

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

November 16 to 30, 2021

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Hunter Check Stations: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock operated hunter check stations on the last two days of the modern firearm deer season. Consistent with the rest of the season, hunter participation at checkstations was low.

Grouse Barrels: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock began picking up grouse wing barrels within the district. Wings were deposited by hunters throughout the fall and data on species and age will be compiled sometime in early 2022.

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Pheasant Releases: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA) Natural Resource Technician Colvin and Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer assisted Private Lands staff members with pheasant releases in northeast Washington during the week of November 20.

Access Area Management: Northeast Washington Access Manager Dziekan opened gates to winter fishing sites and finished preparation for the winter fishing season that starts Friday, November 26, 2021. Some areas are already seeing snow, but no ice has started creeping in yet, so anglers will have to wait a bit longer before ice fishing.



Entrance to Diamond Lake Access Area, “Winter Wonderland”

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Turkey Harassment: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Westerman continued to work with a landowner to demonstrate how well turkey harassment can work at a roosting sight. On November 16, Westerman met with a landowner who has been dealing with turkeys for many years and the flock always roosts in their back yard, which is along the Little Spokane River. The flock is up to 130 turkeys. Westerman harassed the turkeys with a paintball gun when they flew up into the roost trees. All but a few flew across the river and the next night, there were no turkeys that arrived. The second day after (Thursday) half the turkeys came to roost and Westerman harassed the turkeys again and when Westerman arrived on November 22, no turkeys had been sighted since the November 16. Westerman will check in next week to see if they had come back. The landowner will be getting a paintball gun soon.

Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb received reports from Walla Walla County producers about +300 elk moving through freshly planted fields and around haystacks. After surveying the situation, Kolb decided to leave the elk alone and not conduct a hazing operation due to the ground saturation conditions from recent precipitation. Kolb followed up with the affected producers who agreed that leaving the elk where they were at would cause less damage than trying to move that many elk through very wet freshly planted fields. As weather conditions permit, hazing operations will resume.

Fladry Deployment: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade assisted Kolb in deploying fladry for a Columbia County producer who reported wolf activity around their calving/weaning winter pasture. A half-mile of fladry was deployed.



Fladry and Foxlights deployed in an area of new wolf activity in Columbia County

Cattle Producer Contact: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade continued post grazing season contacts with producers who have moved their cattle to winter pastures and away from known wolf territories. Most producers are reporting that they aren't missing any cattle. Wade did talk with two producers from the Grouse Flats area that reported missing a small number of cattle but have not located any carcasses. Wade also worked with one producer to pick up Foxlights that were loaned to them.

Peola Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade received a report from a producer regarding 70 head of elk that recently showed up in his winter wheat field. Wade discussed the situation with the producer and decided that the best first step was to attempt hazing and deploy a late season archery hunter. Wade will be assisting with hazing and will continue to monitor the situation.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Post-Fire Habitat Restoration: Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA) received a 3,000-gallon water tank that had been on order for months. This replaces smaller tanks lost in the Whitney Fire on September 7, 2021. The water is used to assist with control of smaller wildfires, and to fill up the 1,000-gallon tank on the SLWA water truck for tank mixing with herbicides on more remote field sites. The delivery person noted that SLWA looked a lot different than when he was last out. When Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Finch inquired further, the man replied that he had visited about 20 years earlier, on a field trip with his third-grade class from Odessa. Staff members must be doing something right with the kids' adventure tours! How many adults remember anything from the third grade?



3,000-gallon water tank for Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area

Clarkston Injured Deer Report: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Wade responded to a report of an injured deer in the Clarkston Heights. Wade met with the property owner who reported that the deer had broken lower left leg but was still able to move around to get feed and water and was also observed chasing does. Wade explained that deer generally do well with only three legs and directed the landowner to give the deer plenty of space, as they had been trying to give it extra feed and water. Wade evaluated the deer's condition and determined that it appeared to be in good shape and able to move with relative ease even with a compound fracture to its lower left leg. The landowner agreed to monitor the deer and contact Wade if the deer's condition appeared to be getting worse.



Injured deer escaping the weather in an unoccupied horse shelter

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Irrigation Cleanup: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer worked between November 15 and 17 along 2500 feet of irrigation canal on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area. He is halfway done with removing brush along that length and plans to spend time the following week cleaning out the ditch itself, for the portion that is cleared of brush. The mini excavator purchased in July is a great tool for this project, which wouldn't be getting done without it. This work will make routine canal maintenance much easier.

Shop Cleanup: SLWA Natural Resource Technician Colvin put some elbow grease into cleaning up the heated side of the SLWA shop. Colvin and SLWA Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Finch will be spending lots of time in this spot over the coming winter, performing needed equipment maintenance and repair.



We all wish we had a shop like this!

Other

Lost Dog: Private Lands Biologist Gaston assisted a hunter who had lost his dog while duck hunting at Central Ferry. While conducting pheasant releases, Private Lands Biologist Gaston located the missing black lab and was able to promptly return her to her owner. Ellie is now safely back home and ready to hunt ducks again.



Private Lands Biologist Gaston with Ellie who was reunited with her owner

REGION 2

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Mountain Goats: Biologists Comstock and Jeffreys took advantage of a rare, mostly clear window of weather over Lake Chelan to look for mountain goats along the North Shore. Colockum Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky and Assistant Wildlife Area Manager John Hagen generously offered their time and boat for the day, allowing biologists to scan for goats from the water using binoculars and a spotting scope. In total, 20 mountain goats were observed, with several small nanny and kid groups as well as lone billies sighted between Safety Harbor and Moore Point. Low hanging clouds obscured all elevations above approximately 2700 ft, and most goats observed were seen very near this elevation. Boat surveys are inherently challenging as one can only see so much terrain from the water, and it is likely that many goats were hidden from view. This was more of a reconnaissance mission than a formal survey, as biologists seek to get an idea of what elevations and areas the goats are at this time of year prior to aerial surveys anticipated to take place next month. The North Shore has not been aerially surveyed since 2015, so biologists are prioritizing this herd for winter 2021/2022 survey efforts. Biologists Jeffreys and Comstock aim to get out on the lake via boat a couple more times this winter in addition to conducting aerial surveys for the mountain goats.



