

Wildlife Program

Week of April 28 – May 4, 2014

SCIENCE DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Citizen Science: Matt Vander Haegen (Research Scientist, Wildlife Program) recently provided training to citizen scientists embarking on a cooperative project to monitor shrubsteppe obligate birds in eastern Washington. The training took place in Richland and involved 24 members from 4 Audubon Society chapters in eastern Washington. Most participants were members of the Lower Columbia Basin chapter that will be piloting the surveys in 2014. This cooperative project between WDFW and Audubon Washington will expand to include other eastern Washington chapters in 2015.

Pocket Gopher Project: The 2014 spring field season for the Mazama pocket gopher translocation study began April 1 with the hiring of 4 Science Technician 2 non-permanent personnel to assist project leader Gail Olson: Kelly Perry, Chris Capelli, Kara Randall and Denise Stetson. They are currently trapping gophers at West Rocky Wildlife Area with the goals of estimating long-term survival and the size of the breeding population, which will be used to determine the status of the reintroduced population and project future trends. Trapping gophers continues to be challenging even for experienced field biologists, but after almost 3 weeks of trapping we have had 61 captures, including a female that was released in 2009.

Pilot Grazing Meeting: Several DFW staff met with WSU researchers to the Pilot Grazing research study. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss preliminary results, to revisit the contract deliverables and provide feedback and suggestions on data analysis and reporting that would be most useful to the agency. We are expecting final reports from WSU by the end of May.

Sage Grouse Public relations: Mike Schroeder has had several recent contacts with public media related to Sage Grouse conservation. Mike was interviewed by Rich Landers (Outdoors editor, The Spokesman-Review, Spokane). Rich Landers is doing a story about grouse for the newspaper and wanted some insight. Mike was also interviewed by Deborah Richie (Communications Director, Sage Grouse Initiative). Deborah is putting together a story about sage-grouse conservation in Washington State and needed some input. She is also writing an article about sage-grouse for Birding Magazine. On 21 April, Mike was interviewed on KOMW with Becki Andrist (News Director) and Dale Swedberg (WDFW). The purpose of the interview was to talk about the importance of grouse in north-central Washington, particularly Okanogan County. Mike provided her with a couple digital recordings of grouse.

Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program (DDCSP): John Pierce participated in the first meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program (DDCSP) at the University of Washington. The DDCSP seeks to create conservation scholars from a wide

range of socio-cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds to develop a diverse conservation work force equipped to address the challenges of the future. The first 25 future scholars have been selected and will start their 3 year program this summer. It is hoped that in year 3, interested agencies and partners will be able to provide paid summer intern opportunities for the scholars to get firsthand experience in the applied conservation management.

Recent Publications and Presentations: Joe Buchanan and Lori Salzer are coauthors of a connectivity paper that was published in the Wader Study Bulletin Volume 120, Number 3:

Red Knot (*Calidris canutus roselaari*) migration connectivity, abundance and non-breeding distribution along the Pacific coast of the Americas.

Roberto Carmona, Nalley Arce, Victor Ayala Perez, Adriana Hernandez Alvarez, Joseph B. Buchanan, Lori J. Salzer, Pavel Tomkovich, James A. Johnson, Robert E. Gill, Jr, Brian J. McCafferty, James E. Lyons, Larry J. Niles, David Newstead

Red Knots (*Calidris canutus roselaari*) occur along the Pacific coast of the Americas and may use as few as four stopover or staging sites during spring migration. There are key information gaps regarding this population's status and non-breeding distribution because of its localized distribution during migration, relatively small population size (estimated population of 10,000) and a poor understanding of the location of major over-wintering sites. Based on resightings of marked birds, we assessed migratory connectivity of Red Knots along the Pacific coast. Knots captured and marked at two sites in northwestern Mexico have been observed at several locations during northbound migration, including coastal Washington, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in western Alaska and breeding areas in northwestern Alaska. The greatest connectivity was between Guerrero Negro/Ojo de Liebre and Golfo de Santa Clara, Mexico, and during northbound migration, between those two sites and coastal Washington, USA. Much less is known about the southbound migration and comparatively few marked knots North of Mexico have been resighted during autumn. We reviewed scientific literature and consulted eBird data to compile observational records of Red Knots along the Pacific Coast, particularly areas south of the United States. Records from mainland northwestern Mexico document substantial aggregations (hundreds or thousands) of Red Knots at several locations during the non-breeding season. We anticipate that connectivity involving these several locations will be demonstrated with more field effort. Additional records along the Pacific coast south of Mexico, that involved far fewer numbers of birds, extended to extreme southern Chile near the documented winter range of the *rufa* subspecies. The available information suggests the possibility of an area of overlap in the non-breeding range of *roselaari* and *rufa* in southern Mexico; the southernmost distribution of *roselaari* remains incompletely known. Comprehensive conservation assessments will require additional investigation to identify important stopover and overwintering sites.

Andy Duff is a coauthor of a publication that has been accepted for publication in the Natural Areas Journal.

Sarr, D.A., A.A. Duff, E.C. Dinger, S.L. Shafer, M. Wing, N.E. Seavy, and J.D. Alexander. 2015. Comparing Ecoregional Classifications for Natural Areas Management in the Klamath Region, U.S.A. Natural Areas Journal.

ABSTRACT

We compared three existing ecoregional classification schemes (Bailey, Omernik, and World Wildlife Fund) with two derived schemes (Omernik Revised and Climate Zones) to explore their effectiveness in explaining species distributions and to better understand natural resource geography in the Klamath Region, USA. We analyzed presence/absence data derived from digital distribution maps for trees, amphibians, large mammals, small mammals, migrant birds, and resident birds using three statistical analyses of classification accuracy (Analysis of Similarity, Canonical Analysis of Principal Coordinates, and Classification Strength). The classifications were roughly comparable in classification accuracy, with Omernik Revised showing the best overall performance. Trees showed the strongest fidelity to the classifications, and large mammals showed the weakest fidelity. We discuss the implications for regional biogeography and describe how intermediate resolution ecoregional classifications may be appropriate for use as natural areas management domains.

Michael Schroeder and Matt Vander Haegen recently completed a draft final report for the Withrow Wind Power Project. In addition to the report, data and photos have been prepared for final delivery to the Douglas County PUD.

Schroeder, M. A., and M. Vander Haegen. Monitoring of greater sage-grouse and other breeding birds on the Withrow Wind Power Project site: Final report. 2014. WDFW Report, Olympia, Washington.

Sagebrush Habitat Ecology Presentation: Matt Vander Haegen presented a lecture to the graduate seminar in Sagebrush Habitat Ecology at Washington State University. The seminar was held at WSU and included graduate students at the University of Idaho and Boise State University campuses via the Internet. The subject of the lecture was the effects of habitat loss and degradation on passerine birds in the shrubsteppe of Washington and the potential for Farm Bill programs to mitigate some of this habitat loss.

MES Wildlife Ecology and Policy elective Presentation: Gail Olson gave a guest lecture for the MES Wildlife Ecology and Policy elective at The Evergreen State College on April 16. Her talk was about her research projects on Mazama pocket gophers, especially the occupancy modeling study. Approximately 16 TESC graduate students attended.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Oregon Spotted Frog Research: Biologist Hallock, with assistance from Region 6 staff and USFWS Refuge Biologist Bailey, worked on the Black River study of Oregon Spotted Frogs. Work included locating three study frogs using radio-telemetry to collection information on

movements and habitat use, checking 110 aquatic funnel traps for three days and conducting visual encounter surveys to capture more frogs for the study. Information was collected on all Oregon Spotted Frogs captured including weight, length and sex. Three adult females of suitable size were captured. As a result, radio-transmitters have been placed on a total of seven frogs thus far this spring.

Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologist Hallock assisted in Region 5 for three days with the 2014 study of Western Pond Turtles. Priorities for this year include continuing to evaluate the ulcerative shell disease condition among the population, collecting specific individuals for veterinary biopsies related to research shell disease, capturing sufficient individuals to generate a population estimate for the Sondino site, collecting young for the head-starting program and conducting bull-frog control. Over the three days, Biologist Holman and Hallock captured 89 turtles in 52 traps located in 5 ponds. Thirty-three of the turtles had not been captured in 2014. These turtles were measured, weighed and evaluated for shell disease before being released back into the pond where they had been captured.

