

Wildlife Program

Week of April 29 – May 5, 2013

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

Elizabeth Rodrick Retirement – After 35 years of service in the management of wildlife within Washington State, Elizabeth Rodrick retired from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Elizabeth began her career at The Nature Conservancy in Oregon in 1974 and joined the Washington Department of Game in 1978 as one of the first nongame biologists in the state. Throughout her career with the Department, she has truly left a legacy to the citizens of Washington. A very small portion of her career highlights include:

- As a member of the state’s first nongame team, she initiated the first ever Nongame Data System in Washington in 1978-80.
- As one of the “pioneering women” in a male-dominated field, she represented the Department of Wildlife on the state’s Interagency Committee on the Status of Women, and co-led the 1989 conference on “Fisheries and Wildlife: Men and Women Working Together,” that provided an opportunity to explore, understand, and appreciate the differences between women and men in the work environment of natural resource agencies.
- For more than 20 years (from 1985 through 2008), Elizabeth developed programs and forged partnerships to accomplish habitat protection for nongame species. Under her direction, more than 3,200 landowner management plans for bald eagles were developed in the state with habitat protection conditions on 147,000 acres across Washington.
- Working with many WDFW staff, the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program, and once again conservation partners, Elizabeth helped WDFW secure grants totaling \$146 million that resulted in the acquisition of nearly 137,000 acres of fish and wildlife habitat in our state. You can add at least \$64 million in Section 6 funds that protect over 60,000 acres of fish and wildlife habitat in Washington to that.

Congratulations Elizabeth on a spectacular career!

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1: Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed opportunities with a Stevens County resident who would like to start a range riding business. Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed a wolf “standoff” a woman who was jogging had with two wolves near Spirit Junction in the Smackout wolf territory on the phone. She was upset. Conflict Specialist Shepherd and Officer Weatherman discussed the issue in person with her husband. Conflict Specialist Shepherd prepared a presentation for the spring U.S. Forest Service (USFS) grazing allotments meetings. Conflict Specialist Shepherd met with the USFS and federal grazing allotment permittees in

Ferry and Stevens counties separately to discuss known wolf activity, lethal removal operations, radio collar data availability, Damage Prevention Contracts, carcass removal, and the new emergency rule adopted by the Commission allowing wolves to be killed while attacking domestic animals. Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed a funding schedule that will effectively use the cost sharing of the WDFW Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement – Livestock contracts of two grazing permits across two fiscal years in combination with funds from the cattle producers involved in the Smackout range rider program. Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed a compensation claim with a cattle producer in the Wedge. Conflict Specialist Shepherd produced maps of Smackout wolf locations and discussed them with officers throughout the week.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management



Waterfowl Pair Surveys: Biologist Ferguson conducted two waterfowl pair surveys – the Sprague-Lamont-Down’s Lake route and the Lincoln County route. Water bodies were less than last year and as a result duck numbers were down as well. While conducting the waterfowl survey, Ferguson found a new Bald Eagle nest.

A Gadwall pair observed during the breeding pair surveys.

Wildlife Areas



Water bodies were low this year resulting in low waterfowl numbers on the annual waterfowl routes for District 2.

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) 10th Annual work party: Volunteers from around the state gathered at Smoothing Iron Ridge for the 10th annual volunteer work party. Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice spent the weekend working with the volunteers. A total of 25 volunteers attended this year's event. Leonard Shotwell from the Tri-Cities chapter did an excellent job organizing the work party.



Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) volunteers enjoyed breakfast on Sunday morning at Smoothing Iron Ridge.

Approximately two miles of old barbed wire fencing was rolled up and stacked at the Warner Gulch buildings. The volunteers also cleaned stock water tanks, made repairs to spring developments, thinned diseased trees, and repaired boundary stock fence between USFS and WDFW land in the Cook Ridge area.



RMEF volunteers removed old stock fence on Cook Ridge.

One of the volunteers spent quite a bit of time in our D4 cat disking food-plot strips which will be seeded to spring oats next week. Some of the strips will be summer fallowed for next fall's winter wheat crops. The group camped at the buildings in campers and tents while others slept in the shop. The weather was beautiful and as usual elk were in the vicinity providing many viewing opportunities for the group. RMEF sent a staff reporter from Missoula, MT to document the event which will be highlighted in a RMEF news piece on volunteer activities. A reporter from KLEW TV news from Lewiston, ID also interviewed and filmed the volunteers.

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

Wildlife Management

Colville District Turkey Season: Turkey season continues, but word on the street (or in the woods in this case) is that the toms have all but silenced their gobbling. Lone hens – presumably on nests – are a fairly common sight on the woodland edges these days.



Three successful turkey hunters in District 1 enjoyed opening day of the spring 2013 turkey season.

REGION 2

Wolf Management

District 6

Depredation Investigation: Biologist Heinlen assisted Officers Treser and Day investigated a depredation incident in which nine goats were killed. Necropsies found severe trauma and bite marks from the head, down the back, to the hind quarters on each carcass. Small three-inch

canine prints were located in the area as were larger (four-inch wide) prints, but due to poor substrate these larger prints were not identifiable to species. A cougar trap was set and that evening a large Bull Mastiff domestic dog was caught in the trap. Trail cameras set at the site captured hundreds of photos of three domestic dogs hanging around the area that night. The presence of the dogs explained the tracks and the severe trauma to the dead goats.



Goats



Domestic dogs by the cougar trap

Wolf Management: Biologist Fitkin assisted Biologist Becker and Enforcement staff in the investigation of a young calf depredation in the Methow Valley. All investigators including local sheriff personnel present agreed the evidence on site indicated that coyotes likely killed the animal in question. We found no wolf sign on site.