Lopushinsky, Comstock, and Jeffreys glass for mountain goats from Lake Chelan – Photo by John Hagen

Bighorn Sheep: Districts 6, 7, and 8 are in the midst of planning and obtaining supplies for a bighorn sheep radio collaring project scheduled to take place for several herds in January 2022. In District 7, Biologists Jeffreys and Comstock plan to collar 10 sheep in the Manson herd located along the North Shore of Lake Chelan. Once deployed, these collars will send signals to a satellite allowing biologists to remotely track collared individuals, which is crucial as the steep topography surrounding the lake makes traditional very high frequency radio tracking prohibitively difficult here. The primary aim of this project is to get a better idea of the Manson herd's core homerange, which seems to have shifted in recent years. This apparent homerange shift has made it difficult to obtain abundance and composition estimates for the Manson herd over the last few years and biologists hope the deployment of these collars will shed new light on the herd's movements. In addition to collaring captured sheep, the crew will take several samples including nasal swabs and blood to test for the presence of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniaef* (MOVI) and other diseases.

The capture is anticipated to take place in mid-January entirely on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land. The captures will be performed by Leading Edge, an aerial net-gunning crew working from a helicopter. District 7 biologists are currently working on the coordination, logistics, and materials needed for this project to succeed, and will provide ground support during the mission.

Mule Deer: The four-year mule deer migration study initiated in 2020 will be entering its third year in January 2022, and Biologists Comstock and Jeffreys are hard at work preparing for this next round of captures. This coming year, the goal is to redeploy 28 collars on does in the Wenatchee Foothills to continue monitoring the seasonal movements of this subpopulation within the Chelan sub-herd of the East Slope Cascades Mule Deer Management Zone. Data obtained from the first couple years of this study indicate that the majority of deer wintering in the Wenatchee Foothills are migratory and most of these migrant's head west in the spring, crossing Highway 97 to reach summer habitat in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. As was the case in the previous two years, does will be captured and collared via helicopter net gunning performed by an experienced aerial net gun crew contracted by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) specifically for this study. The crew will net individual does from a low-flying helicopter and work quickly to collect biological samples, take measurements, and fit a GPS collar to each doe before releasing the deer onsite.

In addition to preparing for January 2022 mule deer captures, biologists are in the process of planning aerial surveys for the Chelan subherd. These surveys are scheduled to take place next month, December 2021, when biologists plan to fly over foothills in the Wenatchee, Swakane, Entiat, and South Lake Chelan areas, where the majority of Chelan County mule deer spend the winter. This herd is difficult to survey due to consistently poor winter weather in the valley. Persistent low-hanging clouds, precipitation, wind, and fog, have prevented biologists from flying the past few years, which has in turn made it impossible to obtain post-hunt ratios and abundance estimates for this subherd. If post-hunt surveys are thwarted again this year, biologists will survey the herd in spring 2022. This is less desirable as bucks will have shed their antlers by this time (making it impossible to obtain buck:doe ratios), but it would at least allow for fawn:doe ratios and an abundance estimate.

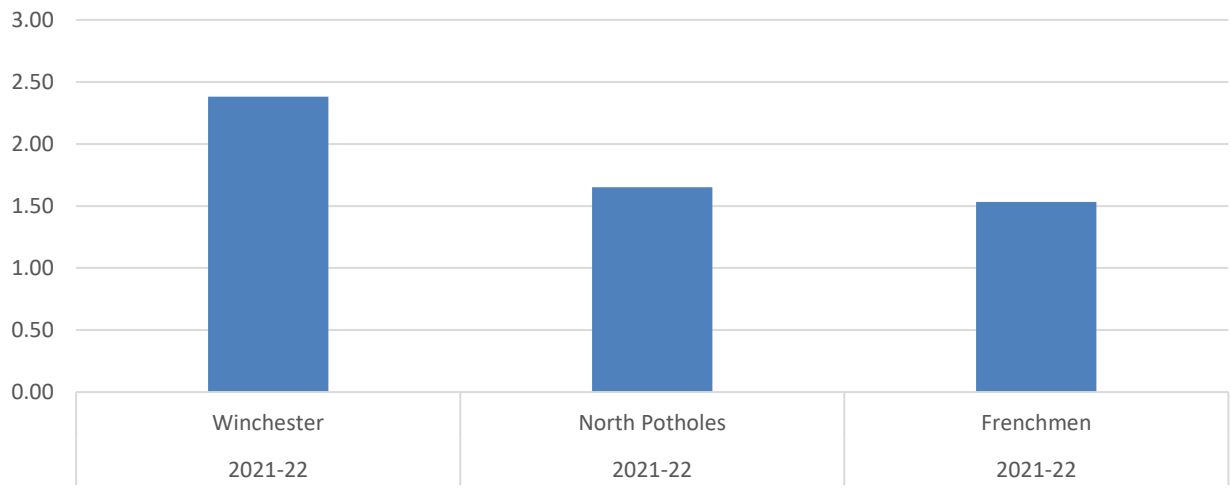
Currently, biologists are performing annual post-hunt surveys of the Douglas subherd, part of the Columbia Plateau Mule Deer Management Zone. These surveys are performed by slowly driving predetermined routes spread across Douglas County and recording all deer observed, noting age, sex, and antler points whenever possible. These data allow biologists to assess post-hunt herd composition and abundance each year.

