

Wildlife Program

Week of May 13-19, 2013

SCIENCE DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Outer Coast Ecological Indicators: Last week staff attended a workshop in Montesano hosted by the Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE) to review and comment on preliminary recommendations for defining long-term ecological indicators associated with the marine systems along the outer coast. The workshop was attended by 20-30 individuals from Federal and State agencies, and non-governmental organizations.

Conceptual models of ecosystem structure, processes and functions for five major habitat types (pelagic, sea floors, kelp forests, rocky shore, and sandy/gravel beach) were presented by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) scientists. WDOE will be summarizing feedback/comments received at the workshop and report back what the next steps are in the process to identify ecological indicators to monitor these habitats over time.

Marbled Murrelets: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW's) annual marbled murrelet at-sea monitoring started on May 15 and will continue through July. This year we are monitoring murrelets along the coast of Washington, the Strait of Juan de Fuca and in Puget Sound. We will be running two crews of four on two boats launching from many locations. The monitoring approach is described on our website and the boats used in the surveys are two 24-26' Almars - one is WDFW's Research 4 and the other is a U.S. Fish and Wildlife boat with "Research" on the side. For any inquiries, please contact Monique Lance or Scott Pearson.

Mountain Lion Project: Maintaining viable cougar (*Puma concolor*) populations while minimizing the risks these populations present to public safety and private property is an explicit management objective of WDFW. Consequently, WDFW Wildlife Science Division staff has initiated the West Cascades Cougar Research Project in wildland and residential portions of King and Snohomish counties to better understand the relationship among cougar population characteristics, cougar use of residential areas, human attitudes and behaviors, and cougar-human interaction.

We initiated the first capture season in December 2012 and concluded our efforts for the season on March 30, 2013. We focused our capture work in the Snoqualmie and Marckworth Forest portions of the Snoqualmie study area. Despite less than favorable conditions present throughout the winter (i.e., heavy rain and limited snow), we managed to capture and place Global Positioning System (GPS) radio collars on 10 cougars. In the coming weeks, we hope to capture three individuals known to occur in the study area that have not been captured. We will also carry out additional cougar capture efforts throughout the Snoqualmie study area as opportunities arise.

Publications

The following publication was published this week:

Pearson, S.F., P.J. Hodum, T.P. Good, M. Schrimpf, S. Knapp. 2013. A model approach for estimating colony size, trends and habitat associations of burrow-nesting seabirds. *Condor* 115(2):356–365.

Abstract: We present a prototype monitoring strategy for estimating the density and number of occupied burrows of burrow-nesting seabirds. We use data and management questions from Washington State as an example that can be applied to burrow-nesting seabirds at single- or multi-island scales. We also demonstrate how habitat assessments can be conducted concurrently. Specifically, we compared the density and occupancy of burrows of the Rhinoceros Auklet (*Cerorhinca monocerata*) at nesting colonies in the California Current and the Salish Sea in the 1970s, 1980s, and today. We estimated 36152, 1546, and 6494 occupied burrows on Protection and Smith islands (Salish Sea), and Destruction Island (California Current), respectively. Our estimates for the Salish Sea are 52% greater than those from the 1970s and 1980s, while that for the California Current is 60% less than that of 1975. This suggests that the Salish Sea population has increased, despite greater human effects on that ecosystem. However, some of the estimated changes between the periods could be the result of methodological and analytical differences. To address these issues we recommend an unbiased and representative sampling approach (stratified random) and an approach for optimally allocating the samples among strata within and among islands, depending on the scale of the question being addressed. Optimally allocating the sample would save a great deal of field effort; using this approach, we achieve relatively high power (>0.80) to detect moderate changes (20%) sampling hundreds of fewer plots than in a sample not optimally allocated.

