

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

June 16 to 30, 2021

DIVERSITY DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

GAME DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

HUNTER EDUCATION

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

Coordination with Tribes: On June 17, WDFW hosted a fifth meeting in a series of conversations on the topic of outdoor recreation and impacts. At this meeting, Planning and Recreation Section Manager Sisolak provided an update on the development of a Statewide Recreation Strategy for WDFW-managed lands and Tulalip Tribes representatives presented a literature review titled “[The ‘Recreation Boom’ on Public Lands in Western Washington: Impacts to Wildlife and Implications for Treaty Tribes](#) (2021).”

Big Tent Outdoor Recreation Coalition Board Retreat: Planning and Recreation Section Manager Sisolak represents WDFW on the Big Tent Outdoor Recreation Coalition Board. At the June 24 annual retreat, the Board discussed the creation of a new 501(c)3 nonprofit to support the work of the Coalition.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Conflict Management Process: A subcommittee of the Recreation Strategy Advisory Committee is developing a process for managing local recreation-related conflicts arising on WDFW-managed lands. The goal is to manage conflicts locally where possible.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition: Division Manager attended the WWRC Board meeting on June 17 and was elected as an official ex-officio alternate for Director Susewind.

South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Draft Management Plan: The South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Management Plan was sent to the Advisory Committee for review and comment. The wildlife area consists of eight units located to the east of the Olympic Mountains near the Olympic Peninsula, adjacent to the shorelines of Puget Sound. The primary management focus on these units is estuary and floodplain conservation, forest restoration, recovery of federal and state listed species, and recreation. The Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) consist of 12 individuals ranging from local citizens, state agencies and non-governmental organizations. A WAAC meeting is scheduled on June 29 with the main purpose being to collect comments on the draft plan.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

2021 Land Camp Presentation: Program Specialist Trenda, Lands Division Manager Wilkerson, Region 1 Director Pozzanghera, and Region 5 Director Lee presented at the [2021 Northwest Land Camp](#) on June 17. The presentation covered WDFW's Lands Showcase project, which is an effort to raise awareness of the benefits and opportunities provided by WDFW-managed public lands. This work included a statewide assessment of interest and desired information that would help the public directly interact with department-managed lands and waters.

The presentation discussed results from the initial assessment on public perceptions of WDFW-managed lands and public lands in general, as well as messaging strategies and specific project examples around public lands outreach and public interaction.

Using the work from the Lands Showcase, we hope to increase engagement and advocacy for the lands and waters we manage in Washington, as well as adjust our strategies to ensure WDFW-managed lands meet the needs communicated by Washington's public.

Sign Design Guidelines and Standards: Work continues on the development of sign design standards and guidelines for WDFW-managed lands. Otak, Inc. is the design consultant leading the effort with Planning and Recreation Section Manager Sisolak managing the project for WDFW Lands.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Nothing for this installment.

SCIENCE DIVISION

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) Managing Wildlife Populations

Bumblebee Surveys: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock completed a few bumblebee surveys according to the Graves cell protocol.



Bombus spp caught during a bee survey in District 1

Selkirk Grizzly Bear Monitoring: Biologists Turnock and Prince with Technician Merluccio continued deploying and began checking hair corrals setup to detect grizzly bears in the Selkirk recovery area.



Black bear checks out a hair corral set for grizzly bears in District 1

Golden Eagle Tagging: Biologist Lowe assisted Research Scientist Watson and District 3 Biologists in radio-tagging a male golden eagle fledgling along the Snake River in southeastern Whitman County.



Biologist Vekasy rappelling to golden eagle nest to capture fledgling

Ferruginous Hawk Monitoring: Biologists Atamian and Lowe finished up productivity surveys for the Ferruginous hawk territories with successful nesting in District 2. The final nest visit occurred when the young were estimated to be near the age of fledging; 10 total fledglings were observed in four territories.





Two Ferruginous hawk nests being monitored in southwestern Lincoln County with three fledglings each

Bat Maternity Colony Surveys: Biologists Atamian, Lowe, Westerman, and DeVivo conducted evening emergence counts of a *Yuma myotis* maternity colony at a bat condo on private property near the Little Spokane River. Around 6,500 bats were counted leaving the roost structure that was built for the landowner by the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council in 2008. The colony count has increased each year of monitoring.



Observers setting up to count exit points at the bat condo on the Little Spokane River

Bat Acoustic Monitoring: Biologists Atamian and Lowe participated the North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat), an ongoing bat survey effort in the northwestern United States to look at species distribution changes over time. Four acoustic detectors were set up in an assigned sample unit near Mount Spokane to record overnight bat echolocations.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologists from WDFW and Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) worked together to capture two yearling rams in Asotin. Biologists were able to capture one using chemical immobilization and the other with helicopter net gunning. Both were kept in a horse trailer for approximately 24 hours while M. ovi tests at Washington State University were conducted. Both bighorns were clear of the bacteria and released with new collars in the Asotin herd. Biologists Wik and Cotterill attended the biannual Hells Canyon Initiative meeting in Lewiston. This meeting provided an update to partners and worked on planning for the upcoming year.



Bat acoustic recording equipment set up for the NABat Program

Waterfowl Brood Surveys: Biologist Lowe ran the Sprague-Lamont and Ewan-Revere waterfowl routes to survey for productivity. Many waterbodies were partly or completely dried up and there were very few broods observed.



A lake in Lincoln County that normally has high waterfowl use partially dried up

Elk Calf Research: District 3 Wildlife Management staff members have been busy monitoring the elk calves that were captured from mid-May through mid-June. A total of 125 elk calves were captured in GMUs 162, 166, and 175 using ground based and helicopter capture methods. Mortalities on these neonates are keeping staff members busy investigating causes, with 39 mortalities occurring through June 25. Twenty-seven of the mortalities have been confirmed predation, with 14 being attributed to cougars, 5 coyotes, 5 bears, and the others pending DNA samples.



A volunteer with a newly captured elk calf in the Blue Mountains

Irrigating Food Plots: Wildlife Area staff members have been managing irrigation on the food plot fields on the Chief Joseph and W.T. Wooten Wildlife Areas. The irrigation also creates a green buffer between the dry uplands and the wildlife area buildings as wildfire mitigation.