Providing Recreation Opportunities

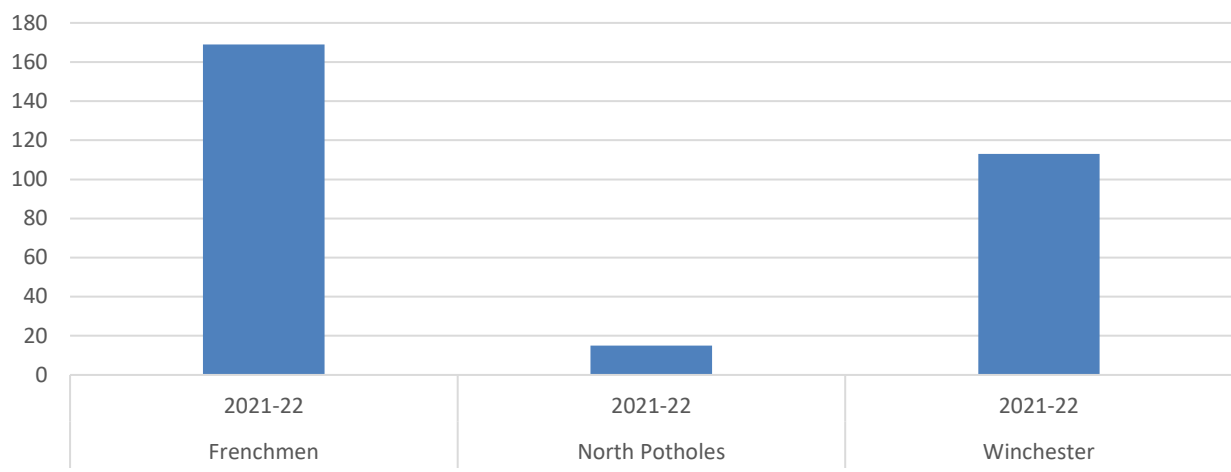
Trails Recreation Education Advocacy and Development Roundtable: Lands Operations Manager Finger participated in a round table discussion led by the organization [Trails Recreation Education Advocacy and Development \(TREAD\)](#) whose goal is to “bring all the various stakeholders together (motorized, non-motorized, water, snow and land) so we can move forward in a coordinated fashion to thoughtfully and sustainably provide the best OR experiences we can, improving the quality of life for everyone who lives in or visits the region.” The scope of this group is loosely centered on Chelan and Douglas counties. The meeting was attended by representatives from USFS, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), among others. TREAD’s primary goal is to gather public input on recreational values, facilitate discussion across land management agencies, and help move trails projects forward. There was a very nice tribute to Bob Parlette and his contributions to recreational trails development, such as the Apple Capital Recreational Loop Trail, from TREAD members and former Senator Linda Evans Parlette. USFS presented a concept of engaging state and federal land managers in a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) with TREAD to facilitate trails projects. Finger will participate in future discussions on this topic to see whether WDFW might have a role to play or not.

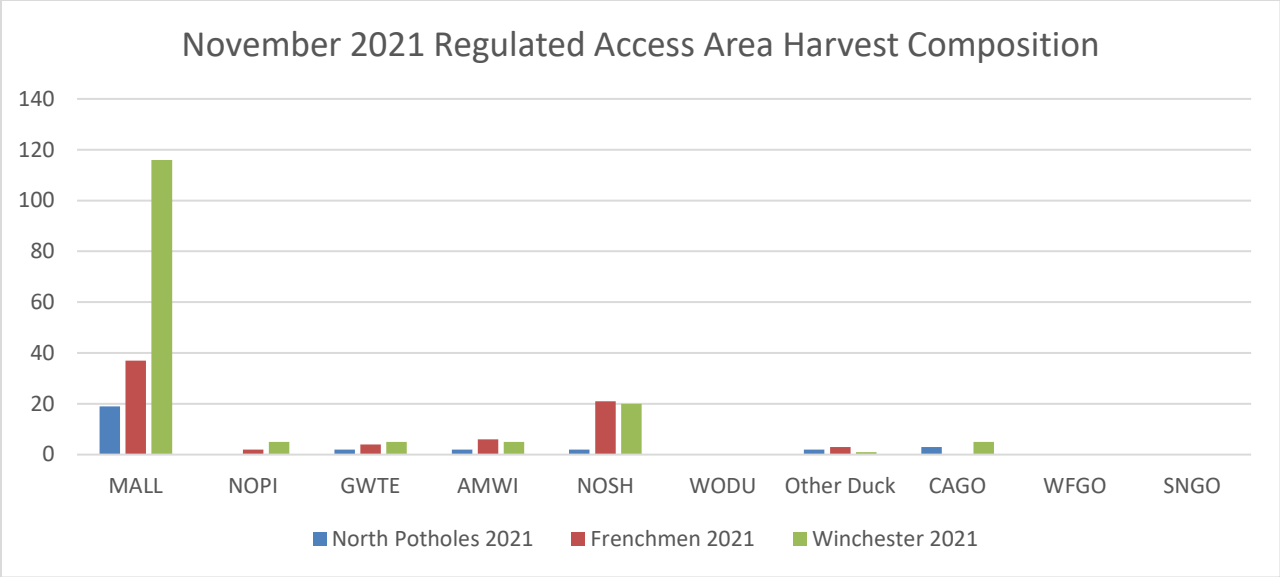
Regulated Access Areas: November has brought a rise in bird numbers at all the Regulated Access Areas (RAA). Frenchman and Winchester have been seeing a good amount of hunter participation and decent harvest. North Potholes reserve has started gaining duck and goose numbers and with birds going to feed in Hiawatha Valley, hunters have taken the opportunity to hunt the RAA. Mallards have been the main species of harvest at all RAAs with Northern Shovelers being second most harvest. Biologist McPherson has noticed an increase of northern pintails especially at the Winchester RAA.

2021-2022 Regulated Access Area Average Bird Per Hunter



2021-2022 Regulated Access Area Number of Hunters





Pheasant Release: Biologists Cook and Morris helped the district wildlife biologists with releasing pheasants at two sites in Region 2 to supplement population for hunting.



Biologist Morris releasing pheasants at Dry Falls and pheasant flying over Steamboat Rock. –
 Photo by Nathan Cook, WDFW

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Deer Issues: Specialist Heilhecker spoke to a nursery tree owner interested in filing for crop damage. She explained the compensation program to the individual and directed him to contact the wildlife conflict staff members in Olympia to obtain an application package.