District 7

Wolves: Biologist Volsen and Wolf Biologist Becker gave a presentation to the Chelan County Commissioners on wolf biology and management. Regional Director Beich and Wildlife Program Manager Monda were also in attendance. The presentation was well received with the commissioners updated on protected status, and future directions for management.

Biologist Volsen met with Hurd Ranch, LLC to discuss the current agreement. Discussions included the structure of the current agreement and what would be needed by the ranch in upcoming weeks. It was stressed that human presence amongst the cattle is one of the best possible deterrents to wolves, and that a range rider would be beneficial. The Ranch will get back to WDFW this week on a decision to meet with Conservation Northwest about possible assistance.

Reports of wolf sightings in Douglas County during April were received. The reports were submitted by individuals, mostly on private property. No images or tracks accompanied the reports; therefore, they stand as unconfirmed sightings at this point.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group: Biologist Finger participated in a conference call to share study designs for habitat connectivity model validation. If funded Finger plans to collect genetic samples from populations within four to six habitat concentration areas (HCAs) and from within ‘least cost paths’ between these HCAs if possible. This information will be used to examine genetic similarity between HCAs relative to the cost of the pathways linking the two.

Northern Leopard Frogs: Biologist Finger participated in discussions with Diversity staff, Washington State University, and frog experts Germaine and Wisniewski about current and future direction for conservation and management of northern leopard frogs. Northern leopard frogs are state endangered but do not carry any federal status at this time. In Washington, there is one known population remaining in an area that suffers from water level fluctuations, expansion of non-native bullfrogs and fish, and an abundance of other predators. Much discussion was centered on reintroduction efforts for the future and Finger provided information and a follow-up tour of the Gloyd Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area where leopard frogs occurred historically. Since the Mansfield Pond project was completed in June 2011 we have gained water level control on about 75 acres of wetland habitat and this area was the focus of the tour. More wetland work is expected to occur within the Gloyd Unit over the next several years, including the Bureau of Reclamation Supplemental Feed Project, which will result in the creation of approximately 1,000 new wetland acres in the Gloyd. Over the long-term, this will bring carp, bullfrogs, and invasive vegetation. Over the short-term however, this will bring productive, early succession habitats. Planning for the long-term includes isolating select areas from carp, creating habitats unsuitable for bullfrogs, and establishing desirable native species of vegetation early in the feed water process.

Middle Crab Creek Projects: Biologist Finger participated in discussions with Office of Columbia Rivers Scott and Davidson, Wildlife Area Manager Fitzgerald, Regional Director Beich, and Regional Wildlife Program Manager Monda about upcoming habitat work in the Gloyd Unit associated with the Supplemental Feed Route Project. We hope to begin construction on some sizable wetland enhancement projects at the Spud Field and Flood Flats this fall. Shortly after feed water is delivered, we will be seeking to use waterjet stingers to plant willow and dogwood cuttings throughout miles of new riparian habitat, which is similar to the work completed during last fall at the Spud Field Project (photos below).



Willow and dogwood volunteer planting crew, fall 2012.



Upland shrub plot, weed cloth installation (shrubs planted fall 2012) on April 20, 2013, was an Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account funded project by Washington Waterfowl Association.

Wolverine Research: Biologist Fitkin and USFS Biologist Rohrer conducted surveys of known female wolverine home ranges (Mallory and Mattie) in an attempt to locate potential natal den sites. We located tracks in a handful of locations, but did not find any spot that had a high probability of being a den site. This effort wrapped up the winter field season. We currently have three animals with active satellite collars that should continue transmitting well into the fall. We'll continue to monitor a few remote cameras through the summer and coordinate with volunteer camera efforts.



Wolverine denning habitat (left) and wolverine tracks (right). Scott Fitkin photos.

Sharp-tailed Grouse (STG): Biologist Heinlen spent the period in British Columbia (BC), Canada assisting Research Scientist Mike Schroeder and Wildlife Biologist Derek Stinson searching for and surveying STG leks. Identifying STG lek sites and providing survey data to our Canadian counter parts is the first step in the process of requesting STG from BC for augmentation into Washington State.

The lodge pole pine forests of BC are interspersed with meadow habitats occupied by STG. Due to the severe pine beetle outbreak in BC large areas of forest are being clear cut. This provides STG habitat allowing populations to expand. Survey efforts for STG lek sites were focused in clear cuts. The trip was successful in locating multiple lek sites. However, only five leks were found with enough birds to warrant trapping. This is approximately half the number of leks needed to ensure a successful trapping effort for augmentation.



Sharp-tailed Grouse on cut stump (left). Mike Schroeder documented a 28 bird sharp-tailed grouse lek (right). Jeff Heinlen photos.

Golden Eagle: Biologist Gallie is near completion for the occupancy surveys on all golden eagle territories in Chelan and Douglas counties. There are a total of 45 territories in this district with all but four having been visited; the remaining ones are high in the Cascades with no ground access. Of the 41 territories visited 18 were occupied by a breeding pair of eagles, about 45 percent. There were four territories with unknown status as a pair or a single bird was observed in between two inactive territories and 18 territories where no golden eagles were observed. A new territory was discovered in #1 Canyon, just a couple of miles outside of Wenatchee.



Knapp Coulee Golden Eagle Territory in typical Chelan County Habitat. Adult (left) and Nest (right) are circled.

Mountain Goat: Biologist Gallie was limited to just one opportunity to conduct mountain goat counts. Only able to visit Icicle Creek and Tumwater Canyon where 71 goats were observed. These routes comprise only a small portion of the North Wenatchee Goat unit. Goat numbers and distribution on these routes continue to increase. It is possible that a more comprehensive helo-survey might indicate these herds are over the 100 goat minimum to have a permit issued.



