Wildlife Program

Week of April 16-20, 2012

SCIENCE DIVISION

Sharp-tailed Grouse Recovery: During 7 to 14 April 2012 the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) organized and conducted a translocation of 33 sharp-tailed grouse from southeastern Idaho to north-central Washington. The effort required a collaboration among scientists, biologists, and managers from WDFW (Mike Schroeder, Derek Stinson, and Mike Finch), Idaho Department of Fish and Game (Randy Smith, Regan Berkley, Jeff Knetter, and Jack Connelly), Washington State University (Kourtney Stonehouse and Tiffany Baker), Colville Confederated Tribes (Richard Whitney, Sam Cushing, Eric Krausz, Rick Disautel, and Kelly Singer), and Bureau of Land Management (Jason Lowe and Kerrin Doloughan). The translocation was part of a multiyear effort to augment and monitor populations of sharp-tailed grouse within Washington. The photo is of a sharp-tailed grouse taken on a display ground in Idaho.

Male sharp-tailed grouse in Idaho

Sage Grouse Recovery: On 11 April Mike Schroeder participated in a phone conference for the Conservation Objective Team (COT). This team is working on behalf of the Sage-grouse Task Force (Washington Representative on the Task Force is Greg Shirato). The purpose of the Task Force and the COT is to develop and help implement conservation strategies that benefit sage-grouse enough that their listing as a federally threatened or endangered species is not necessary. There is a federally-mandated deadline for a listing decision in 2015. The COT will meet by phone almost weekly and at least twice in person (through June 2012). The first 'in person' meeting is scheduled for 30 April-1 May in Denver, Colorado. Attendees of the phone

conference included Bob Budd (Wyoming), Dave Budeau (Oregon), Shawn Espinosa (Nevada), Aaron Robinson (North Dakota), Rick Northrup (Montana), Kathy Griffin (Colorado), Scott Gardner (California), John Harja (Utah), Jack Connelly (Idaho), Steve Abele (USFWS), Jodie Delavan (USFWS), James Lindstrom (USFWS), Steve Knick (USGS), Pat Deibert (USFWS), and Noreen Walsh (USFWS).

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Ground Squirrel Surveys: Biologist Gary Wiles worked with District Biologist Mike Livingston and Biologist Chris Sato to visit and document a number of sites occupied by Townsend's ground squirrels in Benton County and Washington ground squirrels in Franklin County. Many of these represented "new" sites that had not been previously recorded in the WSDM database. Townsend's ground squirrels populations occurred in a variety of habitats including both high and low quality shrub-steppe, vineyards, orchards, pastures, and low quality crop circle corners. Many pups were viewed during surveys. They also surveyed three randomized 400 x 400 m quadrants on Hanford Reach National Monument to search for Townsend's ground squirrels, but found none. Wiles visited two Washington ground squirrel sites and confirmed the continued occupation of these locations. The size of one these populations was greatly expanded by an additional search effort in the adjoining habitat. He also surveyed a portion of Esquatzel Coulee Wildlife Area (Mesa Lake), but failed to locate squirrels there.

A lactating female Townsend's ground squirrel in rehabilitated shrub-steppe on Hanford Reach National Monument (Gary Wiles, WDFW).

Citizen Science Initiative Assistance: Biologist Ann Potter developed lists of butterfly and dragonfly species (>100 for each) for Kittitas County, to be used in a phone app for reporting citizen science data, and be demonstrated at the Western Governors Conference annual meeting in Cle Elum in June 2012.

Habitat Connectivity Project: Joanne Schuett-Hames, Lauri Vigue and Elizabeth Rodrick participated in the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group (WHCWG) Interpretation Subgroup meeting. This subgroup will begin writing four papers for publication: (1) how the group approaches collaborative organization and function, and development of connectivity products; (2) a comparative case study of the focal species and landscape integrity approaches to analysis of connectivity; (3) considerations of scale, what are the types of information that emerge based on scale of analysis, with a focus towards understanding how to build enough detail for implementation; and (4) particular to focal species, what have we learned and can share about how to make the products effective and efficient.

In addition, uses of the habitat connectivity analyses continue to emerge. The USFWS conveyed the following updated information on their agency's use of the WHCWG products:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Washington Statewide Analysis is being used in several programs to inform decisions. Programs include Habitat Conservation Plan development, federal project conservation planning assistance, Section 6 Coordination with states, including land acquisition to promote conservation objectives, Recovery initiative grant reviews, and in our participation in sage-steppe conservation partnerships such as the Arid Lands Initiative. Applications occur throughout Washington State.

An additional request to use WHCWG products has come from a contractor working for the Western Electricity Coordination Council. They are producing guidance for transmission line placement, and seek to use the WHCWG analyses in their guidance. A coordinated response is being prepared with help from the Wildlife Program, the Habitat Program and WGA Crucial Habitats project. The map below shows an example of the linear resistance of transmission lines in an important Sage-grouse linkage zone. It compares the statewide map (a) with the Columbia Plateau analysis (b) which added more data layers including transmission lines and wind turbines. (From *Robb and Schroeder, 2012. Appendix A.2. Connectivity for Greater-Sage Grouse in the Columbia Plateau http://waconnected.org/columbia-plateau-ecoregion.*)