Elk enjoying the irrigation water on the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area



Pollinator food plot on the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area

Bear Hair Snare Corrals: W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area staff members assisted with baiting and checking the bear hair snare corrals in the Tucannon Valley. The corrals are being used to collect black bear hair to get an estimate of the current black bear population in the Blue Mountains.



Bear Hair Snare Corral in the Tucannon as part of a black bear population estimation study

Elk Fence: W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area staff members, with assistance from a Department of Natural Resources fire engine, cut a tree off the elk fence and repaired the damaged fence.



Before and after pictures of a tree on the elk fence on the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area

Tucannon River Large Wood Project: The Lacey Construction Shop crew has been on the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area getting materials stockpiled and ready for the in-stream work window July 15 – August 20. They will be constructing log jams in the Tucannon River and adding gravel to the system for salmon habitat.

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Waikiki Springs Trail Painting: Water Access Area Manager Daniel Dziekan coordinated with Inland Northwest Land Conservancy (INLC) member Rose Richardson to recruit volunteers for a project at Waikiki Springs, to paint trail markings on a stretch of asphalt at a confusing portion of trail that winds through a residential area. INLC approached the residents with the idea, as a way to alleviate some stress from having the public wander through private property, and they were very supportive of the idea. Dziekan, Rose, and volunteers Dave and Deanna, spent Saturday morning painting boot and dog prints on the asphalt. Dziekan made the boot print stencil, and Rose provided the dog prints. INLC is panning on supplying some basic signage to go along with the painted markings, doing as much as possible to educate the public and remind them to stay on public land.



Volunteer Dave laying the first boot prints... Follow the yellow paint road!

Hot Birds of Prey: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett assisted on ten calls with concerns for birds of prey chicks found on the ground in Stevens and Pend Oreille counties. Due to the excessive heat, many different species left their nests due to dehydration and to escape the heat.



Two falcon chicks prior to being transported to WSU for rehabilitation

Recreational Access Sites: Technician Heimgartner cleaned and prepared access sites and campgrounds from Hellar Bar over to the W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area in preparation for the Fourth of July holiday weekend.

Tucannon Lakes: W.T. Wooten Wildlife Area staff members spent time trying to keep water flowing into the Tucannon Lakes to continue to provide the put-and-take rainbow trout fishery. The Tucannon River level is dropping quickly with the current drought conditions.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Bear-proof Garbage Cans: Wildlife Biologist Prince received shipment of 20 new 30-gallon bear-proof garbage cans that can be given to residents within and directly adjacent to the Selkirk Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone. With the assistance of Conflict Specialist Bennett, the first can was given to a resident near Sullivan Lake who is experiencing bear-garbage conflict.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Black Bear Concerns in Pend Oreille County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett fielded two complaints about black bears. Information on securing trash, honeybee hives, and bird feeders were also covered during a site visit.



Beehives after two bears easily pushed through the underrated electric fence. Bear proof fences need an output joule of at least 0.7 to deter bears

Urban Bears: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman helped enforcement with locating and setting a trap for a bear that made its way into the south hill area of Spokane. The bear was 70 feet up in the tree which made it unsafe to try and dart the bear.

Wobbly Moose: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman responded to calls about a hot and wobbly moose on the west side of the south hill in Spokane. Westerman advised to let it be as it was close to the edge of town. The next day it went for a walkabout and ended up further in town and made its way back to the edge.

Cloverland Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade received a report from a producer regarding elk damaging a newly planted alfalfa field in the Cloverland area. With the current high temperatures and drought conditions, elk are very attracted to the newly growing crop. Wade worked with the producer to deploy a Zon gun in the field. The producer reported that the Zon gun had little to no effect. Wade will continue to work with the producer to try to resolve the issue.

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Nothing for this installment.

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Water System: Biologist Woodall has been keeping an eye on the water system at Smoothing Iron Ranch, filling water troughs, filling water storage tanks for the ranch house, and making sure there are no hiccups after some electrical issues in May/June. With the extreme heat he noted that the 10,000-gallon tank was down from full capacity to $\frac{1}{4}$ after 12 days. Evaporation and elk consumed approximately 7,500 gallons of water in almost two weeks; kind of mind boggling!



Water trough down in a draw



REGION 2

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 3

Nothing for this installment.

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Bear Population Monitoring: With help from several WDFW staff members, District Wildlife Biologists Waddell and C. Moore are conducting a bear population monitoring project in Whatcom County. By establishing a total of 36 hair snare corrals at sites north and south of the North Fork Nooksack River, biologists will obtain a reliable estimate of black bear densities in this area. Hair snare corrals consist of a pile of logs and debris, baited with a liquid lure, surrounded by two strands of barbed wire at different heights. The barbed wire is strategically placed so that any bear, whether adult, juvenile, or cub, must rub against a portion of the wire as it enters and leaves the enclosure. Biologists can then retrieve the small amounts of hair caught by the barbs and send the samples to a lab for DNA analysis. The project started the first week of June and will be completed by the end of July.



Storm clouds roll in over the North Fork Nooksack River during bear population monitoring in Whatcom County – Photo by R. Waddell



Private Lands Biologist Wingard investigates the barbed wire snare corral for black bear – Photo by R. Waddell



(L) A clump of black bear hair caught by a barb at a black bear hair corral in Whatcom County; (R) A hair snare corral showing two strands of barbed wire at different heights –

Photos by R. Waddell

Loon Monitoring: District 12 searched Lake Philippa, the westmost lake in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area. Fish population is there, but no loons and given the snowpack there was some remaining ice as well. Interesting site with lots of habitat and potential for many occurrences. Avalanches across the lake, upon arrival, were watched from the safe end of lake. District 12 also spent time monitoring a pair observed at Tolt Reservoir. The pair acts like something is going on but does not seem to be on nest – determined occupied but no breeding. Biologist Anderson met with Seattle Public Utilities staff members to monitor all four territories on Chester Morse Reservoir. A pair was on nest at Young’s Cove but has since been determined to likely be on unviable egg. Two other loons were observed in intraspecies conflict with the male loon at Young’s Cove. The two intruders then retracted their advance to the Rex and Cedar deltas, respectively. They appear unpaired but wanting to date. Upon end of effort another loon was called from Masonry Pool. However, no activity has been observed there by SPU or during the effort that day, proving once again the “crazy loons” are fooling the three biologists that spent an eye-squinting longer effort on a large reservoir to see what they were up to.



