

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

Oct. 16 to Oct. 31, 2019

DIVERSITY DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Bat Monitoring: WDFW Biologists Tobin, Anderson, Smith, Buchanan, and Section Manager Cotten along with WDFW volunteer Salzer, radio tracked a Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanesis*) in the Snoqualmie River watershed, King County to attempt to locate its hibernacula. We found the bat roosting in a cottonwood snag for six days, but unfortunately, could not locate the bat again once it left that roost. Bats are susceptible to a deadly bat disease during hibernation called white-nose syndrome (WNS), so locating these roosts will help us develop strategies to combat the spread of WNS.

Cottonwood snag the Yuma myotis roosted in for six days



2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Shorebird conservation in the Pacific Flyway: The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) released a video on Oct. 28 that focuses on shorebird conservation along the Pacific Flyway, with an emphasis on cultural perspectives. The video, produced by a team from Cornell Lab of Ornithology, includes three primary segments: community appreciation of shorebirds in coastal Mexico, research on red knots at Grays Harbor, and subsistence harvest of shorebird eggs in Alaska. Filming in Washington occurred in 2018, with funding from the CEC that independently supported fieldwork and video production. Natural Resource Scientist

Buchanan coordinated the field effort and worked with the videographers. Visit <https://youtu.be/Qb-2eGuXGmM> to view the 13-minute video.

Cascades to Coast Landscape Collaborative Speaker Series: The Cascades to Coast Landscape Collaborative (CCLC) hosted events between Oct. 17-19 in Longview, Shelton and South Bend as part of a quarterly “speaker series.” This three-day event focused on conservation incentives and their role in sustaining small family forests over the long term. Environmental Planner, Jeff Azerrad, along with a small team of CCLC members helped organize and arrange these events. The CCLC advertised this as the kickoff to a speaker series focused on issues relevant to local farm and forest producers and interested partners.

The events featured a talk by Mike Kuttel, Jr., WDFW’s Farm Bill Coordinator, highlighting the Southwest Washington Small Forest Lands Conservation Partnership (SFLCP). It also included an open discussion on how to improve incentives for Small Forest Landowners (SFLOs). The open discussion focused on hearing what features of incentive program either appeal to SFLOs or prevent SFLOs from participating. Over 65 SFLOs and representatives of land trusts, agencies and non-governmental organizations attended. This particular event should help get the word out about the SFLCP to potential enrollees.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

HERE’S WHAT WE’VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Nothing for this installment.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this installment.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Methow Conservancy Mule Deer Monitoring Talk: Deer Specialist Hansen was invited to give a talk for the Methow Conservancy about WDFW's annual mule deer monitoring survey efforts and new research being conducted jointly between the Game Division and staff members in District 6 to develop an aerial sightability model specific to landscapes found here in Washington. The eventual results of this four-year research project are anticipated to provide more accurate and less biased mule deer abundance and age/sex ratio estimates that will improve WDFW's ability to make data-driven science-informed management decisions in the future. The talk was well attended by a wonderfully diverse array of more than 50 very interested and engaged citizens from both the local community as well as hunters who had traveled to the area from around the state to hunt during the modern firearm deer general season. Deer Specialist Hansen was resoundingly invited back to give an update on the progress of this ongoing research project next fall.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this installment.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Region 5 Coordinator Elliott worked with Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and enlisted the help of local master hunters to construct a fence for a landowner who has recently lost sheep to coyote depredations. A couple master hunters went out to the project site but needed additional

help, so Elliott contacted local Master Hunter Advisory Group (MHAG) members to help recruit additional manpower quickly.

Region 6 Coordinator Montgomery is continuing work with Conflict Specialist Blankenship to recruit and establish a local team of volunteers for elk issues in Orting area.

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey referred a grad student to Region 3 Coordinator Garcia for help with the students' predator scavenger study. Coordinator Garcia was able to help her get started recruiting master hunters for this three-year study. The study is in selected Region 1 and Region 2 GMUs and involves the placing of trail cameras at the site of successful game harvests to study the scavengers to the gut piles after field dressing the harvest.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia was contacted by Conflict Specialist Wetzel about a landowner with elk issues. Garcia contacted the landowner to work with him on allowing general season master hunters to hunt his property.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Nothing for this installment.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Region 6 Coordinator Montgomery is working with Alex Biwas from marketing along, Bob Oke Farmer Chris White and Wildlife Area Manager Lowery on a Mentored Pheasant Clinic and hunt, Nov. 2 at the Davis Creek Wildlife Area. We will be mentoring 10 new youth and 10 adult new hunters.

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey assisted with a class held at the Region 4 headquarters in Mill Creek. The class was well attended. Coordinator Dazey also assisted a master hunter by checking out skins and skulls as well as information on volunteer service opportunities to the Chief Seattle Boy Scouts of America training conference for scout leaders. This outreach will let the scouting adults become aware of the opportunities to volunteer for service work to the department.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia contacted the people registered for the three upcoming upland bird clinics and mentored hunts to confirm their registrations and begin preparing them for the clinic. He also visited with Brian Gaston in St. John to work out the details of the clinic/hunt.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia and Rich Mann planned out a mentoring trip where they will spend four days mentoring up to 16 people on fall turkey hunting. Garcia emailed the list of people registered for fall turkey mentoring and got 16 signed up.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Coordinator Elliott has been working with several new instructors to get them set up as new teams or pair them with existing groups. She is also working with a couple of instructors who are looking into new venues to hold classes.

Region4 Coordinator Dazey attend the Washington Hunter Education Instructors Association (WHEIA) meeting that was held at the Region 4 office. Dazey was able to answer questions and provide a department presence at the meeting of one of our valued partners in hunter education. WHEIA has been a solid partner acquiring grants and partnering with hunter education for National Hunting and Fishing Day.

Region 4 Coordinator Dazey conducted the first of two pre-service training sessions in Whatcom County at the Custer gun range. Whatcom County has been historically underserved so it will be a big help to add to the instructor cadre there.

Region 3 Coordinator Garcia delivered hunter education supplies and equipment to teams in Walla Walla, Yakima, Warden, and Benton City.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

LANDS DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Nothing for this installment.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this installment.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this installment.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

The Scatter Creek Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) met on Oct. 23 in Littlerock. Nine advisory committee members attended the meeting. WDFW staff members provided an overview of the planning process, timeline, draft vision statement, focal species, and restoration planning. Darric Lowery provided an update on the wildlife area activities. The bulk of the meeting was spent on collecting comments on the draft goals and objectives that were sent in advance to the WAAC members. Quite a few comments were received; comments included

questions on the selection of focal species, land acquisition, recreation facilities and trail improvements, and fire management. The current goal is to have a draft wildlife area management plan by January 2020 for WAAC review.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

New Real Estate Services staff: We are pleased to announce the hiring of Region 2 Lands Agent Albert Ramirez on Oct. 21 and Region 3 Lands Agent Robert Carbary on Oct. 31. They joined the Real Estate Service's team for our quarterly meeting 1Oct. 31 and Nov. 1. Training and onboarding continued with a special luncheon to thank and send off Region 1 Lands Agent Jan Lawson who is moving out of state.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

SCIENCE DIVISION

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Cougar Mortality Survey123 Form: Any cougar mortality in the state requires that a tooth be pulled. Historically, those teeth were mailed to headquarters (Olympia) for entry into our Tooth Database with a small amount of information about the take included on the tooth envelope. The Game Division decided that soliciting more information from the hunter, such as their days of effort and whether it was targeted hunting or opportunistic take, was desirable to better understand cougar harvest. IT specialist Whelan developed a collection form using Survey123, an ESRI-supported application, that can be accessed offline or through a web-browser for staff members to submit this information. We also developed a scripted process for reconciling the information submitted over Survey123 with the Tooth Database. The form was launched for statewide use in September.

Summer 2019 Mountain Goat GPS Collar Deployments: As part of the ongoing Olympia National Park Mountain Goat Translocation Project, dozens of animals were captured this summer for relocation to the Cascades. Wildlife Survey Data Management (WSDM) Section is responsible for managing all telemetry data for this inter-agency project. During this summer's capture effort, IT Specialist Whelan loaded the new deployment information into our life history database – this database stores information about the animals that were captured, and the GPS collar deployed. This information is then used by our telemetry system to daily retrieve GPS locations from the Vectronics cloud, process the data, publish the data as secured web services, and redisplay this information to our staff and partners in a browser-based, webmap application. Email alerts are also scripted to automatically send status reports (e.g. an animal generating a possible mortality signal) out to project partners. This telemetry data support allows biologists to

track movements of the translocated animals and to better respond to incidents such as mortalities or animals moving to locations with the potential for wildlife-human conflict.

Deer Road Survey Data Collection with Survey123 and Collector: In the past, staff biologists have been collecting survey data on paper and then entering the data into an Excel spreadsheet, district by district. This duplicate data entry is costly in terms of time and errors created during data entry. IT Specialist Simper developed a Survey123 collection form in combination with the ESRI Collector map, so that surveyors could both track their survey route and enter survey observations, while being offline. With the removal of duplicate entry and with data validation embedded in the form, effort and errors are greatly reduced. Once back at the office (or within cell phone or WiFi range), these data are then loaded into the AGOL cloud, so that all deer survey data are located in one place, making analysis easier.

