offered ideas about where they could focus their effort. Biologist Wingard met with multiple Nooksack modern firearm special elk permit holders to distribute keys and tips. Biologist Wingard toured portions of GMU 418 for special permit elk hunters and met with two successful hunters who greatly enjoyed their experience.

**Ungulate Conflict Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman spoke with a landowner in the Acme area of Whatcom County to discuss recent elk activity in GMU 407. The landowner advised that the frequency of elk on his property during the recent hunting seasons has significantly decreased.

Witman was notified that two Skagit County landowners took delivery of fencing materials provided by a Stillaguamish Tribal fence grant. Natural Resource Technician Cogdal verified the delivery materials with the invoices onsite.

Witman received a call from a landowner in the Birdsvie area of Skagit County that had sustained fence damage from elk. Witman contacted the landowner and discussed several options to address the elk related damage. The landowner was appreciative and advised he would report back after he decides on how he plans to utilize his agricultural land in the future.

Witman responded to a tree nursery on Camano Island experiencing significant deer damage from antler rubbing as deer begin to rut. The landowner was advised on what preventative steps he can take to address the damage. In the meantime, the landowner purchased a hunting license for the current hunting season in an attempt to remove the problem deer.

Witman responded to the Darrington area for a report of a sick deer living under the deck of a residence for several weeks. Upon arriving and contacting the landowner, the deer had left and was unable to be located. The landowner was advised to call back if the deer returns.

**Predator Education, Outreach Materials, and Complaint Logging:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell organized and delivered education and outreach materials for predator management. These materials were provided to Western Washington Cattleman's Association and Western Washington Agricultural Association representatives for distribution. Key information was provided on the livestock depredation claims process. Supervisor Caldwell also performed routine upkeep of his complaint log tracking form.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Aircraft Safety Training:** Districts 13 and 14 attended the basic fixed-wing and helicopter modules in Olympia in order to maintain their certification to fly on agency business. Staff members have numerous suggestions for improving this training and will provide them to the committee working on aircraft issues.

**CBA:** District 13 participated in training on the recently negotiated CBA and Job Representation rights and responsibilities.

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Golden Eagle Mortality:** WDFW received notice of another golden eagle mortality associated with wind power development in Klickitat County. This is the fifth suspected golden eagle mortality associated with wind power. The recent mortality was a male that was fitted with a radio transmitter and was part of a study on eagle/wind turbine interactions. The female disappeared on the territory early in the 2013 nest season and its fate is unknown. The male continued to be territorial the past three years, but did not pair up. Most recently, it had been exploring adjacent eagle territories in Klickitat County. This is typical of territorial eagles this time of year. At the time the golden eagle was killed by the wind turbine, WDFW had collected over 93,000 GPS fixes on the bird which will provide insight into his territory use in relation to the turbine project and kill site. A total of seven known golden eagle mortalities have been documented in Klickitat County in the past few years. It is currently suspected that up to six of the known golden eagle territories in Klickitat County have been impacted by wind power development.



*Recent adult golden eagle mortality*



*Wind farm in Klickitat County – site of eagle mortality*

**Fish Removal:** Biologist Bergh met with Fish Program Biologists Weinheimer, Winther, and Dunlap at a site inhabited by state endangered western pond turtles. The lake at this site also contains a large number of non-native fish, which have a negative effect on the turtle population due to competition for food resources and predation of young turtles by larger fish. The lake also contains a large amount of vegetation which makes it difficult to remove fish via electroshocking or through the use of seine or gill nets. Other options for this site might include using a passive fyke net to trap fish, draining the lake, removing vegetation using sterile grass carp, and building enclosures in the lake that allow turtles in and keep fish out. More research will be done to determine what is best for this site. A big thank you to the Fish Program biologists for helping us with this issue.

**Deer and Elk Section Meeting:** Deer and Elk Section Manager Nelson, along with Statewide Elk Specialist Hoenes and Statewide Deer Specialist Hansen, spent time in both Districts 9 and

10. The gatherings allowed section and regional staff members to discuss many facets of deer and elk management in Region 5. Points of discussion included hunting season structure, population status, survey methods, upcoming projects, elk hoof disease, and more.

### **Hoof Disease**

**Treponeme-associated Hoof Disease Outreach:** Elk Specialist Hoenes, Veterinarian Mansfield, and Biologist George provided an update for the Hoof Disease Public Working Group. The update consisted of the current status and future steps for the four prioritized efforts of survival, distribution, prevalence, and diagnostics as pertaining to elk with hoof disease.

**Distribution:** Biologist George gave interviews to several reporters regarding the Cascades distribution effort, which officially launched last week. The project will be year-round and seeks to engage the public on monitoring for elk while recreating at higher elevations in the Cascade Range.