Lake Philippa in King County – Alpine Lakes Wilderness Area

Bumble Bee Graves Survey: Biologist C. Moore carried out the Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas protocol to survey for bumble bees at a site west of Baker Lake in Skagit County. The Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas is a collaborative project aimed to track and conserve the bumble bees of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. The goal of this project is to gain a better understanding of the distribution of bumble bees throughout the region. Many district biologists across the state will be participating in this project this year.



Caught bumble bees during the survey. Pictures will be used to identify the species of each bumble bee captured

Bat Monitoring and Reconnaissance: Biologist Anderson has been working with a number of volunteers with Bats Northwest, Woodland Park Zoo, Miami University students (WPZ Advanced Inquiry Master's Program) and Doris Duke Foundation interns (with WPZ) to conduct bat emergence counts at known colonies and examine reports of potential roosts. Thus far, four new colonies have been confirmed with two being big brown bat (none documented in King County until 2021) as well as a number of other leads that show bats, but better access is needed. Overall, bats have been over a month late this season and quite low in numbers at the known colonies (in some cases less than 10% normal occupation). This late occupation trend has also been throughout Western Washington in conversation with White Nose Syndrome Coordinator and Bat Biologist Abby Tobin with the Wildlife Diversity Section. The variable spring weather with drastic dips and highs and droughty conditions is suspected as one of a few speculated factors.



Townsend's big-eared bat in winter hibernacula – King County

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Nothing for this installment.

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Bumble Bee Graves Survey: Biologists Anderson, C. Moore, and Waddell assisted the Community Relations and Social Media department with advising animation interns on an informational “Living with Wildlife” video to be used on social media. The video can be found online [here](#). More information about living with wildlife can be found [here](#).

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Livingston Bay Site Visits: Project Coordinator Brokaw visited three landowners at their properties along Livingston Bay on Camano Island to discuss a feasibility study with Whidbey Camano Land Trust. The landowners showed them around and explained how the drainage works. Depending on the results of the feasibility study, the Land Trust may acquire the properties and would consider passing them to a conservation organization to own long term.



The Livingston Bay properties border Port Susan on Camano Island and are currently farmed

– Photo from Island County

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Hot Weather and Wildlife Issues: Biologist Anderson fielded calls regarding a large urban Caspian tern colony suffering from the 108-degree weather that Seattle saw. A portion of the over 1,000 individual bird colony (chicks that were about to fledge as well as younger individuals) jumped from the roof of a 10-acre industrial building, falling 25 feet to the ground below. Overall, few were injured but the heat still took a toll on the colony.

WDFW worked with Port of Seattle, PAWS Wildlife Rehabilitation, and King 5 News to provide outreach regarding well intentioned folks wanting to capture the birds. This only disturbed the quite vigilant adults that would impale on your head if they had a good chance (Caspian terns are one of the most aggressive terns and known for bonking folks on the head). PAWS, WDFW, and Port of Seattle all agreed this event mimicked a disturbance event at a more natural setting colony. Due to that, all felt we should largely let nature take its course to avoid broader disturbance to the colony rather than make a concerted effort to go in and get all of the couple handful of injured young. There is risk of opening up the successful nests and healthy birds on the roof as well as on the ground to depredation and being chased by humans or other. Overall, most birds on the ground were in good shape and actually had access to shade and cover to seek refuge and hide from predators (of which the remaining bulk of colony on roof did not have). Now that the weather has cooled the colony is plodding along relatively normal. A news piece can be found [here](#). PAWS Wildlife Rehabilitation also fielded many calls and intakes of other affected wildlife – raptor nestlings jumping from nests due to heat stress, heat stressed swallow nestlings, etc. It was a rough, abnormally hot weekend for humans, wildlife, and habitat. Definite effects to the normal patterns and processes we usually would see.



Adult Caspian tern providing fish to a young tern; on the ground at the urban colony. These birds get their water metabolically via food

6) Conducted Business Operations and Policy

Spring Bear Checks: District 12 Biologists Anderson, Smith, and Seitz checked multiple bears from northeast Washington. One hunter relayed his appreciation and fun times regarding his successful hunt. He was surprised when Biologist Anderson pointed out the plethora of ticks crawling around the caped bear that was being examined!



Bear from Stevens County – checked in King County

REGION 5

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Bat Emergence Count: Biologist Wickhem, Volunteer Flick, and USFS Scenic Area Technician Edelmuth conducted a bat emergence count at a site in Skamania County this week. The roosting site is an abandoned garage on U.S. Forest Service property that was altered to create a bat-friendly space once it was no longer being used. The site previously contained several dozen bats but has not been surveyed in several years and it is not known what species of bat used to roost there. Unfortunately, no bats were observed exiting the roost on this visit. Biologist Wickhem will consult with WDFW Bat Specialist Tobin and USFS biologists to brainstorm ways they can improve the structure and surrounding area to make it more attractive to roosting bats.



Waiting for the bats to emerge

Monitoring Washington's Bats: Biologists Holman and Ferris joined Biologist Tobin and Volunteer Salzer to conduct exit counts at two private residences in Lewis County. The survey was completed with Holman/Ferris recording 29 bats and Tobin/Salzer noting 95 at their respective survey locations. The overall effort is being conducted to gain a better understanding of Washington's bats in light of the presence of white-nose syndrome. For more information on Washington's bats as well as white-nose syndrome, see the WDFW website [here](#).

Thanks to Biologist Tobin for her knowledge of all things bats, organization, coordination, and implementation of various bat-related projects at a statewide level and in District 10 specifically. Also, thanks to Volunteer Salzer for her participation in District 10 bat projects. Finally, thanks to the private landowners who are concurrently living with sometimes hundreds of bats in their buildings and allowing WDFW to access their property to conduct our work.

NABat Survey Grids: Biologists Bergh and Wickhem conducted bat acoustic surveys at two grid cells as part of a larger national effort to document bat populations known as [NABat](#). Acoustic detectors are set out in areas within the grid cells that are likely to have high bat usage (near water, in forest openings, etc.) and record the echolocation calls of bats during their active flying period between dusk and dawn. The calls are used to identify species and are used with other survey data to help to track bat populations at both the local and national scale.



