

Wildlife Program – Bi-weekly Report

November 16 to 30, 2022

REGION 1

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Bighorn Sheep Survey: Wildlife Biologists Prince and Turnock surveyed the Vulcan bighorn sheep herd. Unfortunately, only eight sheep were located on the survey. They also followed up on reports of roaming domestic sheep in the area. No domestic sheep were found. They will be conducting a few follow up surveys over the next month.

Sage Grouse: Biologists Baarstad and Braaten presented the annual private lands update to statewide sage grouse working group.

Chronic Wasting Disease: Natural Resources Technician Nizer and Chronic Wasting Disease Technician Beine ran a check station on highway 395 in Deer Park. Throughout Saturday the check station, a total of one deer and one cow elk were sampled. On Sunday, a rafter bull elk came in but wasn't sampled because taxidermy work was going to be done on it.



Hunter showing off his rafter bull elk shot near Deer Park, Washington

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Hunting Access: Natural Resource Technicians Barron and Janowski and Biologist Baarstad met to discuss and make edits to a private lands FAQ handout for prospective new cooperators.

Mentored Hunting Clinic: Private Lands Biologist Gaston met with Hunter Education Coordinator Garcia to begin planning an upland mentored hunting clinic. The clinic will be hosted on Dec. 10, 2022, and be held in the St. John area. Pheasants will be planted for hunters as well mentors will provide guidance and hunting dogs to work the fields.

Pheasant Release: Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer released pheasants at Sherman Creek this week. He was assisted by three volunteers. There were several hunters waiting when Palmer arrived on-site with the birds.



A cold day releasing pheasants at Sherman Creek

Providing Conflict Prevention and Education

Producer Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill checked in with several producers throughout the week to see how their grazing season was wrapping up. Most of the information collected was relayed to Conflict Supervisor McCanna for a Wolf Advisory Group (WAG) conflict update.

Dairy Fencing Project: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill visited a dairy in Stevens County to inquire on the status of a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement for Livestock (DPCA-L) funded fencing project to install predator resistant fencing around a turnout pasture. Ideally this will prevent wolves from entering the pasture and cattle from escaping. Samsill dropped off a t-post puller to the landowner. Samsill identified a heifer carcass that had not been properly disposed of yet.

Wolf Activity: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Kolb received a report of Touchet Pack wolves around cattle. The producer provided photographs and field observations from range riders. The producer is in the process of pulling cattle off the grazing pasture. Kolb will follow up with the producer after cows are off the pasture to get a final report on numbers.



Four wolves observed on a private cattle pasture in Columbia County

Kids and Shrubsteppe: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Finch received a visit from Jay Titus, the Superintendent of the Wilbur and Creston School district, concerning a grant the district will receive for junior high students to get out in the field for science-related activities. Titus would like the students to come out to Swanson Lake sometime in May 2023. The district would like to involve the students to help with any habitat or wildlife-related work. Finch will review the grant when he receives the copy he requested. This will be a great opportunity for WDFW's outreach and education personnel to join wildlife area staff members in expanding WDFW and local school district cooperation on shrubsteppe activities in Region 1.

Carcass Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill discussed carcass management and sanitation strategies with Jacobsen. Samsill researched an incinerator that is being stored at the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area.

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Shrub Delivery: Private Lands Biologist Thorne Hadley coordinated with native plant nursery for delivery of purchased shrubs to be planted this fall.

Ranch Tree and Shrub Trimming: David Woodall and Wynn Stallcop used the WDFW forestry masticator to clear some roads and trails of brush and trees. The machine does a good job but is limited in its reach and where it may go with the type of track tread it currently carries. It did not handle slick, muddy roads. While in the area, David talked to elk hunters. The machine was hauled back to Clarkston and cleaned up by Wynn. As unstable as it is in mud and snow, we will likely not be using it this winter.



Clearing brush and tree debris with WDFW masticator

Spring Plantings: Natural Resource Technician Barron reached out to Stevens County and Pend Oreille County Conservation Districts to coordinate plant orders for spring, 2023 planting projects.

Providing Education and Outreach

The Wildlife Society Conference Booth: Wildlife Conflict Specialist McCarty managed the WDFW booth for questions, conversations about working with WDFW, and potential hiring opportunities through the new internship program, seasonal hiring, and permanent positions along with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Manager Delgado and Wildlife Conflict and Private Lands Technician Janowski.