**Prevalence/Diagnostics:** The 2016 Hoof Collection Packets were assembled this week with help from Biologists Stephens and Holman and Technicians Sheffield and Loughridge. Four hundred seventy-five packets were sent to special permit elk hunters in western Washington to assist with understanding more about hoof disease in elk. This is the second year hunters are being asked to collect and submit hooves of harvested elk to WDFW and determine if they observed any abnormalities in the hooves of the elk they harvested. The collection will provide more information on the apparent prevalence of the disease in southwest Washington and further insight into the microbial profiles of hoof disease at different stages of the disease.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Goose Season:** Biologist Anderson conducted goose hunter harvest checks in the Vancouver Lowlands and at the Ridgefield Marina. Hunting pressure was light due to mild weather conditions and a high cloud ceiling. Hunters reported high numbers of geese in the area as birds start to move in for the winter, but it was difficult to get birds into blinds. Duck numbers remain low, which is typical for this time of year as their numbers start to build later in the season. The majority of hunters in the Vancouver Lowlands were hunting pheasants, especially in the northern unit. Two different hunting parties were contacted that successfully harvested pheasants. The Ridgefield Marina had few hunters, as many people are currently hunting the deer season and will return for waterfowl season into November.

### **Klickitat Wildlife Area Deer Modern Firearm Hunting Season**

**Simcoe Mountains Unit:** Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven worked at the new Simcoe Mountains Unit this week and had an opportunity to talk with hunters. On Thursday, there were three vehicles parked at the entrance, and on Saturday there were eight vehicles parked there. Ten hunters were contacted on Saturday. Three were from Vancouver or Washougal, one



was from the Tri-Cities, two were from Granger, and four were probably from the Yakima Valley. One 3X3 buck was checked on October 22. Not many shots were heard either day. Thursday was overcast, but Saturday was fair and warm. The Box Springs Road is still passable.

***Overcast day in the Simcoes***

**Soda Springs Unit:** Manager Van Leuven contacted 29 hunters in camp or on roads on the Soda Springs Unit this week. Weather was

favorable both days. No deer were checked, but at least three bucks were reported harvested. Hunters who worked the brushy draws on the lower slopes above the Klickitat River reported seeing numerous deer, while hunters staying in the higher elevations saw very few. Over the two weekends, hunters noted several bear observations. One group of hunters counted 16 black bear observations in various locations during their hunt in GMU 388. Two bears were reported to have been harvested by hunters camped on private land on Grayback Mountain.



***Soda Springs hunter camps***

**Pheasant Release:** Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven worked with Biologist Meyer and Volunteer Morrison to release pheasants for the opening of pheasant hunting season. Forty birds were released at the Goldendale Hatchery Unit, 30 were distributed on the Gun Club property, and 10 at the Finn Ridge Road property.



***Lift off***

**Access**

**Silver Lake:** Three trees and many branches fell into the parking lot from the high winds. One of the cottonwood trees clipped one of the restrooms as it crashed down. The restroom is still usable, but the edge of the concrete roof was broken and rebar exposed. A day was spent cutting and removing the trees and branches from the parking lot. A drainage ditch was dug out along the concrete platform that holds the dock to the beach. Water builds up and can't drain, causing several inches of standing water

over most of the platform. The soil is muddy and full of roots, so digging is difficult and the mud fills back in. Several other drains on the site are also plugged from root wads creeping up the pipes and eventually blocking the water from draining.



### *Silver Lake*

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Public Outreach:** Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven gave a presentation highlighting the important values of the new Simcoe Mountains acquisition at an annual meeting of Conservation District staff members of south-central Washington. The PowerPoint presentation, developed by Regional Program Manager Jonker, was well-received.



#### **Wildlife Conflict**

**Elk:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin and Biologist Meyers met two landowners experiencing damage to crops and pasture lands from elk in Glenwood. They will come up with a strategy to best assist the landowners, which will entail public hunting access, working with antlerless permit holders, and issuing damage permits.

**Cougar:** Wildlife conflict specialists removed a game camera from an area experiencing cougar issues. No cougar were detected, but the area is heavily used by wildlife such as bear, coyote, raccoon, elk, and deer.



#### ***GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE***

##### **Wildlife Management**

**Aircraft Safety Training:** Biologists Stephens, Meyer, George, and Holman attended WDFW aircraft safety training. The course includes modules on various aspects of safety related to flying, including how the aircraft function, safety equipment, flight following procedures, and more. Two modules focus on the challenging task of aerial capture of wildlife, including net gunning and darting. Thanks to Researcher Meyers for teaching the course and sharing his knowledge from many years of aerial wildlife work, including over 1,500 animal captures.