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery: On Wednesday Biologist Wisniewski and staff released our final batch of kits from the first round of captures. We were again assisted by 11 students and teachers from Wenatchee Westside High School. This is an amazing group of students who are not only hard working but eager to learn, and we are grateful for their assistance. We released 16 kits to the wild on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area (SBFWA) and 9 kits were released into the Beezley Hills breeding enclosure. Seven rabbits were retained in the nursery to reach the target weight of 150 grams. The first round of captures in the four enclosures totaled:

Captured – 116 kits, 3 adults
Released to wild – 54 kits
Released in enclosure – 37 kits, 3 adults
Held in nursery to gain weight – 8 kits

The other main field activity for this week was installing additional release sites at SBFWA to handle the increased production of kits this year. We have completed one site (already utilized fully once), and are working on three more (one will be installed later in summer for August use). Each site will have 25 mounds with 2 artificial burrows at each mound.

Habitat Restoration and Butterfly Monitoring: Ann Potter and Mary McCallum, Wildlife Diversity Biologists, began the field component of 2014 butterfly SGCN monitoring for the State Wildlife Grant Prairie-Oak restoration project. Throughout the spring and summer, 8 butterfly SGCN will be being monitored on 8 south Puget Sound prairie and oak woodland sites where they occur in or near project restoration units. Surveys were initiated for 2 spring-flying butterflies, Propertius Duskywing and Hoary Elfin on Scatter Creek Wildlife Area and 2 DNR Natural Area Preserves. See the pictures embedded in the attachment.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management



Specialist Bennett herding geese away from I90.

Canada Geese near I90: Conflict Specialist Bennett was contacted by Sergeant Sprecher about a report received from Washington State Patrol regarding nine geese trying to cross the interstate. Bennett and District Biologist Atamian met the WSP near milepost 298, eastbound I90. Two adult geese and seven goslings were trying to cross the rush hour traffic towards the Spokane River. After an extended period of time herding the geese, the whole group was relocated back to the river.

Road-killed Wolf: Specialist Shepherd, Sergeant Taylor, and Officer Erickson investigated a dead wolf to determine cause of death. No evidence of violence was found and the wounds and damage was consistent with a vehicle-caused mortality.



Dead Ruby Pack member apparently struck by a vehicle on State Highway 31

Wildlife Areas

Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – 11th Annual Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation work party: For the 11th year in a row, volunteers from RMEF were at Smoothing Iron Ridge performing several tasks for the wildlife area. Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice worked with the volunteers on Friday thru Sunday. Biologist David Woodall assisted on Friday and Saturday as well. Projects included installation of a 2,000 gallon big-game guzzler with a collection apron and small overflow pond. The volunteers also cleaned troughs and springs, tore out old fence on Cook Ridge, put out salt for elk, planted a wind break shrub plot near the Smoothing Iron house, and repaired a broken water line supplying water to troughs in Warner Gulch. About 30 volunteers showed up this year with some coming from Western Washington and the rest from all over Eastern Washington. Stan Wilson from the Asotin County Sportsman's association was also present on Saturday.



Right: 2000 gallon Boss Tank wildlife guzzler installed by RMEF volunteers at Smoothing Iron.
Left: Ground mounted collection apron for Boss Tank with enclosure fence installed.

Private Lands/Wildlife Areas

Packer Creek habitat project – Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Finch and Natural Resource Worker (NRW) Jim Bauer traveled to Whitman County to spray Roundup on 40 acres of a U. S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-owned property at Packer Creek. This is part of a cooperative project with Pheasants Forever. Finch and Bauer’s work was funded through a contract with BLM. Private Lands Biologist Eric Lewis and Wildlife Technician Clements completed the project with a 14 acre cover crop/food plot seeding of barley.

Right: Roundup Application by Wildlife Area Staff.
Left: Private Lands Staff Seeding cover crop/food plot at BLM Packer Creek



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

Wildlife Areas

Access site maintenance: Access Manager Scott Young conducted routine maintenance at the access areas at Deer, Waitts, Liberty, Newman, Williams, Clear, West Medical, Jump-off Joe, and Badger Lakes. He also did some spring cleaning at Fishtrap Lake access area. The WDFW construction crew completed grading at Silver Lake. You can see a mule deer at the tree line if you look hard, in the photo below.



Grading work at Silver Lake. See the deer?

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

Private Lands/Wildlife Areas

Regional Envirothon: Private Lands Biologist Eric Lewis and Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Biologist David Woodall worked at the regional Envirothon event held in Pullman, WA. Lewis conducted the wildlife testing portion of the event that was attended by approximately 70 High School students from schools in Whitman and Asotin Counties. Woodall served as a judge for group presentations.



Winning team from Garfield-Palouse High School

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

Wildlife Areas

Wildlife Area Planning: Wildlife Area Manager Anderson and Assistant Manager Finch conducted the kickoff Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) meeting, Monday, April 28 in Davenport, with WDFW planners Melinda Posner and Lauri Vigue. The WDFW employees and about 15 invited members reviewed the WAAC charter, discussed the planning process, and dug a bit into management issues for each of the three units in the greater Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area. The next WAAC, the second of three to four planned before publication of the new WLA Management Plan, is tentatively set for June.

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wolf Conservation and Management

Chelan County: Specialist Bridges responded to a call from a concerned citizen that a dog with a red collar chased his chickens. He did not report it as a wolf, he just wanted to make sure that we were aware that “it was not a wild wolf,” so that “the wild wolves don’t get blamed.”

Okanogan County: We continue to get occasional remote camera photos of Lookout Pack wolves in their traditional territory (and other interesting critters, see photos). There’s a good chance the alpha female has recently whelped and this will restrict pack movements for several weeks creating an opportunity to capture and radio-collar adult animals. Trapping efforts are slated to begin this week.

Wildlife Management

Piscivorous Waterbirds: Biologists Duvuvuei and Finger continued monitoring Caspian tern use at Frenchmen Regulated Access Area. Tern activity has slowed and only approximately 10-15 terns are observed in the project area at one time compared to 30-40 at the beginning of the project. Biologists have begun drawing water down at a more rapid rate in an attempt to hold the remaining terns and perhaps bring other terns back. Though drawing down one cell did not appear to concentrate large numbers of piscivorous water birds, based on early indications, drawing down the next cell up appears to be attracting an increase in piscivorous water birds, many of which are Caspian terns that are having successful foraging attempts. We hope this trend increases as this cell continues to drain. Trail cameras are being used to document the effectiveness of our efforts. Biologist Finger participated in an Inland Avian Predation Management conference call to receive updates with regards to the status of the dissuasion at Goose Island and mitigation site development planned for San Francisco Bay at Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge. Recently, nearly 400 Caspian terns were observed loafing on and around Goose Island; this is roughly half the typical breeding population of this colony. Dissuasion efforts have reached the maximum allowable acreage of 2.5 acres. There is an estimated 20 active Caspian tern nests on the small islet adjacent to Goose Island. Numbers of nests are expected to increase. One Caspian tern egg had been taken at the time of the call. Finger provided a brief update on the Caspian tern feeding project.

Deer Management: WDFW Officer Treser sent Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen a photo showing what appears to be a fawn mule deer exhibiting classic hair-loss sign attributed to the exotic lice *Bovicola tibialis*. This is an exotic chewing louse typically associated with European fallow deer. In recent years, it has spread to infest several subspecies of native *O. hemionus* deer in at least



Mule deer fawn exhibiting hair loss
Photo: Cal Treser

eight western states, including Washington. It also occurs on Columbian Black Tailed deer in British Columbia, Canada. Infestation intensities vary widely, but fawns in late winter/early spring may sustain intense louse populations and display severe hair loss. This louse was first confirmed in District 6 in 2012 from a mule deer fawn sampled in the Okanogan Valley. This is the first sign of the louse being present in the Methow Valley. To date, only a handful of deer in the district have exhibited significant hair-loss symptoms

Pygmy Rabbit Releases: On Wednesday we released our final batch of kits from the first round of captures. We were again assisted by 11 students and teachers from Wenatchee Westside High School. This is an amazing group of students who are not only hard working but eager to learn, we are grateful for their assistance. We released 16 kits to wild on Sagebrush Flat Wildlife Area (SBFWA) and 9 kits were released into the Beezley Hills breeding enclosure. Seven rabbits were retained in the nursery to reach the target weight of 150 grams. The first round totals are:

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Release sites: The other main field activity for this week was continuing to install additional release sites at SBFWA to handle the increased production of kits this year. We have completed one site (already utilized fully once), and are working on three more (one will be installed later in summer for August use). Each site will have 25 mounds with 2 artificial burrows at each mound.