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

CAPS-TRACS Replacement project – The Wildlife Program and others completed its sandbox testing phase of the contract/project management software evaluation last week. Novatus, Inc was selected as the preferred vendor. The agency is now entering into final contract negotiations. Assuming all goes well, implementation and training will be scheduled for June and July, with an expected online production system to be operational by the end of July.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Climate Change Adaptation Outreach Information – Section Manager Bruce Thompson, working with Lynn Helbrecht (WDFW Climate Change Coordinator) in Habitat Program, completed and submitted a Final Report to U.S. Geological Survey regarding WDFW work on climate outreach to resource managers. The report details WDFW staff efforts, working with

numerous agency, university, and non-governmental collaborators to identify climate vulnerability and adaptation information that is useful to managers and how such information might be best delivered.

REGION 1

Wolf Management

District 1: District Wildlife Biologist Base and Wildlife Officer Dan Anderson responded to a reported conflict situation involving wolves, hybrids, or wolf-like dogs exhibiting territorial defensive and threatening behavior toward a citizen walking their domestic pet dogs in Game Management Unit (GMU) 117.

Conflict Specialist Shepherd attended the agency award ceremony where the “wolf depredation” team received a group award. Conflict Specialist Shepherd delivered the contractor’s truck to Olympia and picked up a truck from motor pool rented for the Conflict Specialist position in Northeastern Washington.

Conflict Specialist Shepherd and Officer Weatherman discussed wolf visits with a family in the Smackout wolf territory. Another neighbor who allegedly butchered a hog and did not dispose of the carcass was not home. A group of neighbors in the Cottonwood–Grouse Creek area south of Chewelah were visited as well after wolf sightings including pups were reported. A pair of coyotes and two-to-three pups, and mid-sized scat were observed and a remote camera was deployed where potentially larger animals were observed. Wolf and contact information was given out in both situations.

Conflict Specialist Shepherd discussed a wolf sighting at a residence with a homeowner near Williams Lake and Private Land Technician Bendixen and Officer Anderson deployed a remote camera. Conflict Specialist Shepherd produced maps of Smackout wolf locations and discussed them with officers and a rancher throughout the week.

Biologist McCanna received a call from a Stevens County landowner concerned that we only have one GPS collar on a wolf in the Smackout territory. McCanna explained to the landowner that we also have two VHF collars in the Smackout pack. The landowner already knew about the VHF collars and was concerned about the ranger rider program only having one GPS collar. The landowner expressed the desire for WDFW to trap another wolf in this territory and place a GPS collar on it. McCanna explained the current trapping priorities and will pass on his concern.

District 2: Biologist Lewis met in the St. John office with a landowner that has concerns with recent wolf sighting in the Ewan area. Landowner is a livestock operator and wanted to discuss the reports and locations of reports. Lewis provided information on the conflict agreements.

District 3: Biologist Rasley responded to two separate possible wolf reports. Both were found to be large coyotes.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Lincoln Cliffs Bighorn Sheep Surveys:

Biologist Atamian and volunteer L. Lillquist surveyed the Lincoln Cliffs Bighorn herd. A total of 77 sheep were observed, 34 ewes, 18 lambs, and 25 rams. This is the highest spring survey to date for this herd, driven predominantly by the high ram count and secondarily by the high lamb count. We surveyed the area opposite our normal route, starting at Whitestone then headed east to Lincoln due to a cloud bank sitting on the Lincoln cliff face when we first arrived in the area. Most of the males were found midway between Whitestone and Lincoln in the Sterling cliffs area where we seldom find animals, but perhaps the reason for this is the later arrival to this area in previous surveys and catching them before they went in to the caves.



Whitestone ewe and lamb group



A dozen rams (left) were headed up slope to this cave in Sterling Cliffs area (right). A few seconds after this photo all animals were in the cave and impossible to see.

Pronghorn Antelope: Biologists Wik and Vekasy, Program Manager Robinette, and Special Species Manager Harris participated in a field tour of property where local landowners would like WDFW to consider a pronghorn reintroduction in northern Walla Walla County. Other members of the tour included the county Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) field person and representatives from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Yakama Tribes. Coincidentally, on Monday of this week District Biologist Wik was notified of three pronghorn antelope being sited in Asotin County. On Wednesday, Wik was able to locate the two bucks and one doe with the help of the local Department of Transportation (DOT) supervisor. It is not known how long it has been since naturally recolonizing pronghorn have been seen in the State, but it has likely been a very long time.