Transitioning from Three to Two WSDM Data Biologists: Biologists Blatz and Jenkerson spent time with transition planning, training, documentation, and data entry work to absorb the workload of WSDM Biologist Salzer, who retired at the end of September. New species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) responsibilities for these two include: bats, northern spotted owl, mussels, snails, western pond turtle, amphibians, reptiles, and marine mammals. As WSDM is now down two staff members, we are attempting to improve efficiency while maintaining, as much as possible, the same level of support to Wildlife Program staff members as well as external customers.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

Nothing for this installment.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Nothing for this installment.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this installment.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Best of Washington Information Technology Award: A cross-program team of IT specialists were selected to receive the “**Best of Washington Information Technology Award**” for their innovative and modern approach to effectively manage, integrate and deliver “database-driven” content to the newly redesigned WDFW website. (Nominees: *Shelly Snyder, Ian Trewella, Randy Kreuziger, Mike Eaton, Ryan Gatchell, Treg Christopher, Dale Gombert, Peggy Ushakoff, Chris Marsh*)

A very special “shout-out” to Wildlife Program IT Specialist, Ian Trewella for his pivotal role in architecting a modern and efficient solution for managing and publishing web content in “real-time” from a centralized data repository.

This work resulted in the elimination of duplicated effort in managing “redundant” web site content within the WDFW’s new website content management system. It also removed the need to continuously update and publish hundreds of static PDF map files.

The most successful/robust implementation of this new process is “[Wildlife Areas – Places to Go](#)” section of the website. Visitors can drive the content of the page by using drop downs, interactive maps or dynamic lists. The data on this page can be used by other applications, because it is all managed in a database and served out for consumption by REST API’s. This was a collaborative effort, to tackle an issue of data management that affects many agencies.

The team created the process, templates and reusable/configurable source code for future web site enhancements and for applications being developed by the agency. This project integrates and aligns very well with the goals/objectives outlined in the Agency’s: GIS Strategic Plan, Land Information System and Lands Showcase Initiative.

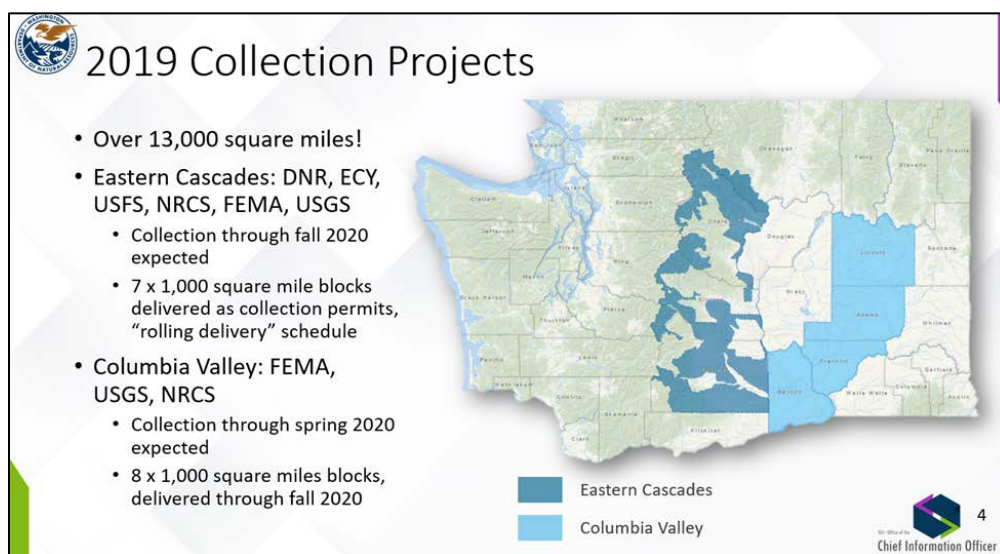
This award will be presented at the Washington Digital Government Summit held in Olympia, on Nov 7.



Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR): Abigail Gleason (DNR LiDAR Program Manager) and Joanne Markert (Washington State OCIO GIS Coordinator) presented WDFW staff members with a brownbag Skype session to:

- highlight the history, status and future of [WA State LiDAR](#) data acquisition and distribution, and
- discuss and explore LiDAR data needs and applications for WDFW

During this informational meeting, we learned that WDFW does not have a formal seat or representation on the Washington State LiDAR Stakeholders team. This group advocates for LiDAR funding, data acquisition priorities and partnership opportunities in Washington. Members from WDFW's GIS coordination team plan to queue this up for discussion/resolution to ensure our agency's interests are formally and adequately represented, in the future. LiDAR acquisitions for 2019 are highlighted below:



REGION 1

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Bat White Nose Syndrome Monitoring Meeting: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy listened in on the bat white-nose syndrome (WNS) planning/monitoring meeting. The district does not currently have any identified colony sites for monitoring.

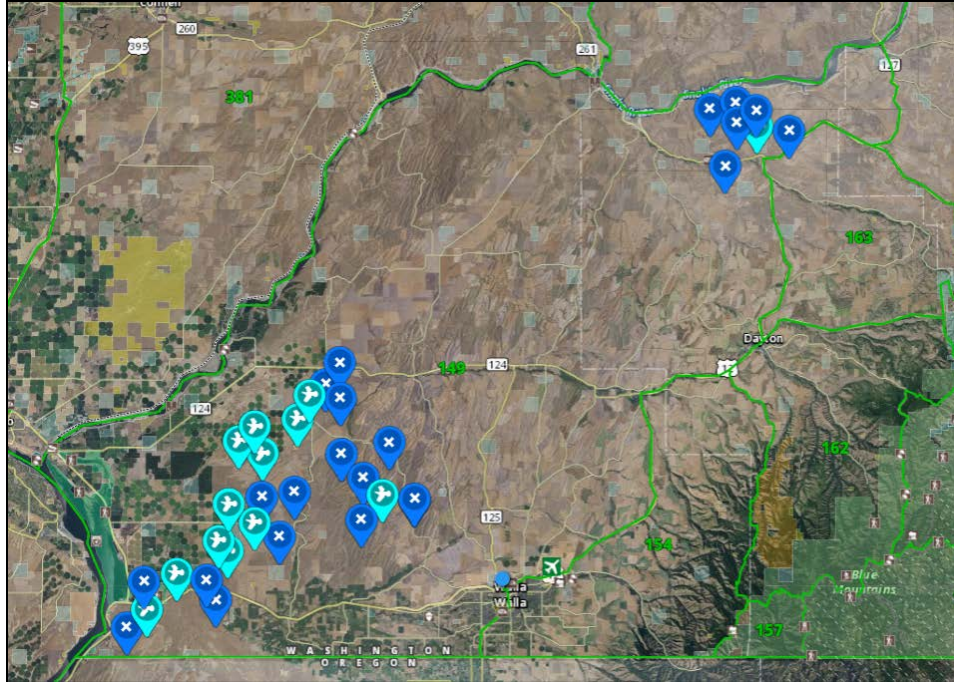
Rocky Mountain Tailed Frog eDNA Sampling: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy completed sampling for frog eDNA at three sites in the Tucannon-Wenaha Wilderness where frogs had been detected prior to recent wildfires. Wildlife area and Olympia staff members, and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) cooperators also sampled sites across the district to determine if current distribution matches historical detections in areas that have experienced wildfires. The USFS is also contributing samples collected during bull trout eDNA survey work.



Photo of West Fork Butte Creek sampling site

Elk TAHD Quarterly Meeting: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy joined a conference call for the quarterly meeting on TAHD research with cooperators from Washington State University (WSU). The group discussed upcoming survey questions that were developed from an earlier survey with a small focus group. The new survey will target a state-wide audience. The group also discussed logistics of beginning the captive study at WSU once the pens are completed, and a quick discussion of a student research proposal utilizing existing harvest data to identify any changes in antler asymmetry that could be correlated with increasing incidence of hoof disease.

Highway 12 Realignment Mitigation: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy continued working on landowner contacts for installation of ferruginous hawk nest platforms. All locations have received landowner approval, with 15 sites in Walla Walla County and six sites in Columbia County. Vekasy has also coordinated with District Biologist Fidora, who has approval for eight sites in Benton-Franklin counties. Vekasy delivered poles and platforms to the District 4 office, and completed the staging of materials at the Walla Walla office for contractor installation beginning the first week of November.



Nest platform locations in dark blue in relation to recently occupied territory/nest locations in light blue



Platforms with sagebrush nest material, wrapped to secure material during installation

Bighorn Sheep Sampling: District Biologist Wik spent the work period working with Dr. Ryan Long (University of Idaho Professor) and Dr. Frances Cassirer (IDFG Research Biologist) attempting to sample and collar bighorn sheep in the Asotin herd. A Ph.D. student will be starting work this fall with the intent of looking at the relationship of body condition, lamb recruitment, and landscape use. This requires us to capture at least 15 ewes to collect body condition (using an ultrasound to measure body fat) and place GPS collars that will assist in lamb captures in the spring.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Southeast Washington Access Areas: Access Manager Greg Heimgartner reported use at Heller Bar and other sites along the Grande Ronde River have been busy with steelhead season on. Steelhead fishing opportunities are limited this year and use has been concentrated along the Grande Ronde and upper Snake rivers where seasons are open. Greg recently installed a new sign at Snyder Bar on the kiosk.



Snyder Bar kiosk

Steelhead Fishing Outfitters at Shumaker Wildlife Area: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice and Fish and Wildlife Officer Matt Sabo contacted a steelhead fishing outfitter at a remote campsite at Shumaker about length of stay on WDFW lands. The outfitter was not doing anything wrong, and it turns out another party is upset about not being able to use the same site for themselves. This is not the first time WDFW staff members have had to contact outfitters camped at this location.



Outfitter camp at the very east end of the Shumaker Unit along the Grande Ronde River

Blue Mountains Region Trails Awards: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman attended the Blue Mountain Region Trails awards ceremony and accepted the Governor’s 2019 Smart Communities Award for WDFW.



Group photo of stakeholders that worked together to complete the Blue Mountain Region Trails Plan and received the Governor’s 2019 Smart Communities Award

4-O Ranch and Grouse Flats Wildlife Area Land Management Activities: Wet snowfall this week at the highest elevations has postponed the controlled burn planned for Grouse Flats Wildlife Area this fall. Biologist Woodall and Wildlife Area Manager Dice went over to retrieve the water tanker truck and pump that had been on standby there for the project. Biologist Woodall removed the informational signs that explained the burn, and he visited with a successful elk hunter.