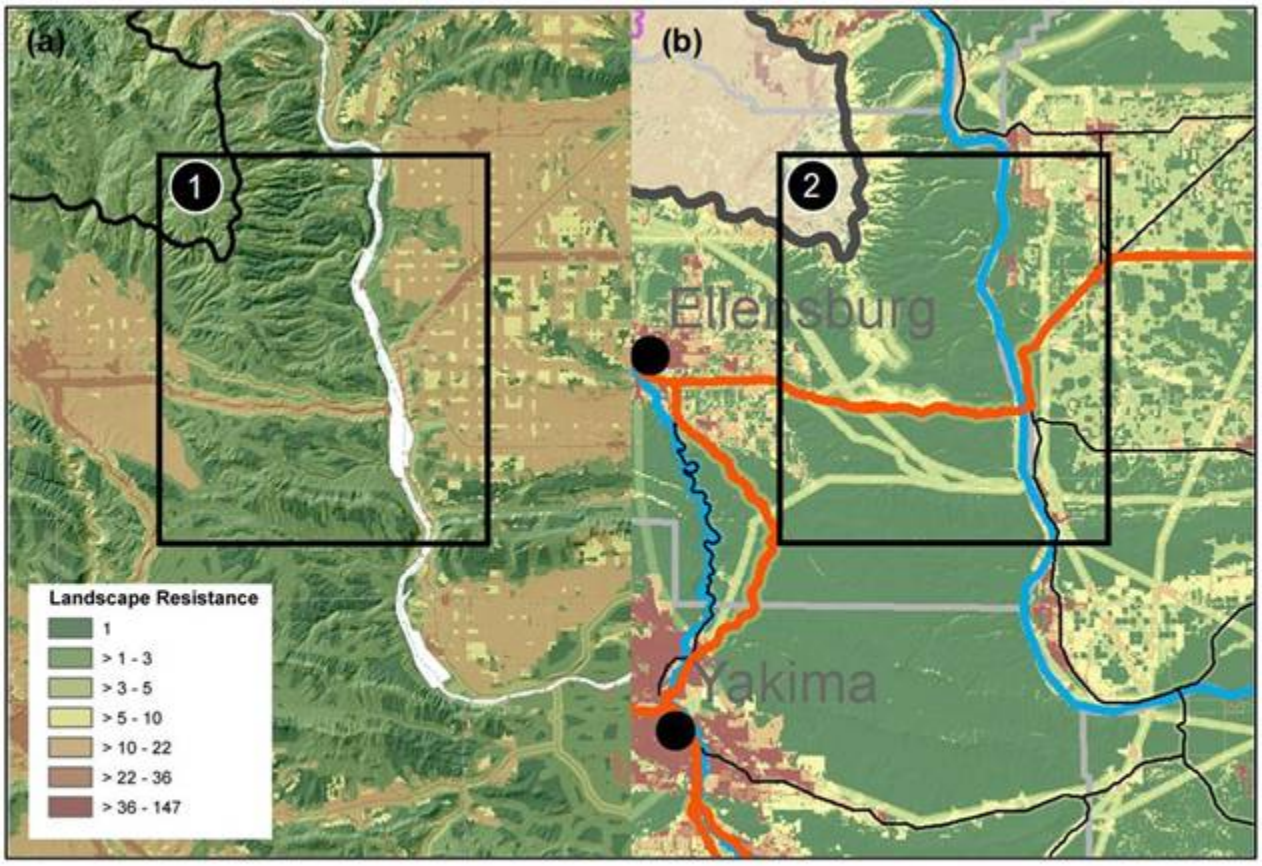

Figure A.2.6. A close up of the resistance surface for Greater Sage-Grouse generated by the (a) statewide analysis and the (b) Columbia Plateau Ecoregion analysis. The areas outlined by boxes are located between the Yakima Training Center (south) and the Mansfield Plateau/Moses Coulee (north).

WILDLIFE OUTREACH DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Scientific Collections Permits: The Scientific Collection Permit application review process can be cumbersome and redundant; for that reason we are exploring ways to simplify the process and tighten up criteria. It is our intent to make the review process more clear for the Biologists tasked with the reviews and the criteria more specific so that we may be confident in knowing and managing the effects of permanent and lethal collection on the species of Washington State. We also must cross check any research also occurring in the areas of proposed research and collection. One of the areas of concern is the lethal collection of many species and individuals by universities and museums – both in and out of state. This week, Tricia Thompson has been corresponding with two of those university museum professors/curators asking for much more detail on their applications.

Also for the SCP review simplification and clarification, Tricia Thompson reviewed and compiled into categories approximately 30 emails from fellow biologists' and managers' suggestions and requests for improvement. This compilation will go out to the review committee this coming week.

Wildlife Rehabilitation: Tricia Thompson approved five Wildlife Rehabilitation Permit Applications. Four of these applications were from Sarvey Wildlife Care Center in Snohomish County which underwent abrupt staff changes these past couple of weeks. Three of these four came in to take the Wildlife Rehabilitation Exam and the Raptor Rehabilitation exam, administered by Ericka Thomas (Region 4 Wildlife Rehabilitation Coordinator).