Pronghorn in northern Asotin County

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

Wildlife Areas

Discovery Week -- “Home on the Range” at Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area (SLWA):

Discovery Week, an annual event coordinated by the Lake Roosevelt Forum, brings regional schoolchildren to various fish and wildlife venues throughout Northeastern Washington State. This week, SLWA staff hosted three groups of visiting second and third-grade students from Loon Lake, Wilbur and Odessa for a total of about 50 children from May 14-16. The kids got to use a GPS receiver to track hidden flags, follow radio signals to grouse tracking collars, learn about some of the plants and animals that inhabit the shrub-steppe, visit with Fish and Wildlife Officer (FWO) Curt Wood, and get up close and personal with animal pelts, bird wings, and ungulate skulls.



Fish and Wildlife Officer Curt Wood demonstrated his robo-deer to Loon Lake third graders on Tuesday, May 14.



Odessa second graders learned about radio-tracking with Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Mike Finch on Thursday, May 16.



Wilbur third graders examined bitterroot flowers with Wildlife Area Manager Anderson on Wednesday, May 15.

REGION 2

Wolves

Wolf Sighting documentation: Private Lands Biologist Braaten was contacted by a local landowner about two wolves she and her husband had seen on two separate occasions in north Douglas County. Private Lands Biologist Braaten contacted the district biologist and sent locations of sightings for future reference.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Pygmy Rabbit Kits Captured For Release: Research Scientist Becker, Scientific Technician Kohli, graduate student DeMay, Biologists Volsen and Gallie, and a crew of volunteers from Mazama completed the second capture of kits out of the enclosures on May 13. 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. Depending on their lineage, some kits will be released on the May 20 and some kept in the enclosures for breeding next year. Round-ups and releases of kits will continue for the next two months as additional litters are born.



Left: Graduate student DeMay works with a volunteer to extract a kit from a piece of tubing where it was hiding. Center: A pygmy rabbit adult sits happily in the shade of sagebrush. Right: Research Scientist Becker is assisted by a mini-volunteer as she marks the ear of a pygmy rabbit kit.

Wetland/Beaver Restoration: With four temp employees recently hired, the beaver project field season is underway. The crew has already trapped half a dozen nuisance beavers from private land that are now in the hatchery holding facility. They will likely be on hand for public education purposes through national fishing day, then turned out in early summer at carefully selected release site higher up in the watershed.

When not beaver wrangling, the crew continues to download and catalog thousands of data points from flow and temperature meters. In addition to restoring beavers/wetlands, this project aims to document the effect of beaver activity on stream temperature and flow regimes.



Wildlife Areas

North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team – Focusing on finishing units on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, the prescribed fire team burned every day this week (See photos below). The units we are burning have high fuel loads of residual slash from logging operations, which makes burning a slow process since we need to manage fire behavior to keep the intensity below predefined thresholds to meet retention objectives for certain trees. Thunderstorms approached the burn areas several afternoons bringing gusty winds, but the water delivery hoses allowed us to wet fuels outside burn units and there were never any issues despite the dry conditions. A contract crew also bolstered our resources making patrol and mop-up of units more effective and efficient. Crews worked 14 and sometimes 16 hour days, sometimes burning into the night to accomplish the burns. Over the weekend several team members attended a class on Intermediate Fire Behavior (S-290) taught by Fuels Manager Leuschen. The class will resume next Saturday and conclude Sunday. The team will continue to conduct prescribed burns as long as conditions will allow.





Private Lands/Access

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)/Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):

Biologist Dougherty spoke with approximately seven landowners to discuss the Field Buffer and Ferruginous Hawk SAFE CRP programs. Some of those landowners have been extremely excited about the prospect of one or both programs. The Field Buffer program has been well received with nearly all property owners voicing some interest, and a few said they would absolutely sign up for the program. The Ferruginous Hawk SAFE program has been well received, but few landowners have been eligible. Most of the areas/fields that the property owners would be most interested in signing up are not within the designated SAFE area and other parcels that landowners would like to enroll are currently under general CRP contracts that don't expire for another two to three years. Both programs offer annual payments, signing incentives, 90% cost share, and a non-competitive signup that are very enticing to any interested parties. Private Lands Biologist Braaten continues to work on seeding mixes, SAFE plan comprehension, etc. with landowners.

