

# Wildlife Program

Week of December 22-28, 2014

## **REGION 1**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**District 3 Wolf Activity:** OR-14, former breeding male from the Umatilla Pack, moved into WA and was last located in drainages off Jasper Mountain, NE of Walla Walla. He is presumed to be traveling alone, although there was a report of an un-collared wolf in the same general area during the past week. During a flight by an OR biologist, OR-15 was sighted with one other wolf on an elk kill in the Tucannon Wilderness.

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**4-O Ranch WA –Controlling Annual Invasive Grasses:** Biologist Woodall and Plant Ecologist Merg set up some test plots near the McNeill and Botts Places of the 4-O Ranch and applied a bacterial solution to the ground for the control of annual invasive grasses such as cheat, jointed goat, and medusahead. This new cutting edge weed control measure may end up revolutionizing the way we restore or maintain native bunch grasses in the future.

*Applying a bacterial solution for the control of annual invasive grasses*

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**



**Swanson Lakes WLA Snowy Owl:** WDFW Volunteer Kim Thorburn's birding notes from Friday, December 26: "[A] snowy owl was sitting along Schuster Rd. between Swanson Lakes and Blenz Rds. in the morning. I suspect that it's the same bird reported by Ann a few days ago. While I love seeing these enchanting owls, I'm not sure how I feel about it sitting in the middle of grouse land. During last winter's East Coast irruption, GPS study of these birds indicated waterfowl may be an important lower 48 substitute for the arctic lemming diet. I hope that doesn't translate to "fowl." There must have been something enticing along the Schuster mile. In addition to the owl, I saw an immature red-tailed hawk, two American kestrels, and a prairie falcon. The owl flew to the pole with the red-tailed hawk, which graciously yielded. I saw the snowy owl again at dusk as I was leaving. He (presumably, because he's so white) was

*sitting on a utility pole along the Houger's pasture on Swanson Lakes Rd. about five poles down from a great horned owl."*

**Snowy owl, central Lincoln County, 12/26/14** – Photo by Dr. Kim Thorburn



## **Winter Conditions**

**Wildlife Management District 1:** For most of this week, temperatures varied between 30-40 degrees F. in the daytime high down to the 20's in the overnight low. Some snow fell in the mountains, but it was mostly rain in the valleys. As of December 26<sup>th</sup>, the 49 degrees North Ski Resort had nine inches of snow at the lodge and twenty-one inches at the top of Chewelah Mountain.

**Swanson Lakes WLA:** Daytime temperatures generally hovered in the upper thirties, with cloudy skies. Snow fell on Saturday, 12/27, but didn't stick. Temps dropped to the twenties on Sunday, but there was still no snow cover.

## **Private Lands/Wildlife Conflict**

**District One:** Weather during the week was mild with a snow dusting mid-week. Temperatures ranged from 30-37 degrees.

**District Two:** Rain with highs in the mid 40's for the first half of the week with lower temperatures and the possibility of snow around Christmas.

**District Three:** High wind storms during the first part of the week. Temperatures are still dropping, with snow in the forecast.

**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 Conflict**

**Pomeroy Deer:** Conflict Specialist Rasley and Temp Jeff Wade continue to work with home owners and the Pomeroy Mayor regarding deer damage to trees and shrubs in the city limits. We coordinated three deer hunts and were able to harvest two deer. One of the hunters was a no show. So far the only complaints we are getting are "we are not shooting enough deer". That said, everybody has been very great to work with.

**Habitat Restoration Projects:** Biologist Lewis is working with the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Mule Deer Foundation on funding habitat projects. Lewis put together cost estimates and sent them to the two organizations for review.

**Habitat Grants:** Biologist Thorne Hadley contacted a local member of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation to find out when monthly meetings are held to attend and provide habitat enhancement information and opportunities. Biologist Thorne Hadley also contacted Ducks Unlimited to attend one of their meetings.

## **REGION 2**

**WOLVES:** Nothing to Report

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Northern Leopard Frog Project:** Biologist Finger submitted a NOVATUS contract to allow for payment to WSU for the processing of Northern Leopard Frog DNA samples. Biologist E. Duvuvuei measured water quality at fifteen sites in the NLFMA, CNWR, and the Gloyd. These data will be used to compare overwintering conditions at the location of the source population, the potential release sites, and known NLF locations. Duvuvuei also searched for articles and published data about overwintering amphibians.

#### **Winter Conditions:**

**Past Weather:** Mild with the exception of two freezing events which were relatively short lived. Rainfall has resulted in a good fall green-up of native (Sandberg's bluegrass) and invasive (cheatgrass) cool season grasses.

