

# Wildlife Program

Week of August 25-31, 2014

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE.***

**Fisher:** Biologist Jeff Lewis, Listing and Recovery Section Manager Penny Becker, and Diversity Division Manager Eric Gardner drafted a letter for Director Anderson, which formally requested the continued assistance of the British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations (BC FLNRO) in supporting fisher reintroductions in the forests of the Cascades beginning in the fall of 2014. The regional directors of the National Park Service (NPS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) also sent letters to the Ministry requesting their continued support of the Cascades fisher reintroductions. These letters were sent to prompt the continued support from the Ministry, which is currently challenged by the need to implement a recent Canadian Supreme Court decision to conduct more comprehensive consultations with First Nations groups. The fisher reintroduction project is an activity that would require consultation with First Nations groups in BC.

Biologist Jeff Lewis participated in a conference call with the NPS regarding the roll out of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Cascades fisher reintroduction. The goal is to release the EA on 15 September and we are discussing the possibility of 3 public meetings (joint NPS and WDFW; Seattle, Randle/Packwood, Vancouver) in late September and early October in association with the roll out. Lewis and NPS staff are also finalizing the purchase of 45 abdominal implant transmitters for fishers for the proposed fall 2014 launch of the fisher reintroduction in the south Cascades.

**Tufted Puffin Status Review:** Biologist Gary Wiles completed revisions to the tufted puffin status review, which will soon be released for the 3-month public review period. The biggest revisions to the document involved the incorporation of some older USFWS data for the San Juan Islands that did not appear in Speich and Wahl's (1989) *Catalog of Washington Seabird Colonies*, and the establishment of improved criteria for defining historical puffin breeding sites. These changes resulted in a minor revision to the number of historical puffin colonies recognized for Washington and extended the use of several colonies into the 1980s. This means that the loss of colonies in the state since the 1980s has been greater than previously believed, which supports other data indicating that puffins have been in steep decline since then.

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

**WildWatch Camera System Functional Review:** Section Manager Bruce Thompson and Biologists Greg Falxa and Chris Sato reviewed the 9 WildWatch Camera systems to determine continued functionality and needs for near-term servicing. Burrowing owl, harbor seal, and bluebird/swallow camera systems are operating normally. Recent image and signal transmission problems had occurred with the osprey, bald eagle, and salmon cameras. The image was cleared

on the salmon camera, and diagnostics were initiated to determine problems associated with stalled images for the osprey and eagle cameras. Actions were outlined for near-term retrieval of all equipment associated with the great blue heron camera that did not function in 2014 because herons have shifted nesting locations. Assessment is underway to determine the best timing for retrieval of barn owl camera equipment pending the schedule for closure of the Issaquah hatchery where the camera system is located. A previously established bat camera system is not operational because the equipment was stolen prior to the 2014 viewing year from a private building where the system was located. Some prospects are being investigated for a possible bat camera opportunity at a building on the Evergreen State College campus. Signal transmission from any of the camera systems can interrupt unexpectedly and is a continual challenge to address.

## **REGION 1**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE.***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Preseason Deer Surveys:** *District 2* – Biologist Lowe finished the first round of deer composition surveys (and learned some new areas) in Game Management Units (GMUs) 130, 136, 139, and 142. Biologist Atamian ran the last two deer surveys in GMU 124 (148 deer, 73 does, 49 fawns, & 26 bucks) and GMU 127 (74 deer, 37 does, 20 fawns, and 17 bucks).

*District 3* – Biologists Wik and Vekasy conducted deer composition surveys in GMUs 145, 149, 154, 162, and 163. The summary of all August surveys for mule deer are: 1,015 total, 248 bucks, 562 does, 205 fawn, with a buck ratio of 44/100 does. For white-tailed deer the numbers are: 824 total, 226 bucks, 461 does, 137 fawns, with a buck ratio of 49/100 does.



***Buck group observed during a morning survey in GMU 142.***

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**West Branch Little Spokane Moose:** While working at West Branch Little Spokane Wildlife Area (WLA) this week, wildlife area staff observed this mature bull moose in the Upper West Branch of the Little Spokane River.

***A closer look at the bull moose.***



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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Asotin Creek WA – Charley Creek Cleanup:** Biologist Woodall, Wildlife Area Manager Dice, Technician Meisner, and Volunteer Steveson spent a couple days cleaning up the road and spraying weeds up Charley Creek. The amount of weeds up there is so overwhelming that it was best to just start on the road. While the others trimmed branches off the road, Woodall sprayed 162 gallons of herbicide product using the ATV sprayer from the bottom entry gate up to the Zig Zag Grade. Noxious weed control on this new acquisition will be quite a challenge. Staff also looked at the operating principle behind the water system at the CREP shrub planting project on a recent agency purchase.