Pygmy Rabbit Recovery - First Round-up of Kits: Research Scientist Becker, Scientific Technician Kohli, graduate student DeMay, Biologists Volsen, Gallie, Peterson, Hastings and a crew of volunteers completed the first capture of kits out of the enclosures from April 22-23. The kits were weighed, sexed, treated for parasites, sampled for genetics and placed in temporary enclosures while the genetic analyses were done in the lab. Based on the results showing each individual kit's lineage, some of the kits will be released on April 29 and some kept in the enclosures for breeding. The next round up of kits will be on May 13, with likely two more capture days in the coming two months as more kits are born.



A pygmy rabbit kit munches on greens outside an artificial burrow after being sampled and moved.



Scientific Technician Brooks Kohli uses radio telemetry to monitor newly released pygmy rabbit kits.

First Release of Pygmy Rabbit Kits: After capturing and sampling 53 pygmy rabbit kits last week, the kits waited in temporary ‘nursery’ enclosures until genetic lab analyses could be completed. This week, after the lab results were finished, Research Scientist Becker, Scientific Technician Kohli, graduate student DeMay, and volunteers returned 21 kits to large enclosures and released 24 kits to the wild. The kits that were returned to the enclosures will be kept for breeding in 2014 because lab results showed that they represent a large proportion of Columbia Basin genes. A proportion of the released kits were fitted with radio transmitters and their movements are being monitored. After the first three days, 9 of the 11 monitored rabbits had stayed very close to their release site, while two others had traveled at least one kilometer. The next round-up of kits will be on May 13, with likely two more capture days in the coming months as more kits are born.



While monitoring rabbits, Becker and Kohli enjoy other wildlife on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area (left). The wildlife area is at its most beautiful with green everywhere and flowers in full bloom (right).

Mule Deer: Biologist Gallie has completed the spring green up deer surveys in Chelan County. Surveys were completed about two weeks later than normal due to conflicts with other work, which highly influenced the counts as deer had mostly moved higher in elevation outside of normal green up areas. As a result, only 344 deer were observed, about one-third of the normal amount seen weeks earlier. The fawn adult ratio was 37, lower than the five year average of 44. While the small sample size might be influencing this, it could indicate a higher than normal winter kill. Few individuals have been observed with hair-loss syndrome this spring with less than one percent of the deer showing signs. The fires from the previous fall have resulted in an impressive green up across their range. While most shrub cover was removed, grasses are flourishing, almost appearing like golf courses.



Mule Deer observed on post-fire green up in the Entiat, Chelan County.

Wildlife Areas



Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA): Biologists Dougherty, Cotton, and Wisniewski assisted volunteers from Pheasants Forever, Washington Waterfowlers, and other WDFW employees with laying plastic mulch to complete a shrub planting at Gloyd Seeps. The shrub planting is part of a plan to establish habitat along a 10 mile stretch of Crab Creek that will provide cover for the benefit of many species.



Sinlahekin Wildlife Area: Washington State Cattlemen's and Okanogan County Cattlemen's representatives Daryl Asmussen, (Executive Committee Member - Chair of the Public Lands Committee, Washington State Cattlemen's Association) and Les Kinney stopped in at Sinlahekin HQ. They were reviewing a Tour Route and planning stops for the Annual Washington Cattlemen's Association field tour, which is scheduled for North Okanogan County this year on June 25. They plan to stop at the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area and asked that some handouts be prepared for up to 70 participants covering topics from grazing to prescribed burning.

Coordinated Weed Management Area Meeting: Sinlahekin Assistant Manager Haug and Okanogan Lands Complex Manager (OLCM) Swedberg attended the Coordinated Weed Management Area (CWMA) meeting. Topic focused primarily on gathering information for submission of a grant proposal for funding to survey for and treat Spurge flax, a Class A weed that has dramatically expanded its range throughout the Horse Spring Coulee area. The Horse Spring Coulee Wildlife Area has been searched with no Spurge flax found.

Okanogan County Noxious Weed Board Monthly Meeting: OLCM Swedberg attended the April Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board meeting and gave a short presentation about the OLCM position and vision. OLCM Swedberg was rather taken aback by the overwhelming support shown by the members of the board for the OLCM position and vision shared with them. Overall it was a very positive meeting. OLCM Swedberg advised that he would be attempting to attend every monthly meeting.

Okanogan County Board of Commissioners: OLCM Swedberg met briefly with the Okanogan County Board of Commissioners (while waiting for the Okanogan County Noxious Weed Board members to arrive) and congratulated Commissioners Kennedy and Campbell on their election. He then made an appointment to meet with the Commissioners on May 7 to apprise them on the OLCM position and to begin the education process for the two new commissioners regarding prescribed fire. However, he was later notified that the appointment was postponed to May 20 due to a conflict with the Superior Court needing the hearing room for jury selection.

Chiliwist Wildlife Area Infrastructure Renovation: Sinlahekin Assistant Manager Haug, Engineer Gigstead and OLCM Swedberg met with Cass Gebbers and Dan Whitley regarding plans for irrigation infrastructure improvements on the Chiliwist Wildlife Area. Subsequently, Haug and Swedberg accompanied Gebbers and Whitley for an inspection tour of newly installed water troughs and other springs with water troughs needing renovation. Plans were discussed and agreed upon.