A bat acoustic detector (with the microphone affixed to a 9-foot pole) ready to record bat echolocation calls in Skamania County

Monitoring Washington's Bats: Biologist Holman joined Biologist Tobin to conduct an exit count at a private residence in Lewis County. The survey was completed and over 350 bats were counted by the duo. The overall effort is being conducted to gain a better understanding of Washington's bats in light of the presence of white-nose syndrome.

Bat Colony Reconnaissance Visit: Species Lead Biologist Tobin and Biologist Holman visited the site of a prospective bat colony in Lewis County. Dead bats were reported to WDFW by the local police department in 2019. Follow up at that time revealed lots of guano and places for bats to roost. The more-recent effort resulted in sighting just three bats, but evidence of their presence is still apparent. A follow up visit will be conducted in July.

Testing Bats for White-nose Syndrome: Biologist Holman and Private Lands Biologist Ferris joined species lead Biologist Tobin, USFWS, Bats Northwest, an Eastern Washington University graduate student, and a highly skilled volunteer to conduct testing of bats for white-nose syndrome at a site in Lewis County. Nearly 30 bats were captured and 25 were tested per USFWS protocols. The colony is comprised mostly of long-legged myotis. Relatively little is known about this species' habits in Washington. Thanks to the private landowner for access to his property to conduct this work.

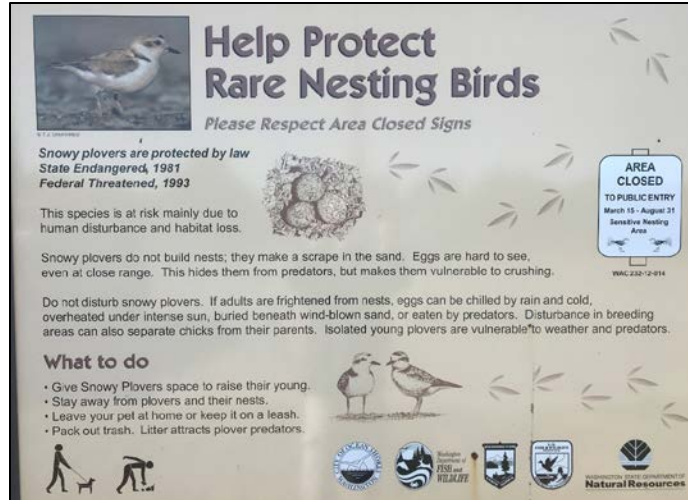


Long-legged myotis bat during testing for white-nose syndrome



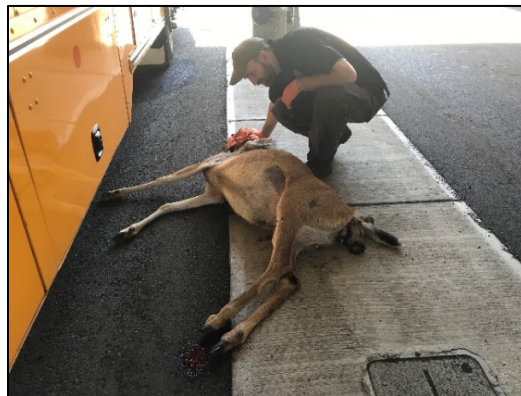
(L) Private Lands Biologist Ferris recording data during bat testing; (R) Biologist Holman handling bats during white-nose testing. Full PPE is required for those handling bats due to the possibility of humans transferring diseases to the bats

Snowy Plover Surveys: Private Lands Biologist Ferris and Biologist Holman assisted Region 6 in conducting surveys for snowy plovers in Pacific and Gray’s Harbor counties. The snowy plover is a small shorebird that nests on beaches in southwest Washington as well as portions of Oregon, California, and Mexico. The bird is listed as State Endangered and Federally Threatened due to small population size and ongoing threats to the specialized habitats that they require for breeding (undisturbed sandy beaches). The Washington surveys are conducted three times annually and contribute to larger data sets monitoring the population. See the WDFW periodic status review for the plovers [here](#). Thanks to Region 6 Biologist Sundstrom for her unmatched skills in identifying plovers and their tiny leg bands, as well as her very well-organized leadership on the project. Please help protect the plovers by following seasonal closure signs and keeping pets on a leash.



Sign posted at beach access points near snowy plover nesting areas

Pregnant Doe in Distress: Biologist Wickhem and Conflict Specialist Jacobsen responded to a report of a pregnant doe who appeared to be in distress because her fawn had been “partially-birthing” for more than 24 hours. When the pair arrived at the scene, they observed the partially birthed fawn to be dead and stuck inside the doe. The doe was obviously suffering as she had a hard time walking, moved very slowly, and was panting and drooling. Some concerned citizens at the scene who have experience with livestock had unsuccessfully tried to hold her down and pull the dead fawn out. *Please **DO NOT** approach or handle wildlife, especially an animal in distress – you are putting yourself at risk and could cause more damage to the animal. Contact your [regional WDFW office](#) who can send a professional, and/or give advice about the best way to handle the situation.* Wickhem and Jacobsen immobilized the doe with a tranquilizer dart with hopes of removing the dead fawn and saving the mother. Unfortunately, the doe was already extremely ill, and she died only a few minutes after receiving the immobilization drugs. Upon closer inspection, the dead fawn was covered in flies, and the doe was extremely bloated, meaning the fawn was rotting inside of her and likely causing a nasty internal infection. While we don’t know why the fawn got stuck, the doe was a smaller yearling and possibly was not big enough to birth a full-sized fawn. Thankfully the deer was put out of her misery shortly after staff arrived.



Conflict Specialist Jacobsen checks the doe shortly after she was darted

Blacktail Doe in Distress: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted by a Clark County landowner who had a deer under her porch at the time in poor condition. The landowner believed that the doe had a partially birthed fawn protruding from her hind end and believed that the deer had been in that state for at least 36 hours. Details were thin, but the story involved actions by the local police department who had responded to the scene and chased the deer under a homeowner's deck. Jacobsen and Biologist Holman responded to the scene and tranquilized the deer and evaluated the situation. Unfortunately, upon closer inspection it was determined that the doe had suffered a prolapsed uterus during delivery of a stillborn fawn three days prior. The resulting infection was severe, and the deer had to be removed from the urban setting and euthanized. Despite the sad outcome for the doe and her fawn, the reporting party and neighboring homeowners were very happy to get help from WDFW.