**REGION 2**

***WOLVES:***

**Lookout Pack:** Specialist Heilhecker talked over the phone and visited in person with the rancher and range riders operating in the Lookout Pack territory. They discussed wolf locations in relation to livestock locations and how the program can be improved next year. She also got paperwork prepared to submit for payment. Specialist Heilhecker checked a trail camera she placed in the national forest south of Twisp. The trail camera was set at the end of June before the wildfire. There were photos of deer, a coyote with a pup, a bobcat, a bear, a cougar, and a moose with a calf. There were no wolf photos.

***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE.***

**Wildlife Management**

**Northern Leopard Frog Reintroduction Feasibility:** Biologist E. Duvuvuei coordinated and executed a large-scale DNA collection effort throughout the Northern Leopard Frog Management Area involving volunteers, master hunters, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff (including biologists Finger and O. Duvuvuei). Over 300 toe clips were taken from leopard frogs throughout 5 of the 6 sub-units. Four sub-units have had all ponds surveyed for metamorphs, and the remaining 2 sub-units will likely only be partially surveyed due to time constraints. This effort exceeded all expectations. Additionally, over 75 chytrids samples were collected from leopard frogs. Thus, most of the contractual obligations have been met for this contract with Ecology. Additional efforts will be made this week to attempt to get DNA from the last sub-unit, which has not yet been surveyed. A more detailed summary of this effort, with photos, will be provided next week.

Biologist Finger and E. Duvuvuei also surveyed a portion of the North Potholes Reserve which had leopard frogs when last surveyed during 2007. Unfortunately, no leopard frogs were observed.

## Wildlife Areas

**Carlton Complex Management:** Project Forester Bass met with Doug Kuehn, the WDFW department forester, to discuss survivorship of trees in burned forested areas, future needs for hazard tree management, possible avenues for wood removal (harvest, firewood permits, etc.), prescriptions to restore, as possible, remaining forested habitat, and WDFW policies for habitat protection. Bass also met and led a field assessment meeting of burned forested acres in the Methow Wildlife Area's Carlton Complex affected land. Discussions and action plans were put together by the members, including Greg Shirato, Clay Sprague, Paul Dahmer, Richard Tveten, Rob Wottlin, Dale Swedberg, Sheri Furnari, and Doug Kuehn, all of whom provided a wealth of knowledge and support for action in the MWA. Possible Chiliwist forested acres were also discussed, but road accessibility made that small acreage untimely for a field visit. Following the meeting, Bass wrote up a flexible and historic density based prescription to be finalized this week, composed a re-cap with maps and beginning estimates for costs and acreages needing to be treated, and met with U.S. Forest Service (USFS) pre-sale forester Mark Issac to discuss right of way, hazard trees, and post-fire thinning operations on adjoining public lands.

**Chelan WLA:** Over the past couple of weeks Natural Resource Technicians Brad Zabreznik and Kevin Vallance have completed a variety of needed projects on the Swakane and Chelan Butte Units. At Swakane they performed much needed maintenance on three shrub plots including working on the drip irrigation system, mowing annual weeds, and weeding around each plant. These plots are in their second growing season and are progressing along quite nicely. With the assistance of Ed Pierson, Maintenance Mechanic, Kevin and Brad also replaced the last cable gate on the wildlife area with an all steel swing gate that will better restrict vehicle access to the fields in Swakane Canyon. This eliminates the safety and liability issues of cable gates. While in



Swakane Canyon Kevin and Brad also reposted signs, cleaned out 3 culverts, disked 3 plots that will be planted to shrubs next year, repaired a leak in the irrigation mainline, and cleaned up a rather large pile of cans and bottles left at a favorite party spot.

*Natural Resource Technician Vallance using new offset flail mower to mow between shrub rows in Swakane Canyon.*

### **Chiliwist Flood Damage**

**Assessment:** Manager Haug assessed the flood damage on the Chiliwist Wildlife Area following heavy rains last Friday. Damage was most heavily on the county road leading to the

Chiliwist and on the agency access road leading towards the Stout inholding (see picture below). Significant damage was also evident on the Chiliwist Irrigation Improvement Project where

control gates were blocked, the fish screen was filled in, and rock weirs were shifted. Manager Haug discussed the damage with WDFW engineer Gigstead and determined a course of action. The crews worked all week cleaning up the damage and repairing the system to pre-flood condition. Manager Haug prepared a damage assessment for potential financial assistance.

***Damage from last Friday's flooding on the Chiliwist; the agency access road washed out and temporarily fixed by the Yakima construction shop*** – Photo by Brandon Boulger



### **Private Lands/Access**

**Pygmy rabbits:** Biologist Dougherty and Biologist Comstock spent one day assisting the pygmy rabbit recovery team with the pygmy rabbit round-up. Despite a grueling earlier morning, the private lands biologists were able to master most skills necessary to capture and release pygmy rabbits quickly and efficiently. Biologist Dougherty was even able to successfully release a rabbit back in to enclosure, even though it was supposed to be released back into the wild. It is worth noting that pygmy rabbits have a fairly devious and crafty nature despite being considered cute by most nature lovers.



