Wildlife Program

Week of May 26 – June 1, 2014

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

District 3 Wolf Activity: The Oregon collared wolf OR-15 returned to Washington on Wednesday of last week after travelling south to the LaGrande area. It has not been determined whether this animal is travelling alone or has picked up a companion. Assistant District Biologist Vekasy set a trail camera in general area of recent Oregon wolf location off of Skyline Rd. No tracks from that day were found, but a single set of older wolf tracks was located near the Bluewood Ski area.

Wildlife Areas

Sherman Creek Wildlife Area (SCWA) Weed Control: SCWA staff began chemical weed treatments this week, concentrating first on hoary alyssum, a state Class B noxious weed. It is limited in its distribution on the wildlife area, and staff is working to keep it that way. While conducting control around the old Wilkie Homestead, Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer surveyed for occurrence of biological control agent presence on St. Johnswort, Dalmatian toadflax, and diffuse knapweed, finding agents present on all three species of noxious weed.

Adult Chrysolina spp. feeding on St. Johnswort.

The diffuse knapweed plant (pictured right) has been fed on heavily by *Larinus minutus*, a small weevil, one of which you can see mid-way up the plant. The root also likely has the larva of a different beetle feeding inside of it.

Chief Joseph Wildlife Area Plant Surveys: Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Biologist Woodall assisted USFS Botanist Mark Darrach and a Kansas State University Professor who is renowned in the Phlox spp., conduct some surveys for the Snake River Phlox, *Phlox colubrine*, which is a rare endemic species to Hell's Canyon and its canyon land grassland ecosystem. The characteristics are not evident by the naked eye and took a hand lens to properly identify the plant. The post Cache Creek Fire grass growth is phenomenal with grass over knee deep and even waist high in one field. We have never seen these lands look so good. The combination of a fire in late August (2012) followed up by application of Tordon and Escort Herbicides on over 1,500 acres of problem weed areas has produced astounding results! Contrary to the upland areas, the lowland areas along Joseph Creek and the Grande Ronde are a mess. We simply have

not had the resources to conduct adequate weed control in these areas this year. Also, the fence contractor was on the ground working and constructing corners.

Plant survey on the canyons edge.

Snake River Phlox

Grass and wildflowers.

What was once fields of starthistle are now productive grass fields.

Private Lands / Wildlife Conflict

Injured Owl in Medical Lake, Washington: Conflict Specialist Bennett received a call about an owl just south of Medical Lake. The Reporting Party (RP) assumed the owl was young, but after a discussion about its feathers it was determined to be an adult. After even more discussion, Bennett realized this was not a common owl to the area and went to retrieve the injured bird. Upon arrival, it was determined to be a flammulated owl with a left wing injury. The owl was transported to a wildlife rehabilitator and is doing well to-date.

An injured flammulated found near Medical Lake, Washington

Ducklings in Greenacres, Washington: Conflict Specialist Bennett and District Biologist Atamian received a call from a concerned citizen in Greenacres regarding a female mallard duck that had lost her ducklings in a storm drain. The ducklings were freed by placing cardboard boxes over the grates so the ducklings would follow the light out of the drain into the wetland. One duckling ran into a nearby yard, but was quickly reunited to the wetland were the rest of the brood was located.

A wayward duckling before being reunited with the female mallard in a wetland near Greenacres, Washington

Conservation Forum: Biologist Lewis attended a bi-monthly conservation forum held in Pullman. The purpose of the meetings is for conservation professionals to get together and discuss conservation options in the area.

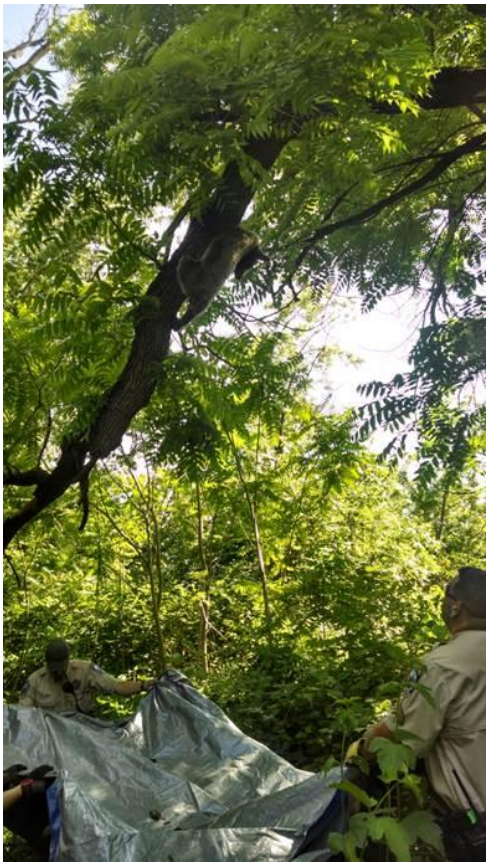
GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

Wildlife Management

Black Bear in Walla Walla: On Saturday, District Biologist Wik and Asst. District Biologist Vekasy received calls from Officer John requesting assistance with a yearling black bear that was in downtown Walla Walla. Both biologists responded to the scene where Sergeant Fulton, local PD, and firefighters were located. District Biologist Wik used the ladder truck to assist in the darting of the treed bear. The

immobilization went smoothly and Sergeant Fulton, Officer John, and District Biologist Wik relocated the young bear to the Blue Mountains where hopefully it will remain out of trouble.

Walla Walla Fire Department Ladder Truck extended towards the young bear in a large tree.



The young bear starting to become sedated.

The young bear running out of the back of the bear trap with a bird banger being fired over its head.

Private Lands / Wildlife Conflict

Bear Complaints: Specialist Shepherd handled several black bear issues across Northeast Washington from near the town of Rice in southwestern Stevens County to Metaline Falls in northern Pend Oreille County.

Cougar Attacks: Conflict Specialist Rasley continues to deal with cougar attacks on sheep just east of Starbuck along the Tucannon River.

Cougar caught on trail camera after killing two sheep

One of the 2 dead sheep

Wildlife Conflict: Natural Resource Worker Wade continued working this week with Conflict Specialist Rasley in the early morning and evening hours to keep elk hazed out of the agriculture fields south of Pomeroy. The large herds of cow elk are beginning to break up and calve. Wade also went to the County Assessor office in Pomeroy to gather maps of landowner boundaries in the area as some of the land is now off limits for WDFW hazing.

Bull elk being hazed out of fields south of Pomeroy (HOBWP sign along the road)

REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wolf Conservation and Management

Okanogan Wolves: Specialist Heilhecker contacted a rancher about a wolf being trapped and collared south of their allotment. Specialist Heilhecker met with the WSU student working in the area. She gave the student a trail camera, discussed recent wolf activity, and where the range rider has been working. Specialist Heilhecker talked with the range rider. She answered his questions regarding which cow herds to ride and when.

Specialist Heilhecker along with Officers Day and Boyd responded to a call regarding a dog possibly attacked by two wolves west of Pateros. The RP was not sure if the animals were wolves but he thought the animals were too big to be coyotes. Earlier this week, a stranger driving on highway 153 saw the dog being attacked by the two animals that she believed were wolves. She reported the attack to the owner. The dog received minor scrapes and bruising to its pelvic region. The RP stated the dog has been playing with the two animals for the last couple of months. The RP thought the animals may be denning in his field, which is adjacent to highway 153. A den was located in the field but was determined to be too small to have been used by wolves. Several piles of coyote scat were found where the RP stated most of the activity has occurred. A trail camera was hung in this area. The RP was advised to not allow his dog to play with wild animals.