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Photo: Lake Washington eagles at nest, 04/19/12

WildWatchcams – Eaglecam Mystery: In the continuing effort to determine the breeding status of the Lake Washington bald eagles monitored by WDFW WildWatchcams and millions of on-line viewers, WDFW Wildlife Biologist Chris Anderson sent this cam image on April 19, 10:00AM—two adult bald eagles at the nest site with no eggs in the nest. Possibilities are many, but the most likely theory, according to Anderson and based on observations of active nest building earlier in the year, is that one of the pair may have died and a new mate has been selected too late in the year to commence egg laying. Another alternative could be that the pair had selected to use an alternative nest site—but that would mean this female in the photo should be setting and would be flying about as implied by the photo. Perhaps the Lake Washington pair will continue to rest and feed at the nest site into the summer since such real-estate, even for eagles, is a valuable commodity.

Falconry: Tricia Thompson spoke with a young Apprentice falconer who had a very interesting question: can Apprentice falconers have more than one "raptor" in their care (they are only allowed one raptor on their falconry permit) if the raptor is an exotic captive-bred raptor (such as a Barbary or Saker falcon)? He found that as per the USFWS definition of migratory bird used for our falconry definition purposes, exotic falcons are not on that list, therefore, they are not regulated by the state. This question has many subtleties; such as, can these exotic falcons be

kept simply as “pets” without the requirement to fly them for hunting? This will take some more discussion.

Tricia Thompson was asked to give an Earth Day presentation at the Center Of Peace in Woodinville. This was a 30-minute presentation on the conservation of wildlife and species diversity that included a power point presentation representing global habitats.

Western Governors Association Annual Meeting Planning: Staff from the Hunter Education Program and Wildlife Outreach toured the Suncadia Resort facility to inspect the location of the planned June 9 outdoor activities. Governor Chris Gregoire, Chair of the Western Governors Association, is working with fellow Governors to highlight the connection of outdoor recreation and tourism to the health of our local economies as well as to our citizens. Among the topics Governors will discuss at the 2012 Annual Meeting, is increasing outdoor recreation and tourism in ways that will result in more jobs and draw attention to effective conservation strategies that will ensure these assets are available for future generations. WDFW will host a pellet gun shooting trailer, an archery range, casting and fishing demonstrations and a birds, butterfly and damselfly hike.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Wolf Outreach: New printed and on-line outreach materials are under development that will communicate to the public various management options and best practices for living in Washington wolf country. Draft materials will be reviewed at the end of April and make their appearance later this spring.

Wildlife Tourism: Hundreds of wildlife viewing maps and brochures are being circulated along Interstate 5 and throughout Washington. Many of the major rest areas in Western Washington serviced by the Washington Department of Transportation will stock the popular full color wildlife viewing samplers and scenic byways publications. Other vendors receiving the publications include area visitor bureaus, Forest Service Ranger Districts and offices, and many other outlets in addition to WDFW Region Offices.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Northeast Washington Gray Wolf Monitoring: District Wildlife Biologists Dana Base and Jay Shepherd worked on a number of wolf issues this week. Most notable ones included investigating a recent moose carcass on Bureau of Land Management property in the south Huckleberry Mountains, and participating in a staff meeting to better coordinate wolf response protocols and communication. Assistant District Wildlife Biologist Shepherd also accompanied U.S. Air Force and Department of Defense personnel examining wolf sign and deploying remote cameras near their survival camp activities after howls were detected in the Ruby and Tacoma Creek drainages.

Sharp-tail & Sage Grouse Surveys at Swanson Lakes: Research Assistant/Grad student Kourtney Stonehouse surveyed a sage grouse lek and provided the following photo from her surveys:

Photo taken by Kourtney Stonehouse 4-14-2012

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – University of Idaho Tour: Bob Dice and David Woodall led a field trip of Kerry Reese's senior wildlife management students on a tour of the wildlife area. We provided the students with a perspective on what it takes to manage a wildlife area and showed them several projects we are currently working on at Smoothing Iron Ridge. This has been an annual event with Kerry's students for nearly 10 years now.

REGION 2

Region 2 – Okanogan, Douglas, Chelan, Grant and Adams Counties

Regional Wildlife Program Manager: Matt Monda

DISTRICT BIOLOGISTS

District 6: Okanogan District - Scott Fitkin / Jeff Heinlen

Weather Conditions: Despite some new snow at pass level, it was generally a nice week with temps climbing well into the 70s by the weekend. The snow is going fast at lower elevations.

Weekender Opportunities: The general spring turkey season continues and access to mid-elevations has improved noticeable since the opener. Bird watching opportunities continue to improve as neotropical migrants stream into the district. Reptiles and amphibians are also becoming quite active.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Deer Management: After consultation with agency veterinary staff, Assistant District Biologist Heinlen and local Enforcement Sergeant Brown collected the fawn showing advanced hair-slip symptoms seen earlier during spring surveys. They found the animal heavily infested with lice. Biologist Heinlen shipped a lice sample to the US Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Veterinary Services laboratory in Ames, IA for species identification. It is anticipated to be *Bovicola tibialis,* the exotic fallow deer lice implicated in widespread hair-slip syndrome seen in other parts of the state.

Lice (brown specks) found on mule deer fawn.

Canada Lynx Research: Biologist Heinlen successfully downloaded GPS data from the collar of Lycan (adult male lynx #346) after the scheduled drop-off released it from the animal. The collar generated well over 1000 locations in roughly a 12-month period. These locations show his territory centered on the Loomis State Forest, but also document long-distance movement into Canada and back. This information will add to the growing data set for the analysis phase of the project.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Education and Outreach: District Wildlife Biologist Fitkin and USFS staff hosted members of the Washington State University chapter of the Wildlife Society and conducted a field tour of some ongoing wildlife projects in the Methow Watershed. We took the group to camera sites deployed for rare carnivore detection. We also visited sites we are currently monitoring as part of our ongoing rattlesnake and the hands-on experience with rattlesnakes definitely stood out as the trip highlight.