Common Loon Management: Biologist Heinlen received photos from a bird watcher showing a common loon on Lost Lake with fishing line protruding from its mouth. It most likely consumed a fish that had broken off someone's fishing line. Concerns include hook puncturing the gullet or interfering with food passage, and fishing line entangled in the digestive track causing blockage. Lead ingestion from sinkers or lures should not be a problem here because, Lost Lake is one of the 13 statewide lakes that have a lead tackle restriction specifically due to loon nesting; however, the fish may have been consumed elsewhere. This individual is particularly valuable as one of the breeding adults on Lost Lake, one of Washington's most successful loon producing lakes. Biologist Heinlen and local loon enthusiasts will continue to monitor the loon and are prepared to take it into captivity if it becomes impaired.



Common Loon – Lost Lake Photo: Bird Watcher

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successful loon producing lakes. Biologist Heinlen and local loon enthusiasts will continue to monitor the loon and are prepared to take it into captivity if it becomes impaired.

Golden Eagles: Biologist Gallie is making some of the final occupancy visits to eagles nests, which will be completed next week. Highlights including locating a new nest more than two

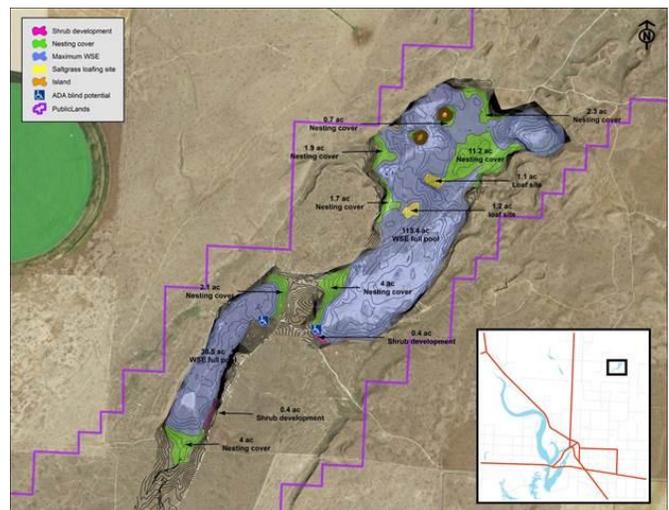
miles away in a territory that has not been active in nearly 30 years on Lake Chelan. Preparation and plans have begun for the productivity flight, planned for June.



First active nest in 30 years. Required a long hike up steep terrain to get the right angle (J Gallie)

Wildlife Areas

Odessa Subarea Special Study - Biologist Finger participated in a budget and implementation meeting for the Odessa projects, including supplemental feed route items. Through this project, and with much assistance from Environmental Planner Davidson, Finger and Duvuvuei have received funding for a large Northern leopard frog reintroduction feasibility study and an artificial burrow project for burrowing owls. Finger and Duvuvuei are now working with Davidson to attempt to gain funding for the Artesian and Black Lake wetland project just northeast of Moses Lake. Many thanks to Davidson for her unwavering support on these projects!



Artesian and Black Lakes preliminary conceptual plan showing potential for habitat and recreational developments. Image by R. Finger.



North Central Washington Prescribed Burn Team:

Saturday, the burn team completed the Blue 3 Prescribed Fire Project on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. A high pressure system brought about warm dry air that pushed us to the hot end of our environment prescription parameters and Thursday afternoon we went out of prescription and had to put the burn on hold until the humidity rose and fire behavior in the logging slash became manageable. Friday also brought us to the edge of the prescription, but the unit was very secure at that point with areas recently burned surrounding most the perimeter. Using a variety of ignitions techniques the team was able to maintain fire behavior within defined ranges and objectives were well met. Due to the hot end conditions it was decided to bring in one squad of contracted firefighters to bolster our resources for safe and successful operations. The burn went very well over the course of the 3 days and the immediate post-burn results appear to be excellent.

Prescribed Fire in the Blue 3 Unit on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area.

Photo: Tiffany Mitchell

Water Birch Planting: Staff began work rebuilding two irrigated water birch plantings that were destroyed in 2012 by the Foster Creek Fire. We worked on the larger of the two sites and completed rotovating, installing an underground water line, a new 1000 gallon water tank, and 1,300 feet of plastic weed barrier fabric. Once the area was rotovated, Fidel and Angel set up a temporary irrigation system using 3-inch hand-line and the Chelan Wildlife Area’s water truck. In addition to getting some much needed moisture in the ground, this also made operation of the fabric laying machine more efficient and effective. Fidel and Angel also installed the solar panel array that powers the water pump. Noel and Dan kept busy working on the supply line from the pump to the tank, and irrigation lines.



Reconstruction in progress



Irrigated water birch planting in 2009, six years after construction

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: Biologist Fitkin gave a presentation on amphibians as part of a monthly lecture series organized by the Okanogan Highlands Alliance at the Tonasket Community Center. The talk appeared to be well received and benefitted from the presence of live amphibians, as well as a couple of bonus reptiles designed to be a preview of a reptile lecture scheduled later in the season as part of the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area celebration.



Naughty western toads (note egg strings)

Photo – Scott Fitkin



Gopher snake ambassador.

Photo – Scott Fitkin

Private Lands/Access

Livestock Depredation: Specialist Heilhecker along with Sergeant Christensen investigated three dead lambs north of Tonasket. For about a week, the reporting party has been losing a lamb every two to three days. The RP had buried two of the lambs. Based on the condition of the one remaining carcass, it was determined to have been killed by a cougar. Sergeant Christensen issued a depredation permit. In the meantime, the reporting party was given suggestions as to how to deter any additional depredations. Specialist Heilhecker along with Officers Day and Boyd responded to a call regarding an injured horse east of Tonasket. The horse had a severe cut on its front leg. There were no injuries that would indicate predator activity. The reporting party stated this female horse is in estrus. It is likely the horse got injured while being chased by the male mule.



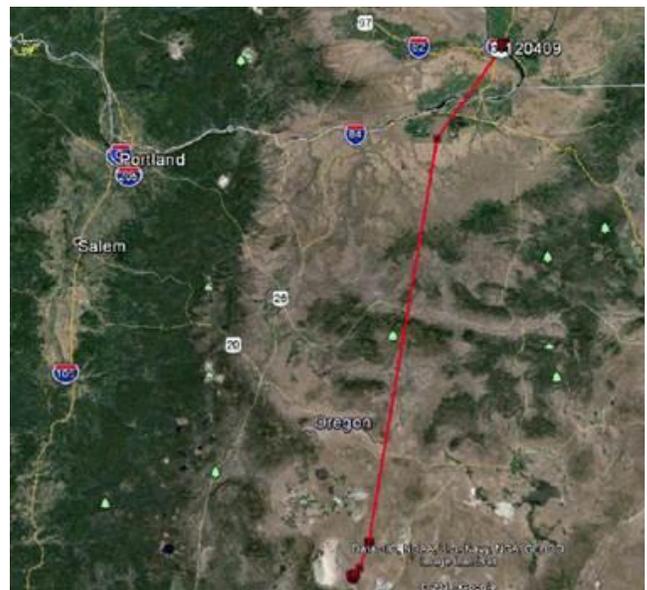
Working landscape

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Burrowing Owls: Biologist Gregory met with David Johnson from the Global Owl Project to discuss upcoming plans for burrowing owl capture. The owl that was marked with a GPS transmitter north of Pasco last year has returned (see image below). An attempt will be made to capture her and assess her condition to determine if the transmitter should be removed. There will also be a general banding effort around the Pasco area near the end of the month. Owls have been marked around the Tri-Cities for the past 10 years contributing to the Global Owl Project's efforts to track burrowing owl movement and survival.



The final leg of a female burrowing owl's migration from southern California to Pasco

CRP Field Preparations: Biologist Stutzman did a site visit with a landowner who is enrolled in the Upland Field buffers CRP program to check in on their field prep. Field prep is on schedule as the site was recently sprayed and will remain in summer fallow for the 2nd year until seeding occurs in the fall. We discussed seeding procedures, seed mix questions, and other site prep specifics as well. Additionally, a number of other conservation programs and wildlife questions were discussed including the Sage Grouse Initiative, the Yakama Nation's antelope project, and wolf issues.

Habitat Restoration: Biologist Stutzman met with NRCS staff and a Benton County landowner who has land along the Yakima River and is interested in doing some habitat restoration or conservation easements for wildlife. A number of state and federal funding options were discussed and a follow up field visit was planned.

