

# Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

October 1 to 15, 2021

## **REGION 1**

### *HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:*

#### **Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Chronic Wasting Disease Check Station Prep:** Biologists Prince and Turnock finalized preparations for Chronic Wasting Disease check stations in District 1. Check stations will be run during all weekends of the modern firearm deer season.

**Vulcan Sheep Survey:** Biologists Prince and Turnock conducted a ground survey of the Vulcan sheep herd. The biologists mostly observed ewes and lambs to see how many rams are in the herd. A survey closer to the rut is planned.

**Potential Deer Survey Transects:** On Thursday, October 14, Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer, Region 1 Wildlife Program Manager Robinette, and Wildlife Area Manager Anderson met on Bisbee Mountain Road for a quick visit. They briefly discussed potential for setting up deer survey transects on Sherman Creek Wildlife Area to help determine changes in white-tailed deer populations as related to prescribed burns on and around the wildlife area. Running the transects would of course add to the workload of the District 1 wildlife biologists, but a few years' worth of data could help show how white-tailed deer movements change after fires occur.

#### **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

**Hunter Contacts:** Biologists Prince and Turnock answered emails and phone calls from hunters about upcoming and ongoing seasons.

**Drone Request at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area:** Region 1 Lands Agent Ploof planned to check with a caller requesting permission for recreational use of a drone in the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area, to obtain more details on the request. Coming this close to modern firearm deer hunting season, such a request is unusual. Wildlife area staff members haven't heard back yet on this as of Friday, October 15.

**Aeration System Completion:** Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area staff members completed the last few touch-ups on the new aeration system for Z Lake at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area, after the old one burned up in the 2020 Whitney Fire. This project brought in a variety of Region 1 staff members and private vendors to get the job done. The planted trout in the rimrock lake are now expected to survive winter freeze-overs of the lake. Big shoutout to WAAM Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Finch and Natural Resource Technician Colvin on getting this back up and running!



**Landowner Contact:** Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley contacted a landowner to extend their WDFW access contract for five years in Walla Walla County. Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley forwarded the contract request to Contracts for review and approval.

**Hunting Access:** Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley assisted hunters via phone, text, and email pertaining to available access for upcoming hunting seasons. Biologist Hadley received several contacts from hunters with questions pertaining to the reservation system.

### **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

**Badger Issues:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman talked to a rural resident that found an active badger burrow and wanted to make sure they were doing the right things to prevent conflict. They didn't want the badger trapped and just wanted to know how to better live with wildlife. Westerman provided advice.

**Dead Cow:** WDFW staff members investigated a report of a dead cow discovered by a range rider in Touchet pack territory. The carcass was very fresh, and no trauma or evidence was presented on the carcass that would suggest a depredation event. The determination of non-depredation was made by staff members in the field.

**Damage Claim Follow Up:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb followed up with a producer who has been working through an elk damage claim from the 2020 growing season. The producer confirmed that they were paid for the claim. The same producer will be submitting another claim this year due to elk damage on green peas, seed peas, winter wheat, spring wheat, seed corn and seed sunflower crops.

**Fence Damage from Elk:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman reached out to master hunters in the Cheney area to help a producer that has chronic elk damage to his fence and would like help keeping up on the repairs. Westerman is waiting to hear back from the master hunters he contacted via email.

**Data Sharing:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb worked with numerous producers in submitting data sharing agreements. These producers run livestock in an area of new wolf activity in Columbia County. Kolb also helped a producer who has previously received a data sharing email but was unable to log on. The troubleshooting for the affected producer continues.

**Raccoon in Cat Trap:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb assisted a property owner of a commercial RV park in Columbia County who was working on trapping a large number of feral cats around the property. The property owner is working with the local humane society in capturing the cats and taking them to a shelter for adoption. In their effort to trap cats, which was very successful (seven cats captured in one night), a very large raccoon was unintentionally captured in one of the live traps. Kolb assisted the elderly property owner with safely releasing the large raccoon on the property since it was a non-targeted species.

**Peola Elk:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade spoke with multiple producers in the Peola area who reported that they were not currently experiencing any issues with elk. Wade also followed up with a landowner regarding his request for kill permits. Wade also spent one morning checking for elk activity in the area.

**Anatone Elk:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade worked with an Anatone area producer who reported 70 head of elk in his newly planted winter wheat. The producers did not want to sign a damage prevention cooperative agreement at this time. Wade met with the producer and provided him with some hazing supplies and will continue working with the producer on the issue.

### **Providing Education and Outreach**

**Washington State University Lab:** Biologist Baarstad met with Biologist Gaston and Technician Rumiser to conduct an outdoor lab and demonstration of common methods for wildlife capture. Rocket net and net gun procedures were discussed and demonstrated to a group of Washington State University students.

### **Conducting Business Operations and Policy**

**Culture Improvement Team:** Biologist Prince presented parts of the culture improvement plan and associated first year projects to the Executive Management Team (EMT). The entire culture improvement team was present for the meeting and each member presented portions of the plan.