First snowfall at Grouse Flats



Successful hunter on the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area

Water Access Sites: Water Access Manager Dziekan closed up summer water access sites in Region 1 for the end of the fishing season. He made one final sweep for garbage, cleaned and emptied restrooms, and removed brush piles, which will make opening the sites in the spring much quicker. Dziekan also started preparing winter access sites for the opener at the end of November. He picked up litter that had blown in, cleaned restrooms, trimmed brush, and hauled off debris, to start the winter season with clean sites.



Autumn defoliation exposed three trash bags' worth of used fireworks at this summer access site

Hunter Contacts: Assistant District Biologist Vekasy responded to numerous hunter calls and emails related to permit and general hunt opportunities across District 3, with more bird hunter calls than usual. Vekasy also checked one cougar and sealed two hunter-harvested bobcats.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Nothing for this installment.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Gravel Hauling: Technician Wynn Stallcop spent a little over a week hauling crushed rock to a parking area near McNeil Spring on the wildlife area. The parking area will be used by future volunteers as a camping area. Wynn also put two loads on the Autrey campground driveway.

4-O Ranch Wildlife Area Spring work: Dave Meisner and Scott McGee fenced off a spring and installed a trough at Mountain View. The spring area is now protected from permitted livestock use. Livestock have a new trough to drink from which gathers water from a spring box. Unused water is returned to the spring via an overflow pipe.



Newly fenced spring area at Mountain View on the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area



Trough installed by Dave Meisner and Scott McGee



Spring water collection box fabricated and installed by Dave Meisner and Scott McGee

Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Trespass Livestock Updates: As of the end of October, trespass livestock are on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area at Joseph Creek, 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area at Hanson Ridge, and at Grouse Flats on the 4-O Ranch. Approximately a dozen cows are hanging around the buildings at Joseph Creek. The cows entered the wildlife area at a damaged fence where it crosses Joseph Creek to the south of the headquarters buildings. WDFW personnel repaired the fence and attempted contact with the owner to remove his cows. Livestock were found on the 4-O Ranch Wildlife Area on Oct. 31 at Hanson Ridge. This is especially disturbing since a contractor recently completed a very expensive new boundary fence near there. Staff members will be going over the new fence in early November to determine what the problem is. Livestock are still on the wildlife area in corral pens near the Bucannon Barn. The owner was contacted and indicated the cows will be hauled away soon. Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice inspected boundary fence at the top of Tam Tam Ridge on Oct. 24 and found the fence in poor condition with multiple sites where it was down allowing livestock to enter the wildlife area. This is the source of last summer's trespass livestock incidents in Charley Creek. Repair at this remote site will be difficult and expensive. The fence is very old and in need of replacement.



Tam Tam Ridge boundary fence. Private land on the left, wildlife area land on the right. It is easy to see why livestock pushed the fence to enter WDFW land



Fence at a corner laying on the ground



Snow and cold temperatures mean it is time to shut off water systems and winterize facilities

Wildlife Area Facility Winterization: David Woodall spent a good portion of the week draining water tanks and lines, and winterizing facilities, turning on heat, and making sure things will not freeze up. It was nine degrees up at Smoothing Iron Ranch this week with a couple inches of snow on the ground.

Shrubsteppe Restoration: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch completed the restoration seeding on 60 acres at Swanson Lakes. This acreage is part of an old wheat field that had been retired and planted to a crested wheatgrass monoculture in the mid-1980s. Using grant funding, this acreage joined an adjacent 60 acres completed last year, in restoration to shrubsteppe meadow vegetation with native grass and forb species. These restored lands will increase the available nesting and foraging habitat for sharp-tailed grouse in the vicinity.



Planting for Pollinators: At Sherman Creek Wildlife Area's Bisbee Mountain, a team of eight WDFW employees - Biologist Kurt Merg, Assistant Manager Daro Palmer and the north central burn crew - planted 3100 individual plugs of a variety of forbs, to benefit pollinators such as butterflies and native bees.



Slash pile burning: WDFW's north central burn crew, along with Assistant Manager Daro Palmer, torched approximately 500 hand piles of tree debris at Rustlers Gulch Wildlife Area. The piles were left over from recent pre-commercial thinning for forest health and fire fuels reduction.



5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Clarkston Office Security: The Port of Clarkston provided Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice with access to one of their security cameras for monitoring WDFW's Clarkston facility after hours for security. The camera is mounted on top of a grain elevator complex across the street and is controllable by logging onto a password protected web site. The camera effectively covers the building and equipment storage lot.



WDFW's Clarkston shop and storage yard as seen from a nearby Port of Clarkston security camera

Swanson Lakes Office Move: Action has begun on moving the Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area office to the recently vacated manager's residence next door. At the new location, wiring for computer needs was installed, a technician repaired problems with the heating and cooling system, and Assistant Manager Finch installed a new thermostat. Several employees in Region 1 have committed to helping with the actual staff move, including transporting furniture, books, computers, etc. to the new office the week of Dec. 1.



New Employee: Scientific Technician Dalton Mouritsen started working for us on the bighorn sheep project during this period. Dalton will work for us for the next two months while we are intensively capturing bighorns.

Biologist 2 Position: District Biologist Wik and IDFG Research Biologist Cassirer conducted interviews for our vacant Biologist 2 position. Reference checks were conducted and a recommendation for hiring has been forwarded to approving authorities.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Reintroduced Pronghorn Antelope in Douglas County: Private Lands Biologist Braaten participated in a WDFW teleconference regarding pronghorn antelope. Many topics were covered regarding planning, damage issues, conflict, tribal interests, etc.

Private Lands Biologist Braaten also spent time with local landowners discussing pronghorn antelope issues (mainly fence issues/observations and locations they are frequenting) and recently located a pronghorn antelope herd in north Douglas County with 32 members (around six bucks, 20 does, and six fawns).



Pronghorn antelope – Douglas County fall 2019 - Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW



Pronghorn doe with a fence situation - Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

Bighorn Sheep Surveys: Biologist Comstock and Conflict Specialist Bridges conducted two day of aerial bighorn sheep surveys for the Swakane and Chelan Butte herds. No formal aerial survey had been conducted for these two herds in the last decade. Previous annual counts had been conducted from opportunistic roadside viewpoints.



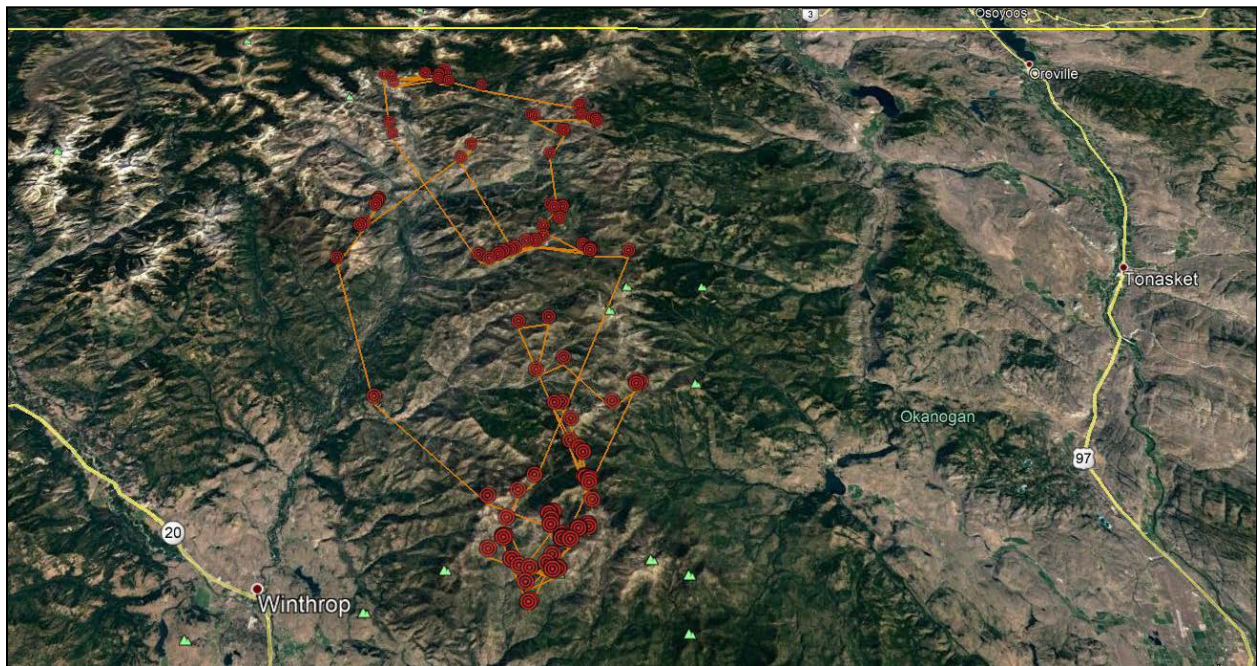
Bighorn sheep from the helicopter – Photo by Comstock

Western Gray Squirrel Survey: Biologist Heinlen summarized all the data for the western gray squirrel survey effort within District 6 and submitted it to Research Scientist Vanderhaegen. In 2019, WDFW staff members and volunteers deployed 22 survey transects. Four had positive western grey squirrel detections (with one other under review). Eleven (50 percent) were censored due to non-target detections and will have to be re-deployed next year. Leaving 11 of 22 transects that were completed per protocol in 2019.