North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team – Sherman Creek Wildlife Area Prescribed Burn: OLCM Swedberg received reports from the North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team that they were getting burning done with help from the Redmond Interagency Hotshot Crew and two squads of contract firefighters. However, they felt they could be accomplishing much more burning, but were being denied smoke approval for more acres (translate that to tons of fuels per acre which would mean more smoke). Additional smoke approvals/denials have been arriving as late as 10 a.m. Burn Boss Leuschen and Burn Boss Guse find it very frustrating having 40 people standing around waiting for the OK to begin ignitions

and further that they are not able to get approval to burn more acres when they have a large crew and are capable of conducting the larger acreage burn with a greater degree of safety. (Note: the estimated cost of personnel on-site was estimated to be \$600/hour). Bottom line: The more acres burned reduces the per acre cost to burn. We need support from Administration to address this very challenging part of prescribed burning. There are several viable options to having a person in Olympia determine whether or not burning can take place due to smoke concerns. OLCM Swedberg and Burn Boss Leuschen would be pleased to discuss these options with Administration should the opportunity occur.

Field cleaning: Methow staff was left scratching their head trying to figure out how to pile a field full of Russian thistle. That is until Rob Wottlin came up with the brilliant idea of coupling an old, derelict, loose hay rake to the backhoe. The result was an extremely effective Russian thistle rake and a device that would be pretty handy if we were attacked by raging mammoths!



Silver Field Tour: With the snow melted from nearly all of the wildlife area it's time to begin on-the-ground planning for a variety of projects. Methow staff met with members of the Cascade Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group and Gina McCoy of the Habitat Program to reach a strategic agreement on how to proceed with salmonid habitat projects at the Silver Side Channel site. We believe that by using a phased strategy will lead to tangible results without over taxing WDFW resources. Groundwater monitoring is underway and a small revegetation project will be implemented this fall.

North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team: The prescribed burn team was able to conduct burns over four days on the Sherman Creek Wildlife Area this week with Leuschen, Guse and back-up Burn Boss Brown leading separate burns. We were not granted a daily smoke permit to burn the entire high complexity Cougar Unit, however, we were allowed to burn two compartments within that unit. Restrictions on our daily smoke permits are causing delays. Leuschen documented light smoke production, which had little effects on surrounding communities. A weather system with predicted high winds and low relative humidity approached Friday, so rather than continuing to burn the crews focused on mopping up all the units burned over the past 10 days. Joining our crew was the Redmond Hotshots that came for training opportunities, along with contract crews from Wildfire Services. When burning the Cougar Unit our prescribed burn team operated a complex hose-lay supplying water to the unit with three pumps and several miles of hose, which required a great deal of coordination among themselves and with the crews containing the fire to maintain a consistent flow of water where it was needed. Crews continued to patrol and mop up the units through the weekend while reorganizing equipment in preparation of burning at the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area next week. A contract crew will continue to monitor the units next week. Brett, Sinlahekin Forester trained under a Redmond Hotshot Crew member to become a qualified Fire Effects Monitor, and he reported that prescribed burn objectives were being very well met.



Sinlahekin Weed Spraying and Field Prep: Assistant manager Haug sprayed various weeds (Dalmation toadflax, Russian knapweed, common tansy, etc.) on the northwest corner of the McLaughlin Falls Wildlife Area as well as a small area on the Carter Mountains. Haug also met with both sharecroppers on the unit and assisted in the relocation of a 15 horsepower pump and motor to be used on the orchard and agricultural fields. Technician Boulger disked and raked various food plots on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area in preparation for planting this week.

Private Lands/Access

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE): Private Lands Biologist Braaten provided seed mix data to landowner so he could get his seed ordered for this fall. Private Lands Biologist Braaten met with a landowner regarding a proposal to farm of some agricultural land within a SAFE contract for a landowner. After seeing no issues, Private Lands Biologist Braaten sent the proposal and WDFW opinion to an FSA representative, which will be forwarded to the Douglas County Oversight Committee for waiver determination and review.

Biologist Wisniewski assisted completing all SAFE landowner activity updates, then compiled all the updates and sent them to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and FSA as part of our agreement with them.

Biologists Cotton and Wisniewski participated in a conference call regarding the SAFE wildlife monitoring requirements. It was determined that control surveys would be done on range lands and undisturbed Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) lands.

Wildfire Restoration Bitterbrush Work Party: Private Lands Biologist Braaten got equipment and gear ready for a work party on Saturday April 13 after Mule Deer Foundation and Inland Northwest Wildlife Council (INWC) volunteers didn't show up. Braaten made a few quick calls and was able to get some local labor that helped plant the 450 bitterbrush. INWC and Mule Deer Foundation representatives sent Private Lands Biologist Braaten email apologies for not showing up and promise to make up for it in the future. Private Lands Biologist Braaten also planted 300 bitterbrush plants this week in north Douglas County. Conditions are drying out fast and most of the plugs will be healed in and planted this fall.



Sage Grouse Initiative (SGI): Private Lands Biologist Braaten met with a landowner who was concerned that his SGI project did not make the cut when the 2013 projects were ranked. Private Lands Biologist Braaten is checking on the criteria used in ranking and will try to determine why the project didn't rank very high. Private Lands Biologist Braaten also found out that several of the landowners he sent to apply for SGI months ago, that when asked for final locations of SGI projects was told the locations could not be made available to WDFW because of privacy laws. Private Lands Biologist Braaten expressed his concern with Don Larsen, who was checking into the possibility of changing the WDFW contract language to include the ability to have locations and other information available to consultants.

Pygmy Rabbit: Biologist Cotton met with Research Scientist Becker and Regional Program Manager Monda to discuss workload challenges with Safe Harbor Agreements (SHA). There is a need to expand the acres covered by SHA's where we plan to release rabbits in the Beazley Hills and near the Dormaier Unit of the Sage Brush Flats Wildlife Area. Private Lands Biologist Wisniewski continued assisting with ArcMap needs for pygmy rabbit SHA work.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Wildlife Management

Recruiting: Biologist Finger checked references for two candidates who applied for the Ephrata Assistant District Wildlife Biologist position. References for both candidates were extremely positive. The position was offered to and accepted by Orrin Duvuvuei who is currently finishing up his Master's degree at Utah State University working on vital rates and habitat use patterns of translocated greater sage grouse

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Tieton Bighorn: Biologist Bernatowicz continued to monitor reports of bighorn sheep in the Tieton and forward the information to Enforcement. Reports continue to be received on bighorn sheep on or near the highway. The sheep numbers are small (two to six), but consistent.