Pygmy Rabbit: Biologist Cotton and Research Scientist Becker met with a landowner that has approximately 1,500 acres in CRP adjacent to the Sage Brush Flats Wildlife Area that are expiring in September 2013. We developed a plan to keep the existing CRP cover intact on the portions that are currently inhabited by pygmy rabbits and on important travel corridors. The remaining portion will be enhanced with native grasses, forbs and sage brush to improve the cover quality and increase the chance of re-enrollment.

Hunter Access: Biologist Dougherty has been able to meet with several landowners to discuss Hunter Access agreements. Of those landowners half have committed to a renewed Agreement for an approximate total of 21,000 acres being renewed for public hunting. Additionally, Biologist Dougherty has met with other landowners that are considering whether they will re-enroll. The decision to remain in the Hunter Access program depends on whether the property can be re-enrolled in CRP. One landowner is deciding whether to enter into the Hunt by Written Permission or Hunt by Reservation Hunter Access Program. The total approximate acreage for pending enrollment in the Hunter Access Program is 7,700. Private Lands Biologist Braaten continues working on Access/Habitat contracts with landowners. Several landowners were called regarding expired contracts; some cancelled and some will renew.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Environmental Education: Assistant District Biologist Heinlen gave presentations on the wolverine research being conducted in the North Cascades and how to safely live with bears. Biologist Heinlen gave these presentations to 42 Oroville, 22 Okanogan, and 43 Omak sixth grade students. All presentations were well received with most students not realizing wolverines lived in the North Cascades nor how to live safely in bear country.

Wildlife Areas

Oden Road Wildfire Effects Study: Wildlife Area Manager Olson and Assistant Manager Haug participated in the annual post-wildfire monitoring event in the wake of the Oden Road fire in 2009 (see picture below). The study is a cooperative effort with representatives from WDFW, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Okanogan Conservation District and Okanogan Land Trust, as well as private landowners who direct students from Okanogan High School to monitor a variety of things including vegetation, soil, invertebrate, and wildlife presence. The students gather data and present this year's plus the four-year cumulative findings at a public presentation this June. Wildlife Area Manager Olson helped out with the fourth year data collection on the Oden Road Wildfire Study. This project is sponsored by the Okanogan Land Council and Okanogan High School. Jim led a group of high school juniors (advanced biology class) through vegetation monitoring in the morning and a group for the continuing wildlife survey in the afternoon. This 10-year project is measuring forest recovery following the Oden Road wildfire in 2009.



Students from Okanogan High School



Bighorn sheep within the Conner's #5 burn unit that burned nearly two years ago.

REGION 3

None

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

State Listed Common Loon Efforts: Biologist Anderson and collaborating contract researchers from BioDiversity Institute trapped loons in King County over four days last week. The first day of the week had unsuitable weather conditions; hail, rain...all the bad weather making field biology fun. However, the group used the day to scout territories and prepare for trapping throughout the week.

A territorial pair was trapped at Calligan using a floating mist net set. Both the male and female were captured together in one effort; quickly and easily. This trapping technique uses decoys and playback calls to entice territorial birds over to the net floating on the water.

More management efforts are needed to understand the ecology of western loon populations and appropriate management actions to employ regarding this state listed species. At one time loons breeding range extended down into California. The range of this species is receding throughout the western states, even though appropriate habitat still exists. Interestingly, it is slowly recovering in the eastern United States due to more intensive management and research efforts and despite more human recreation and development on loon breeding lakes.



Biologist Chris Anderson holding two common loons that were trapped and banded



A territorial pair of common loons was trapped using a floating mist net set.