#### **REGION 6**

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

##### **Wildlife Management**

**Dead Bat:** Biologist Ament collected a dead bat from a man in Port Angeles. The bat had been frozen and stored in the man's freezer since last month. The bat died from injuries sustained

from being attacked by the man's cat. The bat was originally found alive. Biologist Ament consulted with a few of the licensed bat rehabilitators in the state. Due to the serious injuries, the bat was not a suitable patient for medical treatment. The bat will be delivered to the new White-nose Syndrome and Bat Specialist, Abby Tobin, and will be tested sometime in the future for White-nose Syndrome.

**Taylor's Checkerspot 2016 Data Processing & GIS Map Creation:** Biologist McMillan completed the 2016 survey records, including detailed GIS mapping for 36 of the 50 surveys conducted west of the Elwha River. Biologist McMillan created individual GIS maps to display the route surveyed and where Taylor's checkerspot butterflies were observed. She reviewed data sheets and made necessary edits. The northern extant population records (10 survey data sheets) are complete with the exception of the GIS mapping.

The survey records represent the effort to analyze the Taylor's checkerspot adult population dynamics within the two extant populations west of the Elwha River. These records have been saved as shapefiles for efficient comparing of data.

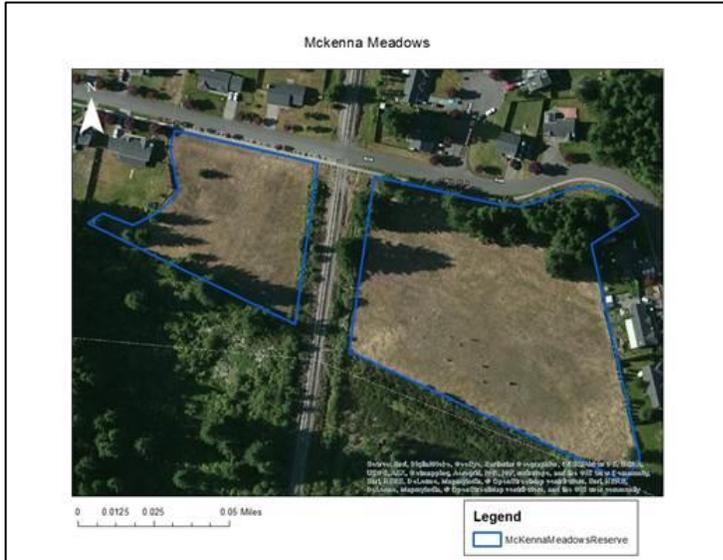
**Fisher Camera Stations:** In a multi-agency collaborative effort to document fisher presence on the Olympic Peninsula, Biologist Murphie established three camera/bait stations within survey blocks located near the town of Shelton. Biologist Murphie recently checked camera stations set up within the Kennedy Creek area near Shelton. Photos of opossums, spotted skunk, rabbit, bear, Stellar's jay, cougar, and deer were taken. Bait was refreshed at each station and will be checked again in two weeks.



*A black bear visits one of the fisher camera stations near Kennedy Creek*

**Satsop/Mason Deer Project:** In 2009, WDFW initiated a study of the effects of forest management practices on black-tailed deer reproduction. Two of eight study sites are represented in District 15: Mason and Satsop. The Mason cluster includes five GPS collared does, while the Satsop cluster has two. Three fawns collared this spring remain active. Biologist Murphie investigated the mortality of one adult doe in the Mason cluster recently. He classified this mortality as a bear predation based on evidence at the scene.

**Mazama Pocket Gopher Set Asides:** Biologists Tirhi, Butler and Hays, along with Research Scientist Olson, visited three properties, two private and one public, on which gopher set asides had been established in the past to assess habitat conditions and gopher occupancy. This work is being funded under a grant received through a joint project with Oregon on the management of prairie species (C-SWGs). Staff members were happy to find that a majority of the set asides are being mowed annually to minimize invasive grasses and Scot's broom and that gopher were persisting. One was not. Grant funds will be used to do further enhancement on each set aside for gophers (shrub removal, tree removal, mowing, herbicides).



Example of a Mazama pocket gopher set aside area established in the 1990s as part of a land use permit in Pierce County. It was recently visited to assess current habitat conditions and gopher use.

**Citizen Science Amphibian Monitoring Program:** Biologist Tirhi reviewed photos and data forms submitted by citizen scientists participating in this volunteer monitoring program in Pierce and Thurston counties. Tirhi is particularly interested in reports of listed and candidate species. Several western

toad locations were submitted, and Tirhi is making sure these are in the WDFW system as breeding locations.



*Photos of western toads sent in by participants of the citizen science amphibian monitoring program*



*Northwest salamander egg mass sent in by participant of the citizen science amphibian monitoring program*

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Hunter Checks:** Biologist Murphie conducted a roving hunter check during the first two weekends of the modern firearm deer season in District 15. The intent of this exercise was to interact with hunters in the field. He reports meeting 51 hunters, with one spike buck, one 4-point bull elk taken by permit in GMU 621, and one adult male bobcat.