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Monthly Budget Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor McCanna had his monthly budget meeting with Budget Analyst Bottoms. Bottoms has been extremely helpful in putting together monthly budget updates for McCanna to track staff time splits throughout the region. It is extremely tough to anticipate the personnel time needed to work on wolf related issues. We feel we are on track moving into the time of year staff members spend less time on wolf issues.

Conservation District Meeting: Natural Resource Technicians Barron and Janowski and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Samsill attended the Stevens County Conservation District board of directors meeting in Colville and provided an update on WDFW activity in District 1.

Other

Workshop: Natural Resource Technician Janowski attended a chainsaw and tractor operation and safety workshop in Deer Park. The workshop was hosted by Washington State University and Stevens County Conservation District staff members.

REGION 4

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Hunter and Trapper Harvest Check-ins: Region 4 Wildlife staff members have been busy checking in and marking hunter harvests which has included multiple bobcats, cougars, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats. Special thanks to the Mill Creek front desk staff members for your support and participation!



District Wildlife Biologists Waddell and Licence collecting data from a mountain goat harvested in the Lincoln Peak Hunt Area

North Sound Scoter Captures: Region 4 Wildlife staff members assisted Waterfowl Section biologists with their annual scoter captures to better understand sea duck mortality and movements throughout the Pacific Flyway. The scoters showed up this year making for a successful capture event.

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Orcas Island Turtleback Mountain Preserve Hunting Site Visit: Private Lands Biologist Wingard and District Wildlife Biologist Licence met with San Juan County Conservation Land Bank staff members in late October to discuss a hunting proposal for the preserve's draft Stewardship and Management Plan that would potentially open hundreds of acres of public hunting access. The proposal's objective is to provide recreation opportunity and improve habitat conditions in a remote section of the preserve where significant deer herbivory is impeding progress towards habitat goals. WDFW staff members discussed the many options available to balance hunting opportunity with other existing users and offered support throughout the scoping process.



WDFW and San Juan County Land Bank Personnel discuss hunting options from a grassy overlook on Turtleback Mountain Preserve

REGION 6

HERE'S WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO:

Managing Wildlife Populations

Grouse Wing and Tail Collection Barrels: Biologist Murphie placed grouse wing collection barrels at two locations in District 15. They are located at Simpson Mill 5 near Matlock and at the George Adams Hatchery north of Shelton. So far, 31 wings have been collected. Biologist Cent also checked collection barrels at locations in District 17 for grouse wing and tail submissions.

PSEMP Seaducks Image Review: During the winter, a crew of WDFW biologists conduct aerial surveys of waterfowl and marine birds throughout the inland marine waters of Washington. Data collected includes species identification, count, and location of observation. As part of a trial effort to add more detail to these surveys, for example, age and sex ratios among observed seaducks, thousands of digital images were collected in 2022. Biologist Murphie and others are currently reviewing these images to assess the feasibility of this effort.

Fisher Reintroduction Monitoring: Biologists Butler and Tirhi revisited one deployed fisher camera station near Crystal Mountain, while Butler and volunteer Terry visited another near Randle to check functionality and camera status. This post-deployment check is not required but District 11 wanted to check a few cameras in response to reports from other project collaborators that reported stations vandalized by a black bear. In those situations, cameras were knocked around and baits removed. Neither situation had occurred at the two District 11 check stations. District 11 does not intend to check other stations unless in the area for other work.

Scoter Captures: Biologist Cent travelled to the Bellingham area to help with scoter captures in the Salish Sea. She assisted the surgical team as they implanted GPS transmitters to track movement and habitat use of white-winged and surf scoters.

Snowy Plover: Biologist Cent also remotely attended the annual Snowy Plover Working Group meeting where the team gave updates on coastal populations in Oregon and Washington and discussed threats to the populations and new research/efforts for monitoring and protecting snowy plovers and their habitat.