Wolf Monitoring and Management: Biologists Fitkin and Rohrer investigated two independent reports of considerable wolf activity in the south end of the Methow Watershed outside of the traditionally known territory of the Lookout Pack. On the ground follow-up and review of remote camera photos by local wildlife enthusiast confirmed the presence of multiple animals. After additional follow-up by biologists Becker and Jones, who were already in the valley attempting to trap the Lookout Pack, it appears that the reported activity is simply an extension or shift of the Lookout territory. Several days later, biologists Roussin and Jones succeeded in capturing and radio-collaring a yearling female in this new area. This is the first time in almost 4 years we have had a functioning radio on a Lookout Pack member.

Fresh wolf tracks in the Lower Methow watershed.

Photo – Scott Fitkin

Wildlife Management

Piscivorous Waterbirds: Biologists Duvuvuei and Finger continued monitoring Caspian tern and other piscivorous waterbird use of the Frenchmen Regulated Access Area. Tern use has decreased dramatically and only a few terns are viewed over the course of a week. In recent weeks, pelicans have been the most abundant species observed. Great egrets are the second most abundant. Duvuvuei and Finger pulled boards in the final cell to continue to concentrate fish and observe response. Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei electroshocked to sample the fish species available for tern foraging at Frenchmen Regulated Access Area. Due to quickly draining batteries, Finger and Duvuvuei were only able to shock approximately 5 minutes due to battery life. In that short span, the biologists netted approximately 100 carp (5-20 cm), 7 bluegills (5-10 cm), 1 perch (10 cm), and approximately 100 bullfrog tadpoles. Biologist Duvuvuei and Bureau of Reclamation Natural Resource Specialist Lesky finished installing grebe nesting platforms at Osborn Bay on Banks Lake. Grebes have been documented to readily use artificial nesting structures. These platforms will be monitored periodically throughout the nesting season to determine their use by grebes.

Juvenile carp and bullfrog tadpoles. Photo by R. Finger.

Mosquito Control: Biologist Finger met with Wildlife Area Manager Fitzgerald to discuss the Mosquito Control District and Bureau of Reclamation meeting that took place this week. The Mosquito Control District wishes to apply Anvil 10+10 ULV, a Synthetic Pyrethroid to control adult mosquitos. The label of the product only permits application over water under specific conditions and testing has not been done on amphibians to provide any degree of comfort with its use in the Northern Leopard Frog Management Area (NLFMA). Further, the NPDES permit specifically states that only larvicides are to be used within some key areas, including the NLFMA and parts of the Gloyd Unit where leopard frogs historically occurred. The following week, Finger and Fitzgerald met with the Mosquito Control District and with Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) staff at the BOR office to discuss the issue further (BOR owns the land that WDFW manages as the NLFMA). The Mosquito Control District was denied permission to spray adulticides in the NLFMA by Finger. Further discussion is warranted to determine at what point WDFW would approve its use, in the event of a documented vector issue, with a disease such as West Nile Virus. Public safety concerns must be balanced with the protection of a State Endangered species.

Wolverine Monitoring: As access allows, run-pole cameras are being checked and maintained. No new wolverine photos from the last pair, but many other species are being documented including the occasional person. We suspect someone may be systematically turning off one of our cameras near Washington Pass. This is baffling given the non-intrusive

nature of the methodology and unfortunate for the study given that the site is likely to produce wolverine detections.

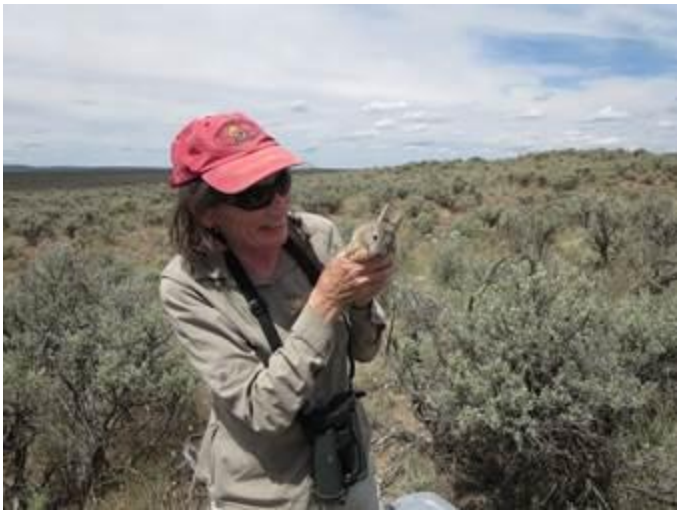
Mischievous martens and curious coyote. Remote camera photos - USFS

Golden Eagles: Biologist Gallie completed final nest checks for occupancy visits in Chelan and Douglas Counties. Additional sites were visited in attempts to clear up uncertainty regarding which nest was being used and to gauge the development of chicks to best plan the productivity flight. Most chicks are now 5-6 weeks old, and protocol target 7 weeks of age for flights and productivity assessments. Our productivity flight is planned for the second week of June. The final occupancy assessments for the district (for all known territories over the two years of this inventory project) are promising, with Douglas County having 17 of 25 territories occupied, and Chelan County had 18 of 24 territories occupied. Biologist Gallie also discovered a new territory in Grimes Lake, Douglas County.

Cliffs above Grimes Lake, Douglas County.

Two 5-6 week-old golden chicks in the Grimes Lake nest-blend in all too well with the dark rock and whitewash. (J Gallie)

Pygmy Rabbit Kit Release: On Wednesday this week Technician Duvuvuei, PhD student Demay, and Interns Jones and Jacobs released 23 kits from the nursery enclosures at SBF that had attained the 150 g weight requirement for release to wild. The team also began the third round of trapping in the breeding enclosures this week. On Thursday we captured 30 rabbits at the Dormaier breeding enclosure (28 new kits, 1 recap kit, and 1 adult). Nineteen kits were released to wild, 9 kits were retained at the nursery to reach weight, and the recap and adult were released back into the breeding enclosure. On Friday we captured 36 rabbits at one of the SBF breeding enclosures (32 new kits, 3 recap kits, and 1 adult male). Twenty-nine kits and the adult were released to wild, 3 kits were retained in the nursery, and the recaps were released back into the breeding enclosure. This week we were assisted by volunteers Kelsi Potterf and Susan Ballinger, as well as Private Lands Biologist Comstock and Assistant District Biologist Duvuvuei.



Volunteer Susan Ballinger prepares to release a kit to the wild

Pen Maintenance: Interns Jones and Jacobs along with Technician Duvuvuei replaced the cracked valve at the SBF irrigation system, buried additional water dishes, added protective netting in an enclosure over two mounds with high rabbit activity, fixed the panels between the large enclosure and nursery, added a PVC riser in a nursery to raise the height of the top netting, and installed artificial burrows at additional release sites.

Badger excavation beside the fence line at the Dormaier enclosure

Technician Duvuvuei helped to orient Interns Jones and Jacobs and familiarize them with all aspects of husbandry. During the perimeter check at the Dormaier enclosure, several badger diggings and a large tunnel was discovered along the fence line. By digging out the tunnel, we determined that the badger had tunneled along the base of the buried fence line in pursuit of a small mammal, but had not breached the enclosure. After confirming this, we collapsed the tunnel and filled it in.