Northern Pacific rattlesnakes at a den.

District 7: Chelan / Douglas District – David Volsen / Jon Gallie
Weather Conditions: Spring conditions have arrived in the district. Temperatures are increasing and green-up is here. Snows still dominate upper elevation areas, with an anticipated late arrival of summer this year.

Weekender Opportunities: Those interested in birding opportunities can take advantage of spring conditions and the varied communities in Chelan and Douglas Counties. From mesic forest to dry shrub-steppe, migrant species are occupying territories and competing for mates.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Sage and Sharp-tailed Grouse: Biologist Gallie, Braaten, Area Managers Peterson and Winters, have been monitoring 22 sage and 19 sharp-tailed grouse lek sites in Douglas County. Thus far we have completed about 3 counts on most of sage grouse sites and have counted a total of about 300 males on those leks, representing a 17% decrease from last year. With more count on most leks to go, the total number could increase.

We are about half way through the first series of counts with sharp-tails, but so far they are similar to last year's numbers. We have also conducted several searches for sharp-tail leks, but have not been successful in finding any yet. Biologists Volsen, Peterson, Gallie and Winters toured a Douglas County RCO critical habitat grant area. The project will be a phased grant focused on protecting existing sage and sharp-tailed grouse lek sites.

Bunchgrass and sagebrush communities on the Douglas County critical habitat RCO grant area.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Mule Deer: Biologist Gallie continued with spring deer composition counts in Chelan County this week. The goal being to look at adult and fawn ratios and presumed winter kill severity. Due to this winter's conditions, we do not expect an unusually high winter kill. With 10 of the 13 routes completed, ratios are falling within normal survival ranges at 46 fawns per 100 adults. Spring counts also allow for the identification of apparent hairloss syndrome that is present in the Chelan County herd and its geographic distribution. Thus far, hairloss has been documented in on each route (this has not increased known distribution), with approximately 6% of the observed deer show obvious symptoms. It increased over observed rates during the past several years, and is lower than the highest occurrence rate.

Image of apparent hair loss affected fawn (on left) and unaffected deer.

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Sportsman Outreach: Biologist Gallie gave a presentation to the Wenatchee Sportsman's meeting on the results of winter game surveys, trends, and harvest statistics from Chelan and Douglas Counties, and changes in upcoming seasons, particularly of interest was the changes to the cougar regulations and season structure.

SPECIES RECOVERY
Pygmy Rabbit Recovery - Penny Becker

Weather Conditions: Sagebrush Flat Wildlife had rain again this week that was followed sunny days. The vegetation remains green and flowering.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Pygmy Rabbit Husbandry: Research Scientist Becker and Biologist Eidson spent time on Sagebrush Flat wildlife area providing supplemental feed to the pygmy rabbits in the large enclosures and the kits in the nursery area. Eidson and Becker continued monitoring of the rabbits in the enclosures via visual observations and trail cameras. Breeding season is well underway and at least 15 kits have been born thus far in the large enclosures to both wild born and captive-bred pygmy rabbits. At the Oregon Zoo, five kits have survived thus far and will arrive on Sagebrush Flat the first week of May. No mortalities occurred this week but a male rabbit was photographed repeatedly that injured and lost its eye. Becker spoke with veterinarian Lisa Harrenstien about the injured rabbit and they decided to leave the rabbit to hopefully heal on its own because this particular injury would require a large amount of hands-on vet treatment that would likely be too stressful for this wild individual.

Methow Wildlife Area Complex - Tom McCoy / Rob Wottlin / John Haegan
Weather Conditions: Much warmer than in past weeks with temperatures reaching into the high 60's with mild winds from the north, lows in the 30's and 40's. Scattered clouds and showers throughout the week.

Weekender Opportunities: Spring flowers are starting to make an appearance in the mid to lower valley. In a couple of weeks the Methow will be in it's full spring splendor!

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Forest Stand Reconstruction: Derik Churchill, a consultant contracted by TNC to help the Methow Wildlife Area develop a forest management plan, was at the wildlife area from Thursday the 19th through Sunday the 22nd. The purpose of this visit was twofold; first, to teach Methow staff the finishing touches on developing forest reconstruction plots, and second to teach this techniques to an advanced siliviculture class from the University of Montana. Thursday was spent going over the various data collection and analysis techniques with Methow staff with the remainder of his stay dedicated to teaching field procedures. Also along for the Friday field day were Pete Olson, fire ecologist, and siliviculturalist John Daily, from the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. To make a long story short, this technique not only allows users to determine pre-settlement/fire suppression species composition and tree density, but also the special patters of canopy openings and tree clumping characteristics. Data collected from these plots is then readily used to develop thinning prescriptions and fire behavior models. Following this session both Tom McCoy and John Hagan are able to carry out all of the field work necessary to implement these forest characterizations and stand reconstruction procedures.