Heron Colony Management: Biologist Anderson continues to keep in touch with volunteers, Heron Habitat Helpers, and Seattle regarding the recently abandoned Kiwanis Ravine colony. Half of the colony simply picked-up and are now re-nesting at Commodore Park, just down the hill from Kiwanis ravine. The other 45 pairs are yet to be relocated.

Anderson worked with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) biologist staff, King County Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Friends of Soos Creek Park to ensure that appropriate management consideration will be implemented regarding scheduled trimming of trees along a PSE right-of-way (ROW) that is directly adjacent to the Soos Creek heron colony there. PSE will be trimming that portion of the ROW after the heron nesting season.

Urban Peregrine Falcon Management: Biologist Anderson has been working with Seattle Department of Transportation staff and area peregrine monitoring volunteers to monitor the Ballard Bridge eyrie. The male bird was quite injured and passed on in rehab. The female is very successfully tending to the 2-3 week old chicks currently. However, as they get older, it may be too much for one bird. Hopefully, another male will pair with this now unpaired female. If not, taking of the chicks to place with falconry and rehabilitation facilities may be considered. Monitoring efforts will help determine the appropriate course of action.

Urban Wildlife Fire Works Disturbance Concern: Biologist Anderson provided information to Seattle Staff regarding a fireworks special event. Anderson passed contacts along regarding U.S. Fish and Wildlife for Bald Eagle management consideration and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Division regarding the Marine Mammal Protection Act for consultation follow-up.

Judson Lake Swan Mortality Lead Treatment Proposal: Biologist Danilson met with Assistant District 12 Biologist Mike Smith and Habitat Biologists Brokes and Ingram to discuss proposed strategies for treating Judson Lake to address swan mortalities related to relict lead shotgun shot left behind from decades of waterfowl hunting before lead shot was banned. An experimental approach being considered for implementation this summer is to remove rhizomatous vegetation (which suspends lead shot in the feeding zone of swans). Permitting issues for treatments being proposed for summer/fall 2013 were discussed and Danilson later followed up with planning and permitting officials at 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 relict 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.

Northern Goshawk Site Protection: Biologist Danilson coordinated with biologists representing a private landowner and a local Indian tribe regarding a historically occupied Northern Goshawk nest site. The private landowner is interested in harvesting the small isolated timber woodlot with the nest to promote elk habitat. However, western Cascades goshawk nest

sites are extremely uncommon, so Danilson is working with the project proponent and other interested parties to develop a plan that provides benefits for both species.

North Cascades Wolf Monitoring: Biologist DeBruyn hiked in to five sites in the Lightning Creek drainage in north eastern Whatcom County to retrieve memory cards from cameras that have been snowed in since mid-November. An image of a single wolf was recorded at one site bringing the number of detections of wolves to three for the season. Not more than one wolf was recorded at any camera site but a Park Service biologist found what he thought were tracks of multiple wolves on the western edge of the Ross Lake drawdown.



Trail Cam Image of North Cascades Wolf (taken from video)

Golden Eagle Surveys: Biologist Milner re-checked the Priority 1 nests that cannot be monitored from the ground using a helicopter. No birds or nests were found at sites where no activity was seen in April. The active territory that was seen on the first flight remains active with an adult on the nest, possibly brooding a chick.

Sharp-tailed Snake Survey Site Selection: Biologist Milner, hosted by staff from the San Juan County Land Bank, toured prospective sites for potential sharp-tailed snake occurrence on San

Juan Island. The species is known to occur on selected Canadian Gulf Islands and on Orcas Island, and there has been at least one anecdotal sighting on San Juan Island several years ago. Several sites look reasonable for placing cover boards for passive surveys for this species. Milner and Cyra plan to set out cover structures as time permits this summer.

Bald Eagle Data Management Support: Assistant District Biologist Cyra visited the sites of a variety of Bald Eagle nest reports while en route to other tasks to determine validity of reports. WDFW is responsible for the management of the site data that U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) use in their management of the species in Washington State.