Dusky Canada Goose: Biologist Cent traveled to District 9 to assist with dusky goose surveys,

Mazama Pocket Gopher Recovery: Biologist Tirhi has requested various meetings with Diversity Division regarding gopher surveys (or lack thereof) and mitigation of impacts (or lack thereof) in Thurston County under the newly adopted Thurston County Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP), draft Bush Prairie HCP, Olympia Airport Master Plan, and various private HCPs. WDFW is having conversations regarding its need for survey information, habitat impact mitigation recommendations, and data collection in terms of the gopher's state listing as a threatened species. While WDFW applauds the various jurisdictions for proactively planning for listed prairie species, they potentially allow significant loss of occupied gopher habitat as currently written. WDFW must determine how that affects state recovery goals of this listed

species. Similar discussions are taking place regarding listed streaked horned larks, particularly those breeding at Olympia Airport.

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Clean-up and Regular Maintenance: The access team worked on a variety of projects. Gravel work, illegal dumping, storm clean up, and fence repairs have been the on the to-do list aside from routine maintenance. Gravel work, vegetation control, sign placement has been the focus of recent of efforts. The team has continued larger projects at a few Pierce County sites that are still in need of vegetation management.



Ohop Lake, Before and After



Lake St. Clair, Before and After

Thurston County, Black lake: Access staff members with help of two Washington Conservation Corp (WCC) monofilament crews helped cut logs, chip limbs, remove debris, and blow the entire lot. Most of the downed fence was salvaged and a few feet of toprail was replaced. The crew's experience and ingenuity brought the fence is back to its previous condition.

Illegal Dumping in Mason, Pierce, and Thurston Counties: Several illegal dumps, abandoned vehicles, and RVs were discovered. Materials at the dump sites were collected and disposed of. The trailer shown and an RV have yet to be cleared by WDFW Enforcement before access personnel can act on plans for removal.



Black Lake, Before and After

Monofilament Recycling Program: The access crew members have been working with WCC in the field and with Department of Ecology staff members on expanding the monofilament recycling program to other sites and counties within Region 6.

Boat Facilities Program Applications: Access Area Supervisor Reeves submitted three Boat Facilities Program application presentations for technical review to Recreation and Conservation Office, one for Gardiner Access parking area upgrade, a second for Spencer Lake Access redevelopment, and a third for a restroom replacement package of four Pierce County access areas. Final presentations will be scheduled in January.