Riparian Property Assessment: On Wednesday the 18th, Okanogan District Team members Lynda Hofmann, Gina McCoy and Tom McCoy carried out the river and riparian assessment on the Prewitt's Island property on the main stem of the Methow River. In short, we have determined that this is an exquisitely complex and diverse site with tremendous potential to improve habitat quantity and quality for terrestrial, riparian dependent species as well as salmonids. Much of the property is in a lower functional condition due to channel degradation and diking through this reach, and past grazing and farming practices. Following the assessment we believe this site to be, without question, the Methow Wildlife Areas site with the highest potential for river/riparian restoration. This would be a multi-year project with significant potential habitat gains for a wide variety of fish and wildlife species.

Endophytic Fungus Research: For the third consecutive year Dr. Russell Rodriguez is back to continue researching the role of endophytic fungus in exotic plant invasions. On this trip Rusty is reapplying fungicides to diffuse knapweed, bulbous bluegrass, and white top plots that were established last year. Lab work conducted over the winter indicated that one of the fungicides used last year was ineffective on many of the endophytes seen in our weeds. Thus the new set of trials with a different set of fungicides. If all goes according to plan this field season we will have sufficient data to develop a publication. Given the initial results and the implications of this research we are starting to discuss grant opportunities to continue this line of research for the next several years.

Wells – Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area Complex
Dan Peterson / Ann Winters / Fidel Rios

Weather Conditions: Lows in the 40's, mid to upper 60's for highs. Scattered showers early in the week resulted in 0.20 inches of rain at the office while our rain gauge on Dyer Hill registered 0.10. For the remainder of the week sky conditions varied from partly cloudy to clear.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Grouse Counts: Biologists Dan Peterson and Ann Winters conducted sage grouse lek counts Wednesday morning. They visited 6 leks and observed a total of 86 males and 3 females. This count was coordinated with Biologist Jon Gallie who visited 3 additional leks the same morning. Thursday morning, Dan and Ann checked sharp-tailed grouse leks in the Bridgeport vicinity.

Three sites were visited and total of 16 males were observed. An additional treat on this morning was a flock of nearly 150 Sandhill cranes feeding in a field of wheat stubble.

Earth Day: Friday, Dan and Ann participated in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers annual Earth Day event held at Bridgeport State Park. Third, 4th and 5th grade students from Bridgeport, Brewster and Waterville were treated to a diversity of natural resource programs ranging from salmon life cycle, bird watching, leaving-no-trace ethic to shrub-steppe habitat. Ann prepared a program on local mammalian wildlife and using borrowed skins and skulls they put on a great show for as groups as large as 50 students. The kids had a good time and asked some really great questions. All in all a good time was had by everyone, although, spending 6 hours with 350 elementary school aged kids will sure make anyone appreciate what real teachers do for a living.

Earth Day at Bridgeport State Park.

Columbia Basin Wildlife Area Complex – Greg Fitzgerald / Brian Cole / Roger Nelson

Weather Conditions: Mild spring weather this week, with highs generally mid 50s to upper 60s, lows upper 30s to mid 40s; light winds and occasional light showers.

Weekender Opportunities: Spring wildflowers are just beginning to bloom in the warmer places in the Columbia Basin, such as Babcock Bench on the Quincy Lakes Unit. Ice Age Floods scoured the soil, exposing vast basalt flow outcroppings and stunning vistas. In the draws where wind-blown soils have since deposited, vigorous stands of native shrub/steppe have reestablished.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Middle Crab Creek Habitat Enhancements: Wildlife Area and Private Lands staff spent a considerable amount of time this week on development of the dense nesting upland habitat enhancements associated with the Supplemental Feed Route in the Middle Crab Creek reach through the Gloyd Seeps Unit. Firebreaks were disked, and cheat grass residue was removed by either field burning or mowing in preparation for herbicide applications (chemical fallow).

Lands Stewardship: Wildlife Area staff toured a portion of the Quincy Lakes to check fences, possible boundary encroachments, noxious weed infestations, and possible livestock trespass. All is well on this portion of the Wildlife Area, we were pleasantly surprised and gratified to find almost no issues needing addressing.

Sinlahekin Wildlife Area Complex - Dale Swedberg / Justin Haug
Weather Conditions: For the week daytime temperatures ranged from daytime highs ranging from 53 to 64. Nighttime temperatures ranged from 30 to 41. Precipitation - .03 inches. Snow still persists at higher elevations on north slopes and more shaded areas. Mostly cloudy skies with scattered showers. Average winds ranged from 1.5 to 2.6 mph with gusts ranging from 11 to 21 mph.

Weekender Opportunities: Numerous **Sandhill cranes** and **Canada geese** still continue to be observed flying northward on their springtime migration to their breeding grounds. **Bighorn Sheep** can be seen enjoying new vegetation growth after a prescribed burn west of Conners Lake. Newly returning birds sighted this week: **Rufus hummingbird**, **common loon**, **red-necked grebe**, and **yellow-rumped warbler**. Also spotted a **sharp-shinned hawk** southeast of Forde Lake.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Spring Prescribed Burning – The prescribed burning continued, under auspices of Rx Burn Boss **Tom Leuschen** with a total of about 15 acres of timber litter and light slash burned in two units over 2 days, on a steep hill slope with the fire line mid-slope along the property boundary. The units are located west of Conner's Lake. Very challenging conditions requiring a lot of effort on the part of a crew of only 5 people. We have an outstanding burn crew that has met the challenges head-on in excellent fashion.