Elk and Deer Issues: Specialist Bridges has worked with a multitude of landowners in assisting with attempts to decrease damage for deer and elk. Specialist Bridges has deployed master hunters, special permit holders, and other various user groups to reduce damages.

Highway 97A Wildlife Fence Maintenance: Specialist Bridges with non-governmental organizations and the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) have completed the yearly maintenance of the 97a big horn sheep fence. The Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association, Washington Wild Sheep Foundation, Washington Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, WSDOT, and WDFW continue to come together for the conservation of this big horn sheep fence. This fence has shown that it has reduced the vehicle/animal collision rate to that of the statewide average, when before, it was identified as one of the highest collision rates in the state.





Photos of the completed repairs to the fence

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Douglas County Habitat Restoration Project: Private Lands Braaten was able to share with new private lands staff members the benefits and process of laying fabric mulch over habitat plantings. Work was completed in a day laying almost 1.5 miles (14 rolls) of fabric mulch over 1400 trees and shrubs. Supervisor Rickel, and Biologists Cook and Morris, helped Biologist Braaten with laying fabric mulch on shrub and tree rows.



Fabric Mulch protects habitat seedlings from grass competition and conserves soil moisture, critical during drought years – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW



Upland Habitat Restoration Teamwork - Private Lands Biologists Eric Braaten, Jesse Morris, Nathan Cook along with Private Land Supervisor Michael Rickel laid 1.5 miles of fabric mulch over 1400+ riparian plants focused on future wintering Sharp-tailed grouse in northern Douglas County. (Active Sharp-tailed grouse lek on hill above truck) – Photos by Eric Braaten, WDFW

Private Lands Habitat Plots: Biologist Cook seeded native grasses on approximately 24 acres near Lind. Native grass species were planted to improve local diversity and went along with shrubs, planted this past spring, on the edges of field. Biologist Morris assisted Biologist Cook in prepping and calibrating seeding equipment for a planting project with a landowner in Adams County that will improve wildlife habitat.



WDFW tractor and not-till drill used for seeding grasses near Lind – Photo by Nathan Cook, WDFW

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement and Conservation Reserve Program: Biologist Cook, Biologist Morris, and Supervisor Rickel all attended the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Big Bend Local Working Group Meeting. At this meeting, local priorities were assigned for funding NRCS programs. Private Lands Biologist Braaten visited several State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) fields to determine if 2021 fall field prep had been completed or initiated according to plans. A few SAFE fields had nothing done on them which will require follow up with landowners or operators. However Private Lands Biologist Braaten did find some landowners were following plans exactly which was nice to see.



SAFE field prep on a 2021 contract in Douglas County. Landowner did a great job! – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

REGION 3

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Columbia Basin Mule Deer Surveys Begin: District 4 Wildlife Biologist Fidorra and District 2 and District 5 biologists began conducting Mule Deer surveys in the Columbia Basin on deer winter ranges. The helicopter survey will continue into December and is normally done every 3-5 years to track trends in abundance and demographics. The pandemic led to postponing the planned 2020 survey, so this area had not been surveyed for 6 years.

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Reservations Available for Waterfowl Hunting in Franklin County: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett continued to work with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and their lessee on the Snake River DNR hunting access sites. Hunts are now available for reservation through the online Private Lands reservation system. Hulett has received many successful reports from hunters that have hunted these fields.

Klickitat County Bobcat: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand sealed a bobcat for a hunter who harvested the cat during the late muzzleloader deer season in Game Management Unit (GMU) 382.

Silver Dollar Landowner Hunting Permit: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with one of the participating landowners to discuss this year's past success. All of the state issued permit holders completed their hunting opportunity, and only one did not harvest an elk. Just two of the landowner's permits were utilized, with a harvest of one bull elk.

L.T. Murray Natural Resource Technician Blore, Natural Resource Specialist Nass, and Assistant Manager Winegeart re-installed a public access elk fence gate to improve function in Joe Watt Canyon on the L.T. Murray Unit. The double gate will eventually need to be replaced, but repair was accomplished by replacing the highly used broken gate with a gate that doesn't currently need to be opened.





Gate swap at Joe Watt on the L.T. Murray Unit

Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett and Technician Byers released 280 pheasants on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property in Benton and Franklin counties in preparation for the Thanksgiving holiday.



Technician Byers releasing pheasants at local Army Corp property

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area's Natural Resource Technician Blore, Manager Bates, and District 8 Wildlife Biologist Oates released pheasants on the Quilomene Unit for the last pheasant hunt of the season.



Pheasant release at Green Gate on the Quilomene Wildlife Area

Franklin County Elk Season: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand patrolled and monitored elk hunting effort in GMUs 381 and 379. Although few hunters were contacted in the field, some reports from hunters and landowners indicated a few elk had been harvested in neighboring GMUs on private land.

Maintaining Vehicle Access: Colockum Wildlife Area staff members assessed impacts of a recent windstorm that toppled dead and live trees on the wildlife area. Some trees have been removed from blocking green dot roads, while others still need to be cleared.



Dead trees blown down by recent Colockum wind event

Parking Lot Improvements: Colockum Wildlife Area staff members spent time arranging large barrier rock at the Lily Lake Snow Park. Barrier rock was placed around a heavily used parking lot to define its borders and prevent vehicles from straying off into the woods.



Barrier rock being lined around perimeter of the Lily Lake Snow Park

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Blackrock Cougar Sighting: District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand responded to a report of a cougar sighting in the Blackrock area. A landowner, with a cattle grazing operation, retrieved digital images from a trail camera documenting the cat in the area. No threats to livestock have been reported and protective measures were discussed.

Signing the Winter Closure: Wenas Wildlife Area Biologist Daling and Assistant Manager Taylor began signing the winter closure on the Wenas Wildlife Area with the newly acquired metal signs. The two were able to fully sign the closure along the Ridge Road, which needed to be completed before road conditions worsen. They also completed signing a little over three quarters of a mile down Jones Canyon, on the Western edge of the closure.