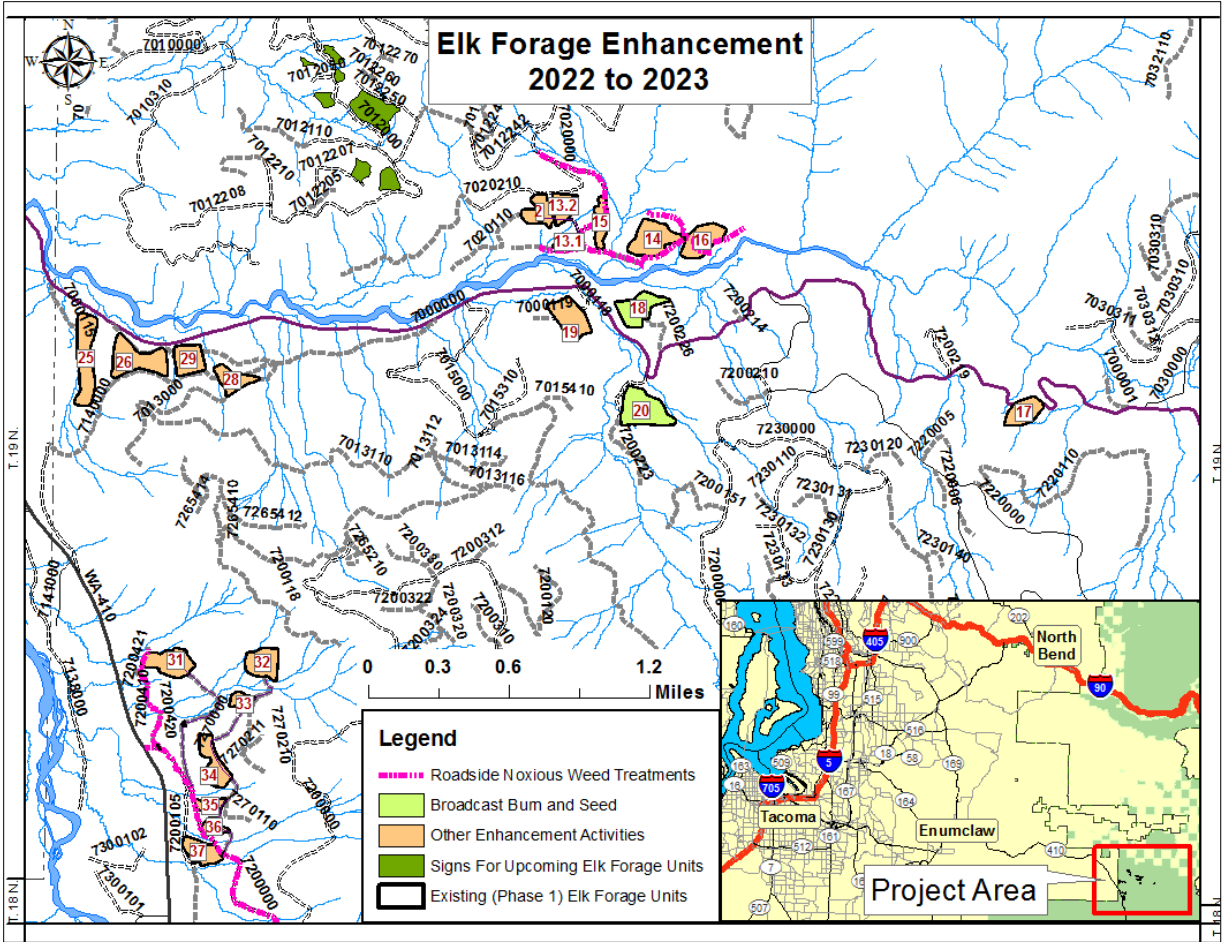


Illegal dumping throughout Mason, Pierce and Thurston Counties

Conserving Natural Landscapes

Bell Creek and South Puget Sound Units: Wildlife Area Manager Laushman mowed vegetation at the Bell Creek and South Puget Sound units to increase access to oak restoration projects and reduce invasive vegetation near western pond turtle populations.

North Rainier Elk Herd, Greenwater and White River Elk Forage Units: Biologist Tirhi received an update from U.S. Forest Service South Zone Biologist Aluzas regarding this elk forage enhancement project taking place off the 7010 road system off Highway 410 in the heart of the North Rainier Elk Herd management area. This is a collaborative project spearheaded by Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest and Snoqualmie Ranger District's Aluzas with support from Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, The Tulalip Tribes, Conservation Northwest, Ruffed Grouse Society, Northwest Youth Corp, and WDFW. The project goals are to enhance 90 acres of elk forage habitat through creation of meadow and early seral habitat to also include herbicide treatments, burning, seeding, and educational signage. To date, timber harvest has opened several of the units, although not as many, nor as large, as originally intended for various forest service reasons. A prolonged dry season delayed much of the planned seeding. Tirhi is in receipt of an update on seeding and signage.



North Rainier Elk Herd, Greenwater and White elk forage unit enhancement project, 2022

Davis Creek Unit: Biologists Novack and Cent continued removing fencing from the newly acquired acres of the Davis Creek Unit. Most of the wire and metal posts that were located within the floodplain have been removed.

Future Wetlands Projects: Biologist Novack engaged with Ducks Unlimited staff members to pursue funding for various wetlands projects via a federal North American Wetlands Conservation Act funding application



North Rainier Elk Herd, Greenwater and White elk forage enhancement unit 60 with clearing completed and slash piling followed by seeding next in plans

Providing Education and Outreach

General Wildlife Inquiries: Biologist Murphie responded to inquiries received by phone or email related to:

- Two deer and deer hunting
- A Waterfowl hunting
- Three osprey nest removal requests

Last Day of Modern Firearm Deer Season: Biologist Novack and Cent went afield to contact hunters the last day of modern firearm deer season in GMU 672 on Department of Natural Resource's lands north-west of the town of Pe Ell. No deer were inspected. One grouse hunter indicated his appreciation for seeing agency staff members in the field.

Presentation Given to Olympic Chapter of The Puget Sound Anglers Club: Crew members Reeves and Walker gave a presentation to the Olympic Chapter of the Puget Sound Anglers Club. The presentation included the Powerpoint of the recent RCO acquisition application for the new Sol Duc access area, an overview of how the grant application process works and how WDFW manages public access areas.

Conducting Business Operations and Policy

Equipment Upgrade: Biologist Murphie took boat in for motor replacement. Funding was available to upgrade the 1993 Johnson to a cleaner, more efficient model.