On Thursday our team got a much needed boost with the assistance of Colockum Wildlife Area Manager **Pete Lopushinsky** and Wells Wildlife Area Manager **Dan Peterson**. The crew worked great together – Dan and Pete did a great job and we think they learned a few new things. We'd love to have them back anytime!

Burn Boss Leuschen and burn crew during pre-burn briefing on the mid-slope fire line.

Wells Wildlife Area Manager Dan Peterson lighting a strip of fuel.

Conner#6 prescribed burn. Note fire backing down the hill slope and short flame lengths.

Burn crew member Nick Gutierrez observes the recent strip of fire he just applied.

Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration – Phase 1 –NRCS WHIP Project: Assistant manager Haug met with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Forester Stan Janowitz for our final site visit to check compliance of fuels reduction work done within our Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project (WHIP) portion of our Sinlahekin Ecosystem Restoration Project (SERP). Stan was very pleased at the work done within the project and a final report will be completed in the next couple of weeks to finalize the project.

Bighorn Sheep Using Area Burned Last Fall: A small group of **bighorn sheep** have been regularly observed feeding in a unit that was burned last fall. See photo.

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Wildlife Oriented Recreation: Spring birding is available as well as observing deer and bighorn sheep opportunities. See photo of **sharp-shinned hawk**. (See Weekender Opportunities).

Sharp-shinned hawk

PRIVATE LANDS - John Cotton / Eric Braaten / JoAnn Wisniewski
Weather Conditions: Temperatures were similar to historic averages with highs in the mid sixties and lows generally near 40 except one at 29. That will probably be the last night below freezing until next fall.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Shrub Planting:

Laying out rows

Shrubs planted

Plastic mulch installed

Jacob Steele sprayed germination inhibitor at the base of shrub rows planted last fall, sprayed for broadleaf weeds in grass plantings, and helped plant shrubs and lay mulch,

Gloyd Seeps: Michael Oborne continued discing firebreaks on 235 acres of Gloyd Seeps fields to begin two year summer fallow that will prepare the fields for seeding during fall 2013.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Townsend's Ground Squirrel: District Wildlife Biologist Livingston and Olympia Biologists Chris Sato and Gary Wiles surveyed for Townsend's Ground Squirrels in Benton County. They located and described several previously undocumented colonies for both subspecies. Large colonies (>200 individuals) were recorded in the irrigated Yakima Valley, on BLM land in the Horse Heaven Hills and on the Hanford Reach National Monument. Many females were observed with pups and one female had at least nine young. All documented colonies were located opportunistically. Surveys of six randomly selected 400 m^2 quadrants placed within modeled habitat concentration areas yielded no observations.

Female Townsend's ground squirrel nursing pup (above)

Litter of 9 Townsend's ground squirrel (below)

Kittitas Field and Stream Annual Shooting Areas Cleanup: On Saturday, the Kittitas Field and Stream coordinated the annual cleanup of the Durr Road shooting areas. The group got a grant to help cover the costs of the clean up and Kittitas Waste Management donated the large dumpster and dump fees. Temporary Discover passes were provided for those that needed them and volunteer vouchers for those interested in pursuing a free Discover pass or their master hunter hours. Turn-out was great with over 70 folks showing up on a beautiful spring day and over two tons of garbage was collected.

Kittitas Field and Stream Shooting Areas Clean-up

Wenas Target Shooting Public Meetings: Manager Confer Morris worked with DNR to finalize dates for the public meetings on target shooting issues on the Wildlife Area. The meeting in Selah will be on May 15 and the meeting in Ellensburg will be on May 16. Both meetings will run from 6:30pm to 9:00pm. Locations are still being finalized.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Western Toad Breeding Site Confirmation: Biologist Anderson followed up on finding western toad tadpoles last year at Klaus Lake by attempting to find the breeding location. Anderson arrived at Klaus to the sound of breeding toads. A shallow area with good sun exposure appears to be the major egg laying site on this lake.

More information on this WDFW State Candidate and Priority Species can be found here: http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/endangered/ http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/

Western Toads

Common Loon Monitoring and Nest Platform Maintenance: Biologist Anderson, with help from Fish Program Tech Kris Kostello, launched the loon nesting platform at Calligan Lake. A male loon was observed earlier in the week. While preparing the platform, two loons were observed. More efforts are needed to monitor this and surrounding lakes for loon activity, as well as further maintenance at a few other sites desired to have nest platforms for potential loon use. More information on this State Sensitive species and WDFW management efforts can be found here: http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/loons/

Common Loon Platform

Peregrine Falcon Delist Monitoring and New Eyrie: Biologist Anderson, along with two volunteers, made an effort to determine occupancy and activity at Mt. Si and Rattlesnake Lake. No birds were observed at Mt. Si, however 5-6 mountain goats were observed. A lone bird was observed at Rattlesnake. Anderson and the volunteers followed-up on multiple reports over the past few years of falcons breeding in the vicinity of Deception Wall, along the Iron Horse Trail, near Olallie State Park. A pair of adults was found, with the female utilizing an old raven's nest for their scrape. She is on eggs. The nest is in direct view and in a route of regular climbing activity. This information will be passed along to USFS so that they can examine management consideration in light of the climbing activity around this active nest. More information on WDFW management efforts related to this State Sensitive and Priority Species for management can be found here: http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/pub.php?id=00387 http://wdfw.wa.gov/publications/00026/

Black Oystercatcher Detectability Publication: In 2006, Department staff partnered with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and US Geological Survey statistician James Lyons to develop a standardized approach for surveying nesting Black Oystercatchers. Dr. Lyons as lead author submitted WDFW work for publication. Reviewer comments have been received, with requests for information on certain aspects of the project. District Biologist Milner spent a day with retired biologist Dave Nysewander reviewing 87 sites in the San Juan Archipelago that were involved in the study and providing data to Dr. Lyons.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project: Biologist DeBruyn banded, collared and released a juvenile Trumpeter Swan that had recovered from lead poisoning at Northwest Wildlife near Bellingham. The swan tested significantly lower for blood lead levels than when it was brought in March. It was released at Lake Terrell on the Whatcom Wildlife area where it will be monitored.