Biologist Bernatowicz attended a presentation by Dr. Tom Besser on the role of *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* in bighorn sheep pneumonia. The presentation was organized by USFS and well attended by USFS, WDFW, and grazing interests. The research presented shows a very strong case that *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* is likely the primary cause of disease outbreaks, including the recent Tieton die off. Locally, Dr. Mansfield's efforts to collect blood and store serum are contributing significantly to overall body of work. The Tieton herd was sampled in 2009, 2010 and 2012 during translocations and found to be free of *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia*. All sheep sampled during the die off have the bacteria, which most likely entered the herd via contact with domestic animals.

Burrowing owls: District Wildlife Biologist Gregory participated in the Global Owl Project's burrowing owl capture effort at the Umatilla Depot. Seven owls were captured on the first night and 13 owls on the second night. It was a good opportunity for training as we are discussing the possibility of doing some trapping for owls around the Tri-Cities.



A trap in an owl burrow



One of the captured burrowing owls

Wildlife Areas

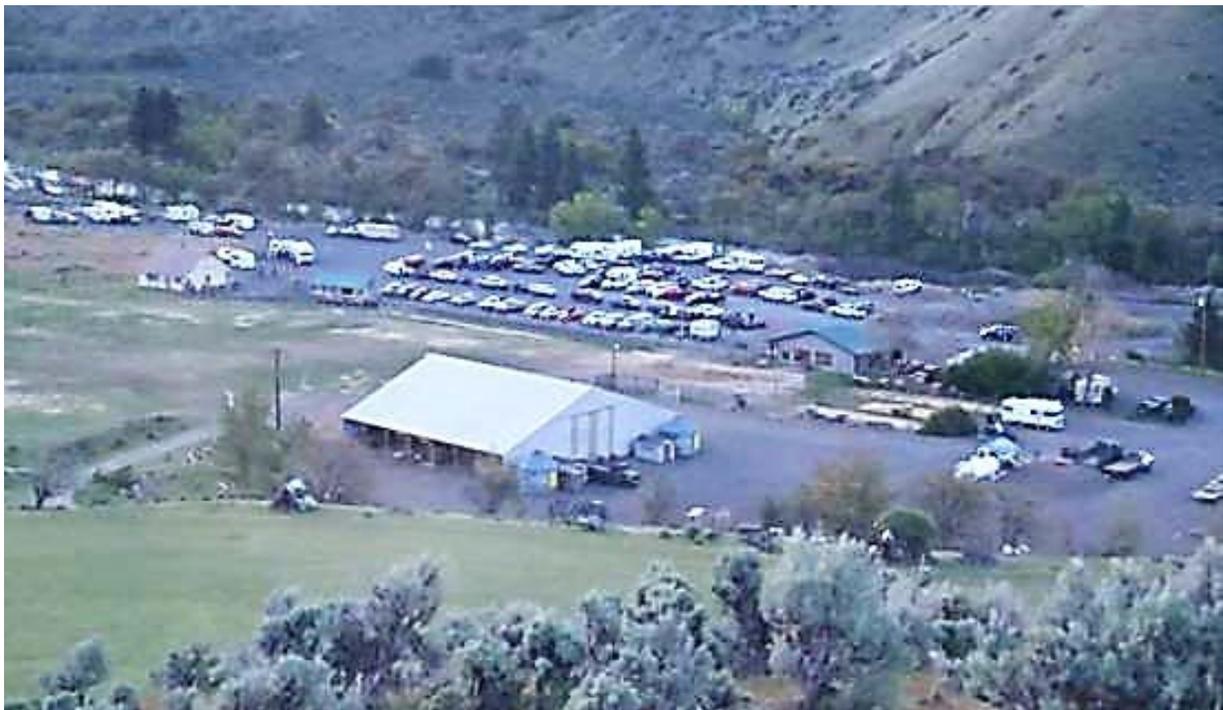
Tarpiscan Fields Restoration: Colockum Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky arranged to have 110 acres of agricultural fields in the Tarpiscan sprayed by helicopter to kill weeds and begin the fallowing process for fall or spring grass seeding. This has been a very windy spring and this was one of the first opportunities to spray.



Central Valley Helicopters preparing to spray Tarpiscan Fields, Colockum Wildlife Area.

Opening Day for the Annual Winter Range Closures: Oak Creek Wildlife Area Manager Huffman and Assistant Manager Berry coordinated the end of the winter/spring closures on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area when hundreds of people come out to look for shed antlers. At Oak Creek, Huffman coordinated with Eyes in the Woods volunteers, Wildlife Education Corp volunteers, and Enforcement for an organized lineup of vehicles and monitoring for early entry. At 6 a.m. the gates opened and hundreds of people raced to find sheds. Total numbers appeared to be down at Oak Creek, but across the District there were nearly 300 vehicles lined up at the seven different gates.

During the day, several reports came in of people picking up antlers and skulls from winter kill elk. With the help of Enforcement, several skulls were retrieved and the word quickly spread through the parking lot. Hopefully it was a good education opportunity for the public.



Oak Creek HQ parking lot (above) and Cowiche Unit parking lot (below) on May 1 for the opening day of winter range closures when people come out to look for shed antlers.



REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management



Sharp-tailed Snake Surveys: Biologists Milner and Cyra checked cover boards for the sharp-tailed snake on Orcas Island. Several of the covers that were put out last fall were moved into the vicinity of a recent sighting. All the remaining in-place boards were checked and an adult Sharp-tailed snake was located under one of them in oak-savannah habitat. This is the third sighting of this species in the San Juan Archipelago and thus far all sightings have occurred in different places

Biologist Milner measuring the Sharp-tailed snake

within a Preserve owned and managed by the San Juan Preservation Trust and the San Juan County Land Bank. The first documented occurrence of the species in the San Juan Islands was made in 2007.



Sharp-tailed snake from Orcas Island

Breeding Snipe Surveys: Biologist Anderson continued surveys for Wilson's snipe on WDFW owned properties. This week marked the first observations of winnowing and calling snipe,

indicating breeding birds versus spring migrants. Several other elusive marsh birds were also documented, with rails readily calling and responding to the playback tape employed during the survey.

Golden Eagle Study: Biologist DeBruyn visited a priority two site in Whatcom County that proved to be occupied. Although the site was just off a forest service road, it was challenging to visit due to timber that fallen over the road last winter. DeBruyn and a volunteer sawed and chopped all morning and arrived at the site just in time for the clouds to lift and a male eagle to deliver food to the nest site. The female could be heard vocalizing from the nest. Before leaving, DeBruyn also observed mountain goats in the area.



Mountain Goats near a Golden Eagle Nest Site in Whatcom County.

Judson Lake Swan Mortality Conference Call: Biologist Danilson participated in a conference call with other project partners regarding potential strategies and funding options for treatment of lead shot in Judson Lake in Whatcom County. Biologists from WDFW, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Society, Canadian Wildlife Service, and the University of Washington have worked for years to address swan mortality associated with lead ingestion from relic lead shot at Judson Lake. Past efforts have demonstrated that excluding and hazing swans from the lake has reduced lead related mortality in the population. However, with funding resources increasingly scarce and the desire for a more permanent fix, new strategies are being considered. An experimental approach being considered for implementation this summer is to remove rhizomatous vegetation (which suspends lead shot in the feeding zone of swans).

Moose Mapping: At the request of Special Species Section Manager Harris, Biologist Danilson provided data into a new mapping product and database. There have been several moose sightings over the past few years in District 14. Danilson reviewed field notes and followed

individuals who have reported sightings to ensure accurate accounts were input. [Reporting Moose Observations](#) is a new map and database system available on the agency website and is intended to better document the increased distribution of moose throughout Washington State.

Northwest Washington Envirothon:

Biologist Anderson provided for the wildlife testing and instruction portion of the NW WA Envirothon competition, held by King County Conservation District at Camp Korey. Five teams of high school students from NW WA competed in the event. Instructors were with WDFW, King County, City of Bothell Public Works, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, as well as King County Conservation District.

Envirothon is a nationwide high school environmental education competition that seeks to help young people develop an understanding of the principles and practices of natural resource management through the development of problem solving and critical thinking skills.

The competition takes place annually in many states and Canadian provinces where teams of students explore ecology, natural resource management and current environmental issues through classroom and field-based curricula. Local teams participate in regional competitions and winning teams then advance to state competitions with each participating state/province sending one finalist team to the North American Envirothon.

Learn more about competition at <http://www.envirothon.org/> and http://www.kingcd.org/pro_env.htm



Biologist Anderson provided for the wildlife testing and instruction portion of the NW WA Envirothon competition, held by King County Conservation District at Camp Korey.

Breeding Freshwater Duck Survey: Assistant District Biologist Cyra assisted Waterfowl Specialist Evenson with the central Puget Sound region aerial surveys for breeding ducks. East-west transects are flown and all wetlands, ponds, rivers, creek and retention ponds within the transect boundaries are assessed for waterfowl presence and number, and species type are recorded.

Peregrine Falcon Management: Assistant District Biologist Cyra confirmed a new breeding location for the Index Town Wall peregrine falcons. This location was reported to Washington

State Parks rangers and relayed to WDFW. State Parks in cooperation with the Washington Climbing Coalition places climbing closures on areas of the wall used by falcons, and this visit was to confirm the location and to identify areas needing a seasonal closure. The area used traditionally that was subject to an earlier closure was reopened based on this new location.

Mountain Goat-hiker conflict: Biologist Anderson worked with WA State Parks and Muckleshoot Indian Tribe to respond to a report of a loitering goat along the Iron Horse State Park Trail. A goat was reported on the trail and not showing any fear of nearby hikers. WA State Parks is posting the attached signage and is keeping in contact with Biologist Anderson regarding status and further reports.



GOAT WARNING!!!

Mountain goats have been frequenting this trail.

Stay at least 50 yards away from goats!

Over time, animals that are closely approached can lose their natural fear of people, and become habituated to human presence. Once an animal is habituated, it may develop aggressive behaviors.

If you see goats and they do not move away from you as you hike towards them or if they approach you, act aggressive by yelling, snapping plastic bags and throwing rocks. If you encounter such a goat, please report it to Andrew Fielding at 509-668-1138.



Goats are wild animals. Their behavior is unpredictable, and they can inflict severe injury!

Common Loon Efforts: Biologist Anderson and Smith monitored the Snoqualmie Tree Farm this week in efforts to prepare for upcoming trapping and banding of territorial loons at Calligan Lake and other area bodies of water. Anderson and Smith had a loon at Calligan both early and later in the week. The loon has been there since the beginning of April consistently. Biologist Smith, in follow-up to early week efforts, had a loon on Calligan once again as well as on

Hancock – which has had a loon since the beginning of April as well. It is undetermined if pairing has occurred.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Food Plots: Technician Otto began preparations for potential grain plots on private land. Otto sprayed unwanted vegetation and weeds, and began discussions with landowner regarding plot layout and timing. This work is in anticipation of upcoming food plot installation on several sites throughout Whatcom and Skagit counties that will also potentially enhance hunting opportunities on Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program unit sites.