***One perk of early morning work is a beautiful sunrise over the Sage-steppe, but sometimes that leads to hungry biologists. Duct tape is not the breakfast of champions, but is sometimes necessary to fend off starvation. Biologist Comstock mentioned being hungry, but no one took her seriously*** – Photos by Sean Dougherty

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Bighorn Sheep:** Biologist Gallie was able to complete a partial count on the Manson sheep herd. Hot temperatures and poor visibility from smoke/haze have provided difficult conditions on getting a complete count on this herd, which will be attempted again later this fall. Focusing on ewe and lamb groups, a total of 47 sheep were observed, including 26 ewes, 15 lambs, and 6 rams. This limited sample of the herd (about 1/3) shows promising productivity, where this herd has traditionally struggled. Biologist Gallie forwarded on a field report of bighorn sheep (from the Chelan Butte herd) in close proximity to domestic goats to Research Associate Heinse, who is working on outreach with domestic sheep goat owners in and around bighorn sheep range. Once livestock owners are aware of the potential disease transmission issues with bighorns and domestics, they will look to find a solution that prevents possible contact with the two.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Shooting Preserve:** Biologist Gallie and Braaten met with an applicant for a shooting preserve in Douglas County. While touring the area and discussing the planned activities, we spent most of the time discussion possible impacts to sage and sharp-tailed grouse. The applicant is well aware of the recovery efforts that are ongoing and is willing to implement efforts to reduce chances of impacting grouse.



***Proposed Shooting Preserve, Douglas County***

**Wildlife Rehab:** Biologist Gallie coordinated placement of a mule deer fawn into a rehab facility from Douglas County (very unusual late birth – probably only a week or two old) and the release of a burrowing owl that originated from the Moses Lake area.

## **REGION 3**

### **GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE.**

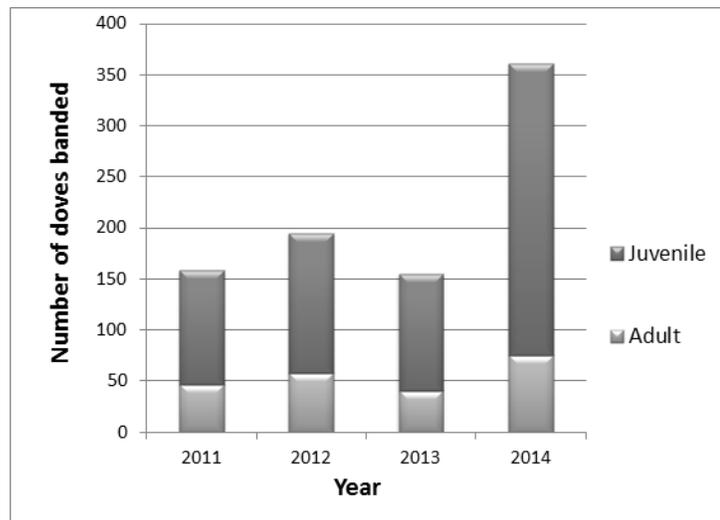
#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Sak and NRT2 Medina began banding ducks with the help of local volunteers at the Sunnyside HQ Unit. The total for the week was 79 ducks.

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman worked with Section Manager Dahmer on information needed to approve the proposed timber sale on Oak Creek. Huffman also reviewed the FPA for the timber sale which is ready for submittal to DNR.

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Mourning Doves:** Capture has wrapped up for the 2014 season. With other trapping sites in Regions 2 and 3 struggling, Biologist Gregory was fortunate to have good success with dove banding in Franklin County. This year a total of 361 birds were marked. Of these 75 (21%) were adults and 286 (79%) were juvenile (i.e. hatched this year). Compared with 2013, the number of adult and juveniles marked increases of 83% and 151%, respectively. The total number of birds captured increased 132%. The 4-year average is 218 doves banded.



#### ***Mourning dove banding results in District 4, 2011-2014.***

**Ducks:** Biologist Gregory and Technician Kaelber were joined by new Waterfowl Specialist Wilson for a third day of capture in Franklin County. It was another successful day, with 82 new mallards captured and marked. So far, 323 mallards have been banded. With two more days of trapping planned, last year's capture total of 385 mallards is within reach! In addition, several pintails and a couple of wood ducks were banded. Specialist Wilson offered some fantastic pointers to help with aging and sexing captured birds. His knowledge and assistance were greatly appreciated.



***A young pintail drake***

**Private Lands Access Technician Pat Kaelber:** Kaelber, District Biologist Gregory and Waterfowl Specialist Wilson banded ducks on Tuesday, although trapping success was down a bit, with only ~70 new Mallards banded.

**Bighorn Sheep:** Biologists Bernatowicz, Moore, Muckleshoot Tribal Biologists, and volunteers attempted to dart yearling bighorn sheep in the Yakima River Canyon for disease testing. Bernatowicz was able to dart and sample one yearling ram. While attempting to dart, counts of sheep groups were obtained. A total of 150 ewes with only 15 lambs were observed. The results were not surprising as earlier data indicated high lamb mortality this year due to pneumonia. One portion of the canyon has not been surveyed, but the interns reported a new dead lamb in the area during the week.