Double-crested cormorant nesting survey: Assistant District Biologist Cyra completed the annual survey of double-crested cormorants nesting on pilings at the mouth of the Snohomish River. Nesting numbers continued their downward trend – perhaps due to the increasing decayed state of the remaining pilings. Over 500 nests were observed in 2003, while less than 200 were observed this year.

West Cascades Cougar Project: Biologist Smith accompanied Scientist Kertson and Project Houndsman White on an attempted cougar capture. Several cougars were located, but all were in areas unsuitable for capture attempts.

Private Lands/Access

Spring Bear Damage Hunts: Biologist Roozen and Technician Otto surveyed the two Region 4 spring bear units to examine new bear peeling (damaged trees), forestry operations within the units, and where necessary secured unit access gates. Photo documentation of bear damage late in the week and calls from bear hunters revealed increased black bear activity as well as hunter efforts within the units.



Black bear peeled trees within hunt unit boundaries. Both pictures were taken within only a few yards of one another not far off forest road.

Skagit Wildlife Area Agreements: Biologist Roozen assisted manager Rotten in finalizing agricultural leases at Skagit Wildlife Area that incorporate private land access in the Region.

Roozen and Rotton will collect signed agricultural and access agreements from partner growers in the following days.



Agricultural field included in lease agreement between the Department and partner grower. Several hundred acres of private land were included in agreements, and will offer hunting fall 2013 within the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program.

Wildlife Areas

Cherry Valley Fish Passage Project: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm conducted a site visit to monitor invasive weed growth in the Waterwheel Creek and Fish Passage Project work areas. The two project areas provide over 15 acres of riparian and wetland restoration, including the planting of native grasses and over 15,000 native trees and shrubs. Manager Boehm noted that due to wet conditions, weed growth rate is slow so far and is not threatening the site. Future maintenance will include periodic mowing, herbicide application and irrigation.

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.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with the Sky Valley Tractor Club to discuss the mowing plan and site prep plan for the 10.5 acres of land the Club leases from DFW. The Club will grow hay and wheat and provide wheat for wildlife forage.

Stillwater Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm toured the Harris Creek restoration project with staff from Sound Salmon Solutions (SSS). SSS is in the process of

completing three acres of riparian planting along Harris Creek under a grant from the King Conservation District. Manager Boehm and SSS staff also toured other restoration sites on the Unit to develop an action plan for this season's weed control for the Unit.

Lake Terrell Field Prep: Natural Resource Technician Deyo continued disking the fields at Lake Terrell in preparation for barley planting.

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

Wildlife Management

Deer and Elk Conference Follow Up: Biologist Danilson followed up with biologists from Arizona and Montana following last week's 10th Biennial Western States and Provinces Deer and Elk Conference. The two individuals Danilson corresponded with are working on elk issues related to management issues in common with the North Cascades (highway collisions and agricultural damage). The objective in reaching out to biologists in other areas is to get new ideas/perspectives from individuals who have been dealing with this problem over the years.

Private Lands/Access

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Technician Otto continued food plot installation preparations at select units in Whatcom County. Biologist Roozen worked on Program data management and contract organization in preparation for upcoming tasks.



Thoroughly treated field prepared by Technician Otto for waterfowl food plot installation. Once the vegetation dies back, this field will be tilled and planted with barley to provide waterfowl forage this fall/winter.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Agricultural Enhancement and Lease Program: Manager Belinda Rotton, Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis and Natural Resources Technician Curran Cosgrove monitored

progress on agricultural leases and contract plantings this week. Wildlife Area staff have been coordinating with growers and vendors preparing for planting.

Island Unit: Field preparations continued on the Island Unit. River levels have dropped a bit this week and seem to be holding.

Manager Rotton and Natural Resource Specialist Meis attended an evening meeting with a small group of local hunters and Washington Waterfowl Association member to discuss the planting plan for the Island Unit for this season. The group was interested in the areas to be planted and opportunities to volunteer and assist with the effort. A sign-up sheet was distributed to the group and would be passed around at the Chapter meeting later that evening.