Interns Jones and Jacobs block the badger tunnel at the Dormaier enclosure

Wildlife Areas

Methow Forest Restoration Project: Project Forester Jamie Bass continued to work with department archaeologist Katherine Kelly to establish inadvertent discovery and cultural resource protection plans for the new areas selected for silvicultural restoration treatment. This includes project descriptions, effective protocols, and expected ground disturbance. Before any work will be done, department staff will be sure to complete cultural reports, protection and management plans, and contact all possible shareholders. Forester Bass also continued ground-surveying units with abandoned road systems to determine if such areas can be incorporated in the restoration efforts via temporary roads and what the specific needs of each stand might be. Due to variance in moisture, soil types, fire history, and topography each stand requires unique prescription to deal with insect and pathogen outbreaks, historic stocking densities, and protection of remnant historic conifer structure. Each area is then also limited by accessibility for ground equipment to operate safely with minimal soil disturbance by topography. Forester Bass in addition will be working with the prescription fire team to designate effective burn units coinciding with unit boundaries to give the prescription fire team the ability to control the prescription fire, as well as keep it within prescription.

Wells Wildlife Area Weed Control: Assistant Manager Noel Winegeart, Wells Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Angel Hastings with assistance from volunteer Schroeder as well as Chelan Wildlife Area Natural Resource Technician Kevin Vallance spot sprayed Dalmatian toadflax, whitetop and diffuse knapweed on the Bridgeport and Bridgeport Bar units. We received and distributed a total of 5,600 Mecinus janthinus, a bioagent for Dalmation toadflax. Noel put them at sites on the Washburn Island, Central Ferry Canyon, and Bridgeport units. Noel mowed approximately 60 acres within a restoration field on the Bridgeport unit infested with varying densities of goatgrass. He then mowed about 8.5 miles of interior roads on the same unit.

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

Wildlife Areas

Online Reservation System: Biologists Finger and Duvuvuei met with Private Lands and Wildlife Area staff to discuss an online reservation system for restricted hunting areas. Finger and Duvuvuei hope to employ an online reservation system that is currently being used by the Private Lands Division. Finger and Duvuvuei intend to use this system for the Frenchmen and Winchester Regulated Access Areas this fall but wanted to address some issue that were brought about by hunters, particularly the issue of hunters reserving sites but not showing up.

Waterfowl Food Plots: Biologist Finger and Duvuvuei continued planting Japanese and Proso millet at the Frenchmen Regulated Access Area (FRAA). We are already seeing a good response of millet in areas that were seeded earlier this spring. Millet is a valuable food source for waterfowl and by seeding the exposed mudflats, Finger and Duvuvuei hope to attract more

waterfowl to the area and increase hunter success. The FRAA has been full of water for over 1 year for the tern feeding experiment, which has eliminated much of the competitive vegetation (sod forming grasses) that we've struggled with in the past. The conditions for planting at FRAA are optimal and about 14 acres have been planted thus far.

Japanese millet seeded and harrowed; conditions couldn't have been better. – Photo by R. Finger.

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 Heinlen led 52 Brewster sixth grade students on an environmental hike in the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Topics covered the different habitats in the Sinlahekin and the animals that use each including deer, bighorn sheep, and waterfowl habitat and management. We were lucky enough see white-tailed deer, a blue racer and to hear a ruffed grouse displaying, which many of the students had never heard before and thought was pretty cool. Biologist Heinlen also spoke to 32 sixth graders at Okanogan Middle Schools environmental Camp Progress and 40 sixth graders at Omak's environmental Camp Disuatel this period. All told, this makes a total of 227 sixth grade students from Omak, Okanogan and Brewster Middle Schools reached by wildlife presentations this spring.

Biologist Fitkin is temporarily keeping some local snakes in preparation for presentations later in the summer. Rubber boas are often notoriously difficult to feed in captivity, but the current captive has readily consumed baby mice now on three occasions and is shaping up to be a good ambassador (see photo and video).

Rubber boa consuming a juvenile deer mouse. Photo – Scott Fitkin

Peregrine Banding: Biologist Volsen worked with a local falconer to assist in the banding of his 15 day old bird acquired under permit. Because the bird was very young, new banding materials needed to be found.

Private Lands/Access

Okanogan Access: The local Cub Scouts had a litter pickup and Barba-que at Big Green Lake. This was very well attended by scouts and parents. The campground was cleaner this time and we picked up less bags than the previous effort in late winter. Another outing tentatively scheduled for late August or September.

Cub Scouts at Green Lake

Right: ***A reflection of sunset on Pothole #3. Sinlahekin Wildlife Area. Photos by Justin Haug.***

RECENT VISITORS TO THE WILDLIFE AREA

Seen on Dyer Hill, the Bridgeport Unit. Photo by Dan Peterson

Recently fledged saw-whet owl. Photo by Angel Hastings

Bridgeport Bar Unit
Photo by Dan Peterson

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Area: Manager Huffman received a phone call from DOT of an injured owl in the highway median outside Naches. Huffman caught the great horned owl that had been standing in the highway median for over a day. Huffman contacted a raptor rehabilitator who took the owl. The owl was very weak but did not appear to have any wing injuries. The rehabilitator was fairly confident the owl would recover.

Wildlife Management

Burrowing Owls: Biologist Gregory, Volunteer Ross and members of the Global Owl Project spend one more night trapping owls in Pasco. Another 7 males, 9 females, and 10 owlets were banded. Of the adults 2 of the males and 4 females were previously banded. One of the recaptured females was captured during the last two years at the Umatilla Chemical Depot in Oregon. She is now nesting in Pasco with at least 3 owlets. This is the first observation of an adult owl dispersing between the Depot and Pasco. Overall use of the artificial burrows is high with at least 40 more owlets counted that were too young to band. Later in the week, Volunteer Ross and Biologist Gregory visited a landowner in Pasco who has been supporting artificial burrows on his property. They captured one of the broods for banding and invited the landowner and his grandson to observe. This brings the total number of owls banded in Pasco to 15 males, 20 females, and 25 owlets.

A Pasco landowner with two burrowing owls hatched in artificial burrows on his property. Photo: R. Ross

A newly banded burrowing owl.
Photo: S. Gregory

A young burrowing owl awaits banding.
Photo: R. Ross

Mourning Doves: Biologists Gregory compiled the distance sampling data from two repetitions of the mourning dove survey route and sent it to the USFWS. The third and final survey will be next week.

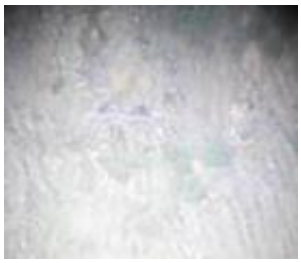
Point Surveys on CRP enrollments: Biologist Stutzman spent two days conducting point count surveys on wildlife-focused, continuous CRP enrollments. Stutzman did two surveys in Franklin County on a SAFE enrollment and four in Benton County on an Upland Field buffer project. The point counts represent the biological monitoring requirements of the programs and will be repeated in mid-June. In addition to the many Horned Larks and Meadowlarks, highlights included an unexpected Pheasant, Sage and Brewer's Sparrows, and a very lost Bullock's Oriole. This was the first year of monitoring for both projects so Stutzman had to establish the survey points using ArcGIS and familiarize himself with the point count protocol after receiving it from Region 2 Private Lands Biologist Comstock. Additionally, Stutzman had to spend some time practicing his grassland bird ID prior to the surveys because it's been a few years now and he was very out of practice.