**Short-Term Forecast:** The ten day forecast is for normal conditions with overnight temperatures below freezing and daytime temperatures at or above freezing. 2015 will bring daytime temperatures to below freezing.

**Long-Term Forecast:** The winter season is projected to be warmer and drier than normal.

**Habitat:** Forage is available at all elevations. Winter wheat and cool season grasses are available due to lack of snow cover.

**Snow Depths:** 100% snow-free.

**Animal Concentrations:** No unusual concentrations noted to date.



**Animal Condition:** No reports of animals in poor condition that can be attributed to winter conditions. Animals observed to date appear to be in great condition.

**Mortality:** None reported or expected in short-term.

**Methow Wildlife Area Observed Environment (weather, fire, etc.):** Total snow accumulation for the winter: 32 inches. One snow event for the week provided an additional nine inches with temps ranging between 8 to 39 degrees Fahrenheit. There were occasional thick fog and smoke inversion events, as well as on-again, off-again *air stagnation advisory*.



*Male Pine Grosbeak near Blue Lake (Top left), female or Immature Pine Grosbeak near headquarters (Top right), Barred Owl just south of Driscoll-Eyhott Island Wildlife Area (Left), and a North Pygmy Owl on the east shore of Blue Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area (Above) –*

Photos by Justin Haug

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

##### **Oak Creek Wildlife Area**

##### **Peak Elk Counts for Week:**

Headquarters-

Junction-

Nile-

Sheep-

Cowiche-

##### **Winter Conditions**

Weather was mild over the past week, but some snow fell over the weekend. Very cold weather is expected this coming week, with the potential for additional snow by the weekend.

Elk are in the feed site area, but with minimal snow access the vegetation is still good.

Elk are in seasonally good condition.

##### **Colockum Wildlife Area**

##### **Winter Conditions**

Weather on the Colockum continues to be very mild for this time of year, with little to no snow accumulations below 4000 ft. High temperatures reached into the 40's at lower elevations. Elk continue to make nightly raids to orchards in the Malaga area, north of the Wildlife Area. The Malaga permit season ends on Dec. 31. Hunters have had ample opportunity to harvest an elk with snow-free access and many elk in the permit area.

##### **LT Murray Wildlife Area**

##### **Winter Conditions**

Lows this week were in the mid-30s and highs in the mid-40s with intermittent rainfall. A few hundred elk are coming to the feed sites each morning, but forage is available on surrounding hill slopes.

##### **Wildlife Management**

**Bighorn Sheep:** Biologists Bernatowicz contacted the Yakama Nation regarding trapping and moving bighorn sheep. The Yakamas are willing to help and have transport boxes and a horse

trailer if needed. Biologist Bernatowicz checked road conditions into Skookumchuck while surveying deer to see if a horse trailer could make the trip. There were a few too many rough areas and sharp corners to risk transport via trailer. The best option might be a convoy of trucks with transport boxes in the beds.

**Deer Survey:** Biologist Bernatowicz surveyed the highway 410 area and the lower Whiskey Dick for deer.

Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a landowner on the Swauk Creek Ranch about a bull elk that would not leave their haystack area. It was reported to have been there for almost two weeks and could not jump fences. Specialist Wetzel approached the elk to determine if it was injured and witnessed it dying on its own, of what appeared to be respiratory failure. The necropsy on this elk showed it had trauma on its entire right side, and corresponding internal damage, possibly from a vehicle collision. The animal was not salvageable and was hauled off site for disposal.

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



### **Wildlife Management**

**Ellensburg Area:** Mild conditions were encountered again this week. Some slight drying of surface areas reduced ponded water, but roads, fields, and timbered areas were still muddy and prone to rutting. Road access to areas above 4000 feet appears to be hampered by snow.

Deer were again hazed this week from an area in Thorp. One master hunter hazed deer but did not harvest any. Six to fourteen deer were observed in or near a raspberry cane area during daylight hours. A group of bucks appear to be together and were hazed by chasing on foot.

Conflict Specialist Wetzel hazed elk from Reecer Creek this week. Elk hazing (with very limited lethal control) appears to be at least partially effective as large groups, if hazed along the BPA right-of-way above the Reecer Creek county road, stay high and move east with returning. This appears to keep them on the normal migration route and above the majority of damage areas.

An orphan calf elk was reported near the edge of I-90 Westbound. This calf has lived at this location for over two months.