Upper Skagit Wolf Study: Biologist DeBruyn took advantage of the road being opened from Hope B.C. and went in and serviced all the cameras and retrieved memory cards containing

wildlife images. No new wolf images were obtained but three new species were added to the list of those photographed: Pine Martin, Northern Flying Squirrel and Black Bear.

Stillwater Earth Day Planting: Sound Salmon Solutions had their Earth Day tree planting on the Stillwater Unit. Partners in this planting were: Sound Salmon Solutions, Boeing, REI, Ducks Unlimited, King County Conservation District and WDFW. A local Boy Scout pack also helped plant trees. One scout said, "I want to do this every day". The weather was perfect for the 35 volunteers to plant 900 trees along Harris Creek. This was the second year on a 3 year project for the Stillwater Unit.

Earth Day planting at the Stillwater Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area

Boy Scouts Clean Up Crescent Lake: Boy Scout Pack 569, from Duvall, picked up trash from the Crescent Lake Unit in the rain. These tough Scouts picked up bottles, cans and shotgun shells during their nature walk. In one hour these hard working Scouts loaded up a truck bed half full of trash.

Crescent Lake Clean Up Crew

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Citizen Great Blue Heron Colony Monitoring – People for Puget Sound: Biologist Anderson provided information regarding great blue heron nesting ecology to volunteers with People for Puget Sound. These volunteers are in a collaborative effort between PFPS, Edmonds Community College and WDFW to monitor heron nesting activity at Edmonds Marsh. This project is part of the monitoring PFPS must do related to their marsh restoration efforts. It is also being used as a likely model program for future expansion of citizen monitoring of area great blue heron colony monitoring with WDFW.

WDFW-Woodland Park Zoo Citizen Amphibian Egg Mass Monitoring: Biologist Anderson provided information and identification assistance to citizen teams involved with the Woodland Park Zoo-WDFW Citizen Amphibian Monitoring Program. This is the pilot year for King Co. More information on this program and pre-registration for next season can be found at Woodland Park Zoo's Backyard Habitat Program website: http://www.zoo.org/backyardhabitat

Mountain Goat Augmentation: District Biologist Milner worked with Northwest Indian Fish Commission biologist Chris Madsen to notify various Tribes of our intent to re-establish a working group on this subject and invite participation. Invitations went out this week.

Padilla Bay Brant Projects: Biologist DeBruyn worked with biologists Evenson and Cyra to develop capture methods for Brant wintering in Padilla Bay. DeBruyn also worked with Evenson on using aerial photography to count Brant.

Hunter Access Program

North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt Coordination: Biologist Roozen and technician Otto continued work on public access for spring bear hunt permit holders. Roozen met with permit holders that did not attend meeting. Roozen and Otto toured bear unit, clearing limbs and rocks from roads, and documented snow line, wildlife, and vehicles.

Private Lands Access Agreements for Deer Hunting: Biologist Roozen continued to work on private land deer hunting access on Whidbey Island. Roozen started documenting possible payment strategies and hunt logistics.

Pheasant Release Site: Biologist Roozen and technician Otto continued work on a new pheasant release site. Roozen continued site evaluations of new proposed areas and discussing hunt and property details with landowners.

Lake Terrell Unit: *The first baby geese of the year were seen at Lake Terrell this week.*

Lake Terrell Unit: *550 Triploid Trout were planted in Lake Terrell.*

Lake Terrell Unit: The first Bass Tournament of the year was held at Lake Terrell. It was very well attended.

Tennant Lake Unit: Manager Kessler finished the WWRP grant application for the Tennant Lake Boardwalk Renovation project. This grant will renovate the 25 year old raised wooden boardwalk by making the 250 foot spur trail ADA Accessible, and building a second layer onto approximately 2000 feet of the existing boardwalk to keep it above the water level of the lake.

Skagit Agriculture Program: Manager Rotton and Contract Specialist Ted Nelson completed and posted the contract services bid for the ferry operation to the Island Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area. It has been sent to over 100 vendors on the WEBS site. The request for bids closes next week.

Access Areas


Access Area Manager Hacker removed graffiti from the Martha Lake entry sign and also painted over graffiti on the property boundary fence.

Bob Lantiegne from north Region 4 Access Program hand placed one man rock along ADA parking area at Lake Roesiger to prevent people from driving off the edge of the pavement. The rock also protects the paved parking area edge from cracking.

Graffiti was removed from the entry sign at Lake Stickney

GOAL 3: USE SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICES, DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE.