District 8 deer mortality: Biologist Bernatowicz investigated 1deer mortality this week at the request of MIT biologists working on the deer study. All evidence suggested the deer had been taken by a cougar.

Collared deer killed by a cougar

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz continued to work with SCI volunteers watching lambs in the Yakima River Canyon. Lamb mortalities were common at the southwest end of the canyon. Since 2 samples were already obtained from the area, no samples were collected. Lambs are doing much better on the east side of the canyon where no mortalities have been observed.

Golden Eagles: Biologist Bernatowicz checked some local nests at the request of Raptor Specialist Watson, who wants to radiomark a few eaglets. Oak Creek, Horseshoe Bend, and McDaniel Canyon sites have chicks in the nest. The Oak Creek bird(s) will likely be radiomarked.



Two golden eagle chicks at Oak Creek

I-90 Wildlife Crossing: Biologist Bernatowicz toured potential wildlife crossings between Rye Grass hill and Vantage with DOT and YTC staff. No funding is currently available, so the main focus was on existing structures. The old cattle crossing has great potential to serve as a wildlife crossing, but is choked with vegetation and has a gate on the south end. There were elk tracks along the side of the highway leading to the tunnel and deer tracks up to the vegetation block. DOT was willing to mow vegetation, but YTC might have issues with opening the gate. Ideas were discussed that might work for YTC and still allow wildlife passage.

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

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area: Access Manager Garcia worked on installing Fly and Spider repellent screens in the restrooms at Lavender Lake, King horn, Bell property, and Teanaway Junction. In addition to servicing those sites, he also serviced the sites at Mattoon Lake, Fio Rito Lakes, Thrall, Wood house, Oak Creek, Tim's Pond, and Rowe.

Natural Resource Worker Barbosa serviced the lower valley access sites as well as the Zillah Bridge, Buena, Pond 4 & 5, Pond 3, Pond 1 & 2, and Mellis Road. He also restocked the work trucks at the end of the week.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Sak met with BOR folks at the Whitstran access site. We are relocating the parking lot and need to consult with BOR prior to proceeding. We will need to build up part of the road for a turn out that will allow access to the new parking lot.

Wildlife Management

Hunt by reservation tool improvements discussion: Biologist Stutzman attended a discussion in Ephrata regarding potential improvements to the Hunt by Reservation system. A number of minor issues and questions that arose from the first year of the reservation system were discussed and many alternatives/improvements were suggested. Staff from Region 2, Region 1, and Olympia was also in attendance or took part in the discussion via conference call.

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Manager Lopushinsky met with Tip Hudson (WSU Cooperative Extension; Kittitas County) and students from Evergreen State College to discuss fire effects on habitat of the Colockum-Tarps Fire.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris worked with Public Affairs Officer Bartlett and Lands Division Manager Sprague on the news release for the fire season (June 2 to September 30) target shooting restriction on the Wenas Wildlife Area. Final release went out on Friday afternoon, May 30.

Manager Confer Morris also drafted thank you letters for the groups that coordinated and conducted the annual shooting areas clean ups and provided them to Regional Director Livingston for his signature.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Sak went with Manager Bjornstrom to the Yakima River planning meeting to review the grant proposal with Yakima Co., Kittitas Co., and Benton Co. weed boards, Yakama Tribes, Dept. of AG and WDFW. This will be a joint effort to map and to get a measurement of Purple loosestrife and yellow flag iris on the Yakima River corridor from Cle-Elum to the Mouth in Richland.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart wrote a response letter to the Yakama Nation regarding concerns over the proposed Parke Creek fence project. Winegeart invited Yakama Nation representatives to a field tour of the site to discuss options on moving the project forward without damage to cultural sites.

Manager Winegeart also coordinated with Regional Director Livingston to schedule a tour of the newly acquired Plum Creek lands for the County's Land Access Advisory Committee and the Wildlife Area Advisory Committee.

Wildlife Management

District 4 Wildlife Conflicts: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored harvest of DPP permits in Elk Area 3721. After a slow start to the summer bull season, this week harvest picked up with the take of 5 spikes, one 5x5, one 3x3 and one 2x2. Total harvest for the summer bull season is 12 bull elk. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand also coordinated with landowners and hunt managers on elk locations to pressure them away from valuable crops.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and responded to a damage complaint from crows and magpies on poultry at a commercial farm near Benton City. Multiple non-lethal and lethal strategies were discussed and will be implemented to reduce predation occurring at the farm. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and handled a call from a homeowner in the Finley area who was having a problem with skunks. Technical advice was given as well as a reference to the Department's "Living with Wildlife" document. Information on local Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators was also provided.

District 8 Wildlife Conflicts: Landowners in the Badger Pocket area reported some elk and deer feeding in hay fields and some residential areas. Conflict Specialist Wetzel will follow up with these landowners.

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area Fire: A lightning-caused wildfire just north of the Colockum Wildlife Area this week threatened the wildlife area. The fire caused a lengthy power outage and prompted level-2 evacuation notices on Tarpiscan and Colockum Roads.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Fence Construction: Manager Huffman and Assistant Manager Berry prepared for a Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) work party over the weekend. Berry built a jig to make assembling the bucks for the buck and rail fence easier and gathered up materials for the weekend.

On Friday and Saturday about 18 volunteers from the RMEF worked on the wildlife area. The first day was spent constructing a buck and rail fence (pictures below) around an aspen stand. Last fall RMEF volunteers thinned conifers out of the stand and cut materials for the fence. About 360 feet of buck and rail fence was built on Friday (picture below). Part of the crew cut more materials in a stand that needed thinning while the rest built bucks and assembled the fence. The crew hammered in over 100 pounds of 8" and 10" spikes but ran out with 3 bucks and a few rails to go. Staff members were able to round up enough spikes so the volunteers could finish the following morning. After finishing the fence Saturday morning Huffman organized the volunteers to begin thinning and piling brush in another stand in need of thinning. The crew removed a lot of grand fir trees and piled a lot of brush before calling it a day (pictures below). Everyone worked hard and had a lot of fun; they are all ready for the next work day in August which will coincide with the RMEF Rendezvous on White Pass.

The first buck and rail section going up around an aspen stand on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. Volunteers cut materials and constructed 360 feet of fence.

Fence construction in progress on Oak Creek Wildlife Area.

A section of the completed buck and rail fence on Oak Creek Wildlife Area. The fence will protect an aspen stand from browsing for a few years. Last fall RMEF volunteers thinned conifers out of the stand.

A section of buck and rail fence with aspen in the back ground inside the fence.

RMEF volunteers thinning grand fir and piling materials for burning. The crew focused on thinning smaller trees from around larger ponderosa pine and larch.

RMEF volunteers after a hard day's work.

LT Murray Wildlife Area Maintenance: Manager Winegeart, and Techs Schnebly and Hill cut weeds around native grass seedlings in the Parke Creek restoration site to reduce density and water competition. Seeded species continue to germinate, and we had excellent survival of last year's plugs.