**Wildlife Conflict:** Biologist Bernatowicz spoke with conflict specialist Wetzel about wolves in the Teanaway. The pack had temporarily relocated to very near a domestic sheep flock. Options were discussed with Regional Director Livingston and Wildlife Program Manager McCorquodale. Over the weekend the wolf pack moved back across the valley and away from the domestic sheep. No depredations were reported.

**Colockum Bull Study:** Biologist Moore performed an aerial search for a VHF beacon of a bull collar that has failed to update its GPS data for well over 30 days. Moore flew all of GMU's 328, 329, and a portion of GMU's 251 and 335, but failed to find the collar's signal. Two other collars were searched for as well. One that has been missing since last April was not found, but another that has not updated for 7 days was found and hopefully will update soon.

**Umtanum/Selah Butte Bighorn Sheep Project:** Moore worked with District Biologist Bernatowicz, Muckleshoot Tribal Biologists, and volunteers to dart yearling bighorn sheep for disease testing. Bernatowicz was able to dart and sample one yearling ram during the effort.



#### ***BHS Observation blind***

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** We have taken custody of 2 cattleguards obtained by Steve Wetzel from the Yakima Training Center. Assistant Manager Hunt picked them up at Mt. Vale on Tuesday and transported them to Joe Watt. Wednesday, Schnebly and Hunt offloaded them and Hunt returned the transport trailer to the Wenas. Thanks to Cindi and Jody for the use of the trailer. We hope to use these cattleguards as part of the upcoming Parke Creek livestock/boundary fence project, and we may have a shot at obtaining some more in October. Thank you, Steve.

***Tech Schnebly off-loads cattleguards for the Parke Creek fence project***

Tech Hill checked on the electric fence enclosures in Little Parke Creek, Parke Creek, and the Whiskey Dick/Skookumchuck section. The Little Parke Creek pond enclosure was missing its charger and it does not appear to have been moved by animals. It might be in the hands of another party at this time. All other enclosures had their chargers and were sending an electrical pulse through the fence.



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

**Wildlife Areas**

**LT Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Winegeart compiled and submitted documents for another PDR.

**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Manager Confer Morris submitted responsive records for PDRs 14390, 14421, and 14436.

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman sent pictures and descriptions of the displays in the Oak Creek Visitor’s Center to Peggy Ushakoff in the Public Information Office. Ushakoff is working with wildlife area staff to update the old and out of date information on the displays.

**Wildlife Management**

**District 4 Wildlife Conflict Specialist:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored harvest of DPP permits in Elk Area 3721. Seven antlerless and one spike bull elk were harvested this past week on DPP permits. Harvest since to August 1 opener is 31 antlerless and 6 spike bull elk.

**Wildlife Conflict Specialist:** Several landowners in the north Kittitas Valley called to complain about the “gang of eight” large bulls that have taken residence near Coleman Canyon. The bulls are damaging trees and bedding in front yards. Specialist Wetzel discussed hazing options with each landowner.



A landowner in the Reecer Creek area reported her horse attacked by a cougar. Officers Scherzinger and Peterson followed up and could find no definitive evidence that a cougar was involved. Specialist Wetzel also met with the landowner and will set up a camera in a riparian area on a site that has had cougar depredations in the past. Wounds on the horse were inconclusive.

Two master hunters started repairs to a damaged elk fence near West Valley. Specialist Wetzel coordinated materials and project details. Salvage gates were generously donated from the Wenas Wildlife Area to replace the missing gates in this area. Several master hunters called to inquire about projects and were referred to landowners in damage areas that have requested help.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Winegeart attended the last day of Supervisor's training, and was drawn for CDL-drivers' random drug test.

**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor worked on a BOG budget request for habitat restoration and fence rebuild/repair related to the Cottonwood #2 fire. Confer Morris coordinated with Amy Windrope, Habitat Program BPA liaison, to pull together the justification and submit the BOG request to BPA.

Manager Confer Morris provided a field tour of the Wenas WLA to Lean Performance Manager Rob Geddis. While touring, they checked on Oasis Spring protection work that was done last fall. Everything has held up well and so far there is no evidence of anyone breaking through the barrier rock.

Manager Confer Morris and Access Manager Garcia attended module 4 of supervisor training.

### **Access Program**

Due to the recent break-in, Access staff was down to one service truck while they had a broken window repaired and essential equipment replaced. Garcia has started purchasing some of the smaller tools and is comparing prices before purchasing a new generator. Access staff has developed a daily procedure to minimize these types of events:

- Remove visible valuables from cab
- Walk around to lock compartments
- Have designated parking by the security camera
- Purchase lockable fuel caps

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman spent 1 day in Supervisor Training.