The District 6 three-year western grey squirrel survey effort break down is below:

Three-year effort: 60 transects in three years.
2018: 27 (of 28) Transects completed; one transect censored; 33 left
2019: 11 (of 22) Transects completed; 11 transects censored
2020: 22 Transects left to complete

Golden Eagle Research: In February 2018, WDFW Research Scientist Watson and volunteer Fischer captured a juvenile male golden eagle in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. In January 2019, the same crew plus Biologist Heinlen captured a juvenile female golden eagle in the same area. Both eagles were fitted with a satellite tracking PTT transmitter. The male has largely stayed within the local area indicating he likely fledged locally. The female migrated north as spring arrived, spent the summer in Alaska and is currently heading south. This pattern indicates she was fledged north, in or towards Alaska. It will be interesting to see if she returns to the Okanogan area or winters elsewhere. It also interesting that two eagles captured in the same area have very different origins.



Male golden eagle from Oct. 9 thru 25, 2019 within Okanogan County



Female golden eagle southward migration from Alaska south into British Columbia as of Oct. 30, 2019

Bighorn Sheep Monitoring: Biologist Heinlen continues to monitor the Mount Hull bighorn herd in the wake of last year's pneumonia outbreak. Currently the herd appears to be doing well with healthy looking animals and good lamb production. A recent partial count by co-managing tribal biologists tallied 60 sheep (39 ewes, 11 lambs, and 10 rams). A more comprehensive survey will be attempted later this fall.



Bighorn sheep in the Mount Hull herd – Photo by WDFW remote camera

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Roses Lake Access Improvements: The Rose's Lake Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) Redevelopment grant Phase 1 is almost complete. The site is really looking good with the new facelift. The grant included a new double vault toilet to replace aging single vault; shoreline fishing improvement included a fishing platform made from ecology blocks that extends out into the lake that is backfilled and paved for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) fishing opportunities. The boat launch was extended at the very end and was filled with rip rap to hopefully help with scouring. Some minor excavation was done, removing debris from ditch/swale for better drainage of the hillside. One of the most significant changes was the extensive paving of the whole site. Overall, we had only a couple of partial closures and one four-day total site closure for paving. The only item left to do is the addition of a new dock that will be attached at a 90-degree angle of the existing one for better loading/unloading of boats and to allow more area for dock fishing. Phase 2 will include a large fishing pier and another dock that will be in the shape of a T strictly for dock fishers.





Before and after photos of the access site showing new paved surface throughout and new vault toilet - Photos by Mike DeHart

Success on the Special limited entry hunt in Okanogan: The Eder Unit of the Scotch Creek Wildlife Area in North Central Washington is managed as a limited entry deer hunting opportunity. The access tag is drawn through a special online permit allowing only six hunters in each user group to participate during deer season. One local family was drawn this year in the youth category and sent me this description of his hunt:

“My son Parker (9) drew an Eder access permit and we hunted Saturday and Sunday. We really enjoyed the unit and ended it all with a beautiful buck on Sunday afternoon. The hunt gave me an opportunity to show Parker lots of deer and other wildlife such as coyotes, bear, and upland birds. It also allowed us to hunt relatively unencumbered by other hunters, which always makes for a quality hunt. He harvested the buck with a well-placed heart shot at 58 yards. Spotting and stalking is the technique I wanted to teach him, and this unit allow that with multiple opportunities.”



Above – Three generations of the Marsh family from Omak successfully harvesting a white-tailed deer during the Eder quality hunt - Photo provided by Matt Marsh

Pheasant Hunting: Biologist Heinlen released birds this period as part of the long-running Eastern Washington Pheasant Release Program. Pheasant releases enhance harvest opportunities and offer an easy way for new hunters to engage in the sport.



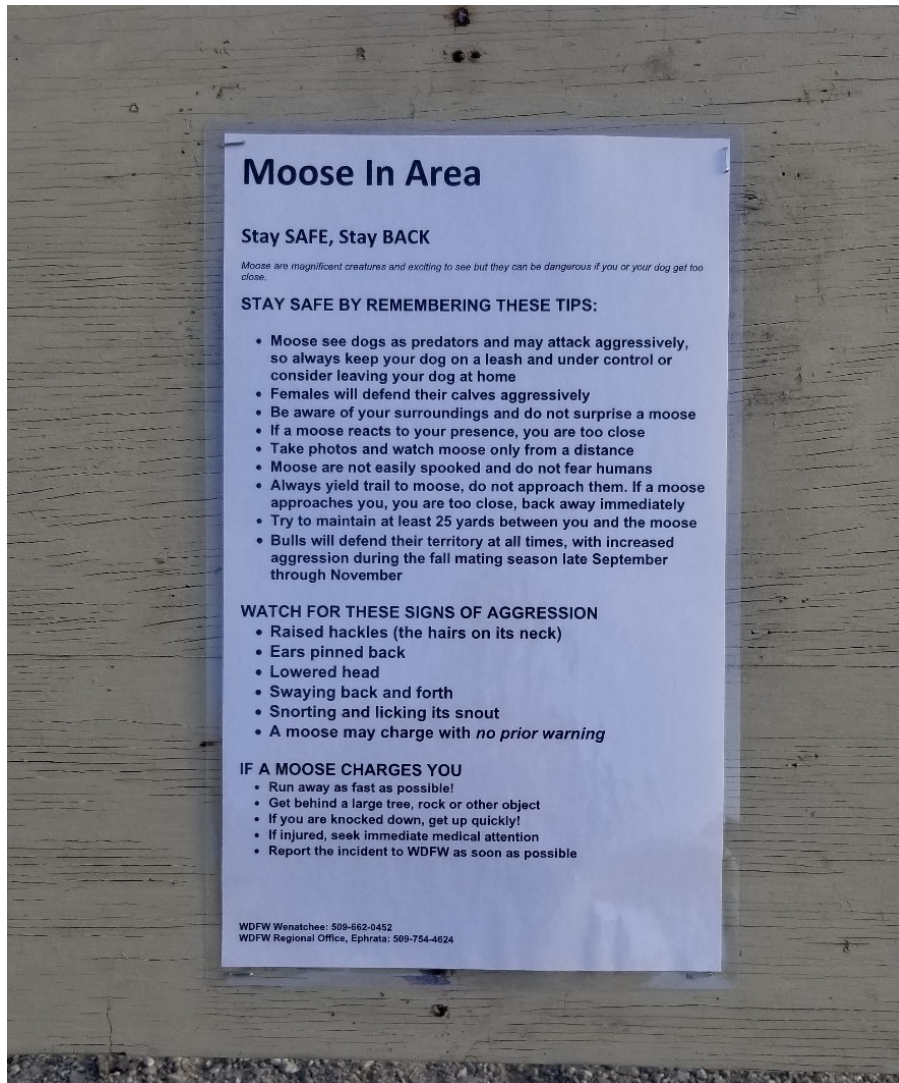
Ring neck pheasant release at the Hegdal Release Site in Okanogan County – Photo by J. Heinlen

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Moose in the park: In July, staff members at Confluence State Park in Wenatchee reported a cow moose in the Horan Natural Area, which is owned by the Chelan PUD, but managed by State Parks. Moose occurrences have become more common in Wenatchee and we typically have one or two that make it into town each year. The Horan Natural Area is popular with the public and people frequently walk their dogs there. On Oct. 7, Biologist Comstock was notified that the moose was still frequenting the park and she had developed somewhat of a celebrity following and due to the novelty of her presence some members of the public were approaching her or following her to get photos. The moose has been frequently reported on the trails and has so far been very tolerant of people and dogs coming in close proximity. After coordinating with the PUD and State Parks, Biologist Comstock asked State Parks to post educational signs about moose and personal safety around moose.



Cow moose adjacent to hiking trails in Horan Natural Area



Sign posted at both entrances to Horan Natural Area

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Methow Forest Health Progress: The Methow Wildlife Area continued to host WDFW's Northcentral Washington Prescribed Burn Team to perform thinning treatments on 75-acre parcel in the Ramsey Creek drainage. The treatment removes small diameter pine, reducing fuels in this overstocked section of forest bordered by USFS lands. This action helps the be forest more resilient to fire, reduce the likelihood of crowning fires, recruit more diverse understory growth, and allow more nutrients to feed the desirable legacy pines. In addition, WDFW Foresters Pfeifle, Mize and Ruggirello and Methow staff members have been burning slash piles in the Ramsey Creek drainage. Over 30 large piles of slash are on the ground following harvest activities this spring. Six piles have been burned in the past week.



Methow Wildlife Area Manager Troyer stands in front of a recently lit slash pile and smoke from a pile burning out in the Rasmsey Creek drainage - Photos by Justin Haug

Carter Mountain RX Burn Tour: Sinlahekin Wildlife Area staff members and the Okanogan land operations manager met with Wells Wildlife Area personnel to tour a Carter Mountain prescribe burn unit. They were looking at the effects of a prescribe burn on the different shrub steppe plant species. During the tour they were able to see the mosaic that a prescribe burn creates along with the diverse plant community and age class that are effects of the burn. The Wells Wildlife Area is looking at a potential site to use prescribe burning to create diverse age class and plant community. On the tour they also gained knowledge of the logistics that need to take place to implement a restoration prescribed burn.



Sinlahekin Wildlife Area manager Wehmeyer and assistant manager Klehm discuss sagebrush steppe prescribed burning on the Carter Mountain Unit with Wells Wildlife Area Manager Peterson and Assistant Manager Blake - Photo by Justin Haug

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement – Conservation Reserve Program - SAFE-CRP:

Biologist Hughes submitted a waiver requesting an exemption of mid-contract management on leave areas in a SAFE-CRP field that is enrolled in Safe Harbor. The waiver request was submitted to the local county Farm Service Agency (FSA) and will be reviewed by the end of this month by the county committee. After the county review, the waiver will go to the state FSA board to be reviewed. The field is due for mid-contract management between years (2020-2022), Hughes got an early start on this because waivers can take up to a year to be processed. Biologist Hughes worked with Biologist Gallie on submitting the write up to FSA. The leave areas of this field contain up to nearly 60 to 70 percent of the entire wild Sagebrush Flat population of pygmy rabbits, being the only established population in the state currently.



