

Wildlife Program

Week of April 13-19, 2015

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Headquarters Wolf Activities

Summer Trapping: The summer trapping schedule for collaring and monitoring wolves in packs without collars was coordinated with the landowners, agency staff, universities, and Tribes involved. There will be multiple trapping crews, starting with the Lookout, Smackout, Profanity Peak, and Dirty Shirt packs, April 27 through mid-May. Next will be Carpenter Ridge and areas where ground monitoring of un-collared packs or wolves indicates high potential for success. Packs in areas with livestock or important for research projects will be the priorities through the summer trapping period.

Packs with Collars		
Name of Pack	GPS Collars (satellite)	VHF Collars
Goodman Meadows	1	1
Diamond	1	0
Huckleberry	1	0
Tucannon	1	0
Teanaway	2	1

Wildlife Society and Society of American Foresters Meeting: The Carnivore Section Manager presented a paper on wolf management and impacts to forest management at the joint Wildlife Society and Society of American Foresters (Washington Chapters) meeting in Rochester Washington.

Social Aspects of Wolf Management: The Wolf Specialist presented a paper on the social aspects of wolf management at the Northwestern Vertebrate Biology and Northwest Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation 2015 joint meeting in Portland Oregon.

State Wolf Biologist: The state's Wolf Biologist spent most of his time preparing traps, following up on wolf reports in northeast Washington, and preparing for the upcoming trapping efforts.

Region 1 Wolf Activities

Huckleberry Wolf Conference Calls: Wildlife Conflict Specialist (WCS) Bennett, WCS Shepherd, and Supervisor McCanna discussed the next steps for the Huckleberry Deterrence Plan. Both Bennett and Shepherd will be compiling conversations with producers for non-lethal techniques used for the upcoming grazing season.

Whitman County Carcass Pit: Supervisor McCanna met with an individual who had found a carcass pit at a residence in Whitman County where he found wolf sign and scat. McCanna and

the individual also met with a neighboring landowner and will be providing Fox Lights for his calving operation. The landowner buried his existing carcass pit.

Huckleberry Producer Meetings: WCS Bennett and WCS Shepherd met with a producer and tried to meet with two more near the Huckleberry Wolf Territory to discuss recent sightings, data sharing, and a deterrence plan.

North Spokane Camera Checks: WCS Bennett checked a camera placed near Elk, Washington. Only turkey and deer were recorded.



Wild turkey in north Spokane County

Damage Claim Conference Calls: WCS Bennett, Supervisor McCanna, and other senior staff discussed two producer damage claims for 2014.

Wolf Presentation: Supervisor McCanna gave the Columbia County Cattlemen a presentation on wolf identification, a statewide update, non-lethal activities, collar data sharing, and contract information. A total of 29 people were present for the presentation and had several good questions.

Collar Data: Biologist Earl spent several hours on the phone this week answering questions about wolf patterns in the Blue Mountains.

Rancher Agreements: Natural Resource Technician (NRT) Wade met with two ranchers who will be placing cattle on forest allotments in June. Both signed sensitive information agreements with WDFW and the forms were sent to Olympia for processing.

District 3 Wolf Activity: ADB Vekasy checked trail cameras in the Tucannon, Robinette Mountain, and Upper Pataha areas. No wolves were detected, just the usual deer, elk, cougar, and one very agitated red squirrel. DB Wik provided information to RD Pozzanghera about a Columbia County website requesting people to report wolf sightings through the county site.

Region 2 Wolf Activities

Okanogan Wolves: Specialist Heilhecker and Sergeant Christensen responded to a report of a dog attacked by wolves north of Brewster. The American Staffordshire terrier, a female, was running in front of the owner's vehicle around 9:00pm when two animals, identified as wolves by the owner, came up from behind. One animal attacked her dog. The owner hit her dog and the animal with the vehicle in order to stop the attack. The dog did not require medical attention. Heilhecker and Christensen did not find any blood where the incident took place. There is no physical evidence on the dog or in the field to determine what kind of animal attacked the dog.

Region 3 Wolf Activities

Wolf Reports and Investigation: Biologist Moore continued to investigate reports of two wolves in the District. Moore spent about a day searching for sign but did not find any. Moore worked with Contractor Leuck to retrieve a camera placed near the recent reports. The camera station did not record any wolves over the last week. Conflict Specialist Wetzel spent some time in the area as well and found a few larger canid tracks that were fairly old.

Region 4 Wolf Activities

Hozomeen Wolf Study: Biologist DeBruyn analyzed images retrieved from trail cameras in the Ross Lake Recreational Area of The North Cascades National Park. One wolf was photographed and is probably the same individual who has been in the area since at least 2011. Tracks found in the draw down found by park staff and fisheries biologists suggest the presence of more than one individual. DeBruyn and Yarborough will retrieve the remaining cameras in the back country next week.



Westside Wolf photographed just North of Hozomeen Campground in The North Cascades National Park

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 4: MAINTAIN A HIGHLY SKILLED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

New Section Manager: On April 16, the new Conservation Assessment Section Manager, Kevin Kalasz, joined the Wildlife Diversity Division team. Kevin comes to us from Delaware, where he was the Environmental Program Manager for Biodiversity with the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife's Species Conservation and Research Program. In his previous position he supervised the revision of the State Wildlife Action Plan, coordinated the Ecological Network (spatial modeling) effort, and supervised several initiatives, including the NatureServe BIOTICS program, the environmental review program, the permitting program (bird banding, scientific collection, and wildlife rehabilitation), and the marine mammals and sea turtles program.