**Yakima Area:** Landowners near Tampico have reported elk numbers that have increased this week below the elk fence. Several master hunters have obtained landowner permission to hunt the affected areas in the 3912 Elk Area, with some success at hazing and moving elk out of the damage areas. These master hunters have also been tasked to inspect the elk fence for possible breaches in these private access areas. Other landowners south of Ahtanum Creek report elk damaging haystacks. They reported elk coming off the YIN and across the creek and onto private lands.

A large landowner near Tampico called Conflict Specialist Wetzel requesting to enter into a Crop DPCA. The contract was prepared and he signed the agreement. Elk have been using his crop areas below the elk fence.

**Wolf Activities:** A landowner with a Crop DPCA called to inquire about a Livestock DPCA, since he had observed wolves near his calving pens two years ago. Conflict Specialist Wetzel met him at the site and reviewed fencing, carcass disposal, and other Livestock DPCA requirements in preparation for entering into an agreement.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Manager Bjornstrom began coordination with CAMP on construction of a new shop at the Sunnyside HQ unit and a pivot on the Windmill Ranch unit.

Manager Bjornstrom started developing a wetland management work plan for the 2015 field season. When done, Manager Bjornstrom will have scheduled maintenance and restoration projects throughout all appropriate wildlife area units prioritized by need and available work windows.

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman continued to search through old files in the attempt to free up some file cabinet space. Huffman found a permit for a surface water right on Cleman Mountain that he was previously unaware of. The permit for the spring is located on WDFW but the point of use is on BLM. Huffman drove out to the area and spent a couple of hours hiking around the steep country trying to determine if the area had been developed as records showed. There are a lot of old scars from past dozer work but no sign of any development beyond one piece of bent pipe and a burned up guzzler. It was a very good hike and great to see a new part of the wildlife area. Further inspection is planned for the spring and more research on the water right is needed.



*Rocky spires in an unnamed canyon of Oak Creek Wildlife Area*



*A burned up guzzler located on Oak Creek Wildlife Area*

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Manager Lopushinsky inspected several boat launches around the Wanapum Reservoir to determine if they are useable for launching after Grant PUD partially raised the reservoir to the 562 ft. level. WDFW has decided to keep the Colockum and the Sunland launches closed to the public until the reservoir is brought back to normal levels, hopefully in spring 2015. The launch at Wanapum State Park is functional and is being used by County and PUD personnel to access the reservoir.

**LT Murray Wildlife Area:** All Murray staff worked to load and transport fence materials left on PSE property. These materials were unused by the contractor building the Skookumchuck/Whiskey Dick stock fence. Materials were moved to the Watt yard for storage.

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Snow Goose Aerial Survey:** Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn flew an aerial snow goose photo survey from Snohomish County to the mouth of the Fraser River. Photos from this flight will serve to enumerate lesser snow geese for the annual mid-winter waterfowl survey.

*Snow Geese and watchers on Fir Island, Skagit County*

**Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project:** Science Tech Anderson and Biologists DeBruyn and Yarborough, as well



as cooperators from Puget Sound Energy and the Trumpeter Swan Society, continued to conduct field surveys this week to monitor for sick and injured trumpeter and tundra swans. This week, twenty-one swans were collected in Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. Gizzard and liver samples were collected for contaminant analysis. Tracheal and Cloacal swabs were taken to monitor for other diseases. Power line strikes continue to be roughly half of all mortalities recovered this week, with “unknown” cause of death making up the remainder. Swan mortalities recorded as unknown causes of death are swan carcasses recovered in and/or near roosting areas and appear to have succumbed to disease. Laboratory results will confirm or deny the suspected presence of avian diseases.

	Lead	Power line Strike	Trauma	Unknown	Feather Pile	Total (per county)
<b>Whatcom</b>		17	3	10	6	36
<b>Snohomish</b>	2	6	5	5		18
<b>Skagit</b>		17	3	13	5	38
<b>San Juan</b>				1		1
						<b>93 (Grand Total)</b>

**Waterfowl Mortality Survey and Avian Influenza Sampling:** Biologist DeBruyn organized a sampling effort to test hunter killed waterfowl for traces of two strains of avian influenza that have been detected in Whatcom County recently. At least three ducks have tested positive for the H5N2 or H5N8 strains of this virus, the first cases of the high pathogen forms recorded in this country. Field Epidemiologist Robert Dusek, from the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin, and volunteer Laura Krogman, a graduate student from Tufts University, have been contacting hunters and collecting carcasses to test for the viruses. DeBruyn also did an interview with King 5 News regarding the effort.