Assistant Manager Berry spent a day repairing a section of fence on the Cowiche Unit North of the creek. Beavers had dropped a tree across the fence, knocking down several posts.

**Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area:** Manager Bjornstrom attended the final day of a 5-day training session on the ins and outs of being a supervisor. The training was held in Selah at the local fire department.

### **Wildlife Management**

**District 4 Wildlife Biologist:** Biologist Gregory attended Module 4 of Leadership Training in Selah and met with RPM McCorquodale and Biologists Stutzman and Hand to discuss District 4 roles and responsibilities.

**Private Lands Biologist:** Stutzman attended the final module of the Department's Leadership Training in Selah on Wednesday.

**District 8 Wildlife Biologist:** Biologist Bernatowicz spent 1 day in the final module of Leadership Training.

## **REGION 4**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE.***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Prohibited Wildlife Efforts:** Biologist Anderson worked with Enforcement and Fish programs to determine the legal status of a captive alligator snapping turtle and the next steps given its legal status. All species of snapping turtles are illegal in the state of Washington due to our temperate environment and these species' potential to live in the wild here and create issues with native species and habitats. More information on prohibited and other invasive wildlife species of concern can be found here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/ais/species.html>

#### ***Captive alligator snapping turtle***

**Waterfowl Trapping:** Biologist DeBruyn continued trapping ducks at a private gun club in Edison, Skagit County. He has reached his goal of 100 mallards trapped (as well as several teal and pintail). He began removing traps and preparing banding schedules for submittal to the banding lab before the start of the hunting season.



**Highway 20 Elk Crossing Project:** Biologist DeBruyn worked on setting up a camera to monitor elk crossing highway 20 at a high collision area. He also reviewed images from a camera set up a short distance from the crossing.

**Mt Goat Aerial Survey Data:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra completed analysis of this summer's Mountain Goat aerial surveys and submitted the data to the Special Species Manager in Olympia and to cooperators. Surveys this year, from Mt Baker to US 2, accomplished multiple goals: census surveys for Mountain Goat hunt determinations, recovering populations' census, and census and reconnaissance of potential relocation areas.

**Lowland Pika Project Report:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra began assembling, analyzing, and presenting data for the completion report of the two-year lowland survey for Pika's in the lower Stillaguamish Valley. Field visits still need to be performed to quantify habitat and vegetation characteristics.

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Lummi Island Heritage Trust:** Manager Kessler coordinated with the Lummi Island Heritage Trust managers on the possible purchase of the Lummi Island quarry property. This former quarry property was recently shut down, and the Heritage Trust is pursuing grant funds to

purchase and restore it. Manager Kessler will be writing letters of support for the project this week.

**Stillwater Wildlife Area:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm discussed corn harvest plans with Frohning Dairy. Due to an insect infestation, approximately 40% of the corn crop is damaged. Manager Boehm is working with Frohning Dairy to equitably adjust the corn leave acreage.

**Spencer Island Wildlife Area:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm used a chainsaw to cut up a mature red alder tree that had fallen across the dike trail earlier this summer. New signs were also installed on the existing kiosk identifying the area as a Wildlife Area, meaning it is closed after dark and non-toxic shot is required. Additionally, Manager Boehm used the DR field mower to cut a fresh path along the dike so hunters can have access to this area. Manager Boehm will coordinate a volunteer work party to make side access trails to the estuary for duck hunter access.

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with grazing lessee Alexander to discuss the exit plan for the cattle that have been grazing all summer. Plans are in place to have the cattle removed by 9/14/2014 to end the grazing contract on Ebey Island Unit. Additionally, Manager Boehm worked with the WDFW Noxious Weed group to use the marsh master to make access trails through the seven foot tall reed canary grass growing on the east portion of the Unit. The marsh master was driven along drainage ditches, around ponds, and around the perimeter of that portion of the Unit to aid hunters in getting around in these tough conditions this coming season.

*Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with the WDFW Noxious Weed group to use the marsh master to make access trails through the seven foot tall reed canary grass growing on the east portion of the Ebey Island unit.*



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

### **Private Lands Access Program**

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Unit Opening:** Tech Otto started construction maintenance on the Bow Hill parking lot. Otto also conducted maintenance on the access trail into the pheasant unit. Biologist Caldwell and Otto conducted annual mowing and blind brushing at two Water Quality

and Hydrology (WQH) units in Skagit County. Otto continued mowing efforts at two more Whatcom County WQH units and then returned the borrowed tractor to the Skagit Wildlife area.



*Blind Materials were cut and attached to blinds in the Waterfowl Quality Hunt program in Skagit County. More materials will be added throughout the year to improve hunting success.*

*Selected vegetation was mowed and left in front of blind locations to enhance site characteristics.*



*Throughout the month Biologist Caldwell and Technician Otto have been checking on the progression of several different fields where barley was planted. All of the planted crops appear healthy and should yield a good amount of feed this year.*

### Wildlife Management

**Whidbey Island Deer Study:** Biologist Milner met with the U of Montana graduate

student who is focusing on deer on Whidbey Island and his advisor to discuss the project. Milner provided harvest reports, hunter contact information, and other materials that will help the project progress. Milner also reviewed a hunter questionnaire that will be sent out to help us learn more about hunting activities on the island.