Manager Rotton and Natural Resource Specialist Meis prepared a drafted lease agreement for the Samish Unit to cover corn planting on the site. Manager Rotton has been working with Habitat Biologist Brendan Brokes regarding updating the 1309 ecosystem reviews for South Padilla Bay and Samish Units; these documents are a part of the agricultural lease package.

Leque Island: Natural Resource Specialist Meis and Natural Resources Technician Cosgrove pre-treated corn planting sites on Leque Island that are being planted as part of share-crop lease.

Samish Unit: Natural Resources Technician Cosgrove mowed and sprayed areas for broadleaf weeds and pretreatment for planting areas.

Tennant Lake Remote Viewing System: Manager Kessler purchased and installed a new computer monitor for the Tennant Lake Remote Viewing System at the Tennant Lake Viewing Tower. This system allows handicapped users to control a pan, tilt, and zoom remote camera and see the same view as at the top of the viewing tower.

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Areas

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continued to evaluate the equipment needs for the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. Irrigation equipment was recently purchased to provide water to the Cherry Valley Restoration areas this coming summer. Manager Boehm has also completed purchasing all of the equipment, herbicide and supplies necessary to implement the weed management plan for the Units. Noxious weeds continue to be a problem in many of the Units.

Lake Terrell Farm Plan: Manager Kessler met onsite with the Whatcom Conservation District at Lake Terrell. They toured the fields and discussed the farming activities on the Lake Terrell and Nooksack units.

Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park: Manager Kessler attended the monthly Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park meeting.

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Washington Salmon Recovery Conference: Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw attended the two-day Washington State Salmon Recovery Conference in Vancouver, WA. The conference focus was on building better salmon recovery projects and consisted of several break-out sessions that covered topics such as: nearshore/estuary restoration, public outreach, project management, and large wood projects.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Areas: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm joined WDFW Enforcement Officers Richard Phillips and Chris Clementson on a boat tour of Ebey Island and Spencer Island, as well as the waterways that encompass the area. Officer Phillips shared his knowledge of the area to point out fishing and hunting areas, and provide historical background of the users of these Units. Officer Clementson is assigned to patrol Ebey and Spencer Island Units and will work with Manager Boehm as needed.

Radio Training: Assistant District Biologist Cyra provided radio training materials support and instruction to Wildlife Program staff requesting use of the DNR managed state radio system.

Immobilization Workshop: Biologist DeBruyn taught the Raptor Handling segment of the workshop put on by department veterinary staff in Wenatchee for biologists and enforcement officers. Biologist Smith participated in the training.



Immobilization Workshop Raptor Handling Segment – Photo by Ella Rowan

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Golden Eagles: Biologists Anderson and Watson met with staff from Iberdrola and West Associates to discuss golden eagle management at the Juniper Canyon Wind Project in Klickitat County. At issue is current survey strategies and mitigation for management associated with a golden eagle nest that is located in the center of the wind farm. The 2013 surveys indicate that the territory is inactive, potentially a result from a past golden eagle mortality on the project site.



Juniper Canyon Wind Project in Klickitat County

Western Gray Squirrel: Biologist Anderson assisted the Enforcement and Habitat divisions with compiling background information on western gray squirrel use of a forest practice in Klickitat County. This follow-up review is being conducted to determine if western gray squirrel nests and their habitat were compromised in relation to state forest practice and wildlife protection laws.

Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologists George, Holman, Bergh, and Stephens initiated and participated in trapping for western pond turtles at the Bergen Road site. The primary purpose of this year's pond turtle work is to determine the extent and severity of the shell disease condition in the overall pond turtle population.

A total of 20 traps have been set in the two most significant water bodies at the site. During the initial week of trapping, a total of 69 captures comprised by 43 different individual turtles have been recorded. Unfortunately, shell disease is present in 40-50% of the animals.

An additional aspect of this year's work is to submit a sub-set of affected individuals to the Oregon Zoo for diagnosis and treatment by Zoo Veterinarian Dr. Storms. Three female pond turtles are currently under the care of Dr. Storms. Thanks to both the Oregon Zoo and Woodland Park Zoo for their continued support of the western pond turtle project.