*Volunteer Laura Krogman preparing to ship waterfowl specimens to the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison Wisconsin*

**Wildlife Management Consultation/Permitting Requests; Municipal, Private Utilities, other:** Biologist Anderson continued work and review for requests of assistance regarding species or habitat management



consultation for urban wildlife (e.g. osprey nests, eagle territories, heron colonies) given construction or land-use alteration work, per local municipal code requirements to work with WDFW.

More on WDFW Priority Habitat and Species Recommendations and how WDFW provides assistance at the local and broader planning levels can be found here:

<http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/>

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Samish River Unit (Welts) Wetland Restoration Project:** WDFW received federal permit authorization for the project from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Projects Coordinator Brokaw read through the permit materials to understand the provisions of the permit. The next step in permitting this project is to apply for construction-focused permits from Skagit County, including a Fill/Grade Permit, Temporary Access Permit, and Stormwater General Permit.

**Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP):** There is currently an open public comment period on PSNERP that runs through January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015. More information on this process, the documents under review, and how to comment is available at: <http://pugetsoundnearshore.org/outreach.html>.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Western High Arctic Brant Survey:** Biologist DeBruyn and Tech Deyo did an age/race determination survey on Brant from a blind (constructed by Deyo) at the Swinomish Spit Reserve. The sample was small but showed about ten percent juveniles in the surveyed flocks. Most of the Brant observed were of the western high arctic race (graybellies).



***Brant and Ducks “gravelling” at the Swinomish Spit Brant Reserve***

## Wildlife Areas

**Samish Unit Enhancement Project:** Skagit County sent notice to Projects Coordinator Brokaw that the Special Use Permit application has been processed, and announcement of the comment period was issued in the Skagit Valley Herald on 12/25/14. The comment period will be open until January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015. For details on the project and how to submit comments, please see project PL14-0499 at:

<http://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningAndPermit/notices2014/122514.htm>.

Following the comment period, Skagit County will schedule a date for a public Hearing Examiner session, whereby additional verbal comments will be sought and a decision on the permit will be made.



*Signs of waterfowl feeding on yellow nut-sedge (chufa) nutlets on the Island unit (First is potholes formed when feeding on nut-sedge, and the second is close-up picture of "nutlets")*



**Skagit Waterfowl Program:** Technician Cosgrove monitored the Island, Leque Island, Samish, and Johnson/Debay's Slough units for waterfowl and hunter activity. While on the Island unit, Cosgrove found evidence of waterfowl feeding in areas of yellow nut-sedge, a non-native weed. Waterfowl feed on the underground "nutlets", especially when fields are submerged in a few inches of water. Yellow nut-sedge is very difficult to control with herbicides, so instead of fighting it, Cosgrove has been managing infested areas by increasing water levels late in the season to encourage use by waterfowl.

Hunter numbers have been good during the holiday break. Volunteers and WDFW staff have been contacting hunters on the Samish, Headquarters and Island units to acquire samples for Avian Influenza testing.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Skagit Headquarters:** Tech Cosgrove and Natural Resource Specialist Meis continued work to remove signs and disassembled the temporary reader-board at the Bow Hill Pheasant Release site. Cosgrove checked the Headquarters unit spur-dike for cracks and erosion due to high river and tides. New cracks continue to form and older cracks and sloughing are getting worse. Manager Rotton was contacted by a regular area user concerned about the degrading condition of the dike. Cosgrove picked up garbage piles at the Leque Island and Big Ditch units.

**Island Unit:** Manager Rotton continued to follow up on action items related to the barge lease agreement, tide gate repair process, and ditch maintenance project for the Island unit. Cosgrove assisted a duck hunter who had been hunting the Island unit and returned to his boat to find it submerged at the landing. The boat got stuck on a steep bank as the morning high tide receded, allowing water to come over the transom and swamp the boat and motor. Cosgrove towed the boat to the Headquarters unit boat launch and assisted with trailering it. The hunter was very distraught about the situation and thanked Cosgrove for his help. It was a bad ending to a good day of hunting, as the hunter had just harvested six mallards with six shots.

**Leque Island:** Manager Rotton walked the site to check the dikes and tidegates following the most recent high tide series. No new breaches were observed.

**Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination**

**Hunter Education support:** Hunter education coordinator Steven Dazey entered three new instructors into the Kalkomey system and sent emails to them appraising of the completion of their certification. HE Coordinator Dazey also sent out two instructor applicant packets for instructors who had passed the newly restarted background check process. Dazey continued to follow up on instructor applicants who had not turned in their authorization to conduct a background check. With the new contractor performing these checks this new authorization form is required. The HE Department is in the process of rewriting the instructor application to include this authorization. Applications already received but still needing background checks need to complete this additional form. HE Coordinator Dazey assisted a 60 year old hunter who was traveling to Colorado to hunt and who did not realize that in Colorado he would need to show his Hunter Education card to get a license and to enroll in a field skills evaluation in Burlington that still had a space available. Many hunters born before Jan 1, 1972 who are able to hunt in Washington State without having taken the class are surprised when they travel out of state and find at the last minute that the state they are going to requires them to show proof that they have taken the hunter safety class. This is in spite of the fact they may have been hunting in Washington State for many years. This time we were able to accommodate the hunter to complete this requirement before traveling out of state and finding out he didn't have the documentation he needed.

**Hunter Education Instructor assistance:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey, following meetings in Olympia, picked up and delivered supplies to two Region 4 instructor teams. HE Coordinator Dazey assisted and evaluated the teaching team at the Skagit Shooting Range to put on a Field Skills Evaluation. The evaluation saw 24 students pass the evaluation, with some traveling from as far away as Selah, WA. This class was held during the day on a weekday and shows that the demand for classes is still strong. The Chief Instructor Bill Vincent commented that as this day time weekday class was filled, he will plan on conducting weekday classes during 2015. Chief Instructors are starting to set up their 2015 class offerings on-line using the Kalkomney system. HE Coordinator Dazey activated numerous classes and assisted instructors in correcting or updating their class offerings for 2015. Dazey also assisted an instructor who had been injured by a clock falling from overhead and hitting him in the face, requiring a dental intervention to follow up on his L&I submission.

**2015 Instructor Incentive Permits:** HE Coordinator Dazey answered questions from instructors who have received their end of year packets. Many questions on how to apply and what permits they qualified for were answered. Also included in the packets was the sign up for the 2015 In Service Training to be held in Wenatchee this coming March, Terry Hoffer Award nomination forms, and the Chief Instructor Financial report forms. Dazey fielded questions from instructors on each of these.

**Volunteer presentation at Jan. Game and Diversity Meeting:** Volunteer Coordinator Dazey finished and forwarded his portion of the Power Point presentation to the volunteer presentation team. The why, how, and after of using volunteers will be presented to show the attendees the benefits that they gain by working with the volunteer coordinators to recruit volunteers to expand what they can accomplish towards meeting agency goals.

**Inactive Instructor Notifications:** Hunter education coordinator Dazey verified with Jan in Olympia the final list of HE instructors who have been decertified. Hunter Education policy requires that volunteer instructors participate in at least one class during the year or risk decertification. Emails and letters were sent to instructors who had not taught in 2014, advising them of their possible decertification. Instructors who, due to unusual circumstances, were not able to teach in 2014 were able to contact Coordinator Dazey and show cause that they should remain certified. Instructors who did contact Dazey after showing that cause were admonished to ensure that they fulfil their instructing requirement in 2015.

**Master Hunter Advisory Group:** HE Coordinator Dazey forwarded the recruitment announcement for members of the Master Hunter Advisory Group to his list of master hunters in Regions 1, 2, and 3 where the Department was looking for an increase in applications. The master hunter contact lists are used as a resource for volunteers for agency projects as they are required to complete 40 hours of service each five year period to maintain their Master Hunter permit status. This also gave Dazey an opportunity to update and correct the bad emails that he had on his contact list.

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

**Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention Training:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed the required online training module.