Native bunch grasses and mature sagebrush of area proposed to be converted - Photo by Hughes

Safe Harbor: Biologist Hughes was contacted by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) about a proposed conversion of approximately 70 acres of mature shrub steppe habitat it owns to dryland wheat that is currently enrolled in a Safe Harbor agreement with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). There is a stipulation contained in Safe Harbor agreements that permittees must inform the USFWS and WDFW prior to any management action that will alter the habitat/land covered in such an agreement. As a result, Hughes coordinated with Biologist Gallie and USFWS personnel. Hughes and Braaten surveyed the proposed site and no signs of pygmy rabbits were identified. Based on the survey results, and the fact that the ground can be converted at any time as long as notice is provided, agreement for the conversion was granted. Hughes recommended that the conversion not take place due to the condition of the native shrub steppe habitat. DNR is going to consider the recommendation and will inform Hughes and USFWS with the final outcome soon.



Biologist Hughes surveying for pygmy rabbits of area proposed to be converted - Photo by Braaten

Columbia Basin Wildlife Area - Potholes Supplemental Feed Route (PSFR): Lands Operations Manager Finger and Environmental Planner Jeff Dengel met with Deputy Field Office Manager Lay and Project Manager McConnell with Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to discuss issues associated with PSFR. The first issue dealt with Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) transmission line tower footings occurring within the boundary of the Flood Flat wetland enhancement and responsibilities for securing those footings. Finger presented BOR flood models (developed without consideration of the wetland project components) which show water encroachment on towers under normal PSFR operations. The wetland project was constructed to isolate the basin from flooding during the growing season, so the project actually gives managers the ability to limit or reduce the encroachment on towers with minimal impact to management objectives during the flooding season. A site visit with BPA engineers is planned for Dec. 9. Also discussed was the Trout Lodge hatchery. We were pleasantly surprised to learn that BOR has a 30 percent engineering design near completion for the mitigation associated with increased flows from PSFR. This design will be shared and reviewed by CAMP and next steps will be determined by BOR and CAMP on who will take the designs to completion. Lastly, we discussed fish passage concerns with regards to culvert and drainage improvements on and near Stratford Road that BOR wishes to make to reduce ponding around Grant County International Airport to reduce potential for avian collisions with aircraft. Jeff Dengel will work to loop in Habitat Biologist Pentico to determine whether fish passage requirements will be met by their current culvert plans.

Lands Operations Manager Finger, Environmental Planner Jeff Dengel, RES Property Supervisor Woodruff, and Bureau of Reclamation Realty Specialist Maciel discussed all things real estate with regards to reclamation needs to flow water over WDFW lands via PSFR. Fortunately, the Real Estate Section staff members are working the situation on a parcel by parcel basis to determine the difference between existing rights and what rights are needed to move the water.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Ecology of the Okanogan – Okanogan High School: Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Manager Wehmeyer and Lands Operations Manager Haug met with Okanogan High School’s advanced biology class and the Conservation District staff members at Driscoll Island as part of their Ecology of the Okanogan class. Wehmeyer discussed the history of the island and current management on the wildlife area unit. The group later collected invertebrates from the Okanogan River and took variety of measurements to determine water quality. Wehmeyer previously spoke to the students at Okanogan High School regarding careers in the natural resources sciences and fielded questions related to being manager of the wildlife area.



High School on Driscoll Island identifying aquatic invertebrates - Photos by Justin Haug

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Central Washington in all its glory!









From top to bottom – Sunrise on the Similkameen-Chopaka Unit, the old Cutchie barn below Chopaka Mountain on the Similkameen-Chopaka, Gibson Creek Falls in the Sinlahekin Valley near Fish Lake, a Northern Flicker on the Scotch Creek Unit and side-channel of the Yakima River within unit of the LT Murray Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug.

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

District 8 Biologists Bernatowicz coordinated getting some elk hooves from the Yakama Nation that were malformed. No lesions were found, and Dr. Mansfield confirmed a classic case of chronic laminitis and not TAHD.



Elk hooves with laminitis

Biologist Bernatowicz entered submitted pictures from summer bumble bee surveys on the Sunnyside Wildlife Area. Only two species found and both fairly common. Surveys in 2018 which were later, found a much greater number and diversity of bumble bees.



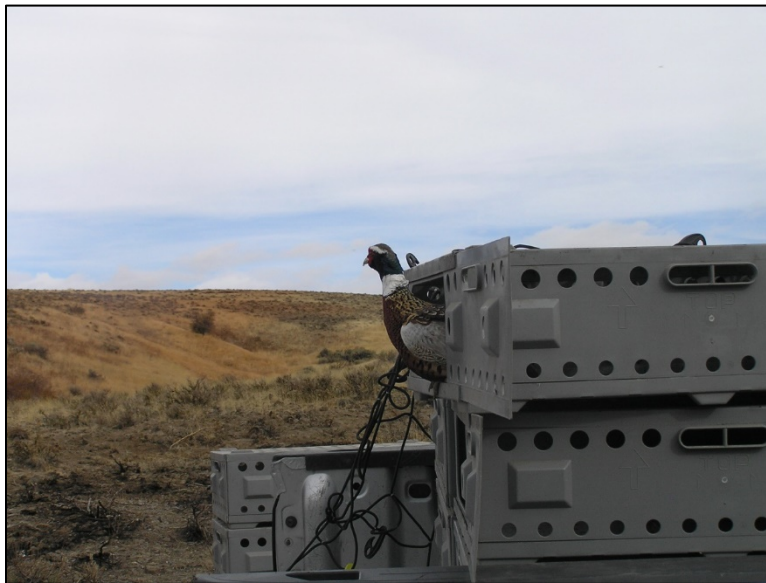
Brown-belted (left) and central (right) bumble bees

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

District 8 Wildlife Biologist Bernatowicz released 168 pheasants at the Cottonwoods site the Friday before the opening of the season.



A truck load of pheasants



If this is the Palm Springs of Washington, where are the trees?

Region 3 Access Manager Garcia and Natural Resource Worker Barbosa removed sediment from boat launch at Granger Pond, hunter will start to use heavily during waterfowl season.



Sediment removed from Granger Pond boat launch

At Tim's Pond, one of the toilet risers was stolen from a CXT outhouse, and due to the safety hazard, it remained closed until a new one could be installed.

Region 3 Access Manger Garcia removed a hazardous tree at Teanaway Junction that was leaning towards the road with broken limbs.



Hazardous tree removed at Teanaway Junction

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik and District 8 Biologist Moore released 104 pheasants at Green Gate.



Pheasant release at Green Gate

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

District 8 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a landowner in Schnebly Canyon about a group of 40 elk that have been entering a grass field at night. Several general season master hunters were put in contact with the landowner to help haze the elk away through hunting efforts.

A landowner in Cle Elum reported elk in his new seeding alfalfa. The location is inside the 3911 hunt area and a landowner permit was issued as well as contact information for use by general season hunters, GMU 335 cow tag hunters, and master hunters.

Conflict Specialist Wetzel patrolled the Poison Springs area for any elk present since an adjacent crop producer reported elk near his new seeding timothy field. No elk were observed this week.

Conflict Specialist Wetzel reviewed a cost-share fencing project after completion at a commercial flower farm in Thorp. The fencing keeps deer out of the flower cutting area.



A homeowner in the Tampico Park area called to report deer had chased his dog. He reported that the deer are artificially fed in his neighborhood. “Do Not Feed” materials were mailed to him as well as advice for reducing conflicts with deer.

A bobcat was caught in a trap set for a cougar that had killed a goat at that location. The bobcat was released, and the trap reset for the intended cougar target.



4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Wenas Wildlife Area staff members, with much appreciated assistance from L.T. Murray Wildlife Area personnel, completed two days of nested frequency plot monitoring on the Wenas.



Wildlife area monitoring

Wenas Wildlife Area Manager Confer Morris and Forester Mize organized a field tour of the proposed Cleman Mountain timber thinning for District 8 and timber, fish, and wildlife forest practices review staff members.



Field tour of Cleman Mountain thinning

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Manager Babik inspected the dozer line rehab from the Riggs Fire. The fire line will be seeded this fall.



DNR did a great job pulling in the dozer fire lines

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area personnel built a riparian enclosure on the Quilomene Wildlife Area to exclude cattle.



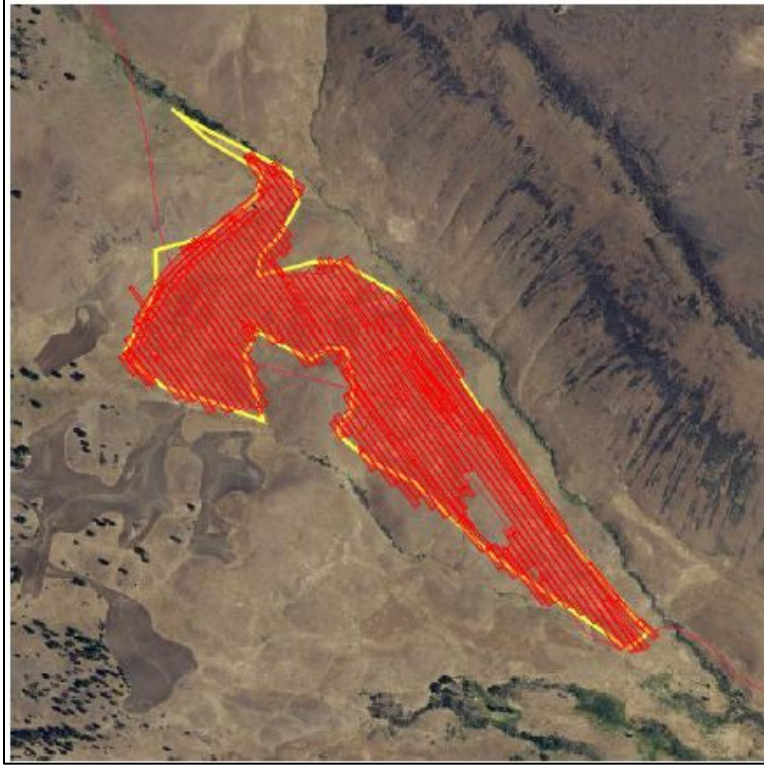


Constructing a riparian cattle exclosure

Colockum Wildlife Area staff members continued work restoring old agricultural fields in the North Fork Tarpiscan Creek drainage this month. The fields are weedy and require several years of cultivation and fallowing before they can be planted with a mixture of native bunchgrasses. Last week, a 50-acre field was aerially sprayed to control weeds and then seeded with a native seed mix. Timing is challenging since we wait for fall moisture to bring on a flush of weeds that can be sprayed before seeding with grasses. If the fields are too wet or too dry seeding by tractor and drill is more difficult. This fall conditions were perfect, and we were able to finish the work right before the general rifle elk season.