Deer Mortality Investigation: Biologist Bernatowicz investigated 2 deer mortalities this week when Muckleshoot tribal biologists were unable to respond. One was a probable cougar and the other a road kill. The Muckleshoot's (MIT) send data from the recently completed deer survey. MIT is using a different survey protocol, which makes comparing with WDFW data somewhat problematic. Discussions were initiated and a conference call scheduled for next week.



Radio collared deer that was probably killed by a cougar

Mountain Goats: Biologist Bernatowicz researched historic data and started contacting others regarding Mountain Goats between I-90 and Highway 2. There is a good possibility that there is a huntable population. The plan is to map known current locations, ground survey, and if numbers are high enough, aerial survey.

Golden Eagles: The last priority one golden eagle territory was completed this week by Biologist Moore. The Parke Creek territory did not have any golden eagle activity during the second occupancy observation. The productivity survey will start up towards the end of May.

Colockum Elk: Biologist Moore also checked up on the collared bull elk and found that one hadn't updated GPS fixes to the website for nearly ten days. Moore spent part of a day checking for the VHF signal, which was not located. A GPS fix update did occur towards the end of the week and all seems to be well besides a glitch with the collar.

Deer Rescue: A call came in about a deer trapped in an irrigation screen diversion box on the west side of the Kittitas Valley. Biologist Moore and Conflict Specialist Wetzel responded to investigate the situation. A male deer was in a concrete diversion box that was easily 8 feet deep and less than 3 feet by 3 feet wide. There was barely enough room for the deer to turn around. Wetzel and Moore devised a plan of getting a heavy tie down strap under its abdomen and simply hoisting it up. All went smoothly and the deer was released.

Wildlife Areas

Flood Plain Restoration Tour: Manager Huffman toured part of the SF Cowiche Creek with Kat Strathman an ecologist and project manager for Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group. They are interested in starting a flood plain restoration project on our ownership along Cowiche Creek. We walked about 1 mile of the creek and identified several areas where the creek is no longer connected to the flood plain. The project is just in the beginning stages and will develop over the coming months.

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

Wildlife Areas

Shed Hunting at Oak Creek: Oak Creek Staff spent Wednesday setting up the parking lot for the May 1st end of the closure. Manager Huffman set up cones to direct traffic and posted parking maps and rules. In addition Huffman coordinated with Eyes In The Woods (EITW) volunteers who were going to do an emphasis patrol overnight to keep people from sneaking in early. By midday volunteers from the Wildlife Education Corp (WEC) had opened the visitor's center and were available to answer questions. That evening Huffman and WEC volunteers allowed vehicles to start lining up at 5:00PM; about a dozen vehicles got in line at that time and more started rolling in all evening. Huffman started work at 4:00AM the next day and vehicles were almost lined up to the highway. Huffman and WEC volunteers started a second then a third line of cars and directed traffic. On the Cowiche Unit Assistant Manager Berry started work before 5:00AM and coordinated with a WEC volunteer to watch the parking lot. Everything went generally smoothly for the opening. Participation seemed to be about the same as last year. People were happy to be out and most had a great time. On Oak Creek 61 vehicles, 10 horses and 31 people on foot went through the main entrance. At the Bethel Ridge gate 15 vehicles went through the gate while numbers were really low on Oak Creek Road where only 4 vehicles went in. On the Cowiche Unit about 20 vehicles were in the parking lot.



Oak Creek Wildlife Area parking lot just before 6AM on May 1, about 61 vehicles is line to drive in plus 31 people and 10 horses to



Cowiche Unit parking lot after the May 1 opening, about 20 vehicles are in the parking lot. The Cowiche Unit is walk in only so most people go in on horseback.



Happy shed hunters on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area.



Happy shed hunter with a matched set on the Cowiche Unit.

LT Murray Gates Opening: Assistant Manager Hunt provided information to Mike Johnston of the Daily Record regarding opening seasonal closures and lifting motorized restrictions on the Wildlife Area. Mike ran the piece earlier in the week. Kyle and Craig removed west boundary winter closure signs from the L.T. Murray Wednesday. Wayne opened the LT Murray gates Thursday morning, and Kyle assisted in removing remaining signage. There was a large turnout of recreational users, particularly at Joe Watt where Wayne encountered 81 vehicles ready to roll at 5:30 AM. Quads, dirt bikes, hikers, horse-backers, campers; you name it, we had it. Many were there to hunt the elusive shed elk antlers.

Whiskey Dick Gates Opening: Craig opened the gates at the Pumphouse and Corrals entrances to the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area. Shana and Craig removed remaining winter closure signage on the Whiskey Dick/Quilomene with assistance by Kittitas County Field and Stream Club.

Wenas Gates Opening: Assistant Manager Taylor opened the Mellotte and Hardy Canyon gates at 6:00 am Thursday morning. Twenty vehicles were waiting in line, and three people had camped for the night at the gate. Staff also pulled all the winter closure signs, including those along the Cleman Ridge road.

Regional Customer Service: Staff fielded lots calls from shed antler hunters.

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Wildlife Management

Rattlesnake Elk Herd meeting and Tour: Biologists Hand and Gregory, Conflict Section Managers Simek and Schreiner, and Region 3 Director Livingston participated in a tour and meeting with landowners surrounding the Rattlesnake elk herd on the Arid Lands Ecology (ALE) area near Hanford. A small group toured the fields that border the Federal refuge to assess ongoing damage concerns. Immediately following the tour, a meeting was held in Prosser. About 20 landowners and hunters attended and participated in discussions about new developments within the conflict section. This meeting went a long way toward keeping the lines of communication open between WDFW and our constituents.



WDFW staff and landowners surrounding the Arid Lands Ecology (ALE) area keep a look out for elk during a recent tour.

Wildlife Areas

Grazing Utilization Prep: Manager Huffman completed the first round of grazing utilization monitoring on the Worrell Ranch east pasture. Total utilization was below the allotted level. Huffman talked to the permittee who was on site gathering cows for branding over the weekend. They will be moving cows out of the east pasture following branding due to a lack of water.

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

Wildlife Areas

Fence Installation: Manager Huffman set up a volunteer project in CERVIS for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF). RMEF volunteers will spend two days at the end of May constructing a buck and rail fence around an aspen patch that had conifers thinned out of it last year by RMEF volunteers.

Russian Thistle Treatment: Kyle and Craig treated rehab site for Russian thistle, white top and mustard.



NRT Kyle Hill spraying weeds in an area that burned in the Colockum-Tarps fire last summer.

seedlings from last fall's planting are evident. Three dozen dalmation toadflax plants were pulled by hand in the near vicinity of Quilomene Bay.

Spring Wildlife Cleaning: Manager Bjornstrom worked on coordinating a clean-up effort of the debris left behind by the spring wildfires. Many calls and emails have been traded by Greg, BPA, and WDFW Administration to determine the best course of action so clean-up can begin at Sunnyside HQ Unit of the burned shop.

Maintaining the Wildlife Areas: Assistant Manager Buser worked on stabilizing the concrete footings of the shed at Windmill Ranch, mowed the Serpent Wetland at Mesa Lake, sprayed roadsides at Windmill Ranch, continued irrigation water management, continued spraying noxious weeds, and met with electricians regarding electricity set-up at Windmill Ranch.

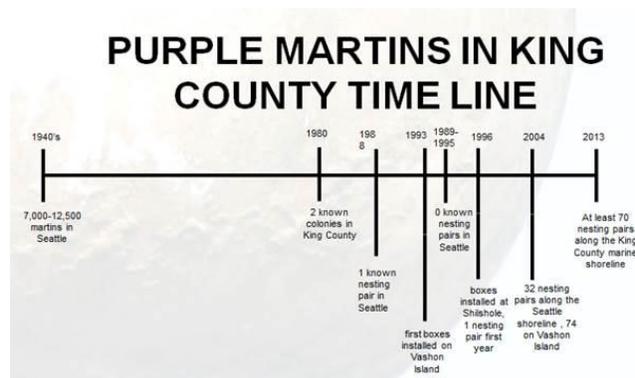
REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Purple Martin Collaborative Nest Maintenance/Post Season inventory: Biologist Anderson worked with volunteer martin stewards and Fish Program Biologist Garrett to maintain Purple Martin Nesting Gourds in the Duwamish Waterway for 2013 nesting season. Sites included T-105 and Kellogg Island. Kellogg Island had 100% occupancy in 2013. T-105 showed occupancy as well, previously not getting much use. All areas of use along the King Co. marine shoreline are expanding in occupancy as the gourds go up.