Wildlife Areas

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Mouse-ear Hawkweed Control: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald treated about 20 acres of the Mudflow Unit and the adjacent Mount St. Helens Monument for mouse-ear hawkweed. Control efforts for this weed seem to be paying off, with there being significantly less plants this area than last year. Hauswald was able to walk and spray the infested area in just a few hours compared to last year that took over a day to accomplish. He will continue to work with Cowlitz County Vegetation Management and the U.S. Forest Service to control and stop the spread of this and other invasive weeds in the area.

Klickitat Wildlife Area



Cattle drive to Klickitat Wildlife Area Grazing Permit Area

Grazing Permit: One of the Klickitat Wildlife Area's (KWA) grazing permittees is utilizing the KWA pasture this year, and on May 14 the cattle were driven to the wildlife area. Manager Van Leuven counted animals as they passed through the gate. Forage growth is about average this year. However, the lack of rain has made drinking water a concern and water troughs will have to be closely monitored to ensure that they are working adequately. Minor fence repairs were handled as time permitted during the week.

Cowlitz Wildlife Area

Invasive Vegetation Management Projects: The Cowlitz Wildlife Area (CWA) staff has sprayed Scotch broom communities for the last couple of weeks on the Trout Hatchery, Swofford, and Spears units. These sites have been looking good, but this year there seems to have been a flush of young plants. Scotch broom seed can stay viable for a long time (up to 30 years) so the flush isn't entirely unexpected. A citizen science volunteer from the PNW Invasive Plant Council contacted the office in regards to a patch of Yellow Archangel near the boat ramp at Swofford Pond. A class B on the Lewis County Weed list, this patch has been treated and is now under observation for outliers and attempts at reestablishment. Perennial pea (*Lathyrus latifolius*) in the forage fields, often confused to be purple peavine (*Lathyrus nevadensis*), is believed to be toxic to horses by local owners. Though a review of the literature will only

confuse the facts to that argument, staff treats this plant chemically as it will completely overtake a field if allowed. Additionally, CWA staff has been treating the vegetation around gates, signs, and facilities on all units of the Wildlife Area.

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

Private Lands/Access



Sportsman Loop

Sportsman Loop: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes met with Volunteer Coordinator Chandler with the WDFW volunteer program. Staff painted the reader board and used chainsaws and limbers on the road and around the parking lot.

Modrow Bridge: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes cleared the ADA and paved parking area. Last year's Japanese knotweed control seemed to be mostly successful. Only a dozen or so small plants came back this year.



Modrow Bridge



Japanese knotweed

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Salmon Recovery Conference: Wildlife Program Manager Jonker gave a presentation on pinniped and aviation predation on the Lower Columbia River as part of a panel to discuss

“Managing for Salmon Recovery in the Lower Columbia River: Fisheries to Predation.” The panel provided an update on Columbia River fishery management policies recently put in place by the Oregon and Washington Fish and Wildlife Commissions, efforts by both states to test alternative fishing gear aimed to harvest more hatchery fish with reduced mortality of wild salmon, and the status and challenges that come with managing predation from caspian terns, double-crested cormorants, and sea lions. Panel members included Guy Norman (Regional Director, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Region 5), Steve Williams (Assistant Fish Division Administrator, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife), John North (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Manager, Fisheries Management Program), and Sandra Jonker (Wildlife Program Manager, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Region 5).

GOAL 4: BUILD AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION BY SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Handling and Immobilization Course: Biologist Bergh attended the agency-sponsored training on Wildlife Handling and Immobilization. The course was taught by agency veterinary staff Mansfield and Rowan, along with several other instructors who specialize in various species (deer, elk, moose, bears, cougars, raptors). The classroom portion of the course covered policies, procedures, pharmacology, drug delivery, animal/human safety, monitoring, and equipment. During the field portion of the course participants were able to practice loading and firing dart guns as well as anesthetizing and handling a pygmy goat. This training is very important for wildlife and enforcement staff in dealing with wildlife for research purposes and when they pose a threat to human or their own safety.



Immobilization Training

REGION 6

None