A Robinson 44 helicopter preparing to apply herbicide to a 50-acre field in the Tarpiscan Creek area



GPS tracking from helicopter herbicide application showing area treated



Tractor planting native grass seed. Seeding was done with a Truax brand seed drill one day after the herbicide application. This specialized equipment is designed to feed very fine native grass seed at low rates and plant it at the correct soil depth.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this installment.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Grouse Wing Barrel Collection: District 13 staff members are collecting grouse wings from hunters to help us better understand our forest grouse populations. Hunters can drop off their wings at the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Darrington Ranger Station where they will find bags to put them in and the barrel to drop their bags, with completed data. The bags prompt hunters to supply us with the date and location where they harvested their birds. Additional information can be found here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds/grouse-wing-tail-collection>.

Island Marble Butterfly Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances: There is still time for landowners on San Juan and Lopez Islands to sign up for this agreement that gives them assurances regarding the Endangered Species Act (ESA) when the butterfly is listed. So far, we have received seven completed applications from landowners who are enrolling in the program. The agreement is voluntary and can be terminated at any time, but will be a great way for landowners to assist WDFW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in recovering this rare species that occurs nowhere else in the world. <https://wdfw.wa.gov/news/news-update-san-juan-and-lopez-island-landowners-can-still-help-protect-island-marble>.

2) **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Nothing for this installment.

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

District 12 provided for a class presentation regarding urban/suburban wildlife conflict reduction, legalities, and attracting desired species to a class of around 300 professionals attending Seattle Parks and Recreation annual Integrated Pest Management recertification seminar.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Leque Island Estuary Restoration Project: The major elements of project construction have been completed, including removal of the dikes and connection to the new channels. This allowed the tide to come in for the first time in over 135 years on the property, initiated the transition of the habitat towards an intertidal marsh. Several reporters produced stories for the project, including this [video](#) by the Everett Herald. The [project webpage](#) is updated to reflect the changes.



Excavators removed the last ribbon of dirt, connecting 250 acres of Leque Island to Port Susan Bay and the Stillaguamish River



The first high tide reaches Leque Island at sunset



Waterfowl and shorebirds are taking advantage of the new areas that hold shallow water at Leque Island

Fir Island Farm Monitoring: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Habitat Planner Jenny Baker installed a water level and salinity data logger on the site while a large group of Wrangel Island snow geese were in the area.



Snow geese in and above the restoration area at the Fir Island Farm Snow Goose Reserve

5) Providing Education and Outreach

District 12 followed-up with a couple reporting parties regarding recent release of exotic pets into the wild. One recent example involved multiple red-eared sliders that had religious symbols painted on them and then were released into Lake Washington. It is quite likely this and similar recent reports are religious “mercy release” activities. This often involves freeing captive animals to provide for cultural values and various ceremonial aspects of a number of eastern

religions. Ideally, tactful outreach within these communities and working with conservation partners to promote alternatives that support these cultural traditions, such as “compassionate release” of e.g. release of rehabilitated wildlife, may be a future pathway in supporting these religious practices within area communities while avoiding any ecological impacts. An example media piece can be found [here](#). These well intentioned releases are quite common in the metro Seattle area and anecdotally appear to be increasing (at least in reports) across the greater King County area as population levels increase and many move to adjacent cities and unincorporated areas outside of Everett-Seattle-Tacoma proper.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 5

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Western Pond Turtle Nest Excavations: Over the last few weeks, Biologists Wickhem and Bergh have excavated 10 Western pond turtle nests at a site in the Columbia River Gorge. Earlier in the summer, the biologists, along with other staff members and volunteers put radio transmitters on 18 female western pond turtles, and then followed those turtles seven days a week during the nesting period to find their nests. Once a nest was located, the biologists dug it up, counted the eggs inside, then reburied the nest and covered it with a wire cage to prevent predators from disturbing it. This nesting study is part of a research project attempting to determine if the recently discovered shell disease (found only in Washington western pond turtle populations) which is affecting the reproductive rates of female turtles. The excavations carried out in recent weeks were necessary to determine how many of the eggs successfully hatched in each nest. Some of the hatchlings were transported to the Oregon Zoo where they will be part of the [head-start program](#), and the remaining hatchlings were marked with ID tags, and put back into their nest cavity so they can emerge on their own in the wild. Of the ten nests studied this year, one was disturbed/predated by a small burrowing predator and no eggs or hatchlings were located. The average hatch rate for the



Hatchling western pond turtles that were counted, given ID tags, and put back into their nest cavity.

remaining nests was 77 percent, which is similar to other studies of western pond turtle reproduction. Thanks to the numerous staff members and volunteers who helped make this turtle field season a success!



Eight hatchling western pond turtles from a single nest, ready for transport to Oregon Zoo

Turtle Habitat Restoration Monitoring: Biologist Bergh and USFWS Refuge Biologist Chmielewski conducted the post-treatment Ecological Integrity Monitoring and took photos at the four established photo points to document the turtle habitat restoration project at Pierce National Wildlife Refuge. The project restored approximately five acres of blackberry-dominated understory adjacent to one of the ponds in order to improve wintering and nesting habitat for the western pond turtle. Last winter refuge staff members and volunteers planted native shrubs in and amongst the oak trees to further retard blackberry re-invasion and improve winter habitat for turtles. Last spring and this fall a spot-treatment with herbicide was applied to the remaining blackberry starts. Two turtle nesting areas were established in locations above the elevation of typical spring freshets to provide refugia from extended high-water events. The nesting areas cover approximately 0.15 acre and are surrounded with welded wire fence to exclude nest predators while allowing access to nesting turtles.

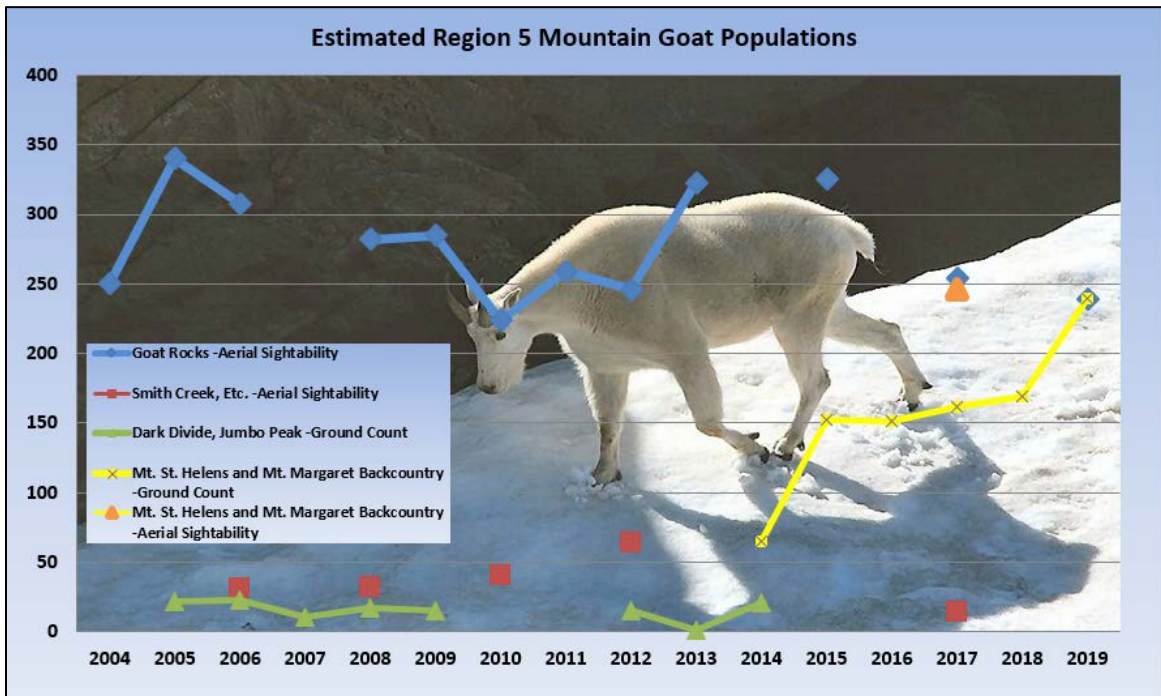


An example of a pre-restoration



and post-restoration

Mount St. Helens Mountain Goat Ground Survey Summary: Biologists Holman and Stephens met with members of the Cowlitz Tribe and the St. Helens Institute to summarize the 2019 Mount St. Helens mountain goat ground survey. The survey took place in August and was conducted primarily by volunteers. The summary meeting involves reviewing data sheets and maps generated during the survey and reconciling all observations to arrive at a final count. This year's tally of 240 mountain goats represents a significant climb from 2018's ground count of 169 and nearly equals the 2017 aerial survey estimate of 246. Though survey methods are not necessarily comparable, all indications show that the population of mountain goats on and near Mount St. Helens continues to climb. Thanks to the Cowlitz Tribe, the St. Helens Institute, and the U.S. Forest Service for their continued partnership in managing this valuable wildlife resource.