See below time-line occurrence chart from recent co-authored poster at Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference:



Biologist Anderson posing near a Purple Martin Nesting Gourd in the Duwamish Waterway

Common Loon Nesting Activity: Biologist Anderson surveyed six lakes in King Co. known for loon use, territorial occupancy or nesting. Nesting was again confirmed for the 2014 season at a new nest lake as of 2013. Anderson put up an educational outreach sign at this new nesting lake.

Another lake had at least one loon with what appeared to be nesting on the far side of the lake. Unfortunately, the distortion of the light hindered confirmation of that second loon on potential nest. Anderson was hopeful for a nest exchange or vocalization but no dice. He will return with a boat to gain better opportunity to confirm if nesting and a second pair is at the lake. The pair at this lake were banded in 2013, nested, but failed. The bird that provided better looks in this recent effort did not have a band. This may indicate a territory usurpation, which also occurred at the same lake in 2010 and 2011. This has been a very unstable territory for the last five years with much “loon battling” observed.

Anderson has been notified of loons back at Howard Hanson and Chester Morse reservoirs.

There are 15 to 17 known nest sites of Common Loon in WA. WA is the last western coast state to have this charismatic bird nesting for all to enjoy while recreating outside and wildlife watching. In the past this species was found nesting down to northern CA. Other western states also have low populations, or none at all anymore, and are initiating similar conservation efforts (ID, WY, MT). Overall, the Common Loon’s range in the lower 48 is receding northward. Conservation efforts in the eastern U.S. have shown promise of assisting to increase or reestablish more southerly populations within historic breeding range. We hope to see that here in WA and the western U.S.



Photo of loon on its nest

More information on Common Loon management in WA State can be found here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/loons/>



New Signage

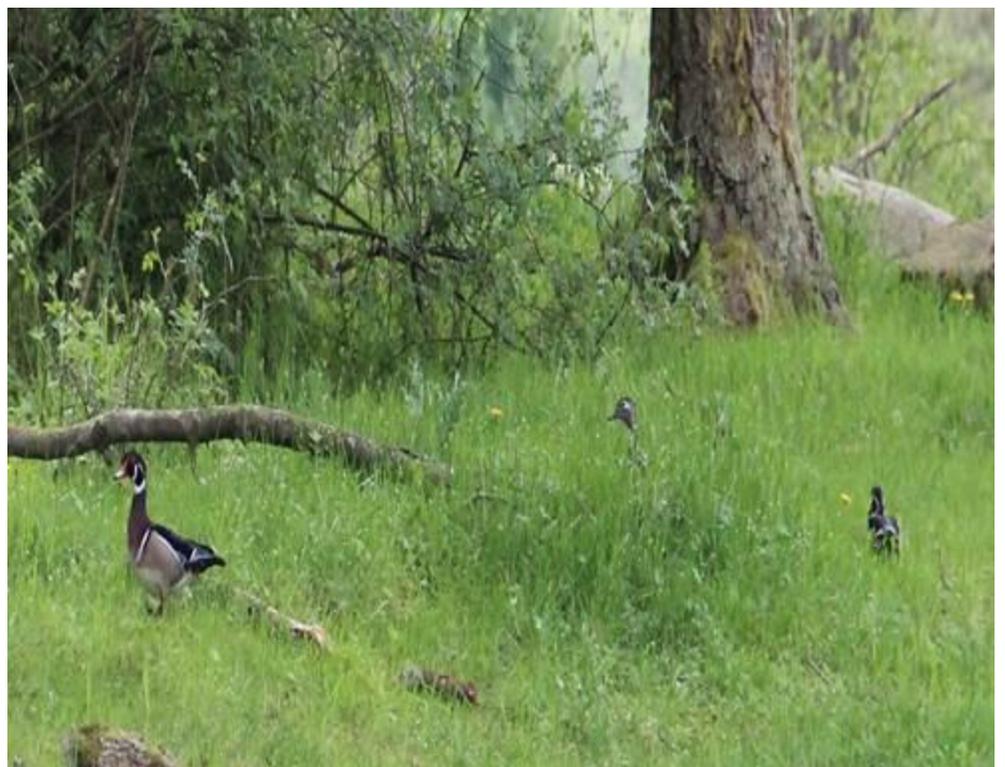
Amphibian Egg Mass Identification and Documentation Assistance – Citizen Science: Biologist Anderson provided phone tutorial to participants in this breeding amphibian documentation effort. Anderson and volunteers have noted that the WDFW Web Wildlife Observation site is having issues and not cooperating. In discussing this with Data Management it appears related to software and related issues to recent well-publicized Internet Explorer bug issues. Anderson and Data Management are continuing dialog. Anderson is contacting the zoo and volunteers to explain the situation and go with a “Plan B” for their data entry needs.

Anderson continues to provide species identification assistance to participants.



**Western Toad
burrow/old Mt.
Beaver burrow from
Mud Lake in same
loon obs effort.**

*Biologist Caldwell
observed these Wood
Duck pairs that are
apparently using nest
boxes at a small private
pond near La Conner,
WA. These cavity
nesters will hopefully
produce two broods
each this year.*



Diversity Species Contacts: Biologist Danilson followed up with a citizen and a representative of The Nature Conservancy regarding a recent possible nutria sighting at the WDFW Johnson-Debay's Slough Reserve property. This is the site where nutria were originally reported to WDFW back in 2005 and were trapped (and ultimately eradicated) in subsequent years. Danilson has contacted US Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services to develop a follow up response to this.

Sharp-tailed snake surveys: Biologists Milner tested field forms and checked cover boards on Orcas Island.

Wildlife Areas

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: The Leque Island Stakeholder Committee met at Stanwood Middle School on Wednesday evening. The committee consists of hunters, wildlife viewers, neighbors, jurisdictions, tribal co-manager staff, and other individuals interested in the Leque Island project. The objectives of the meeting were update the committee on technical work regarding development and analysis of alternatives and to give an opportunity to review and provide input on selection criteria to be used to pick preferred alternative. Sixteen committee members attended the meeting and had a valuable discussion with the WDFW and Ducks Unlimited project team. Once the meeting notes are finalized by the committee, they will be posted on the project webpage at: http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/skagit/leque_island_project.php.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Planner Williams met with biologists who work for the project consultant to discuss monitoring and adaptive management for native and invasive vegetation on the project site. The group met onsite and discussed strategies for pre-project and post-project monitoring, as well as planting plans that could be incorporated into the design plans to promote desirable marsh vegetation after the site is reintroduced to tidal influence.



Planner Williams and project consultants discussing vegetation plans on top of the dike at the Fir Island Farms project site.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with two volunteers to continue spreading mulch on the access roads within the Unit. The mulch was donated by Kemp West and a tractor and loader was donated by one of the volunteers for the task. Approximately 180 truckloads of free mulch has been placed on the access roads so far. Manager Boehm also met with Werkhoven Dairy to discuss this year's planting plan. Winter wheat has been harvested and as soon as the weather changes, field prep will commence.

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Frohning Dairy to discuss this year's planting plan. Frohning wants to increase planted acreage to 55 acres, with a combination of grass, corn and barley. Herbicide treatment has been applied to breakdown the sod-layer prior to field prep.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Sno-Valley Farms to discuss the planting plan for the new Ebey Island agricultural lease. Approximately 90 acres will be planted with grain and grass this season.

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

Wildlife Management

GMU 485 and 490 data examination: Biologist Anderson summarized the last 11 seasons of harvest for Deer and Elk Section Manager Nelson and the data management group in order to examine discrepancies in data reporting and erroneous hunts reported in, e.g. GMU 490 where no public hunting exists or 485 where hunting is permit only. Future attention will be given and D12 staff will key-in on this need to provide corrections annually in collaborative data summary efforts.

Spring Cackling Goose Survey for USFWS: Biologist Anderson submitted his and Biologist Smith's data summary of survey efforts for cackling geese in mid-March. Cackling geese were observed, many in some cases. None of them had neck bands, however, which was the goal of the survey. Banded cacklers have been observed in King Co. a number of times in the past, during annual winter waterfowl survey in early January.

Great Blue Heron and Bald Eagle Land-Use/Development Consideration: Biologist Anderson provided a summary of both WDFW and volunteer anecdotal observations of a previous heron and eagle nest site in King Co. Biologist Blatz provided additional information from internal data resources. The consultant that contacted WDFW was requesting any additional information to provide for due diligence and management consideration measures per local city code. Under the state Growth Management Act, WDFW is available to assist local municipal governments with wildlife management consideration review, per their internal code. Read more about this wildlife management relationship here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/>

Biologist Anderson found a new heron nesting site near the Region 4 office. Data will be submitted as soon as possible. Chicks were present.