### Wildlife Areas

**Pheasant Pen Repairs:** Manager Kessler and two Master Hunter volunteers completed repairs to the netting in the pheasant pens. Last winter, snow drifts collapsed many of the support boards and tore the netting. Kessler and the volunteers patched all the netting. Manager Kessler also mowed grass and weeds in the pens.

**British Petroleum Hunting Access:** Manager Kessler coordinated with the environmental manager at British Petroleum on the farming activities on the hunting access areas. The local

farmer has completed his hay work on the property. With another month for continued growth, the field conditions for this year's pheasant hunting should be very good.

### **Skagit Wildlife Area Agricultural Enhancement Program:**

**Island Unit:** Natural Resources Tech Curran Cosgrove mowed grass and cattail areas in the Fireman's 1, 2, and 3, Crescent, Barn, Broadlin, Olie Thompson, and Lorezen.

**South Padilla Bay:** Manager Rotton checked the plantings on the Hulbert parcel. The grass is coming in and the barley plantings are in good shape for the hunting season.

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

### **Private Lands Access Program**

**Unit Signs:** Tech Otto checked on recently installed signs at a Skagit County hunt unit that has been having trespassing issues in un-harvested crops. Otto found one sign that had been tampered with and it was repaired. Otto spoke with Officer Lee in regards to property lines and access. Officer Lee has been patrolling the unit and issuing multiple trespass tickets to the fisherman illegally accessing this site.

**Private Lands Contract Quality Assurance:** Biologist Caldwell and Deputy Contracts Officer Tran met and discussed contract management operations for one Whatcom County Private Lands Access contract in Novatus. A solution was reached and forwarded on for management approval. Biologist Caldwell developed a list of contracts that need deleted, amended, or updated based on old and/or erroneous contract materials. This list will be submitted next week for contract program review.

**Region 4 Ungulate Damage:** Biologist Smith responded to calls regarding deer and elk damage from residents of King and Skagit counties. Non-lethal measures to deter elk from entering properties were discussed, including fencing options. Smith, Technician Cogdal, and representatives from several local Tribes continued installing permanent elk exclusion fencing on a property in Skagit Valley. The fence is nearly half completed at this time. Cogdal also spent time monitoring and hazing elk in various locations in Skagit County. Smith continued to monitor elk/deer activity on other area agricultural fields with the help of deployed trail cameras.

**Region 4 2014 Hunts:** Biologists responded to multiple members of the hunting community inquiring about prospective hunting areas, regulations, GoHunt interactive mapping, and prospects for the upcoming hunting seasons.

**Mountain Goat Records:** Biologist Milner coordinated with a Master Hunter volunteer who is going through 30+ years of files pertaining to mountain goats. Duplicate materials will be culled, and the files organized according to a logical system so that staff can access relevant materials as the need arises.

**Wildlife Damage:** Biologist Milner fielded phone calls from Whidbey and San Juan Islands regarding Canada goose and deer crop predation. Milner referred the callers to Biologist Smith after determining that his expertise in hazing and kill permits was needed.

### Access Program



*Girl Scout Troop 40655 from Orting, lead by Leah Wright, constructed a new access entry sign at the Weiss water access site located along the Puyallup River. The members of the troop involved with the installation of the sign board and litter removal included Madi, Stephanie, Abigail, and Alyssa. A big thank you goes out to them for spending August cleaning up the river access site and installing the reader board.*

**Skagit Headquarters:** Natural Resource Specialist Meis mowed around parking lots, fence lines, the interpretive center, and pheasant pens. Manager Rotton met with Department of Ecology's new Wetland Specialist, Doug Gresham, to discuss upcoming projects on the Skagit Wildlife Area. Doug toured some of the sites to become familiar with the area. Manager Rotton monitored the flood gate work completed by Dike District 5 on the Samish River Unit. The culvert sleeve installation was completed. Manager Rotton met with Natural Resources Conservation Service staff to discuss details of the permitting for the wetland enhancement project.

**Johnson DeBay's Slough Reserve:** Manager Rotton met with a neighboring land owner to discuss the boundary and administrative access options for the site. The neighbor has agreed to allow access for a mapping and marking project. Rotton and Meis gathered GPS coordinates on Game Reserve and Hunt Unit Boundaries.

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Area:** Manager Brian Boehm worked with a private landowner near the Corson Unit to provide a temporary net-pen for holding pheasants for this coming pheasant season. Birds for Ebey Island will now be held near the Corson Unit, relieving the Skagit Wildlife Area staff from delivering birds to the Ebey Unit. Manager Boehm has a number of Lake Stevens area volunteers who are interested in joining the Snoqualmie Pheasant Release Program. Additionally, Manager Boehm and a number of volunteers are working to upgrade the sign boards and kiosks on four of the Units. New educational, informative, and instructional signs will soon be installed on these sign boards at entrance points, providing a single source of information for users to see. This will eliminate the many signs posted on individual posts, trees, and poles throughout many of the Units.