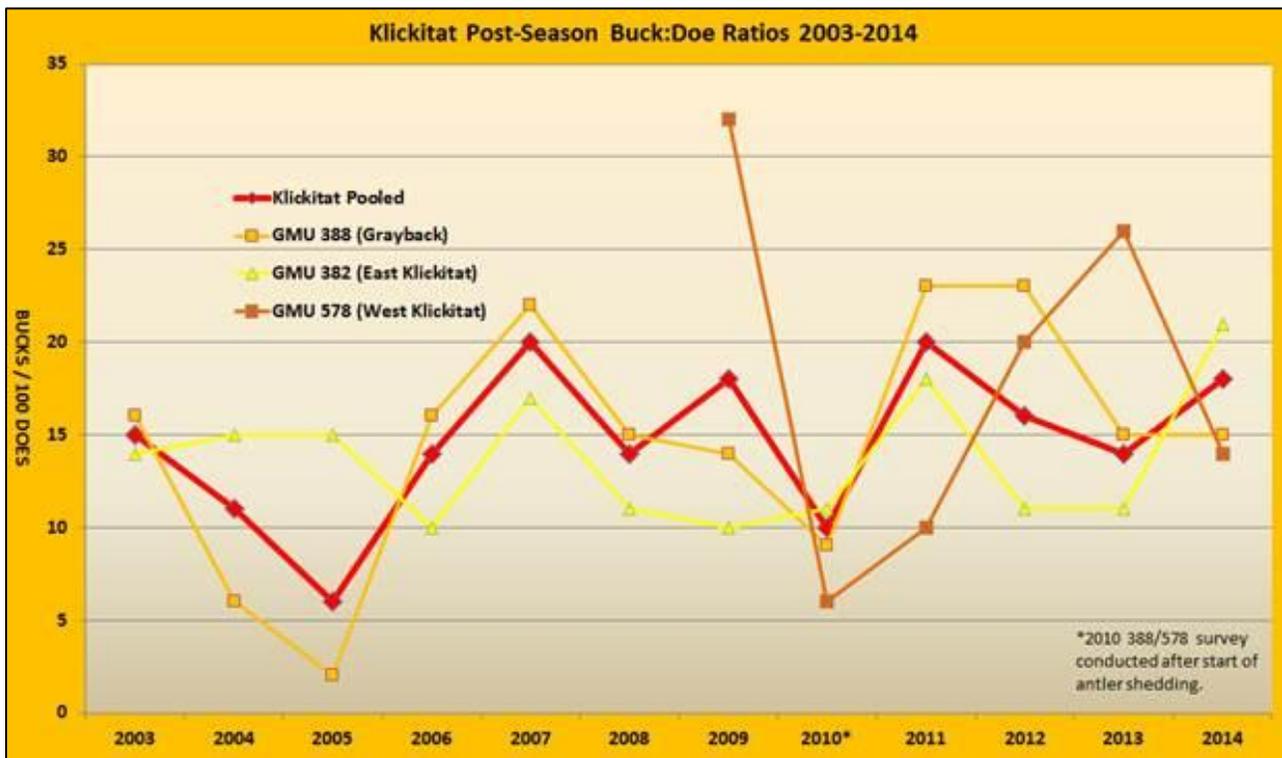
**Volunteer Coordination:** Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator Dazey met with Volunteer program Manager Christine Redmond and Outreach Specialist Janet Anthony to discuss strategies for volunteer outreach to High School groups and other volunteer youth groups. Also covered were strategies for Citizen Science and Environmental Integrity Monitoring. Volunteer Coordinator Dazey answered questions from swan volunteer Martha Jordon in regards to CREVIS and other volunteer concerns she had.