Winegeart cutting weeds at the Parke Creek restoration site

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris responded to a fire at the Ellensburg Pass shooting area Monday evening. The fire appears to have been started by tracer rounds and burned 83 acres, some of that on the private land to the east. The DNR had multiple engines, a hand crew, and two helicopters working the fire, along with multiple brush trucks and tenders from the Kittitas fire district. The fire started within the Forest Fire Protection Area, so DNR is responsible for suppression costs. DNR is investigating the fire and will pursue cost reimbursement. Assistant Manager Taylor reviewed fire initiation area with the DNR investigators. Manager Confer Morris will be coordinating with DNR to ensure that restoration costs are included in the reimbursement costs.

West-end of burn where fire started

Assistant Manager Taylor responded to a fire at the Sheep Company shooting area Sunday evening (June 1). The fire was started by an individual shooting at Rimfire Exploding Targets. It burned 35.5 acres before Selah Fire was able to put it out. The Sheep Company shooting area is within the boundary of Selah Fire District, as well as being within the DNR fire response MOU boundary. DNR didn't have any engines available but did put a helicopter on standby in case we needed it. The individual who started the fire called 911, attempted to put it out, and stuck around until we got enforcement on scene. Capt. Mann and Officer Myers responded and cited the subject for illegal use of incendiary devices on department lands.

Left: ***Fire Initiation location***

Right: ***Portion of burned area***

Manager Confer Morris worked with WSDOT to get 2013 target shooting fire season restriction signs updated for 2014. Rather than produce all new aluminum signs for 2014, we are reusing the 2013 signs by updating the dates and putting a new anti-graffiti film over the top. Signs should be ready June 2 or 3. In the meantime, Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor put up temporary paper signs.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom attended a coordination meeting with BOR staff in Ephrata. Topics discussed were management of Smith Canyon, Exhibit A, and current management responsibilities. At this time BOR is not willing to change management agreements regarding Smith Canyon, so the irrigation district will retain management responsibilities to this property. Other BOR properties that are currently managed by DFW have been modified over the years and certain parcels have been transferred to local irrigation districts for management. It was agreed that BOR needs to update their map layer to reflect these changes as does WDFW.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Region 2/4 East-West Black Bear Project: Over the coming months, staff will be systematically trapping bears in the Snoqualmie and Lake Wenatchee areas in alternating sessions (two sessions in each area). Biologists Anderson and Smith assisted Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil and Carnivore Specialist Maletzke with bear captures and collaring during the first Westside session. A total of 10 bears were collared over the last two weeks (including several Enforcement Officer captures). This represents a very successful session for the project. Trapping will commence in the Lake Wenatchee area in the coming days. Following trapping sessions in each area, WSU Graduate Student Welfelt and Technician Buskirk will be operating 40+ barbed-wire hair corrals they placed throughout the area. Hair will be carefully collected and catalogued from each corral after 10 days. Analysis will be completed and results ultimately used to generate a population and density estimate. Smith will also be assisting this portion of the project during the summer months.

Left: ***Young male bear encountered during capture/collaring activities in the Snoqualmie area.***

Right: ***Biologist Anderson with a young male black bear fitted with a GPS collar during the first session of the East-West black bear project.***

Region 4 (District 12) Ungulate Damage: Biologist Smith spent time meeting and phone conferencing with landowners from Enumclaw, Green Valley and Snoqualmie Valley to discuss deer and elk damage to agricultural crops and residential property. Hazing ideas, fencing techniques and hunting strategies were discussed. Smith also managed trail cameras to monitor deer and elk use in agricultural areas on the Enumclaw plateau and in the Snoqualmie Valley.

Electrified turbofladry fencing used as an experimental barrier to deer and elk damaging agricultural crops within the flood plain in the Snoqualmie Valley.

Recent elk activity in an agricultural area near Enumclaw.

Puget Sound Lowlands Habitat Connectivity Meeting: Biologist DeBruyn attended a meeting with many levels of agencies and NGO's to discuss wildlife connectivity issues in the Puget Sound Basin. Modeling work developed by the Washington Wildlife Habitat Connectivity Working Group provided the basis for discussions, both theoretical and practical. Particularly relevant for DeBruyn was a presentation about a wildlife crossing structure in King County that could be a model for work being done in District 14 with Elk.

Common Loon Monitoring: Biologist DeBruyn followed up on a sighting of a loon at a local lake during the breeding season. He did observe one loon and will follow up with a boat to see if there is any breeding activity. The lake is a non-motorized zone and seems like suitable breeding habitat for loons. Another lake in the area also looks promising and will be checked for loon activity.

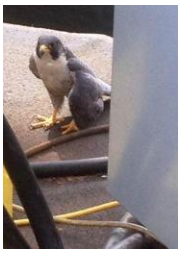
A pair of Loons observed foraging on the Tolt Reservoir during bear capture/collaring activities.

Hozomeen Wolf Cameras: Biologist DeBruyn facilitated the retrieval of the final three cameras by a park service biologist and reviewed the images recovered. There was one image of an as of yet unidentified canid that looked promising.

Scientific Collection Permit Review: Biologist Anderson discussed a proposed research project with a local professor regarding an investigation of populations of area reptiles. SCP review involves local biologists, at times, reviewing proposals. If clarification or concerns are to be discussed, the biologist is to contact the research Project Initiator. Learn more about the state Scientific Collection Permit process and need at the WDFW website: **http://wdfw.wa.gov/licensing/scp/**

Wildlife Management Consultation/Information/Permitting Requests: Biologist Anderson fielded requests and issued management plans, where appropriate. Permits included osprey nest removal of inactive nests, heron management with private entities, eagle nest activity confirmation; among regular requests regarding this topic on a weekly basis.

Peregrine Falcons: Biologist Anderson was notified by WSDOT biologists that a seemingly injured falcon was found at one of the local facilities. WSDOT and local volunteers are monitoring the situation and appropriate measures are being taken. The bird moved on so perhaps it was stunned. Other observers noted territorial falcon activity in the same area that day.



Peregrine falcon on WDOT facility in King County

Lowland Pika Surveys: Biologists Milner and Cyra conducted a pika survey at one of the sites where pika have been heard previously. Weather was cool and damp which may have influenced pika behavior. No animals were seen or heard, but potential old food caches were noted.

Dried remains of sword fern and other forbes that may have been stashed among the rocks at one of the sites under surveillance for pika presence.

Wildlife Areas

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project Monitoring: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and staff from the project consultant downloaded water quality data from each of the 13 water quality monitoring devices on the site and conducted annual cleaning maintenance on each device. The devices collect temperature, water depth, and salinity data in groundwater wells and surface water drainages in and adjacent to the project site.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project Steering Committee Meeting: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, Habitat Planner Williams, and Habitat Engineer Bob Barnard participated in a quarterly meeting of the project Steering Committee. The Steering Committee consists of agencies and representatives of stakeholder interests in the Skagit delta. The group reviewed and provided feedback on materials that are being prepared to submit with the 60% project design.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project ITR Team: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Habitat Planner Williams, and Habitat Engineer Bob Barnard participated in a review session with the project Independent Technical Review (ITR) Team. The ITR Team consists of independent consultants that provide review of project materials and studies. At this meeting, the Team discussed the review of 60% design materials.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated field preparation and planting efforts with Werkhoven Dairy. Corn will continue to be planted as weather allows. Barley fields will be prepared and planted towards the end of June.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm also met with Everett Alexander to discuss grazing and drainage issues. Due to wet soil conditions, grass growth rate has been slow on the West Lobe pastures. A portion of the herd has been moved to a nearby pasture until grass height is suitable for grazing again. Manager Boehm also brush cut along the perimeter fence lines to prevent grass buildup and cattle pressing on the fences to get the grass on the other side. Watering ponds were also refilled in advance of the sunny weather forecast for the coming week.