Spring Black Bear Damage Hunts: Private lands staff observed and received reports of increased bear activity within the North Skagit and Monroe units. Hunter participation is on the increase as well, with one hunter filling tag, and multiple hunters encountering bears. Hunters were reminded to avoid harvesting sows with cubs, and so far, several hunters have reported multiple sightings of sows (with cubs), with none harvested.



Technician Otto observed this bull with new antler growth.

Wildlife Areas

Cherry Valley Fish Passage Project: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated the receipt of the final native plant delivery for the Fish Passage Project. Washington Conservation Crews worked through the week to install the plants. Over the past four weeks, over 10,000 live stakes and native trees were installed across approximately 10 acres. The vegetation will provide habitat diversity, shade for the ponds and stream, and cover for wildlife and recreational users.

While on site, Manager Boehm also visited the Waterwheel Creek planting area on the opposite side of the Unit. Recent high water has slowed the growth rate of reed canary grass in the planting areas. The native plants were submerged a number of times since they were planted, including the trees planted on the hummocks. The site will be monitored closely in the coming weeks to ensure the plants are off to a good start.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to monitor the delivery of cattle on the Unit. DFW has a grazing lease that allows 400 cow and calf pairs on the Unit. Approximately 200 pair has been delivered so far.

Additionally, Manager Boehm coordinated a second site tour to investigate the Unit for tillable acreage, types of crops the soil can produce, and drainage improvements that can be made. Representatives from the Snohomish County Sustainable Land Strategy, Snohomish County Agriculture Coordinator, Snohomish Conservation District, Snohomish County Agriculture Board, and long-term farmers participated. The goal is to determine the alternatives for agricultural production while still meeting wildlife, recreational and wetland protection concerns.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to work with Werkhoven Dairy to finalize the planting plan for 2013. A number of changes to the existing lease are being discussed including adding barley as a leave crop, providing a mix of corn and barley in all of the fields, and maintaining access paths for recreational users and DFW staff.

Leque Island: The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has delayed the determination date on the groundwater study until May 31 to give their hydrogeologist and staff additional time to review the study. Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent an update to the stakeholder email list to notify subscribers. To be added to the email list, please email Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov.

Welts (Samish) Wetland Restoration Project: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton met with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to discuss a revised timeline and public outreach plan for the project. The major excavation work is now planned for summer 2014 and WDFW will facilitate a public meeting this June to present the project plans and answer questions.

Lake Terrell Field Prep: Natural Resource Technician Deyo mowed a four acre field of reed canary grass to prep the field for plowing. He then did a first plowing of the field. The conditions of the field were still very wet.

Nooksack Unit Noxious Weed Control: Natural Resource Technician Deyo mowed two acres of Poison Hemlock on the Nooksack Unit.

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

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Elk Management Group Initial Steering Committee Meeting: Biologist Danilson attended this meeting in La Conner. The primary purpose of the meeting with WDFW Wildlife Program, Enforcement personnel, and tribal representatives was to strategize on the development of this new advisory group. The intent is it will assist the co-managers in dealing with the growing situation of elk-related agricultural conflicts and public safety and guide the completion of the North Cascades elk herd management plan. The proposed timeframe for the first meeting of this group is in late-June or early-July.

Band-tailed Pigeon Project: Biologist DeBruyn trapped pigeons at Bauman's in Skagit County. Two birds were fitted with VHF transmitters as a test of the equipment. Four birds were banded.



DeBruyn with banded Band-tailed Pigeon

Washington Breeding Waterfowl Survey 2013: Biologist DeBruyn participated in breeding waterfowl aerial surveys as an observer in the lowlands of western Washington from Everett north to the Canadian Border.

Private Lands Wildlife Viewing Opportunities: Biologists Roozen and Milner discussed potential viewing opportunities in the Region and evaluated work completed to this point. More effort will be placed on available sites to get them open for the public as soon as possible.

Wildlife Areas

Duck Stamp Proposals: Manager Belinda Rotton reviewed and ranked Duck Stamp proposals.

Island Unit: Natural Resource Technician Curran Cosgrove monitored water levels and beaver deceiver structures on the Island Unit. Modification to one of the main beaver deceiver will be needed since continued beaver activity is impacting function. Millet seed was purchased and delivered this week.

Samish Unit: Technician Cosgrove with the assistance of Tom Wampler from the North Sound Weed Crew was able to perform herbicide pretreatment on weedy areas being brought into cultivation this season.

Manager Rotton received approvals and requested signatures on the Leque Island and DeBay's Slough leases as well as the contract farm agreement for the Samish Unit.

Manager Rotton prepared draft of the South Padilla Bay agricultural lease agreement.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk: Manager Kessler monitored the water level of Tennant Lake, and checked for new beaver dam activity. The boardwalk continues to be open to the public.

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

Wildlife Management

Nuisance Wildlife: Biologist DeBruyn consulted with Whatcom County Parks, The USFWS, and WDFW Enforcement in regards to Canada goose issues in parks in Whatcom County.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Unit: Technician Cosgrove prepared WDFW offset disk for the sharecrop farmer to use for ground preparation on Leque Island.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm facilitated the first Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) meeting on May 1. Five group members participated representing interests from hunters, dog trials and trainers, and waterfowl conservationists. Background information was shared, as well as a progress report on the units during the past four months. Additionally, Manager Boehm asked the CAG to explore user groups that are not currently represented on the CAG to address the need for more CAG membership and participation. The CAG is interested in meeting monthly for the next three months to address issues and concerns as Manager Boehm implements the 2013 management plan.