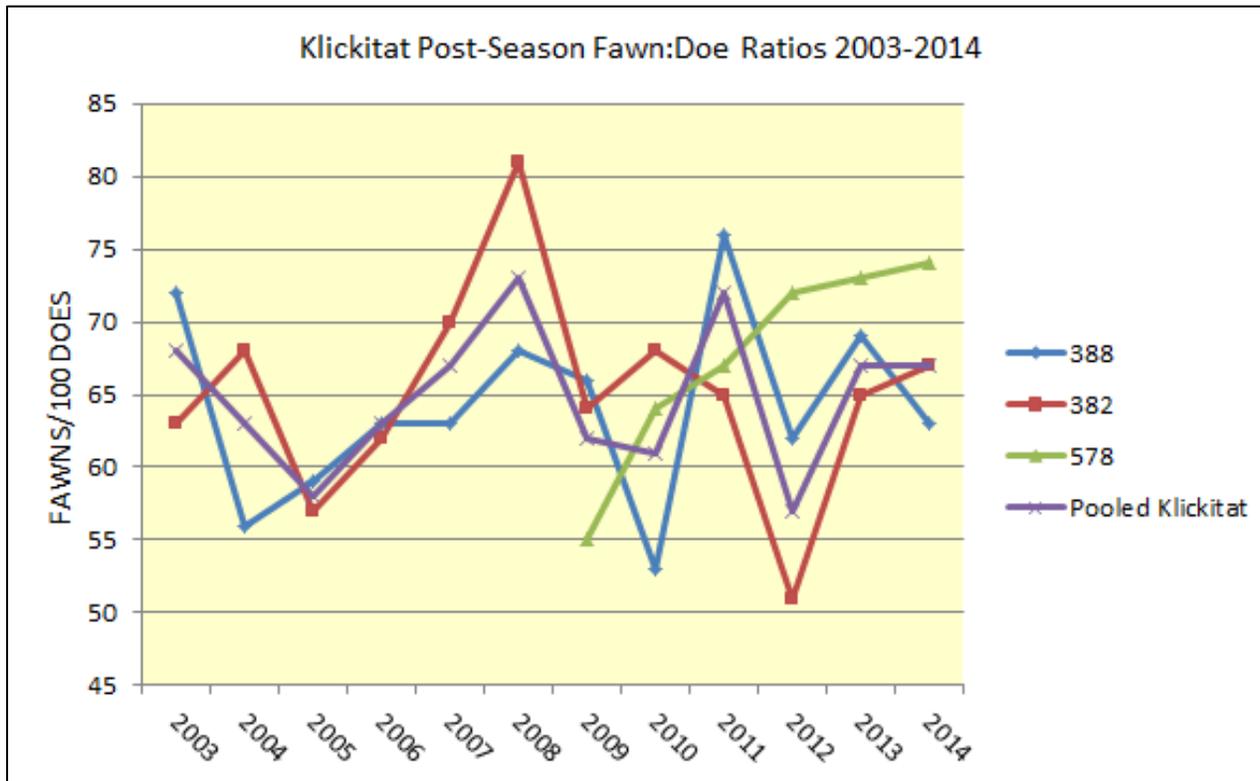
**REGION 5**

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Klickitat Deer Post-season Surveys:** Biologists Bergh completed data analysis for the annual post-season aerial deer surveys that took place in GMUs 578, 388, and 382 last week. The estimates of post-season buck:doe ratios were generally in line with past years (see graph below). A total of 1,271 deer were classified: 172 in GMU 578, 361 in GMU 388, and 738 in GMU 382. The information from this survey, along with harvest reports, pre-season surveys, and spring surveys are all used to guide the management of these deer.





## Wildlife Areas

### Klickitat Wildlife Area

**Fuels Reduction Project:** Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis surveyed the Phase II project area for western gray squirrel nests, completing that part of the project layout. Unfortunately, they found that part of the flagging used to mark project boundaries and squirrel nests in November had been removed by someone, and they had to re-do those markings. Van Leuven downloaded GPS locations of squirrel nests and created a map to provide protection for those nests.

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

### Wildlife Management

**Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt:** The 2014-2015 SW Washington goose hunting season continued this week. As of Sunday, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 358 hunters have checked a total of 864 geese at three check stations at a ratio of approximately 2.4 geese per hunter. At the moment, all zones remain open for Management Area 2A. A total of 80 duskies are distributed amongst five zones in Management Area 2A and 2B. Zones may close to hunting geese if dusky quotas are exceeded. For information regarding up-to-date zone closures, hunters can call the Region 5 office at (360) 696-6211 and follow the menu options for hunting

and waterfowl. Hunters interested in participating in this season can refer to pages 3, 6-7, and 9-10 of the Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Season Pamphlet for further details regarding requirements for participation. <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/publications/01535/wdfw01535.pdf>.

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

**Wildlife Conflict**

**Wildlife Conflict – District 10:** Conflict Specialist Conklin met with a land owner in Morton who has constructed an exclusionary fence to monitor grass hay growth. The growth will be measured before he releases his cows back out into the field in the spring. The protected growth of the grass hay inside the fence will be compared to unprotected areas in the pasture to better assess loss due to elk grazing.



***Exclusionary fence***

\*\*\*\*\*

**Winter Conditions:**

**D-10 & MSHWA Winter Conditions**

**Past Weather:** November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal. Light accumulations of snow fell on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area the last weekend of November. Temperatures have been above average the first few weeks of December. A light accumulation of snow fell on the Wildlife Area December 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Short-Term Forecast:** Freezing levels will fluctuate between sea level and 5,000feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 and 8-14 day forecasts are for below normal temperatures and above normal precipitation.

**Long-Term Forecast:** The January forecast and the three month forecast call for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

**Habitat:** Forage is available at middle and lower elevations.

**Snow Depths:** Lower elevations are currently snow free, with some snow at the middle elevations and significant snow depths at the upper elevations.

**Animal Concentrations:** No unusual concentrations noted to date. The first winter elk survey was conducted on the Mudflow unit December 8<sup>th</sup>, with 63 elk observed.