Stillwater Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager met with Frohning Dairy to finalize the planting plan for the Unit. Approximately 55 acres are planned to be under plow as soon as the soil dries. A mix of barley, corn, and grass is planned to be planted on the Unit this spring.

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

Wildlife Management

Band-tailed pigeon Mineral Springs Monitoring: Biologist DeBruyn made a preseason visit to a mineral spring that in the past has required maintenance to be available to the

pigeons. Work done last year has held up well and no vegetation will have to be removed this year. Contact was made with the landowner and continued access to the site was assured.

University of Washington "Green Wall" Project – Wildlife Camera: Biologists Anderson and Falxa responded to a request for camera techniques and information from a professor at the University of Washington. The professor is interested in documenting wildlife use of new planted "green walls" on campus. Anderson and Falxa discussed some of the equipment WDFW uses and also recommended the group conference with UW Security as they likely use similar equipment and may even be able to tie their existing set-up into this need.

State Envirothon Competition: Biologist Anderson proctored the wildlife portion of the state high school Envirothon competition. The winning team received awards from the coordinating entity, King County Conservation District. However, WDFW donated a songbird box to the winning team and briefly discussed the value of snags to the group. Some sharp young adults out there!

Wildlife Areas

Samish Unit Wetland Enhancement Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, and Ducks Unlimited prepared presentations for an upcoming Open House for the project. The meeting is planned for June 3rd from 6:30 – 8:00 pm at the Padilla Bay Breazeale Interpretive Center. The meeting is open to the public, and attendees will have the opportunity to learn about the project, provide comments, ask questions, and sign up for a project update list to stay current on the project timeline. For more information, please contact Loren Brokaw at Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov.

Samish River Unit (Welts) Parking Lot Access Grant: Projects Coordinator Brokaw received comments on a grant application submitted to the Recreation Conservation Office (RCO). He made adjustments to the grant materials and resubmitted the application based on the comments.

Natural Resource Tech Deyo works to prep the agricultural fields at Lake Terrell for barley plantings. He disked and harrowed the fields.

Skagit Wildlife Area Agricultural Enhancement Program: Staff mowed fields to prep for crop planting on the Samish Unit, coordinated with volunteers on the Island Unit to prepare fields for planting, assisted with the 20 acres of corn planting on the Island Unit, met with Leque Island sharecrop farmer to discuss his planting schedule, and mowed fields to control weeds and improve grass growth.

Johnson DeBay's Slough: Manager Rotton met with Trumpeter Swan Society Representative Martha Jordon to walk thru the proposal for improved wildlife viewing access on the Reserve portion of the site. A meeting is scheduled for early next week to discuss the proposal and propose the redevelopment of the stewardship group for the site with Skagit Audubon.

Pheasant Release program: Skagit Wildlife Area staff have been coordinating with Department of Natural Resources property managers to request slash piles be developed post-harvest on the site. This should improve field access for hunting following the planned harvest for this summer.

Port of Bellingham Wetland Enhancement Project: Manager Kessler coordinated with the Port of Bellingham managers on the wetland enhancement project south of Tennant Lake. Current activities include reed canary grass control and inventorying dead trees and shrubs.

Reed Canary Grass Control: Manager Kessler mowed invasive reed canary grass in fields at Lake Terrell.

Damage Control: Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo performed beaver damage control on the Lake Terrell and Tennant Lake units. The middle animal weighed 57 pounds.

Nooksack Unit Agricultural Lease: The Ag Lessee prepped and planted the 100 acre farm field on the Nooksack Unit. This field is planted with silage corn which is harvested in early September. 10% of the corn is left standing for winter waterfowl feeding.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk Renovation Project: Manager Kessler met onsite with CAMP Engineers and the local Habitat Biologist to discuss the RCO funded Boardwalk renovation project. The short section of the boardwalk will be made ADA wheel chair accessible, and the longer loop section areas that are too low will be raised to keep the boardwalk dry and allow use during the high water months of the year. Final designs and permitting will occur this year, with construction planned for next year.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey continued his series of Pre-Service trainings to certify new hunter education instructors with a classroom Pre Service Training in Lynden WA. Three instructor applicants attended the first session of the PST which consists of classroom presentations on how to conduct classes, department policies, effectiveness of on-line education, and how to build a hunter education team. The three instructors were then given time to plan and prepare to teach an actual class session which will occur June 12th in Lynden. The certification of these three applicants will increase our instructor corps in Whatcom County from 18 to 21. One of the applicants is an officer of the Lynden Shotgun club and after his certification will restart classes at that venue increasing the number of venues in the county. Whatcom County is currently one of our more underserved counties in Region 4 for hunter education classes. The addition of three new instructors and access again to the Lynden Shotgun club will be a much needed addition to the ability of WDFW to offer hunter education to students in the Whatcom County area.

Instructor Advisory Committee Meeting: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey attended the Instructor Advisory Committee meeting May 31st in Ellensburg. The IAC provides important advice and input to assist the department in providing support to the many volunteer instructors around Washington State. IAC is comprised of members who are volunteers representing each region as well as WHEIA and HERO two NGO's who assist in hunter education in Washington.

IAC meeting with Division Manager David Whipple and Enforcement rep Sgt Kline and field coordinator Chuck Ray from Ephrata pictured as well as IAC members.

Hunter Education Instructor Evaluation: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey evaluated the teaching team at the Seattle Rifle and Pistol club, attending the 3rd of 5 sessions of a traditional HE class. Hunter Education Coordinators are tasked with visiting each team a minimum of once every two years. This allows them to evaluate and offer suggestions to the team insuring a high quality program is being offered by each team.

Team members demonstrating gun handling to students. Pictured are volunteer instructors John Blatchford, Victor Moreno, Myron Olson, Shawn Hudson and Todd Wheeler.

<u>Private Lands/Access Management</u>

Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program: Biologist Caldwell coordinated efforts to utilize Migratory Bird Enhancement funding in Skagit and Snohomish Counties. Biologist Caldwell surveyed roughly 730 acres of land that three new private landowner would like the WDFW to consider for waterfowl hunting in 2014-15. Furthermore, habitat suitability surveys were conducted on these lands to delineate habitat variables for quality waterfowl hunting (see photos below). Almost all of the surveyed areas ranked very high in suitability. Further meetings will be scheduled to discuss hunting options for the 2014-15 waterfowl season.

Biologist Caldwell surveyed several new private lands for habitat suitability. The area shown in this photo is a prime location for waterfowl hunting due to its close proximity to Padilla Bay, annual water availability and excellent vegetative cover. This site will be further enhanced by planting barley in the open fields surround the pond.

Biologist Caldwell spotted this Song Sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) foraging at a newly discovered waterfowl quality hunt site in Skagit County. This landowner has agreed to plant 120 acres of barley and allow the public to hunt the property. This site would allow two different groups to hunt both over water and among the barley field. This area was very rich in species. For example, Caldwell positively identified eleven species of birds, confirmed anuran reproduction, four mammalian species and a plethora of invertebrate species occupying the hunting area. Further consideration will be given to add this site as a wildlife viewing site in the future.