*New sign installed on the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area*



**Hunter Education/Volunteer**

**Coordination:** Hunter Education Coordinator Steven Dazey evaluated the teaching team, led by Joe Bee, that teaches at the American Legion hall in Sedro Woolley. This was an On-line field skills evaluation that was conducted over two evenings. The first evening at the hall in Sedro Woolley covered the review, quiz, working actions, and load unload. The second evening was conducted at the Plantation gun range in Whatcom County and covered live fire, carry positions, crossing obstacles, and removing firearms from a vehicle and then returning them to the vehicle. Dr. Bee's team did an excellent job of presenting DFW material to the students and all 19 students in attendance passed.



*Students taking a 20 question quiz after receiving a short review from volunteer instructor Michael Stockton*



*Volunteer instructor Joe Bee and volunteer assisting students to gain proper sight alignment before the live fire exercise.*



*Live fire exercise on the range.*



***Field course covering load/unload, crossing obstacles, and taking firearms from a vehicle and returning them.***

Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey is assisting Hunter Education volunteer instructor Liz Scranton to schedule a traditional hunter education class on Lopez Island for the students on the island to have access to a convenient class to certify.

Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey met with Stillaguamish tribe representative Bill Hebner to preview the venue and discuss scheduling classes at the tribal natural resources building. The venue will provide an excellent site for classes, and with the expected certification of two instructors from the tribe, will help to increase access to classes in the Skagit county area.

Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey met with Scott Schuyler from the Upper Skagit tribe to deliver a thank you for his assistance in getting access to the Upper Skagit Cultural Center for classes in the Sedro Woolley area. Coordinator Dazey also delivered a thank you to the tribal council and sought to gain their permission to hold further classes there. The Upper Skagit venue will allow us to continue to expand availability in the Skagit county area.

Volunteer Coordinator Steven Dazey continues to work with Snoqualmie Wildlife Area manager Brian Boehm to recruit volunteers for several projects. Volunteer Coordinator Dazey also prepared to represent manager Boehm at an upcoming Boy Scout roundtable. The scouts have asked for information and an informational table to present ideas on Boy Scout/Eagle Scout service projects. This will allow us to recruit young adults to plan and complete service projects for the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area benefitting DFW as well as the young adults in the scouting program.

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

**District 14 Biologist Interviews:** Biologist Milner participated in the first round of interviews for the new District 14 Biologist.

**Washington Laws and Pesticide Use Training:** Biologist Caldwell began studying the Washington Laws and Pesticide Use training manual and Rights of Way training manual. Once compliant, Biologist Caldwell will take a test for certification.

**Radio Communications:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued to provide radio support to Program staff.

**Aerial survey assistance:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra provided flight following for District 15 and Olympia staff on a Mountain Goat aerial survey in the eastern Olympic National Forest.

**Snoqualmie Wildlife Areas:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continues to coordinate with WDFW Master Hunters to provide volunteer opportunities for them. With support from Steve Dazey, the WDFW Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator, two Master Hunters and three additional volunteers continued to work on the net pens at the Cherry Valley Unit. Three plumbing leaks were identified and the main system is now flowing water once again. Additional repairs are needed to provide water for the net pen. Additionally, numerous Master Hunter volunteers are answering the call for the pheasant program and other volunteer opportunities on all of the wildlife units. Manager Boehm reports that coordinating efforts with Steve Dazey, the Region 4 Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator, has been a huge success, by directing people who want to volunteer to Manager Boehm, who has many tasks and projects lined up.

## **REGION 5**

### ***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE.***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**South Rainier Elk Herd Survey:** Biologists Holman, Bergh, and Stephens, along with pilot Jess Hagerman of Northwest Helicopters, conducted the annual aerial survey of elk in the portion of the South Rainier elk herd that lies within Mt. Rainier National Park. Another helicopter and survey crew from the National Park Service surveyed at the same time, so all survey units were covered in the short time allowed (evening hours when elk are active). The WDFW crew counted 186 elk, 22 mountain goats, 6 bears, 6 deer, and 2 marmots. Survey conditions were fair with warm temperatures, some areas of bright sun, and high winds in the first part of the survey. A site-specific model that accounts for detection bias will be applied to the raw counts of elk and used to estimate abundance within the survey area. Data is sent to the National Park Service for analysis and results are forthcoming.



*Bull elk, black bear, and Mt. Rainier sunset during South Rainier elk surveys.*



**Black-tailed Deer Research Project:** Please see below for the most current information on the Washougal (GMU 568) and Coweeman (GMU 550) study clusters.

**Washougal:** All four does in the Washougal cluster gave birth this year. Seven fawns (out of 8 biologically possible) were captured from the four Washougal does. Fawns and does are currently being monitored for survival. As of this week, two does and three fawns remain alive.