Master Hunter Work Projects: Manager Kessler coordinated with a Master Hunter on work projects he could perform on the wildlife area.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Biologist Roozen and Manager Rotten completed cooperative agreements that combine agricultural needs on State land and hunting access on private lands. Roozen and Rotten will continue to look for better methods to accomplish these goals in the future, and hopefully provide an effective template for access agreements that other Department staff will want to use.

Technician Otto met with partner landowners to maintain open, continual dialogue on agricultural plans on acreage enrolled in the Program. Otto toured properties throughout Whatcom and Skagit counties to observe tilling and planting operations in the Region.

Biologist Danilson conferred with staff and responded to a waterfowl hunter who was upset about certain aspects of the Quality Hunt Program. This individual is part of a hunting club that leases property adjacent to one of WDFW's sites and there are hard feelings about impacts to their hunting opportunities. Danilson agreed to work with private lands staff and the members of the club to develop a plan to minimize these impacts and to increase the club's understanding of contractual commitments between WDFW and landowners enrolled in the Quality Hunt Program.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Wildlife Management

Performance Development Plan (PDP) Training: Biologist Anderson took PDP training via WDFW Human Resources.

Performance Development Plan: Biologist Danilson met with Manager Link for his performance review and to complete a new performance development plan for the next 12 months.

Conflict Specialist Recruitment: Biologist Danilson prepared the recruitment template and submitted it to the Human Resources Department for the District 14 Conflict Specialist position.

Western States and Provinces Deer and Elk Conference: Biologist Danilson finalized travel arrangements for the upcoming bi-annual conference in Missoula, MT which occurs next week.

Weed Management Plan: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked to prepare for the 2013 weed management plan that will be implemented on the units. A number of herbicide products were purchased as well as application equipment including a backpack sprayer and a 40-gallon tank sprayer. Various containers, measuring instruments and spill-prevention/containment items were also purchased to comply with the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) permit requirements. This arsenal of materials and supplies

will allow for a systematic approach towards fighting numerous invasive species that are established on the units.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Streaked Horned Lark (SHL) Survey Training: Biologists Bergh and Stephens attended training for the Streaked Horned Lark breeding surveys. Protocol specifics and datasheets were discussed with minor changes for the upcoming survey season. Participants then headed out to Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) for field identification practice. Several SHLs were observed and a nest cup was found. Bergh and Stephens will be assisting with surveys in the Lower Columbia River where larks use the dredge material islands for habitat.



Streaked Horned Lark Nest

Black-tailed Deer Research Project: Biologists Bergh and Miller recovered the GPS radio collar of one of the Coweeman study area black-tailed deer does. This doe had recently moved to a new area about four miles west of where she had been living for the past year. With scattered

piles of hair, only the lower jaw bone, and several coyote scats present it was determined that she died of predation. There are now five remaining does in this study area.

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Elk Mortality Survey: Region 5 staff along with 25 volunteers from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation completed the annual elk mortality survey on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. A total of 71 new mortalities from the past year were found, which is the third highest observed since 1999. Many of the mortalities were fresh or decomposing suggesting that they occurred recently. Winter conditions this year were not particularly harsh and there were never large groups of elk concentrating on the Wildlife Area. It is suspected that these elk are going into the winter in poor condition, which can make them susceptible to late winter snow/cold events, such as the late snow in March of this year. One highlight of the day was being greeted by a displaying blue grouse on the road down to the Wildlife Area.



Displaying Blue Grouse

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

Private Lands/Access

Stinson Flats: A large group used the site for a yearly May Day festival; by 11 a.m. Friday, approximately 100 people were already camping.



Vancouver Lake: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes worked to address continued vandalism at Vancouver Lake. The restroom and entrance signs had been vandalized with inappropriate language – Spangler and Rhodes repainted the restroom, replaced damaged lock and window frame, removed and replaced the vandalized entrance sign, pressure washed the ADA walkway, reposted Discover Pass sign and various other signs, and picked up and hauled 40 pounds of trash.



New Vancouver Lake Entrance Sign

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

Wildlife Areas

Cowlitz Wildlife Area (CWA) – Hunter Education: Fourteen students ranging from 9 to 58 years old attended the 4.5-hour Hunter Education Online Evaluation course conducted by CWA staff. The students attending this class have already completed the Hunter Education Online Class. However, they need to attend an evaluation class so that their knowledge of the material and their firearm handling skills can be evaluated by an instructor before being issued a Hunter Education Card. The class quickly reviews the material from the first 12 chapters of the student handbook, checks their knowledge of the material with a 20-question test, and then the students participate in a skills course and a live fire. The live fire portion is optional, but the students must still show their competency with firearm handling. All 14 students passed the course and will be able to apply for permit hunts for this year’s hunting season.

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Wildlife Areas

Cowlitz Wildlife Area -- Invasive Pests, Weeds & Insects Workshop: CWA staff attended the Invasive Pests, Weeds & Insects Workshop held by Lewis County Weed Control Board. Topics included management of woody plants and noxious weeds utilizing selective herbicides, weeds and insect pests that are becoming a concern for southwest Washington, and Integrated Pest Management techniques. Though much of the material presented was familiar information, the workshop provided continuing education credits necessary for maintaining a pesticide

applicator's license. One interesting item from the workshop is the "buy it where your burn it" campaign that promotes education on not moving firewood around from one location to another. The premise being one pest such as the Emerald Ash Borer (not yet found in Washington but of concern due to our native ash species) can devastate Washington forests and negatively impact the economy and recreation.

REGION 6

None