Left: Wenas Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Taylor hiking in t-posts and a post pounder to sign Jones Canyon for the closure. Right: New, metal winter closure sign after installation

Repairing Elk Fence Breakaways: Wenas Wildlife Area Biologist Daling and Manager Hughes hiked into several canyons on Cleman Mountain on the Wenas Wildlife Area, to put back in place several breakaways in the canyon bottoms. The four breakaways down appear to be human caused, as dirt bike tracks could be seen driving through one of the downed breakaways. Together, Hughes and Daling were able to get all the downed breakaways back up and secured properly. Assistant Manager Taylor also assisted with fixing breakaways and replacing fence posts and sections of the fence that were damaged by the public.



Break away that someone damaged and have subsequently been driving through



Elk fence being repaired on the Wenas Wildlife Area near Sheep Company Road

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Region 3 Staff Members Help Tree and Shrub Establishment in Walla Walla: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett planted a tree and shrub establishment in Walla Walla County with Region 1 Private Lands Biologist Thorne-Hadley. Approximately 245, one-gallon potted shrubs were planted along the field border.



Private Lands Biologist Hulett drilling holes for trees and shrubs using a gas-powered Auger



Side by Side loaded with 80, one-gallon trees and shrubs

New Option for Enhancing Habitat: Region 3 Private Lands Biologist Hulett worked with Benton County Farm Services Agency (FSA) and NRCS on enhancing CRP seed mixes with additional forbs or grasses. According to NRCS’s state rangeland specialist, WDFW could work with landowners to enhance CRP seed mixes on contracts scheduled to be seeded in the coming years, but the landowner would not be able to get cost share for of the enhanced portion of the seed mix. FSA requested that if a seed mix is enhanced to provide them with a copy of the seed tag or the seed mix for their records.

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart and Natural Resource Technician Blore reseeded the Corrals restoration site on the Whiskey Dick Unit. The site was seeded in the fall of 2020, but a very dry spring led to low seed germination and survival rates.



The Corrals restoration site on the Whiskey Dick Unit

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart coordinated with a fencing crew to replace a .6-mile section of Quilomene Unit boundary stock fence that was lost in the 2020 Vantage Highway fire.



New fence on the Quilomene Unit

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Blore checked elk fence from Joe Watt to Robinson Canyon.



Elk fence at Robinson Canyon on the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area

Planting Sage Plugs: Wenas Wildlife Area Biologist Daling and Manager Hughes continued work to finish off planting 7,000 sage plugs on the Cleman Mounting Thinning Unit. The area was also burned last year in the Evan's Canyon Fire, making it an excellent location for shrub-steppe habitat restoration. Together, Manager Hughes and Biologist Daling planted around 1,000 plants. Biologist Daling intends to get the rest of the plants into the ground by the end of this week.



Newly planted sage plugs on the Cleman Mountain

Pile Burning on Cleman: The Wenas Wildlife Area staff members along with Statewide Forester Pfeifle burned slash piles on Cleman Mountain. The piles were left over from the thinning that occurred within two different units on Cleman. This helped get rid of excess debris from the thinning, some debris and small piles were left to provide habitat for wildlife.



Pile burning on Cleman Mountain

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart completed and submitted the final public record report for the L.T. Murray Wildlife Area.

Other

L.T. Murray Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Winegeart worked with Natural Resource Technician Blore, Natural Resource Specialist Nass, and Manager Bates to assist Foresters Pfeifle and Rosette with burning slash piles on the L.T. Murray Unit's newly purchased Brain property. The slash piles were a result of logging that took place prior to WDFW ownership.



REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Leque Island Fish Monitoring Results: Skagit River System Cooperative completed a technical memo documenting their findings from monitoring fish in the project area and within surrounding reference marshes. With only one year of post-project data, we are limited in being able to draw conclusions, but some key takeaways from the early results are:

- Overall species diversity increased after restoration.
- Chinook salmon are using the site and at densities similar to mature reference marshes. No Chinook salmon were captured on the site before the project.
- Endangered Species Act-listed bull trout are now using the site. No bull trout were captured on the site before the project.

Monitoring will continue for an additional year in 2022.



A juvenile Chinook salmon captured in the Leque Island restoration area

Sea Duck Captures: District Wildlife Biologists Waddell, C. Moore, and Hamer assisted the Waterfowl Section with sea duck captures in Drayton Harbor. The team members used floating mist nets deployed from and tended by crew members in inflatable boats to capture scoters and harlequin ducks. Captured ducks were banded and fecal samples were collected for diet composition analysis. Blood samples were also taken to conduct an analysis of body condition. A qualified veterinarian also implanted Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) telemetry devices into select surf scoters so that biologists can track and map surf scoter habitats and migratory routes.



District Wildlife Biologist C. Moore draws blood from a female surf scoter

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Pheasant Season: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area pheasant release sites were very popular this past pheasant season. The four units were consistently busy during all times of the day and weekends. One week of flooding in mid-November made things challenging but drained in time for the last week of the season.



A happy end to a good pheasant season on the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area

Green River Watershed (GMU 485) Special Permit Hunts: District 12 (King County) field biologists Smith and Anderson spent time in the field assisting Tacoma Watershed officers; as well as contacting hunters while in field regarding what they are seeing, harvesting, helping get animals in trucks and taking samples during the quality bull, antlerless, quality buck and youth buck hunts for the 2021 season. The hunts all went well – with (tentative numbers) over 70% success rates in just seven days of hunting across the four concurrent hunts.