**School Kiosk Project:** Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Finch reached out to Reardan High School shop teacher Rick Perleberg concerning the shop class's plans for completing kiosk construction at the new addition to Reardan Audubon Wildlife Area. Finch had dropped off all the supplies to the school several months ago, after Perleberg agreed to have his class add the reader board and roof as part of their shop classwork.

**Basement Deer – Yes, There is More!** There is a follow-up to the (not so) excellent adventure Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna and District 2 Fish Biologist Bill Baker had last month in Colville, dealing with a rotting deer in a house. Several days after that exercise, the homeowner called Wildlife Area Manager Anderson and stated that she had later found a dead fawn outside a different window well than the one the first animal had come through. Anderson passed the request to the City of Colville's Road Department, which sent someone out that afternoon to remove the fawn. Let's hope we've all seen the last of this misadventure!

**Filming Request at Reardan Audubon Wildlife Area:** With input from Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Finch and Wildlife Area Manager Anderson, Region 1 Lands Agent Ploof issued a permit to a group planning to use the north side of Reardan Audubon Wildlife Area for a two-person scene in a film. The restrictions included no vehicles on the trail larger than a side-by-side small enough to fit through the gate, limited number of vehicles in the parking lot, and requirement to clean up behind themselves. A \$500 fee was charged for the permit.

**Sherman Creek Wildlife Area:** Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer completed his inventory of state-owned equipment. All items were accounted for. The [Sherman Creek WLA Management Plan](#) update was written by WAAM Palmer, reviewed, and submitted to planner Lauri Vigue.

## **REGION 6**

### *HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:*

#### **Managing Wildlife Populations**

**Oregon Spotted Frog Habitat Management:** Biologists Butler and a Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) crew cut reed canary grass within a known Oregon spotted frog breeding site over the past week. The Oregon spotted frog (OSF) 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 of the frog's breeding area at this site and yearly mowing keeps it open and available. Because the site is typically too wet to use a tractor to mow, the site is mowed every year with handheld brush cutters.



*WCC crew mowing reed canary grass at a known OSF breeding location*

**Mazama Pocket Gophers:** Biologists Butler and Tirhi along with Research Scientist Olson started planning for the upcoming fall gopher surveys. The protocol was reviewed, and all the equipment was tested prior to going into field. Butler and Tirhi also conducted a test run of the survey to provide a better time estimate given the different habitat conditions along the transects. Surveys will begin next week.



*Mazama pocket gopher survey transects*



Biologists Butler and Tirhi also visited the newly acquired Violet Prairie property near Rochester to prep for gopher surveys taking place next week. Electronic hardware was tested for accurate data collection, fresh gopher mounds were located and flagged, and transect lines were reviewed.

**Streaked Horned Lark:** Biologist Tirhi participated in the Washington-Oregon annual streaked horned lark virtual meeting. Presentation included survey results from various occupied locations, an update on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS)-Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Memorandum of Understanding, the USFWS lark action plan, survey improvement discussion, and military programs that will hopefully provide funding once various habitat conservation plans are complete. Personnel changes at both USFWS and FAA has created a need and opportunity to bring folks up to speed on past and current negotiations regarding this very iconic local endemic listed species.

### **Providing Conflict Prevention and Education**

**Injured Deer:** Biologist Butler and Conflict Specialist Blankenship responded to a report of a deer that had been shot with a practice arrow. The doe had been spotted multiple days in the same area. Members of the community were asked to track the times and locations of where they observed the injured doe until a capture attempt could be made. This past week Butler and Blankenship attempted to immobilize the deer and remove the arrow, but upon finding the doe, it appeared the arrow had broken off or came out on its own. The doe did have a limp, but overall, it moved around well.



*Injured doe*

## Conserving Natural Landscapes

**Scotch Broom and Himalayan Blackberry Control:** Expanding upon previous efforts, District Biologist Novack, Assistant District Biologist Michaelis, and Wildlife Area Manager Bechtold recently spent two weeks mowing Scotch broom and Himalayan blackberry at the Elk River Unit. WDFW staff members have gone to considerable lengths to control these listed noxious weeds since the 2019 purchase of the area. This most recent effort included both a follow-up mowing to areas previously treated, and an initial cutting in areas not yet treated. Aside from simply reducing the amount of these noxious weeds on the wildlife area, the particular benefit of this effort depends on the nature of the treatment and the area treated. The follow-up treatment occurred in an area the agency intends to maintain in an open and meadow-like condition. The initial cutting occurred at the edges of an otherwise forested area, where the weeds were competing with young conifers and preventing stand development.

Additional mowing and weed control efforts occurred at the regional office and the Davis Creek Unit. One old agricultural field on the border of the Davis Creek Unit was approximately 95% covered in weeds that included reed canary grass, teasel, and dense areas of common tansy.