Sick doe underneath the landowner's porch

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Continued Trash and Vandalism at Access Sites: Access staff members Rhodes and McKinlay continue to see large amounts of trash dumping as well as vandalism at several access sites. Along with two members from Department of Ecology, WDFW access staff members picked up and hauled away over 300 lbs. of trash at Barbers Access Site. Trash was spread out over the entire length of parking lot and riverbank. Both Vancouver Lake and Mineral Lake Access Sites were also vandalized. Lumber from Mineral Lake is being stolen more often now, which is causing unsafe conditions. Staff members put up caution tape to warn of the dangers of falling in the lake. Vancouver Lake Access had t-posts and boulders moved and rolled out of way so people could evidently 4x4 in the wooded area. Access staff members were able to pull boulders back in place and put posts back in.



Trash, pick-up, and load at Barbers Access Site



Mineral Access timber theft and moving Vancouver lake bolder and t-posts

Access Sites: Over the past several weeks, access site staff members have had to contend with inordinate amounts of trash that have been dumped at several access sites. Many instances of trash stacked inside and outside of the restrooms, and in some cases the stacked trash being used as a toilet as well. Household garbage, a television, couches, and toilets are just some of the items that had to be hauled to waste connections. Department of Ecology was able to help out again at some of the sites. Department of Ecology staff members are a huge help to Access staff members to handle all the trash; not only picking up trash but also helping with loading many of the heavier items and also separating out the recyclable material. Staff members put up additional “Be responsible with litter” signs and warning “Do not litter” signs to remind people using the access sites of the pack-it-out policy. Graffiti has been getting worse over the last couple weeks as well, resulting in staff members spending additional time painting. For example, the Shillapoo access site restroom was painted with graffiti on three sides in addition to the inside and needed to be repainted.



Trash dumping at several access sites



Graffiti at Shillapoo

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Dead Chickens: A Clark County resident contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen regarding 13 dead or missing chickens on their property that had disappeared over the last few weeks. Based on the description of the incidents and the signs left behind, Jacobsen suspected raccoons were behind the chicken raids. Jacobsen provided advice on constructing predator-proof chicken enclosures and suggested monitoring the area with a trail camera to help confirm the raccoon theory.

Bear Mischief: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a landowner who had been visited by a couple of bears lately. The bears had consumed a couple 50-lb. bags of feed grain and a large bucket of old molasses. Jacobsen walked the landowner's property with her to identify any possible remaining food sources. A bear/bears had also decided to waltz across the top of multiple vehicles, with one bear stopping to pull on a Ram pickup windshield wiper during the process. Advice on living in bears country was provided. The landowner will contact Jacobsen if the bears are observed again.



Muddy bear paw prints on the trunk, roof, windshield, and hood of a car. Luckily it was a smaller bear, and it appears the car made it through the ordeal unscathed

Other Bear Concerns: A landowner contacted Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen regarding a recent bear encounter on his property. The landowner had come outside to find a female bear with two cubs near his porch. The landowner's dog pursued the bears and eventually treed the adult female bear. The female bear quickly descended the tree and chased after the dog for a short distance before the landowner shot a 20-gauge shotgun in the direction of the bear, at which point it retreated into the woods. Two days later, the bears were observed again on the property. Jacobsen provided advice on living in bear country and advised the landowner to call back if the bears were observed again.

Cornered Fawn: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen was contacted by a concerned citizen regarding a new fawn that had been cornered by her dogs and separated from its mother. The citizen's husband had dementia and had been carrying the fawn around and petting it, despite her warnings. Jacobsen advised the landowner to return the fawn to its original location and to keep her dogs locked up until the fawn had left the premises. The situation appeared to resolve itself by the next day, as the fawn was no longer present.

Owl Chick: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Jacobsen picked up a barn owl chick from a farmer in Klickitat County. The owl chick likely arrived at the farm via a shipment of new hay bales, wedged in the cracks between bales. Biologist Wickhem was able to transport the owl to Rowena Wildlife Clinic for rehabilitation.

Nuisance Bear Issue: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey met with homeowners in a neighborhood that had been having issues with a bear getting into trash. The neighbors had taken a number of measures, including securing garbage until pickup day, and putting straps on dumpsters to prevent the bear from having access, but the bear was still able to get garbage out of secured locations. A trap was placed to attempt to capture the bear and relocate it. The trap has been unsuccessful so far and will be removed following the next garbage pickup if there is no longer any activity in the area.

Injured Fawn: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey picked up a fawn that had been attacked by unknown animals, likely domestic dogs. The fawn had injuries on the hind legs and neck. Aubrey was making arrangements to get the fawn to a rehab facility, but unfortunately, the fawn died before it made it to the facility.

Abandoned Fawn: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey responded to a report of an abandoned fawn where the adult was hit by a vehicle. Aubrey searched the area but was unable to find a fawn.

Spring Bear Checks: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey continued to inspect the carcasses of bears harvested by spring bear hunters. Seven bears were checked over the last few weeks. For bears, the checking requirement allows for inspection of the animal's sex as well as reproductive status and for collection of a tooth for ageing. Thanks to the successful hunters for bringing their animals into WDFW for the various checking requirements.



Sub-adult male bear harvested in GMU 108 (Douglas)

Baby Barn Owls: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey spoke with an individual who was just about to complete work on a new barn by installing the doors when they noticed a group of young barn owls in the rafters. The adult owls had been observed inside the barn all winter during construction. The individual was open to the idea of leaving the barn open until the young owls are ready to leave the nest so they wouldn't have to be separated from their parents.

Nuisance Ducks: Aubrey was contacted about "wild" ducks creating a nuisance for a homeowner. Aubrey arrived to find domestic ducks as the culprit. The call was sent on to local animal control to handle further.

Trapped "Bobcat": Wildlife Conflict Specialist Aubrey was contacted about a bobcat that was caught in a live trap put out to capture feral cats and the individual was concerned with releasing it themselves. Aubrey responded and found a feral cat was in the trap, not a bobcat.