Biologist Smith, Tacoma Watershed Officers, and hunters discussing local elk populations and the bull harvested

Providing Education and Outreach

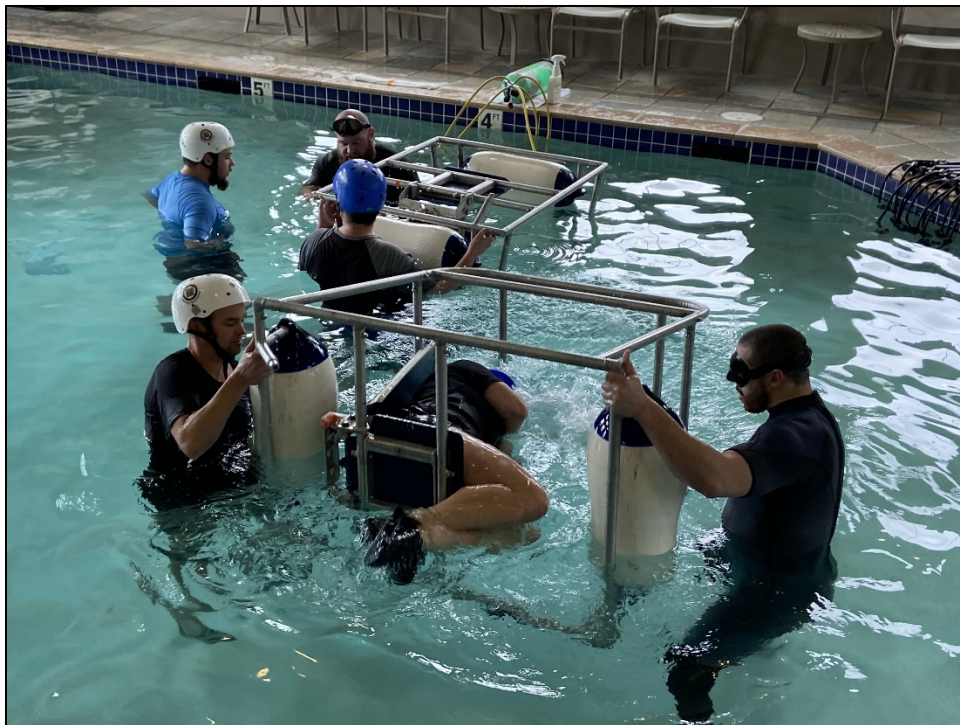
Media Contacts/Interview: Biologist Anderson received word of an interview regarding bald eagles in Washington state. The interview, for the French magazine “Society,” was a broader piece on bald eagles throughout their range, their recovery, how that has gone in Washington (and elsewhere), etc. Anderson was also interviewed regarding coyotes and domestic cats as prey related to a broader piece on rescue of outdoor cats, wildlife rescue and other efforts of the non-profit Canopy Cat Rescue. Anderson received note from a local artist, Susan, who had asked for use of some of his photos and advice regarding two local, municipal outdoor public wildlife art projects (Kent, Tukwila). She had finished and the pieces were now out on display as a public art exhibit for five to seven years. Great to see local wildlife represented in artwork and hopefully it spurs residents to perhaps observe these animals in the local habitats that they use.



Public artwork showing local wildlife such as the pileated woodpecker and silver-haired bat

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Aviation Survival and Egress Training: District Wildlife Biologists Hamer, C. Moore, and Waddell attended a full day course that prepared participants for surviving a plane or helicopter crash in water during aerial surveys. Each student attended a lecture portion and then spent time in a pool to practice escape from a simulated flight cockpit while inverted using both breath holds and an emergency breathing device.



Wildlife Biologist Moore being spun upside down while strapped into the “sweat chair” to practice escape from an inverted cockpit in water

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Hunter Checks: Biologist Michaelis spent time afield, contacting goose hunters and modern firearm deer hunters. A total of 28 deer hunters across Game Management Units (GMUs) 672 and 673 were contacted over the weekend with one two-point buck checked. Another hunter reported harvesting a spike deer shortly after getting a tip from Biologist Michaelis on where to look.



Successful deer hunter in GMU 673

Road Maintenance at Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Site: Biologist Ament met with DNR Fire Crew Leader Cervenka and his crew members on October 7, 2021 at a known Taylor's checkerspot butterfly (TCB) population site west of Port Angeles. DNR and WDFW staff members had met previously on site to review some proposed road maintenance work needed along an access road at the location. The road provides access to a cell tower and DNR has a contract that requires that the road be maintained. Brush removal, limbing of trees, and the removal of small trees was to be initiated by the crew. Biologist Ament educated the crew members on the ecology of TCBs and the need to be very sensitive when working in areas that they inhabit. She discussed the need to protect the significant host and nectar plants along the road. Ament walked the road with the crew members and offered advice on the best locations to pile the vegetation that would be removed. The crew was enthusiastic to help improve habitat for a unique endangered species.

Fisher Release at Ozette: As part of efforts to recover fisher populations on the Olympic Peninsula, Biologists Murphie and Ament were able to attend a recent fisher release at Lake Ozette sponsored by the Olympic National Park and WDFW. Seven fishers were released in two locations of the Olympic National Park, Lake Ozette, and the upper Sol Duc River. The short video shows a fisher exiting the transport box at a release site.



There was a large crowd on hand, including a film crew from Germany and many young children, to see the fishers released in the coastal forest. The fishers were quite reluctant to leave their transport crates but eventually each would burst out and be gone in a flash. The fisher population has done very well but analysis for DNA in hair samples showed a loss of genetic diversity. It was recommended that new genes be added to the population every ten years. All the fishers had been trapped and transported from Alberta, Canada. A total of 13 more fishers are expected to be released at other sites on the Olympic Peninsula by the end of December. A [story in the Peninsula Daily News](#) was published and a local photographer John Gussman provided a [link](#) to view his excellent photos from the event.



Biologist Ament and Tim McNulty carrying a crated fisher to release location

Noah Murphie listens to Biologist Lewis discuss the fisher project

Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologists Tirhi and Butler and volunteer Terry reviewed water level monitoring data being collected at a spotted frog breeding site on Salmon Creek, Thurston County. Butler had entered the data into a dynamic spreadsheet so water levels could be compared by week across the year. Terry provided preliminary data summary on a new water aeration system that was deployed on a large pond on the site to reduce bullfrog (predator) breeding. All data looks very promising for results. The three will meet again in approximately a month to further both projects.