Biologist Caldwell spotted many of these Common Garter Snakes (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) at new waterfowl quality hunt site in Skagit County.

Western Washington Pheasant Release Program Meeting: Biologist Caldwell identified a potential pheasant release site in Skagit County. This site encompasses approximately 166.71 acres. Biologist Caldwell will be contacting the landowners in the upcoming weeks to discuss the possibility of allowing multi-use hunting (waterfowl and pheasants) on the property.

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Conflicts: Biologist Danilson met with landowners in Whatcom and Skagit Counties regarding elk and deer damage. Among the site visits conducted were a small commercial chestnut and apple orchard in Whatcom County, a pasture and hay operation in Skagit County, and a beef and sheep farm in Skagit County. Danilson also followed up with all three landowners that have new cooperative fencing agreements with WDFW. In addition to technical guidance, Danilson temporarily loaned equipment for non-lethal hazing and deterrence. No new damage prevention cooperative agreements (DPCAs) or permits were issued. Danilson also spent time learning how to use the new Novatus contract software and entered information for pre-existing DPCAs so that contract/agreement numbers would be generated.

Danilson conducted a site review for a bear depredation permit on private industrial timberlands in Skagit County. Danilson met with the forester, who was in the area, and drove and walked the site. Fresh tree peel damage was evident and substantial in several portions of the stand and historic damage from the past two to three years was also evident.

Biologist DeBruyn spoke with several landowners regarding depredation of free range chickens by mink. Options within our legal system were discussed. Information from our "Living With Wildlife" web page was relayed and was quite helpful.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Manager Rotton prepared summary of meetings, updates on current projects on Island and Wiley Slough, scheduled conference call with NOAA to discuss mitigation requirements for tidegate repair on the Island Unit.

Pump Station Meeting: Manager Rotton met with Capital Asset Management Program Engineer Ray Berg and Dike District #22 representatives Stan Nelson and John Wolden to review the 90% design drawings for the proposed pumps station along Wiley Slough. The design once approved will go out for bid construction this summer. .

Private Lands/Access

Spring Bear Hunt: Technician Otto performed access gate surveys to insure that private gates were secure and that people could safely enter and exit these lands for the Spring Bear Hunt.

Whidbey Island Diversity Site: Technician Otto performed routine maintenance and collected use data at a Whidbey Island Diversity Site.

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

Wildlife Management

District 14 Wildlife Conflict Specialist Recruitment: Biologist Danilson reviewed applications, rounded up an interview panel, contacted applicants who would be interviewed, prepared interview questions, and forwarded relevant information to interview panelists.

District 14 Wildlife Conflict Technician Recruitment: Open application period closes on June 5th. Danilson responded to one call about the position and encouraged another individual to apply.

Wildlife Areas

Employee Performance Development Plan: Manager Kessler met with Regional Wildlife Program Manager Russell at the wildlife area headquarters to discuss his performance development plan.

Private Lands/Access

Novatus Contracts Management System: Biologist Caldwell continued familiarizing himself and constructing contracts via the Novatus Contracts Management System. As of 4/23/2014 he is still having problems logging into the system. Information technology and contract staff members were notified of this problem.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Black-tailed Deer Research Project: Black-tail does and fawns associated with the Western Washington Black-tail Research Project continue to be monitored. Adult does and their associated young will continue to be monitored through a combination of remote (satellite) and traditional (VHF) equipment.

Washougal Study Cluster: Currently, two out of the four study does in the Washougal cluster have given birth. On May 29th, Natural Resource Technician Sample assisted Biologist George in the capture of two fawns. Unfortunately, one of these fawns was a mortality by the evening of May 29th; the likely cause of the mortality has not been determined at this time. In addition, two fawns belonging to another doe were collared on Saturday morning May 31st. The VIT had been expelled 17 hours before the fawns were captured, yet they were both quite small (1.8 and 2.3kg). Does are being monitored for potential births and fawns are being monitored for survival three times a week through July.

Coweeman Study Cluster: Fawns were born to two does in the Coweeman study cluster this week. One doe had twins, which are still alive. The other doe had only one fawn that was found, which was found dead later in the week. Monitoring of the 4 other pregnant does continues in Coweeman study cluster as fawns are very likely to be born in the next two weeks.

While working on the black-tailed deer research project in the Washougal study cluster, Biologists George and Technician Sample located a piebald deer fawn. The fawn was not associated with a research project adult doe but photos were taken nonetheless. Interestingly, the fawn was located near Spotted Deer Mountain in eastern Clark County.

Piebald deer fawn

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

Private Lands/Access

Vancouver Lake: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes picked up and hauled 960 pounds of garbage, including an abandoned jet ski. In addition, they had to replace 3 broken windows on the restroom.

Vancouver Lake garbage and broken windows.

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

Wildlife Conflict

Wildlife Conflict: Both Conflict Specialists Conklin and McDonald verified bear damage for permits in East Lewis County and Skamania County, respectively. Both observed fresh peeled trees very close to active feeding stations.

Bear station/feed barrel.

Freshly peeled trees near bear feeding station.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Snowy Plovers: Biologists Sundstrom, Michaelis, Hahn, and Doorly continued to monitor snowy plovers at Midway Beach, Leadbetter, and Graveyard Spit. Biologist Hoenes assisted at Leadbetter during one day this week. A summary of monitoring efforts at each location is provided below.

Leadbetter Point

Biologists Hahn and Doorly focused their efforts on areas of the beach with potential high nest numbers. USFWS Biologist Ritchie was on the beach on Thursday and focused his efforts on searching for the SNPL brood that Biologists Hahn and Doorly observed last week. This week, the greatest number of SNPL were observed on Wednesday May 14 with 10 individuals (6 females, 4 males, 0 unk) and the lowest number of SNPL were observed on Friday May 16 with 1 individual (1 female, 0 males, 0 unk). The lower numbers observed this week could be due to several factors, including, but not limited to: high focus on nest searching areas, razor clamming and high winds during one day.

All Snowy Plover nests are still active. They are all either in the incubating or initiation phase. The brood observed last week was not seen this week by Biologists Doorly, Hahn or Ritchie. However, the group did find 5 new SNPL nests. Of the 5 new nests, 4 were incubating and 1 was initiating. The initiating nest was found with one egg. Four of the nests found this week were in the South HRA and one was found on the outer beach near the north point of Leadbetter.

Table 1. Summary of total SNPL nests and broods at Leadbetter.

Leadbetter											
# Nests Found	# Nests Currently Active	# Nests Hatched	# Active Broods	# Chicks Hatched	# Chicks Currently Alive	# Fledglings	# Nests Failed				
							Pred.	Sand Burial	Abandoned	Human Caused	Unknown Cause
10	10	0	1	2	2	N/A					

Biologist Hahn photographing Nest LBN009.
Female is still on nest in photo.
Photo Credit: Steph Doorly

Unbanded Female at Nest LBN009.
Photo Credit: Jennifer Hahn.

Midway Beach

Biologist Sundstrom discovered the first snowy plover nest at Midway Beach on May 15th. The nest discovered at Midway, although within the posted area, is located in a high usage area, not only by predators but people not obeying the posting. To deter further disturbances to the nest, it was necessary to add rope along the sign line (east to west). Additional locations along the posted sign line were also roped; those areas have been identified as "high human non-compliance" areas. During each site visit, notes are taken that include what type of violation (human, dog off leash, vehicle, human/bicycle, horse, etc.), direction of entry and exit within the posted area, how many, and at what location within the posted section. Many of the violations are not directly observed but their evidence is left behind in the sand, such as is depicted in the picture on the left.