Summary of population status of mountain goats in Region 5

Dusky Canada Goose Surveys: Biologist Stephens conducted two dusky Canada goose surveys this month in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. The purpose of the surveys is to count dusky geese observed and read alphanumeric codes on any red collared duskies. Wildlife managers survey the geese multiple times across their primary wintering grounds and use the data to generate survival estimates. The dusky geese are collared on their breeding grounds in Alaska every other year. No dusky geese were detected during October's survey effort and very few geese in general were observed, however; there was a group of 345 sandhill cranes in the Woodland Bottoms.

Grouse Wing and Tail Collection Barrels: Biologists have continued to collect grouse wings and tails deposited by hunters in collection barrels. So far this year, hunters have provided 112 samples at the three collection sites in District 10. The information collected from wings and tails will help biologists assess the species, age and sex and grouse harvested. Collection barrel locations can be found here: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds/grouse-wing-tail-collection#barrel-locations>.

Checks of Hunter Killed Wildlife: Regional wildlife biologists and customer service staff members continued with checks of various species of hunter killed wildlife. Species recently checked have included cougars, mountain goats, bobcats, and big horned sheep. Various data and biological samples are collected from the different species to aid in management. Thanks to the successful hunters for bringing their animals into WDFW for the various checking requirements and for sharing their photos.



Successful mountain goat hunt in the Bumping GMU



Cougar and deer from GMU 382 (East Klickitat)



Customer Service Specialist Smith and Biologist Holman taking measurements from a harvested mountain goat



Juvenile big horned sheep ram submitted for marking and disease surveillance



Successful mountain goat hunt in the Mount Margaret backcountry



Successful hunter with a Mount St. Helens South mountain goat

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Second Weekend General Deer Season: Deer hunting success has picked up since the opening weekend. On Oct. 19, Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Assistant Manager Steveson contacted 21 hunters and checked five deer. On Oct. 20, Van Leuven contacted 35 hunters and no deer. The animals checked included two 3x3 point bucks, two 4x3 point bucks, and one 4x4 point buck (eye guards were not included in the point count). Reports of additional deer taken during the previous week included two 3-point bucks harvested opening weekend, one 3x1 buck, one 5x3 buck, and one 4x3 buck that also had large double eye guards on both sides. Rainy nights and occasionally blustery weather may have contributed to hunter success.



Second weekend success

Pheasant Release: District Wildlife Biologist Bergh, Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven, and Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Steveson released pheasants at the three Klickitat County sites on Oct. 18, the day prior to the opening of the general pheasant hunting season. Forty pheasants were released on the Hatchery Unit of the wildlife area, 33 were released on the gun club property, and 15 were released at the Finn Ridge Road property.



Flying high

Shillapoo Hunting Blind Preparations: Wildlife Area Technician Fox has been repairing and preparing hunting blinds on the Shillapoo Wildlife Area the past couple of weeks. All the blinds have had new camouflage added for the already open waterfowl season, along with minor

repairs, and new steps installed on several of the blinds for easier hunter access. Funding for this work was provided by the State Migratory Bird Stamp. The Washington Waterfowl Association Lower Columbia Chapter also donated materials and time to rebuild blinds 2 and 3 in the North Unit of Shillapoo this summer.



Technician Fox placing the final touches on Blind #16

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Injured Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a report of deer that had been hit by a car. Unfortunately, the injuries were severe, and the deer had to be euthanized.

Dead Bear: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Biologist Wickhem responded to a report of a dead black bear in the roadway. The bear was removed from the roadway to prevent traffic incidents.

Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements: Wildlife Conflict Specialists Jacobsen and Aubrey met with multiple landowners to sign Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements (DPCAs) for elk damage.

Depredation on Sheep: Wildlife Conflict Specialists Jacobsen and Aubrey responded to a reported depredation on two sheep by a cougar. After performing necropsies on the sheep, it was determined that both were killed by coyotes during the previous night. The landowner was able to pen the sheep up in a barn for the next few days until a volunteer crew can assist the landowner reinforce her fence. During the necropsy investigation, Jacobsen learned not to turn his back on a sheep, especially one with horns. One of the remaining sheep decided to take advantage of his vulnerability while he was kneeling down to examine another one of the remaining sheep for injuries and was impolitely rammed in the back.



Two deceased sheep (covered in blue tarps) near a residential development that were killed by coyotes

Elk Damage in Lewis County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with a landowner experiencing elk damage to pasture grass and fruit trees. The landowner entered a DPCA with WDFW during the visit, and a plan was made to reduce the conflict with elk on the property.



Elk observed on the property during the visit

Bear in Hay Silage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey spoke with a landowner in Lewis County who had a bear rip open some of his hay silage bales. Aubrey met the landowner and confirmed that a bear was the cause of the damage to the hay bales. The landowner had already put up electric fence around his haystack and had not seen the bear since. Options on what to do if the problem persisted were discussed, and the situation will be monitored.

Nuisance Goose: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey captured and relocated a nuisance goose that had taken up residence in a homeowner's driveway. The goose was taken a good distance down river and released near other waterfowl.

Goat Depredations: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey contacted a landowner who had two goats killed on separate occasions last week. The landowner had already buried the carcasses but had taken pictures before doing so. Based on the evidence from the pictures, and the time of day the attacks happened, it was determined the goats were killed by canines, likely domestic dogs, as neither carcass was fed on.

TAHD Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey contacted a landowner who was concerned about two cow elk on his property that were exhibiting signs of TAHD. The landowner could observe the hooves of the elk from his home and described symptoms of TAHD. The disease was discussed, and the landowner was referred to the information on our website if he wanted to investigate the issue further.

Cougar Concern: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey contacted an individual who was concerned with seeing a cougar near his property where he keeps goats and horses. The caller was informed of the rights of livestock/pet owners to defend their animals in the event of an attack. Proper livestock husbandry was also discussed, and it was suggested that the goats be kept inside of a secure enclosure at night.

Nuisance Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey was contacted by a landowner who had a group of 10-12 elk frequenting his property. He was concerned that the elk were causing damage to his hay fields. The landowner had already taken his last cut of grass for the year, so no damage was currently occurring. Aubrey visited the site to set up hazing devices to attempt to deter the elk from coming into the field. However, no elk were observed on the property during the visit, and the landowner stated he had not seen the elk since the initial contact.

Injured Owl: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to an injured owl in Lewis County. He was able to capture the owl on the side of the highway and arranged to have the owl transported to a rehabilitation facility.

Urban/Suburban deer: Over the past couple of weeks, Biologists Stephens and Holman have been involved in multiple cases of deer living in proximity to people getting into various mishaps:

Biologist Holman and Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a call from a Lewis County resident regarding a buck fawn in trouble. The young buck had stepped into a cylindrical container of some kind (perhaps a sports drink container or tennis ball can). The container impeded flexing of the deer's lowest joint on the left hind leg. The landowner indicated that neighbors could approach the deer to as little as 15 yards, so an attempt at darting was made. However, the deer proved more mobile and wary of people than thought and an approach to reasonable dart gun distance was not possible. The landowner will continue to monitor the deer's condition and mobility.

Biologist Stephens and Customer Service Specialist Rainwaters responded to a report about a deer that had a long, thin cable with a wooden stake wrapped around its antlers and hanging between its front legs. The deer was fine, but the concern was that it could get tangled up on a tree branch or with another buck. The deer was immobilized, and the materials were removed.



Buck with cable and wooden stake caught up in antlers



Biologist Stephens treating the dart wound of immobilized deer

Biologist Holman, Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald, and Officer Hughes responded to a situation reported by a concerned Clark County resident. The reporting party indicated that a deer had entered a recently dug hole or pit and was trapped. Upon investigation, the deer wasn't trapped at all but rather had wandered into a newly constructed stormwater retention pond. Gentle herding easily coaxed the deer up and out of the pit.

Biologist Holman responded to a deer struck by vehicle incident in Clark County. The deer had significant injuries and was largely immobile. The female fawn was euthanized and removed from the property at the request of the landowner.

Biologists Stephens and Holman responded to a situation involving a deer in Cowlitz County. The young buck had been shot with an arrow, but the wound was not immediately fatal. The deer has been seen by many neighbors in an obvious state of discomfort and pain with the arrow still impaled in its shoulder. Stephens and Holman were able to immobilize the deer to evaluate the

injury and attempt to help the ailing buck. Unfortunately, the arrow was not removable, and the wound was more than superficial. The buck was euthanized.

4) Conserving Natural Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Hoffstadt Unit Slash Pile Burning: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Assistant Manager Wildermuth have spent several days the past two weeks burning slash piles in the Hoffstadt Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. These piles were generated during the forest health timber harvest operations over the past year, and consisted of unmarketable wood, limbs, and stumps. In total about 60 piles have been burned so far with approximately another 20 needing to be burned as weather and conditions allow. Trees will be planted in the areas that were burned next spring. Although the majority of the piles will be burned to create forage and cover for deer and elk, some slash piles will be left creating habitat for small mammals, amphibians, and other wildlife.



Manager Hauswald lighting a slash pile



Assistant Manager Wildermuth monitoring the burning of the slash piles

Klickitat Wildlife Area Seasonal Road Closures: Annual road closures went into effect on Nov. 1 on the Soda Springs Unit. These temporary closures, which have been implemented since 2007, reduce disturbance of wildlife during the winter when animals are stressed by harsh environmental conditions, and help preserve the integrity of the roads that can be damaged by vehicle traffic when soils are soft. The road gates are located on Anderson Road, Old Headquarters Road, South Breaks Road, and Sheep Canyon Road. Segments of most of these roads remain open, and visitors may still access much of the wildlife area by vehicle.