Western Pond Turtle: Biologist Tirhi participated in the quarterly pond turtle health team meeting comprised of representatives from WDFW, partnering zoos, and a variety of veterinarian health team advisors. This national partnership is working collaboratively to determine the cause and cure for ulcerative shell disease, which has significantly affected state listed pond turtles across their breeding range in Washington.

Streaked Horned Lark: Biologist Tirhi completed the final draft Streaked Horned Lark Airports and Federal Lands Best Management Practices (BMPs) guidelines and sent the document to the Streaked Horned Lark Airports and Federal Lands Working Group for a one-month review. The BMPs are designed to provide guidance to site managers working on occupied lark breeding sites (which includes airports and federal lands in the South Puget Sound) to reduce impacts to larks. Although Tirhi put in the bulk of the work on compiling these BMPs, much of the content and initial review was provided by the working group members, especially U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS). Larks are both a state and federally listed species in Washington.

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Summit Lake Fence Repair: The water access team members finished repairing the fence at Summit Lake after a tree fell causing substantial damage. The project was done in stages due to lake levels. The original project was started last winter and completed in October.



Nisqually River Water Access Site: The access team members worked with enforcement to remove and dispose of an abandoned, recreational vehicle (RV) at the Nisqually River Access Site. Unfortunately, another RV was abandoned in the same spot as soon as the previous one was removed.



Illegal Dumping: Illegal dumping continues to be a persistent problem at some of our sites.



Humptulips Highway 101



Union River

Other Work Performed: The access team members looked for storm damage, fortunately not finding any major issues. They discovered numerous new vandalism and graffiti issues on sites that will be addressed in the coming weeks.

Team member Mitchell met with a neighboring property owner to discuss damages due to trees along a property line, and he also met with engineering and construction to discuss upcoming Recreation and Conservation Office redevelopments.

Brian Mitchell retired at the end of October after working for WDFW for 38 years. Aside from his many years of public service and numerous accolades and accomplishments, he was also instrumental in the development of the statewide access management plan. His contribution has helped create the standard in which our access programs are expected to meet or exceed. His legacy will continue through all of our work going into the future.

Grouse Wing/Tail Collections: Biologist Ament had installed grouse wing/tail collection stations at three locations in the district. All barrels have been checked for wings/tails every 1-2 weeks. The total number of wings/tails this season is nearly double the amount collected last season to date. However, deposits have dropped significantly in the past two weeks and the Salmon Creek barrel has (once again) had a low number of deposits. This barrel was also damaged and had to be repaired on the October 13 visit. Hunters are reminded to place both wings and tails in the provided bags and fill out the requested harvest information. Bags have been present with each barrel, but hunters just deposit the wings and tails in the barrels. Biologist Ament has posted more detailed instructions directly on each barrel with hopes that grouse hunters will comply and fill out information on the bags.

District 16 Grouse Wing Barrel Collections	Date	Slab Camp Road	Cooper Ranch Road	Salmon Creek	District 16 Total
	Set-up Sept 14	-	-	-	-
	Sept 15 - 28	6w, 4t	41w, 17t	1w, 1t	48w, 22t
	Sept 29 – Oct 4	0	6w, 4t	0	6w, 4t
	Oct 5 – 13	1w, 1t	4w, 3t	Barrel Repair	5w, 4t
	Oct 14 - 25	0	2w, 2t	New barrel	2w, 2t
	Oct 26 – Nov 3	0	0	0	0
	Nov 4 - 14	0	0	0	0
	Total Collected	7w, 5t	53w, 26t	1w, 1t	61w, 32t

Cougar and Bobcat Sealing: Biologist Ament has sealed a cougar and numerous bobcats during the past month. All records have been submitted in the CITES form in Survey123.

Hunter Contacts: Biologist Tirhi processed two cougars harvested by local District 11 hunters.



Local District 11 hunter with his first cougar, an adult female shot opportunistically while he was hunting deer with his family

Hunting Regulations Review: Biologist Butler reviewed the draft 2022-23 season hunting regulations for District 11 and Biologist Tirhi entered the review into the draft package as well as further review.

Flooding and Storm Damage: The access team members surveyed and began addressing storm damage and clean up as follows:

Forks: The Sol Duc and Bogachiel Rivers reached flood stage causing damage to multiple access sites. The water level reached window height in the restroom and there is still clean up to continue.

Public Hunting access: Private Lands staff members have been heavily engaged with preparing properties for public hunting access by posting signs, maintaining blinds, etc.



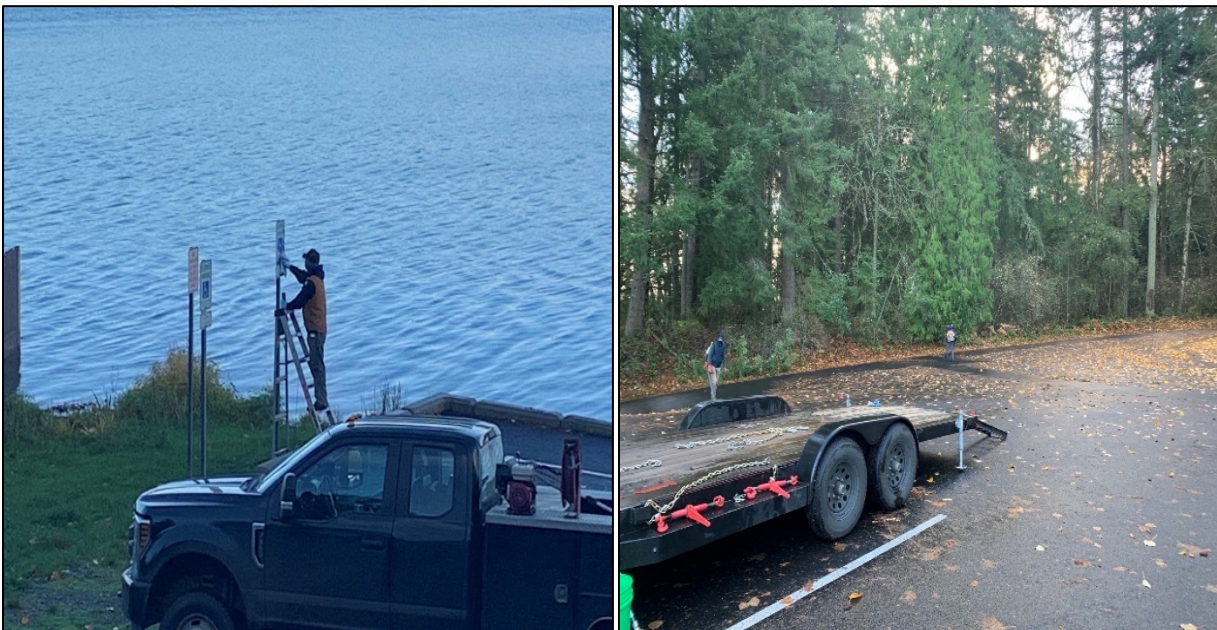
Hicks Lake: This tree came across our property from Lacey Parks into the neighboring properties. The city is providing help with clean up fence repair.