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

New Wildlife Area and Access Site Equipment: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald received a new four-ton mini excavator, brush mower, and tilt deck equipment trailer this past week. The equipment was purchased using multiple funding sources so that it could be used on the Shillapoo and Mount Saint Helens Wildlife Areas, as well as at the Region 5 access sites. The equipment will be primarily used for mowing blackberry thickets and maintaining roads and boat ramps in the region.



New excavator, mower, and tilt trailer for Shillapoo and Mount Saint Helens Wildlife Areas, and Region 5 access sites

Mount Saint Helens Wildlife Area Improved Parking Area: Wildlife area staff members ordered sixty square yards of crushed stone for the small parking area on the Jenny Creek Unit. Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Assistant Manager Wildermuth spread the gravel to create a sturdier parking area. There was a significant drop from the edge of the road into the parking lot which has now been filled in and the gravel should significantly reduce the chances of vehicles getting stuck in the parking area.



Manager Hauswald spreading gravel and the completed parking area

Cowlitz Wildlife Area: Cowlitz Wildlife Area Manager Vanderlip met with Access Manager Rhodes and Assistant McKinlay to remove several large hazard trees adjacent to private property on the Swofford Unit. These trees are a concern to the neighboring landowner who had reached out to WDFW staff members. The trees are dead standing trees with no canopy therefore, it is uncertain where they will fall. Before falling the tree, the large limbs had to be removed to make it easier to guide the trees in the proper direction and for the safety of staff members. After falling the first tree, the homeowner informed staff members that he thought that there may be eagles roosting in one tree and that there may be a nearby nest. Manager Vanderlip spoke with the homeowner about the need to postpone the project until more information about the eagles could be gathered, which he understood.



Removing limbs in preparation for falling hazard tree

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Water Gauge Reading: Water levels are monitored in the ponds on the Sondino Unit, and Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven recorded water level readings on July 1. The surface of one pond is covered with Mexican water-fern, a small native aquatic floating plant that can rapidly colonize sheltered waters. As the plants mature in strong sunshine, they change from green to a reddish color. Turtles can move through the plants, which provide cover for small invertebrates and food for waterfowl. The water-ferns eventually subside, leaving the pond surface clear again.



Water-fern at Pond C

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Follow-up Check on Soda Springs Unit Grazing Permit: Electric fencing that was erected to protect a wet meadow needed to be taken down, so Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven made a trip up the Sheep Canyon Road to retrieve posts and cord. VanLeuven discovered that rush skeletonweed is colonizing parts of the pasture since weed control activities have been scaled back the past two years. Deer browse heavily on rush skeletonweed on the Sondino and Fisher Hill Units, but not on the Soda Springs Unit. She also observed a blizzard of grasshoppers while walking around. The grass left after grazing appears much sparser than it did when the cattle were moved off the pasture, and it seems likely that the grasshoppers have reduced the forage that was retained for wildlife. On the positive side, a water trough in Sheep Canyon still holds water although the flow into the trough has diminished to a tiny trickle. VanLeuven had to improvise a device to pull the fence posts out of the rocky soil but was able to collect all of the gear and return it to storage.

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Rare Plant Survey: Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven assisted volunteer plant surveyors in locating populations of long-bearded sego lilies so they could spend the majority of their time counting the plants and documenting the distribution. This species has not been surveyed in several years, and the effort provided updated information on the health of the population. The group found that this year's dry conditions seemed to limit the development of long-bearded sego lilies and they were not found in some of the sunny places where they would normally occur. However, the plants were present in areas that receive light to moderate shade. The surveyors will send their data to Rare Care, a native plant conservation organization affiliated with the University of Washington. Rare Care will relay the survey results to WDFW and Department of Natural Resources' Natural Heritage Program.

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Water Gauge Maintenance: Manager VanLeuven scrubbed and waxed the staff member gauges in the ponds on the Sondino Unit. These gauges are read monthly to document water levels in the ponds over time. The ponds, which are critical habitat for western pond turtles, vary greatly in depth depending on season and also across years. In order to see the calibration marks on the gauges, crusty algae must be cleaned off. Waxing the enamel plates makes future cleaning easier.

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Bluebird Nest Box Survey on the Soda Springs Unit: The annual survey for nest box occupancy was conducted. Of the 25 usable nest boxes, 14 of them were occupied by western bluebirds. One box was being used by violet-green swallows. Two boxes contained moss and bark nests that appeared to have been constructed by rodents, possibly flying squirrels. One box contained a dense nest built entirely of deer hair. Of the unoccupied nest boxes, some of them were probably used this season but fledglings had left the nest already.

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Emergency Restrictions in Effect: Due to exceedingly dry and hot conditions in the forecast, emergency restrictions on activities that are allowed on eastside Wildlife Areas have been implemented to reduce the chance of wildfire.



Emergency Restrictions on Klickitat Wildlife Area

Klickitat Wildlife Area – Rare Plant Conservation: Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven assisted staff members from a native plant nursery in locating populations of plants that are of special conservation interest on the Soda Springs Unit. The nursery is under contract with the U.S. Forest Service to grow plants from native seed to be used to revegetate project sites within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Nursery staff members collected additional seed to be stored in the Miller Seed Vault at the University of Washington. The Miller Seed Vault is part of a rare plant conservation program in Washington. Seed must be collected under a strict protocol that limits how much seed may be taken from an individual source plant as well as other measures designed to minimize the effect of seed collection on native plant regeneration on site. Seed handling and labeling also follows specific protocols. The target plant for this seed collection effort is Suksdorf’s desert parsley.



Suksdorfs desert parsley

5) Providing Education and Outreach

Pond Turtle Tour: The staff members from the Columbia Gorge Commission visited the Sondino Unit for a tour and overview of the western pond turtle conservation program. Neighbor and longtime project coordinator Frank Slavens described early work starting in the 1980s to help pond turtles and protect their habitat. Later, Wildlife District Biologist Bergh joined the group to talk about current work being done. Wildlife Area Manager VanLeuven spoke mostly about habitat conservation projects and property management practices centered around turtle and worker safety. The Gorge Commission staff members interact with the public in the process of reviewing project proposals and are interested in learning how they can protect turtles in the course of their work, as well as share helpful information with interested members of the public.



Sondino Ponds Field Trip with Columbia Gorge Commission staff members

6) Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Nothing for this installment.