Reader Boards on the Klickitat Wildlife Area Soda Springs Unit: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Steveson and Manager Van Leuven posted new maps on two reader boards on the Soda Springs Unit and covered the maps with protective Plexiglas. All the reader boards are now finished, and the wildlife area staff members have received compliments on the appearance of the boards.



Soda Springs reader board

Grazing Permit Monitoring on the Klickitat Wildlife Area: Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Steveson did a compliance check to verify that the cattle were off the two grazing permit areas on the Simcoe Unit. No cattle were seen or heard on one of the permit areas. Most of the other grazing permit area on this unit was clear of cattle, except for nine animals that were discovered. The permit holder was called at that time and advised of the location.

Cattle Trespass on the Klickitat Wildlife Area Soda Springs Unit: On Saturday, a bull that had been on neighboring property appeared on the Wildlife Area near the Grayback Road. Almost simultaneous to Klickitat Wildlife Area personnel discovering the trespassing animal, a local rancher arrived with a trailer and horses to try to capture the bull. Two riders tried to drive the bull toward the trailer with no success, so they tried to rope the bull. The effort was called off when the bull charged one of the horses. The rancher informed the Klickitat Wildlife Area personnel that they would come back to attempt to capture the bull, which would probably involve more horsemen and tools.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

High School Presentation: Biologist Bergh gave a presentation on wildlife management and a career as a wildlife biologist to two high school natural resource science classes. She talked about the different species studies and the different types of surveys that are conducted by WDFW as well as her career path as a wildlife biologist. The students had lots of questions including some difficult ones on topics like climate change.

Cattlemen's Association Meeting: Biologist Bergh, Conflict Specialist Jacobsen, and Wolf Policy Lead Martorello met with the Klickitat County Cattlemen's Association to answer questions about the current State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) scoping comment period for the post-recovery wolf management plan. The current wolf management plan was completed in 2011 with the purpose to guide wolf recovery while wolves are listed as state endangered. The post-recovery plan will guide wolf management long-term and public comments on what should be included in that plan are welcomed through Nov. 15: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/at-risk/species-recovery/gray-wolf/post-recovery-planning/public-input>. Public comment and open houses will be held once the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is released next year.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Fall Colors: Oak trees on the Klickitat Wildlife Area are in their fall glory along Anderson Road and along the road from the Glenwood Highway to the Stinson Flat Campground. The oak trees on other parts of the wildlife area will follow suit soon. Rain squalls followed by sun breaks add dramatic light effects to the scene.



Overlooking the Klickitat River

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Habitat Enhancement: Biologist Ament spent some time on Oct. 24 communicating with Department of Natural Resources (DNR) personnel about ongoing habitat enhancement work at two known Taylor's checkerspot butterfly sites located west of Port Angeles. A Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew has been allocated some days to work at the sites this fall. A high priority is the burning of tree/brush piles from previous clearing projects. Unfortunately, the weather conditions have not been suitable. Burning may be initiated during the next period of rainy weather. The need to continue efforts to control scotch broom was discussed and will be the second priority for the crew this fall.

Deer with Foreign Material Stuck in Antlers: Responding to two calls regarding a buck in Port Townsend with foreign material stuck in his antlers, Biologist Murphie searched for and located a buck with rope, canvas and other material securely wrapped around his antlers (see photo). With help from local citizens, Biologist Murphie was able to immobilize the buck, remove the material, and release the buck on site.



Immobilized buck in Port Townsend. The material in the foreground was wrapped around the buck's antlers.

Snowy Plover Management – Regional Meeting: Biologist Novack attended the annual meeting of regional government agencies and non-government partners regarding the monitoring and management of plovers in both Oregon and Washington. Data from Oregon revealed robust numbers of birds (over 500) and excellent reproduction. The number of breeding plovers in Washington state still sits under 100.

Oregon Spotted Frog Habitat Management: Biologists Butler, volunteer Terry, and a WCC crew cut reed canary grass within a known Oregon spotted frog breeding site over the past month. The Oregon spotted frog is listed as endangered in the state of Washington with the most significant factor contributing to its decline being habitat loss. Currently, reed canary grass is overtaking a large portion the frog's breeding area at this site and yearly mowing keeps it open and available. In previous years, reed canary grass was cut from designated experimental plots at this site. However, due in part to inconsistent water depths between years, there has been no advantage found between the various plot designs and this year large strips along both sides of the creek were cut. The mowing occurred over four days throughout the month and was completed this past week.



WCC crew at work cutting reed canary grass



Completed mowing of the Oregon spotted frog breeding area



Fresh Mazama pocket gopher mounds

Mazama Pocket Gopher: Biologist Butler conducted a Mazama pocket gopher survey at a gopher set aside area this past week. Mazama pocket gophers live in the prairies of the South Puget Sound. They are state and federally listed as threatened with one their greatest threats being habitat loss. The last survey of this set aside occurred in 2015 with habitat work occurring since then. Fresh and recent gopher mounds were observed during the survey and the data collected will be compared to the results from the 2015 survey.

Wolf Monitoring: Biologist Butler and volunteer Terry checked seven trail cameras in the White River and Carbon River areas for wolf monitoring. District 11 is monitoring wolves in these areas in response to limited sporadic reports from the public. Unfortunately, one of the cameras was stolen and another was found covered up. Six cameras were re-deployed and will continue to be moved around every 1.5 months throughout the year. Once again, a big THANK YOU goes out to volunteer Terry who sifted through hours of 10-second video clips from the cameras on which bear, deer, elk, and several coyotes were detected.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Black Lake: The water access team contracted a private tree company to fall two extremely large dead and dangerous fir trees. One was located on the entrance road to the lake and the other was located next to a neighboring property. The road was temporarily closed during the falling process to ensure public safety and provide a secure work environment.





Site after clean up

Modern Firearm Deer Season: Biologist Murphie conducted a roving hunter contact activity during weekend days of the modern firearm deer season in District 15 GMUs. The intent of this effort is oriented toward hunter engagement rather than biological sampling of harvested game. He reports contacting more than 100 hunters.

Engaging With Hunters: Biologist Ament spent some time this past few weeks responding to several phone calls and emails from hunters requesting information about hunting deer/elk and waterfowl in the district. During a visit to the Lower Dungeness hunt area she had a very positive contact with a new hunter to the area that was focused on hunting sea ducks. He had a few specific questions that she had to contact Wildlife Area Manager Lowery for to get accurate answers that she later provided to the hunter.

Grouse Wing Barrels: Grouse wing barrels were installed at three locations in District 16. One barrel is located in Clallam County (5.5 miles southwest of Sequim) at the junction of Slab Camp Road and Lost Mountain Road. Another barrel is located on U.S. Forest Service land west of Lake Crescent at the junction of the Cooper Ranch Road and USFS Road 29. A final barrel was installed on Oct. 10 on DNR land east of Sequim. This barrel is at the junction of Salmon Creek

Road (NF 2850) with National Forest Road 2906. Unfortunately, the DNR is limiting access above this gate due to an active timber harvest. Biologist Ament was pleased to see that hunters have deposited some wing/tails to this barrel. All barrels were checked for wings/tails in the past few weeks and each barrel had grouse parts for collection. See summary table below.

District 16 Grouse Wing Barrel Collections	Date	Slab Camp Road	Cooper Ranch Road	Salmon Creek	District 16 Total
	Set-up August 31	-	-		-
	Sept 1 to Sept 9	0	7w		7w
	To Sept 19	0	0	-	0
	To Sept 26	No check	0	-	0
	To Oct 15	2w, 2t	7w, 3t	-	9w, 5t
	To Oct 31	2w, 2t	1w, 1t	4w, 3t	7w, 6t
	Total Collected	4w, 4t	15w, 4t	4w, 3t	23w, 11t

Grouse Wing Barrels: Biologist Butler with the help of two volunteers have checked the three



grouse wing barrels within District 11 this past month. One barrel is located at the northern recreational access point to the Vail Tree Farm off Sorenson Road SE and a second barrel is located at the western recreational access point to the Vail Tree Farm off Big Hanaford Rd. The third barrel is located in the parking lot of the Skookumchuck Wildlife Area. A total of 79 wings have been collected among all the barrels with the Sorenson Road barrel being the most utilized. The goal of this collection effort is to build estimated population trend datasets for each species to evaluate harvest changes. These barrels will be in place from Sept. 1 until the middle of December. The more about this effort can be found here:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/requirements/upland-birds/grouse-wing-tail-collection> .

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Bighorn Sheep and Mountain Goat Inspections: Biologist Butler met with one successful mountain goat hunter and two successful bighorn sheep hunters. Hunters are required to present the head of their harvested mountain goat and bighorn sheep for inspection and the horns of the bighorn sheep will also be permanently marked. The horns of the mountain goat were measured and based off the growth rings the goat was estimated to be 5.5 years old. The two bighorn sheep horns were also measured and estimated to be 3.5 and 10.5 years old.



Harvested mountain goat and bighorn sheep presented for inspection

3) **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

News Release: Biologist Novack worked with Public Affairs and Washington State Department of Transportation on a news release for drivers regarding extra precautions during November to avoid deer collisions. The release has been utilized by multiple newspapers and radio stations.

4) **Conserving Natural Landscapes**

Protection Island Prairie Restoration: Biologist Murphie participated in a two day brainstorming session with USFWS staff members regarding efforts to restore native vegetation on Protection Island; a small, but critically important island for nesting seabirds in the Salish Sea. WDFW owns a small portion of the western end of this island.

5) **Providing Education and Outreach**

Nothing for this installment.

6) **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

Nothing for this installment.

7) **Other**

Nothing for this installment.