**Administrative Code of Washington (WAC) Changes:** Biologist Tirhi worked with her local enforcement agents to propose changes to WAC language where deficiencies had been identified. All WAC changes with justification were sent to the regional wildlife program manager.

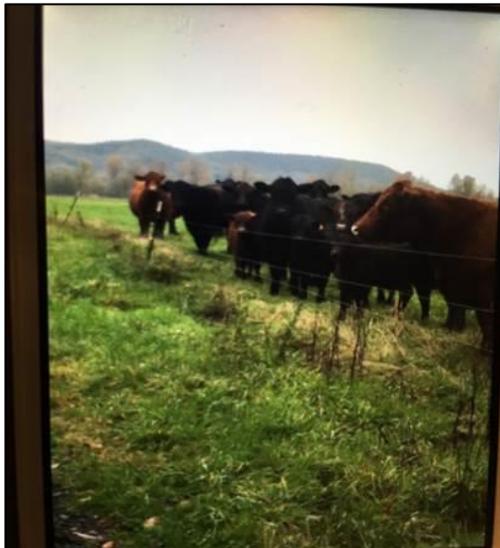
**Private Lands/Access/Conflict**

**Private Lands Access:** Natural Resource Technician Cain checked Private Lands Access sites. She replaced several faded safety zone signs and applied additional camouflage to some blinds. She provided additional safety zone signs to a landowner next to a Feel Free to Hunt area where some hunters have decided to trespass. While checking on a Hunt by Reservation site, she took a quick picture of some waterfowl.



***Picture of waterfowl at Hunt by Reservation location in Mason County***

**Hunter Farms:** Natural Resource Technician Cain met with the volunteer coordinator for the Hunter Farms Pheasant Release site. She toured the area and delivered new volunteer hats for the dedicated crew of volunteers.

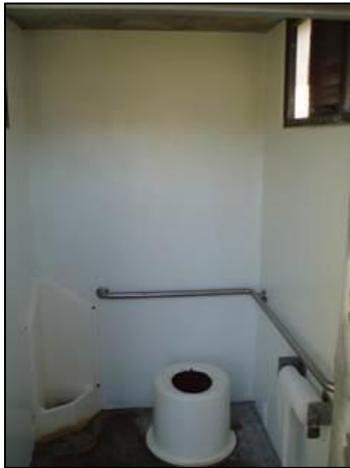


**Nuisance Elk:** Natural Resource Technician Cain checked producers' properties for elk use in Willapa and Wynoochee valleys. While familiarizing herself with one cattle operation, she was accompanied by several of the fields' residents.

***Cows following Cain along fence line***

**Chehalis Valley:** Biologist Harris spoke with a producer in the Chehalis Valley about recent elk use. A DPCA is in progress.

**DPCA:** Biologist Harris met with a producer in Ocosta to sign a DPCA. The elk have been quite busy tearing down fences and munching pasture. While there, the producer mentioned his goose problems. The hunters who used to hunt the property apparently don't hunt much anymore. Biologist Harris said he can find him more hunters. A Hunt by Written permission agreement will be prepared soon.



### Access Areas

**Restroom Painting:** The access team painted the interior of three Access Area restrooms. Sites included Humptulips River Morely, Satsop River Double Bridges, and Nisqually Handicap site.

**Parking Lot Clean Up:** The Access team has been removing leaves and debris from several Access Area parking lots in multiple counties.



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

**Wildlife Management**

**Request from Public:** WDFW often receives requests from the public seeking advice on construction of habitat features at their homes to attract wildlife. As an example, Biologist Tirhi has been advising a local resident who was interested in creating a pond for wildlife using information obtained from our Living with Wildlife series (<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/birdbaths/index.html>):

*“..we spoke a few weeks ago about a wildlife pond that I was constructing. I asked about introducing native species that would be attracted to this pond. We finished the pond last week and I am attaching some photos of the finished project - with the sun low in the sky, the lighting is not ideal. We used the information provided on your website as a basis for the design.*

*Prior to building the pond, I have observed several frogs, a salamander, and numerous garter snakes in the yard. Of course there are many deer, raccoons, squirrels, and coyotes. The birds really love the pond! I am hoping that more native amphibians and other animals will be drawn to the area and if you have any suggestions about possibly introducing other native species that would be very helpful.”*



WDFW sincerely appreciates the efforts of homeowners and larger landowners who make efforts to make a place for wildlife on their properties.

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

**Other**

**Flight Safety Training:** Biologists Tirhi and Butler attended a full day flight safety training in Ellensburg, including all four models of Basic Fix-winged Aircraft Flight Safety, Basic Helicopter Safety, Capture Crew Training, and Gunner/Mugger Training. Biologist Myers did an excellent job covering all safety related to these activities, including preparation and equipment.