WDFW WildWatch Camera Inquiry: Biologist Anderson provided summary of the history of District 12 WildWatch Cameras to staff in the Conservation Assessment Section. This was to provide for an inquiry regarding the success, use, and history of the program. More regarding WDFW's wildlife cameras here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/>

North Cascades Elk Herd Management Plan: Biologist Danilson revised a draft letter to the nine Point Elliott Tribal policy leads that was submitted under Director Everitt's signature. This letter accompanied recommendations provided by the North Cascades Elk Management Work Group, whose role is to advise WDFW in the update of the North Cascades elk herd management plan.

Breeding Waterfowl Surveys: Biologist DeBruyn participated in regional waterfowl surveys in District 14.

Hunter Education: Field coordinator Steven Dazey met with representatives of the Lynden Shotgun club to recruit volunteer hunter education instructors and access to the club so as to expand hunter education classes in Whatcom County. Dazey also delivered training materials to volunteer instructor David Vanderhoek in Lynden for his upcoming classes and discussed the need to recruit more volunteer instructors so as to better serve Whatcom county area. HE coordinator Dazey attended and evaluated the class being offered Sundays at West Coast Armory by the team lead by Jim Hickey and spoke with students about their experiences in getting into classes. I was also able to recruit one new volunteer applicant.

Skagit Wildlife Area Plan Update: Biologist Milner attended the annual Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) meeting for the Skagit Wildlife Area. The goal of the meeting was to update the CAG on accomplishments for the year.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Acquisition Team: Projects Coordinator Brokaw distributed notes from the last team meeting, which includes next steps for team members to complete to develop a strategy to increase waterfowl hunting opportunity and winter forage in the Skagit delta.

Samish Unit Wetland Enhancement Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, and Ducks Unlimited met with Skagit County staff to identify county permitting requirements for the project. The project requires several land use and environmental permits from the county, including a Special Use permit that involves public review. DU and WDFW are currently making some small modifications to the project design, and are working on setting a date for a public open house in late May to present the project, answer questions, and outline opportunities for public comments.

Samish River Unit Access Facilities Application: Projects Coordinator submitted a grant application to the Recreation and Conservation Office in the WWRP State Lands Development category. The project involves creating a parking area and vehicle turn-around pad to

accommodate a portable restroom on the Samish River Unit in the Skagit Wildlife Area. These features would improve public access to fishing, waterfowl hunting, and wildlife viewing opportunities on the property.

Island Unit: Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis prepared spill response plan as required by the 401 water quality certification for the DOE permitting for the ditch maintenance project and coordinated with CAMP program staff for response protocols.

Following concerns mentioned by Wildlife Area Advisory Group members at the meeting this week, Manger Rotton drafted an agreement with local stakeholders about equipment and services provided for the Island Unit. The agreement has been forwarded to Regional Wildlife Program Staff for review. Staff prepared corn planting areas on the Island Unit.

Staff monitored lease activities and field preparation on the Island, Samish and Leque Units.

Whatcom Wildlife Area Noxious Weed Control: Natural Resource Tech Deyo sprayed herbicides to treat scotch broom, poison hemlock and Japanese knotweed on the Lake Terrell, Intalco and Nooksack units.

Lake Terrell Water Control: Natural Resource Tech Deyo cleared grass, mud and sticks from one of the water controls at Lake Terrell. Beavers have been working to plug up the control.

Lake Terrell Barley Fields: Natural Resource Tech Deyo worked to prep the agricultural fields at Lake Terrell for barley plantings. He mowed grass, plowed, and disked the fields. 65 acres of barley will be planted this year. Barley planting will occur towards the end of the May.

Pheasant Release Program: Staff contacted DNR about the Bow Hill pheasant release site to discuss management options following next scheduled timber harvest on the site and to determine the allowable land uses within the property. Manager Kessler coordinated with two Master Hunter volunteers who will be performing repairs on the pheasant holding pens that were damaged during the February snow storm. One section of the roof netting collapsed under the weight of the snow.

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

Wildlife Management

Assistance to city of Bellevue Regarding Black Bear Complaints: Biologist Anderson corresponded with Bellevue Park Rangers regarding how to handle black bear complaints in local parks. Anderson also passed along the same information to another private party that lives up near Soaring Eagle Park in Sammamish where they have seen a sow and cubs in their area.

We live in bear country. Keep food attractants away from bears. We will always have bears around – learn to live with them and avoid creating a habituated bear through direct or indirect feeding and other problem situations that can be avoided with just a little forethought. Please see our Living with Wildlife- Black Bears for more DIY bear management techniques:
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/bears.html>

If you see a bear regularly in your area, please report it to WDFW here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/dangerous/>

Assistance to Issaquah Condominium Group – Nesting Conflict: Per request, Biologist Anderson provided recommendations and referred a Homeowners’ group to local Audubon regarding concern over habitat removal and time of year. A large portion of the group wants a grove of our native big-leaf maples removed immediately due to aesthetic reasons. The administrative management is concerned over timing and legalities due to e.g. breeding bird use. It was recommended that if the removal is purely aesthetic, wait until end of breeding season. They may work with local Audubon to survey the site for bird use and documentation so that things can proceed earlier or documentation of use by various species is provided and planned for.

Interview – Everett Herald: Biologist Anderson provided an interview to an Everett Herald column reporter regarding common pesticides and negative effects they have on wildlife, in particular birds. Conversation included DDE and relatives; as well as organophosphorus and carbamate pesticides, among others. Affected animals are often seen in a ramp-up of lethal cases or strange behavior in early spring when many of us humans are “tidying up the yard”. For alternatives to using pesticides see the WDFW Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary to reduce lawn and increase wildlife use opportunity: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/attracting/>

Also, WA Toxic Coalition offers great information on how to reduce pesticide use, their negative effects, alternatives and related information: <http://watoxics.org/>

Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary – Book Administrative Needs: Biologist Anderson worked with multiple staff at University of Washington Press to determine the base cost of Regional Program Manager Link’s authored books, Landscaping for Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest, and Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest. Anderson also discussed options for state discounts on book orders in bulk. These great resources can be purchased at the Region 4 office for \$25 or mail-order for \$28. More information can be found here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/book/>

Dike Damage Report: Biologist Caldwell received a report of a damaged dike at Indian Slough. The reporting party stated that the damage could be caused by erosion or by wildlife. After an investigation, it was determined that the reported damage did not threaten WDFW lands and that Dike District 12 needed to handle the situation. The landowners were re-contacted and informed on the situation.

Skagit County Deer & Elk Conflict: Conflict Specialist Griffith worked with the manager of a vineyard in Marblemount this week in response to deer browse damages. The manager will be deploying motion activated noise deterrents as a temporary measure.

Griffith worked on collecting and organizing meeting materials generated as a result of the North Cascades Damage Committee meetings that have been ongoing for the past year. All materials will be passed along as a record of public input to the North Cascades Elk Herd plan update.

Manager Link, Biologists Danilson and DeBruyn, and Specialist Griffith all attended a “technical committee” meeting with representatives of the Point Elliott Treaty Tribes. The group discussed a variety of topics relative to North Cascades elk management and elk damage management. The group is developing a damage management plan between WDFW and the Tribes that sets forth roles and responsibilities of each party regarding reported elk damages. The group spent much of the meeting discussing individual perspectives and overall vision of the damage plan.

Region #4’s volunteer coordinator Steven Dazey met with DFW biologist Michael Smith to review upcoming volunteer service needs in King county district #12. Volunteer coordinator Dazey also met with natural resources Derek Hacker about volunteer project to repair tagging and damage to the Seattle fishing pier shelters.

Leque Island stakeholders meeting: Biologist Milner attended an evening meeting to update stakeholders in progress on the Leque Island potential restoration project.

Private Lands/Access Management

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site Enrollment: Biologist Caldwell contacted and set up a meeting to discuss a previously enrolled WQH site in Skagit County. The site was recently sold to a new private land owner. The upcoming meeting will be held to discuss hunting access options and payment structures given that the landowner agrees to bring the property back into the program in 2014. If this property cannot be brought back into the program, multiple WQH sites may be affected.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Site and Equipment Management: Technician Otto applied site management duties (mowing and spraying canary reed grass) on approximately 7 acres at the Riverbend WQH unit in Skagit and Whatcom Counties. Technician Otto applied 225 gallons of herbicide at Riverbend and 150 gallons of spray at the Harksell unit in Whatcom County.