7) Other

Extreme Heat: The hot weather experienced all around the Pacific Northwest also affected the Klickitat Wildlife Area. Furnace-like conditions resulted in a temperature reading of 113 degrees in the shade at the Wildlife Area Headquarters on June 29. Spells of hot weather always cause the Klickitat River to be murky due to accelerated melting of glaciers and transport of fine sediment particles, and this event produced a chocolate milk appearance in the river. The volume of flow appeared to be up as well, although that has not been confirmed.



Klickitat River after heat wave

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

1) **Managing Wildlife Populations**

Oregon Silverspot Butterfly Habitat: A diverse group of WDFW staff members recently gathered at the Oregon Silverspot Butterfly Unit of the Johns River Wildlife Area near the town of Oceanside in an attempt to maintain proper habitat conditions for the butterfly and its host plant, the early blue violet. The group consisted of Assistant District Biologist Michaelis, Pest Biologist Nunez, Diversity Biologist Gill, Pollinator Specialist Potter, and Wildlife Area Manager Bechtold. Equipped with a skid steer mounted brush hog, pole saws, and brush cutters, the group removed all young pine trees that were encroaching on the meadow. The brush hog was used to mow where the trees were most dense, the hand tools were used in other areas to preserve more desirable species.



Early spring conditions at the butterfly site – Photo by USFWS Biologist W. Richey



Butterfly site post-mowing and selective tree cutting – Photo by Bechtold

Common Loons: Biologist Murphie visited lakes in District 15 looking for nesting common loons during this period. He sighted a single loon on Crocker Lake on June 4. He was able to observe the loon from the DFW access site and boat launch but did not see any other loons. Biologist Murphie returned on June 9 to determine if this single loon was paired up with another. While observing the loon, it took flight, circled the lake several times while gaining altitude, then departed to the southwest. No loons have been seen on Crocker Lake since then. Additional lakes were visited, but no loons have been observed. Murphie also visited lakes in District 15 and Lake Crescent with Biologist McMillan in District 16, looking for common loons during this period. No loons were found.

Beller's Bog Beetles: Biologist Murphie collected samples of Beller's bog beetles from Melbourne Lake in District 15 on June 14. Samples will be sent to Headquarters for confirmation.

South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Plan: Biologist Murphie provided comments on the draft plan and conducted a site visit to Lake Koeneman (also loon check).

New Band-Tailed Mineral Site: Biologist Michaelis discovered the exact location of a previously unknown mineral site used by band-tailed pigeons along the lower Chehalis River. Locations received from transmitted birds helped establish the search area. This is part of a migratory bird stamp funded project designed to capture, mark, and track movements of band-tailed pigeons in areas where mineral sites are unknown. These mineral sites are surveyed in July as part of the state-wide monitoring of band-tails. Over 100 birds appeared to be using this location.



Photo of the new mineral spring located along the lower Chehalis river

Snowy Plover Breeding Window Surveys: District wildlife biologists along with assistance from District 17 Habitat program, District 10 Wildlife program, USFWS, and the Shoalwater Tribe finished the third and final breeding window surveys for snowy plovers along various beaches in southwest Washington.

Camera Trapping: Biologist Murphie assisted Skokomish Wildlife Program Manager Ackerman with set-up of several cameras as part of a larger effort being conducted by Olympic Peninsula Tribes to explore the feasibility of using trail-cameras to estimate the density of several game species.

Bat Colony Counts: Biologist Murphie assisted USFS staff members in bat counts at the Hamma Hamma cabin and Quilcene Ranger District shop.

Canada Goose Banding: Biologists Butler and Tirhi assisted the waterfowl section and local volunteer group with goose capture and banding at Lake Tapps and the Clover Creek estuary. Over 150 geese were captured and banded in total.



Geese are herded from water to upland using kayaks (Chambers Bay Estuary, 2021)



Once on uplands, geese are herded into and encircled with containment fences (Lake Tapps, 2021)



Volunteers assisting with goose banding, including a budding young biologist

Common Loon: Biologist Tirhi and a volunteer assisted the Olympic Peninsula district biologists for one day of loon kayak surveys on Lake Ozette. Although the kayak team did not locate any loons by sight or sound, they were able to explore several lagoons and inlets ideal for nesting. The motorized boat team did locate two separate pairs of adult loons on the open water.



Volunteer exploring inlet for nesting common loons on Lake Ozette

Bat and White-nose Syndrome: Biologist Tirhi picked up a reported dead bat in Edgewood and inspected it for white-nose syndrome. The bat tested negative for white-nose syndrome and appeared to be killed by a cat, as evidenced by the puncture wounds in the wing and other wing damage.



Bat predated by a cat (see puncture wounds) that did not have clinical signs of white-nose syndrome (visual inspection only)

2) Providing Recreation Opportunities

Spring Bear Inspection: Biologist Tirhi inspected a bear legally harvested by local hunter. The bear was a beautiful cinnamon.



Belfair Duck Blinds: Biologist Murphie assisted volunteers from Washington Waterfowl Association (WWA) in constructing two new floating blinds at the Union River Unit in Belfair, Washington. WWA's Kurt Snyder led the project from securing the funding, gathering materials, conducting pre-build of blind components, and coordination of volunteers.



Abandoned Vessels and Vehicles Removal: The increase in abandoned vessels and vehicles continues at the water access sites. There was an abandoned boat at Pattison Lake in Thurston County that the access team was able to remove and dispose at the Thurston County landfill. A trashed car was dumped at Black Lake in Thurston County and was removed by the Thurston County Sheriff. A trailer is currently abandoned at Wildcat Lake in Kitsap County and will be removed by the Access Team. An SUV was abandoned at the Highway 4 Naselle River Site in Pacific County and was removed by Enforcement.