Bicycle and human tracks well within and throughout the posted area at Midway Beach

Table 1. Summary of total SNPL nests and broods at Midway Beach.

Midway Beach											
# Nests Found	# Nests Currently Active	# Nests Hatched	# Active Broods	# Chicks Hatched	# Chicks Currently Alive	# Fledglings	# Nests Failed				
							Pred.	Sand Burial	Abandoned	Human Caused	Unknown Cause
1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Graveyard Spit

Biologist Sundstrom assisted Shoalwater Indian Tribal biologist Pfleeger with a survey at Graveyard Spit on Friday, May 16th. The survey was initiated because Pfleeger had observed a minimum of 6 adult plovers using the site. Sundstrom and Pfleeger discovered two nests during their survey. ATV usage at the Graveyard Spit location continues to be a problem both on private and Tribal land. Irrespective of land ownership, motorized vehicles, licensed or not, are not allowed along that portion of the beach.

Table 1. Summary of total SNPL nests and broods at Midway Beach.

Graveyard Spit											
# Nests Found	# Nests Currently Active	# Nests Hatched	# Active Broods	# Chicks Hatched	# Chicks Currently Alive	# Fledglings	# Nests Failed				
							Pred.	Sand Burial	Abandoned	Human Caused	Unknown Cause
2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Streaked Horned Larks: Biologists Hahn and Doorly located 1 Streaked Horned Lark (STHL) nest this week at Leadbetter. They found the nest in the South habitat restoration area. The nest was complete but unlined, thus it is still in the building phase. There were many signs indicating that this nest will be active soon including male singing and lots of tracks.

STHL nest LBN001. Nest is still in the building phase.
Photo Credit: Steph Doorly.

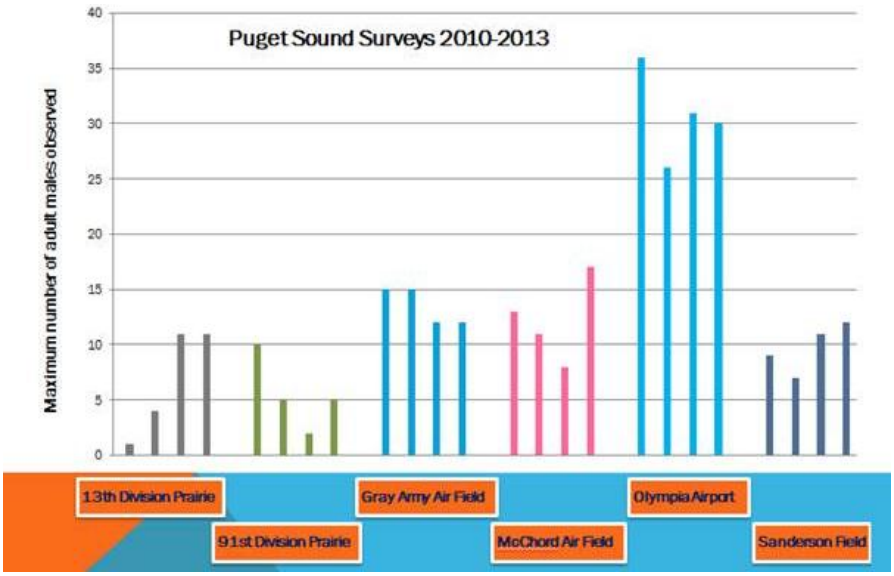
Red Knots: Biologist Michaelis assisted Scientist Buchanan, researchers from Mexico, and USFWS staff from Alaska with the capturing and banding of Red Knots in Grays Harbor. In two days, the team successfully captured and marked 355 Red Knots. Various biometric measurements were collected including blood samples which will be used to test for the H1-N1 virus (Avian Influenza). A few of the Red Knots captured during this event had been originally captured and banded in Mexico in 2006 and by the same group of researchers from Mexico that assisted with this effort. Red Knots are being captured in Grays Harbor as part of a larger project that is trying to identify areas that are important to this species during their annual migration between breeding grounds in Alaska and wintering grounds in South America.

Red Knot that was captured and banded.

Picture of the crew processing captured Red Knots.

Streaked Horned Larks:

District 11 staff produced the following graphic showing the results of annual abundance surveys for the six South Puget Sound lark breeding sites on which annual abundance surveys are conducted (note: larks also nest on the Columbia River dredge spoil islands and the Outer Coast):



Taylor's checkerspot reintroduction: Biologists Linders, Randolph, Walker and Johnson continued distance sampling surveys for adult Taylor's checkerspots in the Puget lowlands under a mix of clouds and sun the past two weeks. Survey returns at all reintroduction sites look promising, with the exception of PCM, which received only a single release. Surveys at SCS on 11, 14 and 15 May produced counts of 30, 22 and 13, respectively, before dropping to 3 on 20 May. At GHP surveys on 12 and 15 May produced counts of 30 and 10, respectively; no checkerspots were observed during a final survey on 20 May. On JBLM, surveys at TA7S returned a count of 30 adults on 13 May and just 2 on 20 May. Surveys at PCM on 13 and 20 May did not encounter any adult checkerspots, although an outside observer reported seeing one north of the Seibert-staked area on one occasion. Surveys at R50 on 12, 16 and 21 May produced counts of 214, 23 and 14; a final survey is expected to take place on Tuesday. Numbers at R76 were proportionately higher with 539 adults counted on 13 May, with another 305 counted on in 4 additional transects on the north edge of the standard survey grid. Numbers at R76 dropped to 146 on 16 May, and then just 2 adults were counted on 24 May to close the season. Exploratory searches beyond the survey area were also conducted during the past week at R76, TA6, and at GHP. A lot of potential habitat was identified in these locations, but with "high" numbers for only two weeks, detecting adults in these peripheral areas was unlikely by the time surveys occurred.

Taylor's checkerspot captive propagation: Female checkerspots at both rearing facilities continue to lay eggs, moving us toward our 10,000-egg target. As of 22 May, Mission Creek had a total 2,838 eggs, including 1,760 from wild females and 1,078 from captive-bred females. Wild females at the Oregon Zoo have laid 4,150 eggs so far; no captive females were retained in 2014. Egg development is looking good and the first clusters have begun to hatch at both facilities. The Oregon Zoo is also in the process of moving their butterfly lab to a new location as part of a long-term development plan; the new facility passed USDA inspection this week, which was the final hurdle prior to having checkerspots occupy the building.

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

Wildlife Management

Willapa Hills Elk Herd Plan (EHP): Biologist Hoenes attended two public meetings to gather public comments that pertained to the Willapa Hills Elk Herd Plan. Also in attendance during these meetings were Deer and Elk Program Manager Nelson, Regional Program Managers Cope and Jonker, Private Lands Biologists Harris and Stephens, and District Biologist Bergh. The meetings occurred in Montesano and Longview and 13 people showed up during each meeting. Although the turnout was lower than expected, both meetings were productive and the Willapa Hills EHP team received some great feedback from those that attended. The public comment period is open until June 2nd. Anyone interested in providing comments can find a copy of the plan online (http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hunting). Comments can be submitted online or during the public meetings.