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Biologist Caldwell and Technician Otto continued coordinated efforts to utilize Migratory Bird Enhancement funding in Whatcom, Skagit and Snohomish Counties. Biologist Caldwell created payment structure scenarios for three Whatcom and Skagit County landowners. These scenarios were produced to show potential payments based on WQH enrollment in 2014.

Spring Bear Hunter Management: Biologist Caldwell contacted Sierra Pacific Timber Company staff to provide status updates and harvest success information. Next week, permit hunters will be contacted to verify any unreported harvests in the Monroe and North Skagit

Areas. Biologist Caldwell and Technician Otto responded to hunter concerns regarding locked, damaged and unlocked gates (gates #1, 2 & 9) in the Monroe Hunt Unit. Technician Otto resolved gate maintenance issues, while Biologist Caldwell relayed information to hunters, DNR staff and private timber company staff about the issues. Below is a photo of a damaged (cut with a torch) gate in the Monroe Spring Bear Hunt area. Biologist Caldwell performed access gate surveys to identify maintenance needs and concerns in the North Skagit and Monroe Spring Bear Hunt areas.



Damaged (cut with a torch) gate in the Monroe Spring Bear Hunt area.

Wildlife Areas

Management Plan Update: Manager Kessler worked on the Whatcom Wildlife Area Management Plan Update and prepped for the Wildlife Area Advisory Committee meeting which will occur this week.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated volunteer activities for three Master Hunters this week. Volunteers are focusing on ground prep and mowing at the Cherry Valley barn and pheasant pen. Grass is being cut, trees are being removed from unwanted areas, and plants in the nursery have been re-spaced to prevent shade mortality. With assistance from Steve Dazey, Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator, eight Master Hunters have committed to at least 20 hours each of volunteer time. A group work day is planned for May 17th.

Skagit Headquarters: Staff prepared for and attended the Skagit Wildlife Area Advisory Group meeting. The objective of the meeting is to discuss the plan update process and to identify projects and issues of concern for the next planning cycle. The group requested improved communications and updates on the status of restoration projects and other wildlife area activities.

GOAL 4: SUPPORTING OUR WORKFORCE, IMPROVING BUSINESS PROCESSES, AND INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY

Private Lands/Access

Private Lands Access Program Management: Biologist Caldwell coordinated agendas with technician staff pertinent to program goals and objectives for the Private Lands Access Program. Vehicle mileage and spending reports were also submitted this week by all PLAP staff.

Skagit County Acquisition Team Accomplishments: Task #1- Determine how many acres of voluntary winter waterfowl forage are annually planted in the delta. Action: Skagit Delta Cover Crop Meetings: Biologist Caldwell contacted and met with Washington State University, University of Washington, USDA-NRCS, and the Western Washington Agricultural Association to discuss annual winter cover crop acreage information (on private lands) across the Skagit Delta. So far pertinent data has not been found. These data will be used to provide an estimate of potential available waterfowl forage during their winter migration. These estimates may influence future management decisions across the Skagit Delta area.

Task #2 - Translate acres into hunting units (sites). Develop an average acreage associated with an average quality hunt unit based on existing data. Action: Based on the available data (2009-2013), Biologist Caldwell calculated that an average hunt site in Skagit County encompasses approximately 39.4 huntable acres. Of these “huntable acres”, there is the potential for no less than one designated blind/hunt location meeting the desired quality site components. There is no set min or max acreage requirement for a site. All sites must comply with the definition below.

Task #3 - Define a quality waterfowl hunting unit. Action: A Waterfowl Quality Hunt Unit is defined as: A managed hunt area (meeting satisfactory site characteristics conducive with safety requirements and feeding and harboring a waterfowl species) that provides reduced hunting competition and hunting access on lands (public or private) to a set amount of individuals. These features combined should increase the probability of success and satisfaction, therefore improving the “quality” of a hunting experience.

Task #4 – Identify/map priority areas in the Skagit delta where WDFW would like to establish quality hunting sites: Determine limiting factors inhibiting enrollment. Action: Biologist Caldwell determined that sites are partly limited by geographic availability and landowner willingness. Site enrollments are mainly limited based on the number of sites meeting the definition of a “Quality Hunt Site”. A map was produced that shows the available areas where we do not currently have any active Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites. This map only provides an indicator of potential use based on availability.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Sandhill Crane Surveys: District Wildlife Biologist Anderson participated in the annual coordinated sandhill crane breeding survey at Conboy National Wildlife Refuge. Survey conditions were compromised by periodic heavy rains during the two day survey. To date a total of 14 breeding pairs have been documented to have initiated nesting. In addition, nesting has started at the Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve and on private land south of the Glenwood Valley. One subadult sandhill crane (photo) that was banded as a juvenile in 2013, was observed near its hatching site this week at Conboy National Wildlife Refuge. Sandhill cranes from Washington’s breeding population typically winter in the Sacramento Valley of California.



Subadult sandhill crane banded as a juvenile in 2013.

Western Pond Turtle Management: Biologists George, Holman, Bergh, Hallock, Stephens participated in this week's continuation of the 2014 study of western pond turtles at the Sondino site. Priorities for this year include continuing to evaluate the shell disease condition among the population, collecting specific individuals for veterinary biopsies related to the shell disease condition, capturing sufficient individuals to generate a population estimate for the Sondino site, collecting young for the head-starting program, and conducting bull-frog control. The capture effort currently involves 52 traps set in 5 of Sondino's primary water bodies.

Through 19 days of trap checks, 214 total captures have occurred comprised of 119 individual turtles. Additionally, six hatchling pond turtles have been captured and delivered to the Oregon Zoo. Also, nine bull frogs were captured in hoop traps and removed. One animal found dead by predation has been submitted for necropsy. Finally, six of the animals targeted for biopsy has been captured and transferred to the Oregon Zoo.



Healthy wild male turtle that will be sent to Oregon Zoo for shell biopsy

Butler Creek Wildlife Connectivity Project: District Wildlife Biologist Anderson and Habitat Biologist Kolb met with Washington State DOT Biologist McAllister to review the fish and



Site visit to fish and wildlife underpass on Highway 97 near Satus Pass in Klickitat County

wildlife underpass on Highway 97 near Satus Pass in Klickitat County. This project was completed in 2013 with the purpose of improving fish passage and providing a wildlife migratory corridor under Highway 97. This stretch of highway has historically had significant deer mortalities and was designed to improve highway crossing for all wildlife species. Preliminary results indicate that deer, bear, coyote, and bobcat all have used the underpass. Currently there are discussions to consider another phase of the project to improve stream bank stability due to

recent high water channelization. The goal would be to enhance an upland bench for improved wildlife passage.

Wildlife Areas

Shillapoo Wildlife Area Reiger and McBride Tree Planting: Technician Sample worked on mowing the Reiger and McBride tree plantings on the Shillapoo Wildlife area to reduce competition between the tall grass (mix of timothy and reed canary) and the young trees and shrubs. Many of the trees are still short enough to quickly become shaded out as the grass grows up to several feet. These plantings will be mowed again in July. A black-tailed deer was seen in the Reiger tree planting and seemed undisturbed by the tractor activity. Also, several red-tailed hawks took advantage of the freshly mowed area to hunt mice and voles and were very successful.



McBride tree planting (black-tailed deer along tree line)

Klickitat Wildlife Area Spring Creek Canarygrass Control: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven visited the segment of Spring Creek that was treated last September to achieve control of invasive canarygrass. Van Leuven found that the efficacy of the treatment was greater than expected, considering the extent of the problem. The area that was treated with AquaNeat showed very little new growth within the treated area, while the untreated areas exhibit about 12 inches or more of green growth above the old leaves and stems from last year. The attached photo shows the area of dead grass in the middle ground where the infestation was treated, with a band of green grass appearing just beyond, where no treatment was applied.



*Treated & Untreated Areas of
Canary Grass*

Private Lands/Access

NRCS SW Washington Local Work Group Meeting: Biologist Stephens attended a meeting with local producers and representatives from Natural Resource Agencies to set the funding priorities for NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentive's Program (EQIP). EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers in order to address natural resource concerns specific to their region and to implement practices that have environmental benefits. After a very lengthy discussion and some persistent lobbying from a couple of small forest landowners, the allocations for each producer type was set similar to last year with the forestry group getting a slight increase in percentage of total funds. The small forest landowners

also opted to set aside a portion of that funding specifically to address the back-log of pre-commercial thin applications that have not been getting funded each year.

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

Wildlife Areas

Cowlitz Wildlife Area Parking Lot and Road Maintenance: Wildlife Area staff have completed re-surfacing the gravel parking lots and vehicle turn-outs for the fishing public on the Swofford Pond Unit and Cowlitz River Brim Bar Unit. Staff also completed 7 miles of roadside spraying on the Peterman Hill Unit for invasive and noxious weeds.