**Animal Condition:** Animals appear to be in good condition.

**Mortality:** None reported to date.

**Public Contacts:** None to report regarding winter conditions.

*The Public is reminded the portion of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area lying east of a line defined by Hoffstadt Creek, The North Fork Toutle, and Deer Creek is closed to public access through April 30, 2014, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.*

### **District 9: Winter Conditions**

**Past Weather:** Weather in the South Cascades continues to be dry and annual snowpack is below 50% of normal for the year.

**Winter Severity:** The Klickitat Wildlife Area continues to be snow-free and forage habitat is available. There is little concern for the current severity of the winter conditions on big game populations in Skamania County and the western portion of Klickitat County. The eastern portions of Klickitat County have had no snow accumulation this winter and deer are reported in good condition.

**Habitat:** Habitat is open and forage available below 3,500 feet in most of the South Cascades. Snow pack at select SNOTEL sites in the South Cascades around 4500 feet is approximately 24 inches.

**Animal Concentrations:** Large elk concentrations have been seen in the South Trout Lake Valley but no unusual concentrations have been seen due to inclement conditions.

**Animal Condition:** Animals appear to be in good condition and numerous deer have been seen in the past week with healthy fawns.

**Mortality:** None documented this week other than a few reported by WDOT on Highway 14.

**Public Contacts:** No concerns raised by the public this week.

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Marking of Power Lines by PUD:** Biologist Ament has been working with staff from the local Clallam County PUD to address the power lines that electrocuted two adult swans and one juvenile swan in Sequim in the past few weeks. The PUD advised that they are not able to modify or bury the lines at this time, but they were willing to install reflective flappers to make the lines more obvious to the swans. Biologist Ament and PUD staff discussed the locations where the flappers should be installed on the lines. A total of fifteen flapper devices were installed on the lines on Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>.



***Clallam PUD installing markers on the power lines responsible for swan electrocutions***

**Cassin's Auklet Mortality:** Biologist Michaelis responded to and coordinated with other agency personnel regarding a fairly large Cassin's Auklet mortality event along the coast. Ten auklet carcasses were submitted to the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin. At this time, the event is thought to be related to birds dying from starvation. The majority of these birds are juveniles. Many governmental agencies, along with the COASST network of volunteers administered from the University of Washington, are closely linked to respond to these types of events.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Goose Area 2B:** On Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, Scientific Technician Capelli checked a total of two hunters with a total of eight geese (four Cackling, two Taverner's, and two Lesser).

On Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, Scientific Technician Capelli checked a total of four hunters with a total of twelve geese (five Taverners and seven Lesser). No Dusky Canada geese were reported as being harvested in goose management Area 2B.

On Wednesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, Scientific Technician Capelli checked a total of two hunters with a total of eight geese (eight Cackling).

On Saturday, December 27<sup>th</sup>, Scientific Technician Capelli checked no hunters. No Dusky Canada geese were reported as being harvested in goose management Area 2B.

Biologist Sundstrom worked the Raymond check station the past two weeks. Twenty-two hunters with a total of fifty-one geese were checked (sixteen Cacklers with one banded, one Aleutian, five Taverner's, two Lesser, twelve Dusky, eight Western, five White Fronted, one Snow, and one Unknown). Wednesday the 17<sup>th</sup> was an interesting day, as enforcement worked the Raymond area throughout the day and it paid dividends. A total of twelve Dusky geese were checked in a single day, bringing the season total to twenty Dusky geese in Area 2B. Although Pacific County has exceeded its quota by ten, the Area remains open for goose hunting after quota numbers from other areas were shifted so 2B could remain open. The future goose hunting season in Pacific County can be closed at any time if current quota numbers are exceeded once more.

**Dusky Goose Surveys:** Biologists Sundstrom, Novack, and Michaelis conducted the monthly goose survey throughout Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. The primary objective is to survey for dusky geese and identify any collared geese. Birds are captured and marked during molt periods on Middleton Island and the Copper River Delta in Alaska. Surveys are being conducted to document wintering areas and survival estimates. Sundstrom surveyed the northern portion of Pacific County and, together with Novack, portions of Grays Harbor County. Biologist Michaelis surveyed the remaining portion of Pacific county. Goose numbers have increased significantly in Grays Harbor since the November survey, especially the number of Dusky geese (Table 1). Michaelis also observed one Cackling Canada goose which was marked from a total of 150 birds.

***A few Dusky geese in a residential neighborhood***



*Table 1: Dusky Goose Survey Totals*

<b>Month</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Dusky Goose Numbers</b>	<b># Banded</b>
December	Pacific County	1796	32
	Grays Harbor	249	0
November	Pacific County	<b>240</b>	<b>1</b>
	Grays Harbor	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>