Osprey Cell Tower Nest Management: Biologist Anderson worked with T-Mobile, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and King County Department of Development and Environmental Services to provide a permit on the WDFW end for an osprey nest conflict and damage situation on Vashon. A new nest start is creating a damage situation on T-arms that are located below a top hat of a cell tower. T-Mobile is concerned for this damage and eventual failure of the structure and related safety issues of it possibly falling to the ground. T-Mobile received a permit to remove the nest start from WDFW, under the WA Wildlife Interaction Rules, as well as permits from USFWS and King Co. Unfortunately, T-Mobile could not obtain a professional wildlife biologist to assist in monitoring the situation (stipulated by King Co.) and therefore they will

have to wait until the nesting season is over, in October. More information on the WDFW Wildlife Interaction Rules can be found here: http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/rules/

Mill Creek Office– Manger Link, Manager Rotton and NRS Meis attended the final review and planning session for the Restoration Framework. The meeting discussed the process develop by Region 4 to use as a guideline for restoration project implementation on WDFW lands. The draft process will be presented as part of the Conservation Initiative road show in the next few weeks.

Skagit Agriculture Program – Career Seasonal Habitat Technician (HT) Curran Cosgrove started back to work this week. He immediately began work on equipment preparation for the farming season. HT Cosgrove and NRS Meis toured the Island Unit and began monitoring field drainage and discussing planting plan for the site. They were able to open jammed screw gate on the water control structure between Ole Thompson and Lorenzen fields to improve drainage.

REGION 5

Region 5 Wildlife Program Weekly
23 April 2012

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologist Holman continued work to prepare for the 2012 western pond turtle field season by preparing field equipment, traps, boats, data forms, bait, scheduling, etc. This year's field season will include a mark-recapture effort at the Sondino site, an effort to capture hatchlings for head-starting, bullfrog control, release of last-year's head-start turtles, habitat enhancements, and environmental education. Trapping at the Sondino site is set to begin April 26th.

Biologist Holman met with Staff from the Oregon Zoo in Portland to evaluate and notch a head-started western pond turtle hatchling from the 2011 cohort. The juvenile turtle provided an opportunity to try notching the plastron. Historically, the pond turtle notching system has entirely relied upon notches in the marginal scutes of the carapace. However, the head-starting program has been so successful that the notching system to identify individual turtles has become complex, requiring multiple notches per animal and generating higher (more confusing) numbers to keep track of. Marks in the plastron have the potential to expand the number of digits available and simplify the numbering system.

Juvenile pond turtle with plastron marks.

Lower Columbia River Goose Nest Survey: Biologists from WDFW Region 5, Waterfowl Program, ODFW, USFWS, and volunteers combined to search for goose nest on islands in the Columbia River. This was a full river survey, which is conducted every 5 years on all islands. Over a three day effort, 8 islands were examined from Kalama downstream to Rive Island. Many of the islands have no nesting geese, often due to high predator levels. Most of the islands from Cathlamet downstream have nesting and some islands have very large populations of geese that nest there. Documentation of dark nesting birds that resemble the Dusky subspecies is included in this effort. For the dark westerns, stage of incubation is documented so we can best estimate the appropriate time to return to the island to band these birds for follow up surveys and goose harvest check station processing. Biologist George attended all 3 days and gave exemplary service to the effort; her diligence and hard work is sincerely appreciated.

Goose Survey 2012

GOAL 2: PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE FISHING, HUNTING AND OTHER WILDLIFE-RELATED RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES.

Klickitat Wildlife Area:

Turkey Hunting: Damp weather has not discouraged visitors to the area from testing their turkey hunting skills. It appears that hunters are well scattered over the Wildlife Area and nearby lands. Manager Van Leuven received several calls and visits at the KWA office regarding hunting access, health of the turkey population, where the birds might be, and so forth.

More early spring wildflowers are blooming, including sagebrush violets.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Taylor's Checkerspot – Clallam County:

Upper Dungeness Watershed Sites:

Biologist McMillan and Ament assisted Forest Service Biologist Karen Holtrap and Biologist Ann Potter with collecting postdiapause larvae from some Upper Dungeness Watershed sites on April 22 (Earth Day) to assist in genetics investigations. The crew had excellent weather conditions for the collection effort. Bio Ament worked with Bio Potter at the Upper Dungeness sites. A total of 20 larvae were collected. Most larvae were between 1.0 – 2.5 cm in length. Bio McMillan worked with Bio Holtrap at the Three O'Clock Sites where 3 larvae were collected. The collection effort will continue this week.

Western Pond Turtles: With the assistance Bios Michaelis and Harris, District 15 Bios completed the project to improve nesting habitat at the Mason County pond turtle site.

Dungeness Elk Collaring: Biologist Ament assisted with the VHF collaring of one cow from the Dungeness elk herd. The herd has been without an active VHF collar after harvest of a collared cow this last hunting season. The crew of Bio Ament, Tim, and volunteer Jerry Anguili were out most mornings and evenings last week. On Tuesday the herd moved to the south side of the Highway 101. Having optimal darting opportunities in the areas east of Bell Hill proved difficult. However, on Friday evening the elk (and landowners) were cooperative. A cow elk was successfully darted and a new collar was deployed. The operation went very smooth and the cow was back with the herd the next morning. The herd was close to the Highway over the weekend and the Elk Crossing signs are once again flashing to alert motorists that the elk are nearby. The collaring effort will continue for this final week.