Fuller Bridge: The Chehalis River reached flood stage and flooded several access areas. Numerous ramps will need continued cleaning in stages as river levels continue to fluctuate.



Washington Conservation Corps Monofilament Crew: The access team members provided the training and orientation for a new group of Washington Conservation Corps (WCC) members primarily focused on the monofilament recycling program. They also helped with graffiti removal and were trained on the use of backpack blowers at Lawrence and Black Lakes.



Other Work Performed: The access team members continue working with enforcement on dealing with abandoned vehicles, RVs, and derelict vessels. This continues to be a persistent problem at our access sites and wildlife areas.



Natural Resource Technician Walker removing debris from ADA trail Chehalis Wildlife Area



Natural Resource Specialist Gallegos and Natural Resource Technician Walker's restoration project of an old Woods 8400 rotary chopper



Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Goose Hunters: Seventeen geese were reported harvested in Pacific County on October 30 from four hunters. A single hunter from Pacific County called to report harvesting four cacklers on October 31.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Lower Dungeness Field Tour with WDFW Commissioner Smith: Regional Director Phillips contacted Biologist Ament to assist with help in planning a tour of the Lower Dungeness Area for new Commissioner Smith. Smith had expressed an interest in reviewing the conservation projects in the area and was hopeful that Director Susewind and other Commissioners would be able to attend the tour. Unfortunately, they were not available but other guests invited by Commissioner Smith attended. The focus of the tour was to highlight the collaboration of WDFW with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), county, tribal, and federal partners on habitat restoration and fishery science. Biologist Ament was able to confirm that representatives from Olympic Peninsula Audubon Society (OPAS) would be present for the tour. Ament spent some time the evening before the tour cleaning up the Lower Dungeness and Three Crabs sites. The tour was conducted on November 3, 2021 and included the following stops and topics:

- 1) Three Crabs – Habitat restoration by North Olympic Salmon Coalition and purple martin (plus other bird species) monitoring by OPAS.
- 2) Towne Road – Levee Set Back Project and Farmland Conservation by county and North Olympic Land Trust.
- 3) Hurd Creek Hatchery – Fish abundance/distribution and recovery efforts plus a review of planned facility modifications by Fish Program staff members.
- 4) Dungeness River Nature Center – OPAS Director escorted the group to see the new center that is currently under construction. Commissioner Smith was very appreciative of the field day. Regional staff members were grateful to be out of their offices and finally able to meet with others face to face (instead of on a computer screen).



Region 6 staff members with Commissioner Smith on Dungeness River Railroad Bridge



Three Crabs – Habitat Restoration and Bird Monitoring



Towne Road – Levee Set-Back and Farmland Conservation



Hurd Creek Hatchery – Fish Production/Monitoring and Facility Modifications



Dungeness River Nature Center (Under Construction)

Cascades to Coast Landscape Collaborative: Biologist Ament participated in the informational webinar on November 9, 2021, to publicly launch the Conservation Program Explorer. This is a web-based tool to help private landowners and others discover conservation incentive programs that benefit working lands. This tool is primarily for small farm and forest landowners and others who are interested in discovering available federal, state, local, and non-governmental incentive programs to apply to their lands based on their geography and needs. The tool currently covers southwest Washington and the Olympic Peninsula and will soon be expanded to cover all of Washington and western Oregon. [The Cascades to Coast Landscape Collaborative](#) is a self-directed partnership working to achieve a connected network of functioning, resilient ecosystems and working lands in the coastal Pacific Northwest.

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.

Providing Education and Outreach

Presentation for Clallam County Master Gardeners - “Deer in My Yard – A Love/Hate Relationship”: Biologist Ament and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Blankenship gave a presentation to the Clallam County Master Gardener’s group on November 11, 2021. Each of them prepared a separate PowerPoint presentation for the monthly Zoom meeting held by the local organization. Biologist Ament covered general black-tailed deer biology, discussed the local deer research projects, and reviewed some diseases and subjects from other common calls she receives about deer. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Blankenship focused his presentation on conflicts associated with deer and provided information on various methods to prevent deer damage. A tremendous amount of educational information was shared with the participants during the hour-long session. The meeting was very well attended, and members have expressed that the material covered was “informative, interesting, and useful.” The meeting was recorded and will be available in the group’s library for others to watch.



Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Underwater Egress and Emergency Breathing Device Training: Biologist Murphie and other staff members participated in underwater egress and emergency breathing device training. Also known as ditching, this training simulates exiting an aircraft after a crash in the water, where an underwater exit is required. Students are trained in procedures to exit an aircraft upside down in the water and in the use of a small scuba-tank like device or Emergency Breathing Device (EBD) that provides additional air to aid in a safer exit. The photos below show a portion of the training, where a student is belted in to the “fuselage” of an aircraft, rolled over in the water, and then, following specific steps, exits the aircraft while using the EBD.



Student in egress training in cage preparing to practice an underwater exit



Student is now upside down, underwater in the cage, going through the steps for a proper exit