Regional Grading and Road Repair: The Lacey Construction Shop recently graded nine sites within the region, five in Grays Harbor County, three in Mason County, and one in Kitsap County. Due to heavy rains the bigger potholes needed to be pumped free of water before the grading could start. Pictured below is Brad Hilton (Grading Supervisor) finishing the pumping of water on the last major pothole at Tee Lake:



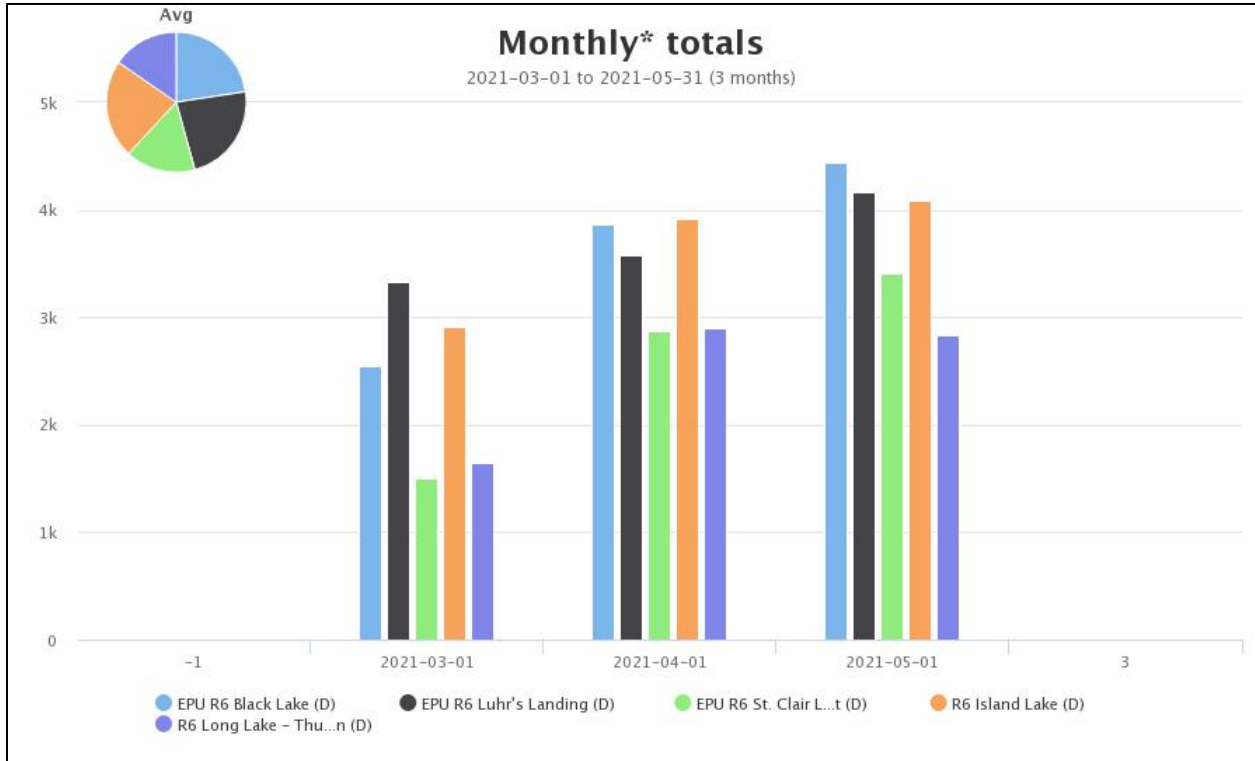
Increased Visitation: With the recent very hot weather, fishing seasons open, and school out, the water access sites have seen an increase in visitation to the point that most exceeded their max capacity with vehicles parking outside DFW property and walking in. Because of this there has been an increase in trash, graffiti, vandalism, and damage.



Traffic Vehicle Counts: The Region 6 access team currently has nine vehicle counters in the field. Below are vehicle counts for the last three months at Black Lake, Luhr’s Landing, Lake St. Clair, and Long Lake in Thurston County along with Island Lake in Mason County. The graph and table show the monthly total vehicles that accessed these sites.

The second table below shows the yearly total at three of the Region 6 sites between May of 2020 and May of 2021.

Monthly Vehicle Totals



Month	EPU R6 Black Lake	EPU R6 Luhr's Landing	EPU R6 St. Clair Lake West	R6 Island Lake	R6 Long Lake - Thurston
Mar-21	2551	3335	1496	2910	1647
Apr-21	3868	3583	2873	3922	2902
May-21	4443	4171	3409	4086	2830

Yearly Vehicle Total May 2020 – May 2021

Black Lake	Luhrs Landing	St. Clair West
42,152	49,859	30,360

3) Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Olympia Regional Airport Master Plan Update Technical Advisory Committee: Biologist Tirhi participated in the first of several technical committee meetings for this plan update. Tirhi was requested to participate on the committee by the Port of Olympia. The Olympia Airport is occupied or seasonally used by three listed prairie species: Mazama pocket gopher, streaked horned lark and Oregon vesper sparrow.

Bats: Biologist Tirhi and Hunter Education Program Lead Montgomery met with staff members at Western State Hospital to inspect several building locations where bats have been roosting (maternity roosts) for several years. Tirhi has worked directly with the staff members at the hospital for years to manage this bat population. Montgomery is able to bring the services of WDFWs Master Hunter Program to assist with installing standard and specialty-built bat boxes to try and contain the bats and encourage them out of the insulation and wall space which they are currently using (and leaving guano). After this inspection, Montgomery and Tirhi plan to meet further to devise a bat house plan.



Just one of many locations that bats are dropping guano and roosting inside buildings at Western State Hospital

4) Conserving Natural Landscapes

Private Landowner Consultations: Biologist Novack visited with landowners in the Elma area with an interest in the long-term protection of their property.

Elk River Weed Control: Biologist Novack made preparations for contractor access to the Elk River Unit to conduct noxious weed control.

Centralia Mine: Biologist Tirhi along with Manager Calkins and Region 5 staff members met with TransAlta and Office of Surface Mining (OSM) staff members to tour the mine and discuss WDFW's vision for the property as a potential new wildlife area. Although more details remain to be worked out over time, OSM seemed very receptive to the prospect.

South Puget Sound Wildlife Area Lakewood: A reminder to the public that this wildlife area provides a unique wildlife experience in an otherwise developed suburbia. A large variety of birds including a pair of nesting red-tailed hawks, amphibians, reptiles, and both large and small mammals may be viewed from the publicly accessible trails. *Please remember dogs are only permitted on leash.* The wildlife we have are either inhibited or harmed by off-leash dogs. We welcome you to come walk or watch wildlife at the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area.



A family of deer are only a few of the wild animals you may see roaming the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area (2021)

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.