**Coweeman:** Six does (out of 7) in the Coweeman cluster gave birth this year. Nine fawns (out of 12 biologically possible) were captured from the six Coweeman does. The does and fawns are currently being monitored for survival. As of this week, seven does and three fawns remain alive.

**Western Pond Turtle:** Biologist George compiled and summarized data for the 2014 western pond turtle season this week. A mark-recapture study took place at the Sondino Unit this year in an effort to monitor the largest population of naturally occurring western pond turtles. During this study, 35 days of trapping in six ponds resulted in 466 captures of 180 individual turtles over a total of 1,220 trap days. Of the 180 individual turtles, 91 were found to have subcutaneous ulcerative disease. Ninety of these animals were previously head started at the zoos, while one wild turtle was also found to show symptoms of the disease. Efforts are ongoing to further understand shell disease and its effects on this important species. An analysis of the mark-recapture data will take place at a later date, and results will be included in future publications regarding the western pond turtle.

**Annual Region 5 Elk PR Report:** Biologists Bergh and Holman completed the annual Pittman-Robertson (PR) report for elk management in Region 5. The report summarizes activities related to elk undertaken in the past year, population estimates and sex and age ratios where available, hunting season structure, harvest, information related to hoof disease, habitat conditions, etc. The report will be compiled with similar documents on all hunted species in Washington and finalized this fall. Interested parties can read the annual reports from past years by visiting the Hunting page of WDFW's website and selecting Game Status and Trend Reports.

### **Shillapoo Wildlife Area**

**Shillapoo Fire:** A small fire occurred on the South Unit of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area, burning about 1 acre of brush. The fire appears to have started next to an area that has had frequent illegal campfires along the Reiger Highway in the past several months, and was suppressed by Vancouver and Clark County Fire Departments. The fire burned mostly blackberries, canary grass, one large willow tree, and several tires from an old silage pit storage area. Wildlife Area staff will reseed the area and pick up the trash that had been covered by the brush.



*Shillapoo Fire*

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

**3-year Package Public Meeting:** Regional Program Manager Jonker, Biologists Holman, Bergh, and Stephens, along with Game program staff hosted a meeting for public comment on the 2015-2017 Hunting Season Setting. Major changes to the season structure are set on a 3-year cycle and input from the hunting public is valuable as these changes are made. Turnout was low, but great conversations were had with all attendees. Online comments are accepted until September 22<sup>nd</sup> here: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/seasonsetting/>.

**Public Access:** Conflict Specialist McDonald and Biologist Stephens painted signboards and replaced damaged signs at access gates on Hancock Timberlands in Klickitat County. WDFW

thanks Hancock Timberlands for continuing to allow hunters “feel free to hunt” access to their lands.



*Before*



*After*

***Signboards at access gates on Hancock Timberlands in Klickitat County***

**Hand Access:** Access staff Spangler and Rhodes cleaned silt off the boat ramp and hauled and disposed the silt to an upland site.



*Hand Access site*

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

**Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin issued one elk Kill Permit to one land owner in Packwood whose damage was verified earlier this year. One Kill Permit was also issued to a dairy in the Randle area. Both landowners have been working with WDFW to deter damage. In addition, Conflict Specialist Conklin met with a land owner in Wahkiakum County experiencing damage to his hay fields. One elk kill permit was issued. The land owner has approximately 100 acres in hay and allows public hunting opportunities.

**Coyote Damage:** Conflict Specialist Conklin continues to work with WDFW Bob Oke Game Farm on protecting their birds from coyotes. The cameras that were installed captured a coyote patrolling the perimeter fencing. The farm has installed metal roofing around part of the perimeter fencing to deter coyotes from chewing through the fencing. Photographs submitted by Manager White of the WDFW Bob Oke Game Farm.



*Metal sheeting being installed to deter coyotes from chewing through the fencing surrounding the pheasants.*

## **REGION 6**

**GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE.**

### **Wildlife Management**

**Mountain Goat Survey:** Biologist Murphie, along with R. Harris and C. Rice, conducted a goat survey of selected areas in the Olympic Wilderness areas. Their preliminary tally is 71 goats counted, including 18 kids.



*Photo of a male goat in the Brothers Wilderness.*

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Scatter Creek:** The field trial / dog training calendar for the Scatter Creek and Davis Creek Units of the Scatter Creek Wildlife Area has been posted on the respective WDFW webpages. Manager Belson coordinated with Region 6 and IT staff to make the calendar easily and equally accessible by the public. The benefits of this posting should be many, including 1)

greater event planning convenience for field trial and dog training groups, 2) higher scheduling efficiency for the Region 6 office due to lower phone call and email volumes, and 3) reduced potential for conflict between user groups through equal access to information and greater agency transparency regarding scheduled special events. The schedule can be viewed on the unit webpages at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife\\_areas/scatter\\_creek/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/wildlife_areas/scatter_creek/).