Private Lands Hunt By Written Permission: Conflict Specialist McDonald and Biologist Stephens signed a Hunt By Written Permission agreement with the new landowner of Finn Ridge East in Klickitat County. WDFW is very thankful to the landowner for making 160 acres of upland game bird habitat available to hunters.

Public Access: Conflict Specialist McDonald performed turkey hunter outreach on Western Pacific Timberlands (WPT) in Klickitat County. Handouts with rules for recreating on WPT land and a Feel Free to Hunt agreement area map were given to hunters and placed on windshields of parked vehicles. McDonald also picked up trash along several access roads.

Access at Mineral Lake Lower: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes sprayed the parking area and hauled 30 pounds of garbage left after the opening weekend. The wet weather seemed to keep some folks from going out on opening day compared to previous years.



Mineral Lake

Stinson Flats Camp



Stinson Flats: The group that celebrates Mayday every year was back and set up 15 camps onsite already by Wednesday.

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

Wildlife Areas

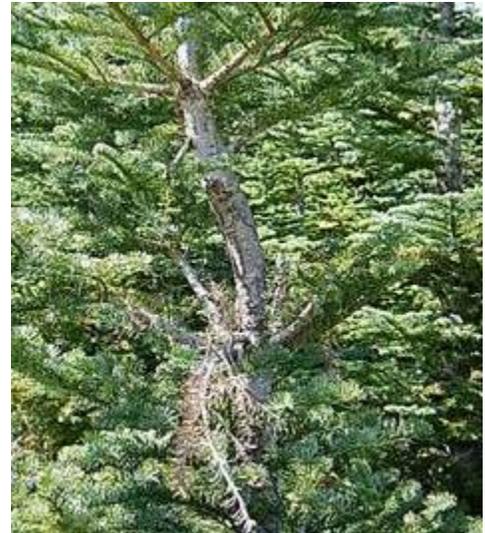
Cowlitz Wildlife Area Advisory Group Meeting: Ten members of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area Advisory Group who represented 7 stakeholder groups met at the Morton office. WDFW staff met with group members to discuss the 2013 management plan updates and accomplishments, new Wildlife Area concerns, summary of the annual report to FERC, and 2014 performance

measures. There was also a short question and answer session with Regional Wildlife Program Manager Jonker regarding elk hoof disease in the southwest Washington herd.

Wildlife Conflict

District 9 Wildlife Conflict: Conflict Specialist McDonald toured a Glenwood Valley ranch with regular elk presence. Forty elk were present on one field mid-morning and 200 elk were observed there last weekend. The ranch has a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement with WDFW. McDonald lent the rancher a bird banger to help with elk hazing. The farmer will install mylar strips where elk exit the forest and he will look into a liquid scent deterrent.

District 10 Elk Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin continues to work with a Christmas tree farmer in the Vader area. He has experienced damage through the years from elk rubbing their antlers on his trees. Damage caused by elk rubbing antlers on Christmas trees results in crooked growth and bare spots in trees. If the trees survive they can be used as bow trees.



Damage caused by elk rubbing antlers on Christmas trees.

Elk Deterrence: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin contacted a property owner in Castle Rock who has been using a propane cannon to deter elk from his fields. He is very pleased with the cannon and said it continues to work after using it for a full month. Conklin will continue to allow the property owner to use the cannon until there is a need somewhere else or the elk move off the property.

Deer Damage: Conflict Specialist Conklin is working with a very frustrated property owner who is experiencing damage from deer to his gardens and fences. He expressed concerns that his cattle will contract the hair loss disease from the deer as well. Conklin worked with Wildlife Biologist Bergh to get documentation on hair loss to give to the property owner. Conklin will meet with him next week to give advice such as noise deterrents, sprays, and Mylar tape. Conklin will also suggest using bird bangers and possibly a Critter Gitter.

The “Critter Gitter” noise device may prove to be more useful for deer than first thought. The trail video camera captured a deer running away after being spooked by the alarm. The trail video was moved to another location where deer are more prevalent to get a better baseline of the effectiveness of the noise device (see attached video clip).



Bear Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin checked the trail cameras at the Curtis property. The property owner and Conklin walked the entire property to check for bear damage. So far there is no sign of bear but plenty of deer and one Barred Owl who was very interested in the activity in his forest.

Conflict Specialist Conklin spent the day with a hound hunter who reports damage for a private timber company. Conklin wanted to ensure the hound hunter uses the same criteria as the Department when reporting damage. One fresh peel was detected in a conifer stand that has significant past damage.



Bear Damage verification

Public Safety: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin received a call from an individual who was calling on behalf of his Kalama River neighborhood. The person reported his wife took their small dog outside at night and saw a very large bear in the yard. They asked Conklin for advice on how to deter the bear from coming in so close to the homes. Conklin gave them advice about not leaving out garbage, hummingbird feeders, bird feeders, barbecues, or anything else that may attract the bear by smell. Conklin will contact the neighbors of the reporting party and educate them as well and provide the Living with Wildlife brochure and her business card. Conklin contacted Enforcement to let them know of the report.

REGION 6

Wildlife Management

Checkerspot Reintroduction: Biologists Linders, Randolph, Walker and Johnson conducted distance sampling surveys for adult Taylor's checkerspots on all six occupied sites in the Puget lowlands this week. The first protocol survey was conducted at R50 on Monday morning in suboptimal conditions, so a second survey was conducted later the same day. The first survey returned a count of 77 checkerspots, while the second produced a count of 280. A count completed at R76 the same day returned a count of 273, and 632 two days later. Counts at SCS, GHP and T7S (new site) had returns of 56, 44, and 53, respectively. No checkerspots were observed at PCM, a site which received just one release in 2012, however one checkerspot was observed on two different dates on a distant part of that prairie. Numbers were higher at all sites until Friday, when a count of 479 was obtained at R76, with just 13 at R50 on Saturday. While weather may have been a factor in these surveys, they were conducted in protocol or near protocol conditions. Searches were also conducted at Mortar Point 13 and Range 81 at JBLM to follow up on scattered sighting locations reported in 2013. Three sightings were observed at the

latter site, though at least two were likely the same individual. Most of the area searched lacked host plants, but contained high quality nectar resources.

Sequim Checkerspot Reintroduction Site: Biologist Ament conducted two surveys at the site near Sequim last week. On April 28, 2014 she conducted one survey. There was full sunshine with prominent shadows for the entire survey. The temperature ranged from 56 to 57 degrees. Unfortunately, there was a very strong cool wind that ranged from 8.3 to 11.3 mph. There were not official protocol weather conditions for the entire survey. A total of 404 TCB's were counted during the survey. Adult butterflies were observed on each of the 23 sections on the route. Biologist Ament concluded that there would have been more TCB activity and a higher count if the wind conditions were different. No larvae were observed during the survey. There are very few plants in bloom at the site. Only a few dandelions were still in bloom. Biologist Ament conducted another survey at the site on May 1, 2014. Survey conditions were excellent. All protocol conditions were finally met for a survey at this site. A total of 614 TCB's were counted. This is the highest count of TCB's observed at this site since surveys were initiated in 2008. Private Land Biologist Ivan Stocker also conducted surveys at the site last week but has not yet reported the results of his surveys. Last week or this week may be the peak of the flight period at this site. Surveys will continue each week. Biologist Ament will try and conduct two surveys at the site this week.

Wildlife Areas

Taylor's Checkerspot Habitat Enhancement: Biologist Linders met with land managers from WDFW, DNR, CNLM and JBLM to discuss potential changes to the data collection protocols for the 2014 field season. Baseline data are being used to create spatially explicit management plans and determine site readiness for reintroduction. The first round of data were collected in 2013 and focused on occupied sites and those closest to being ready for release. Data collection in 2014 will focus on some adjacent areas that are of lower quality as well as some new sites that where no mapping occurred in 2013.

Media Event at Glacial Heritage: Biologist Linders met with reporter John Dodge from the Olympian to talk about progress on the Taylor's Checkerspot reintroduction and advertise the spectacle of the Puget lowland prairies in peak spring bloom. The event was organized by the Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) with grant funding from the Department of Defense. The CNLM manages Glacial Heritage Preserve on behalf of Thurston County, where it will host Prairie Appreciation Day on Saturday, May 10. This event is attended by about 1,000 people of all ages and focuses on a combination of education and appreciation for this rare and unique ecosystem.