The Wildlife Society Washington Chapter Meetings: Several Wildlife Diversity Division staff attended the April 15-16th annual meeting of the Washington Chapter of The Wildlife Society in Grand Mound, Washington. Carnivore Biologist Jeff Lewis received the "Foresight Award" for his work leading the fisher reintroduction project on the Olympic Peninsula.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

District 3 Ferruginous Hawk monitoring:

Private Lands Biologist (PLB) Thorne-Hadley reported an occupied platform in Walla Walla County, but was unsure of the identity.

Assistant District Biologist Vekasy and PLB Thorne-Hadley investigated and found the site occupied by ferruginous hawks. While in the area, they also checked another site that had been unoccupied early in the month, but now has a female incubating and a male bringing sticks to the nest. In all, at least five FEHA territories are occupied this year, and a number of others that were vacant earlier in the month could possibly be occupied.



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

Wildlife Areas

Access site maintenance: Young conducted routine maintenance at the fishing access areas at Liberty, Newman, Eloika, Ruby, Marshall, Black, Deep, Cedar, Sacheen, and Silver Lakes. Young also worked at Diamond and Waitts Lakes with a power sweeper to remove gravel and sand from roads and parking areas.



Young cleaned at Black Lake for the opener, and was happy to see the grader crew from Tumwater had graded and added rock. This is the first year in many that the access is accessible for the opener. Normal years have over a foot of snow at this time.



Young cleaned prior to opening the gate at Diamond Lake access site. He swept with power and hand brooms.

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 Control Operator Certification Course: Wildlife Conflict Specialist (WCS) Bennett and WDFW Veterinarian Mansfield presented information about the Wildlife Control Operator Program. Attendance was good and several participants had great questions.

Pheasants Forever habitat project: Biologist Lewis worked with the local Pheasants Forever chapter on a habitat project in the Ewan area. Lewis helped with the planning and implementation of tree/shrub plantings (500), deer fencing and enclosure, and a 15 acre food plot. Lewis also checked a 25 acre native grass seeding that was planted last spring and the grasses are doing well.

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Society Meeting: Biologist Lowe attended the annual Washington Chapter of the Wildlife Society meeting in Grand Mound this week. The meeting was held jointly with the Washington State Society of American Foresters. Presentations and workshops included a variety of topics, such as field technology and cooperative forest and wildlife management. Participants included representatives from several state and federal agencies, universities, NGOs, and private industries.



WDFW Veterinarian Dr. Kristin Mansfield delivering a presentation on Elk Hoof Disease at the TWS Annual Meeting in Grand Mound

Wildlife Areas

4-O Ranch Wildlife Area – Aggressive Wildlife: After being assaulted by this Dusky (Blue) Grouse defending his territory, Biologist Woodall reached down and grabbed him to pose for a selfie. This is bird species #114 for Biologist Woodall’s Big Year. This type of occupational hazard adds a new dimension of training needs for department employees.

David Woodall with his new friend on the 4-O Ranch WLA



REGION 2

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDIFE

Wildlife Management

Rattlesnake Survey and Monitoring: We started our annual rattlesnake den documentation and monitoring in the Methow Watershed. Highlights thus far include a new den in the Squaw Creek drainage and the best count we've recorded at one of the Twisp River dens. This is part of a many year effort to document den distribution and trends at known sites. Over the next couple of weeks we also hope to partner with Dr. Dan Beck at Central Washington University to collect DNA from a variety of local sites as part of a genetic diversity / relatedness project he is initiating.



Rattlesnake Den – Photo by Scott Fitkin



Neonate (baby) Northern Pacific rattlesnake – Photo by Scott Fitkin

Adult Northern Pacific rattlesnake – Photo by Scott Fitkin



North Cascades Wolverine Research: Biologist Fitkin and USFS Biologist Rohrer continued aerial surveys for wolverine dens in the known home ranges of adult females. We found no activity on a follow-up visit to Mallory’s probable den, so no cameras

were deployed. In contrast, a search of Sasha’s home range core yielded a probable den location with fresh activity, although the location is on a steep slope in an avalanche terrain, which precluded landing. We also investigated a location being repeatedly visited by Special K and found considerable activity, but heavy forest cover precluded landing at this site also. We anticipate visiting all three of these locations in summer to attempt to locate the precise den location, record physical parameters, and collect DNA.



Probable wolverine tracks and den – Photo by Scott Fitkin



North Cascades wolverine country – Photo by Scott Fitkin

Inland Avian Predation Working Group: Biologist Finger participated in an Inland Avian Predation Working Group conference call to learn about the current status and future plans for Caspian Tern dissuasion efforts on Goose Island. Goose Island is now 90% covered with ropes and flagging (some areas with double layers of rope and flagging) and no terns have attempted to nest there. Gulls have been hazed since March 9, but they are acclimating rapidly and began laying on April 14, limiting field crews ability for active hazing (crews are spending up to nine hours a day actively hazing). Additionally, nesting Canada geese are reducing their ability to haze in some areas. Some terns have shown up on Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, in Marsh Unit 1, loafing on small islands that are likely not appropriate for tern nesting in their current condition. Future management by CNWR of these wetland cells is uncertain. Thirty-two terns have been observed at the mitigation islands in San Francisco Bay.

Douglas County Lek Counts: Biologists Gallie, Schroeder, Peterson, Braaten and Comstock continue lek counts in Douglas County. High counts of males used to index the breeding population (237 so far this year) is slightly higher than this same time period last year, largely from finding new leks.

Male sage grouse feeding in a canola field – Photo by J. Gallie



Sharp-tailed grouse leks are also being counted and their numbers are above last year, currently around 124. Biologists Gallie and Braaten have not relocated three of the four leks vacated by

the 2012 Leahy-Barker fire. Birds were likely redistributed on the land scape by the fire, but now as habitat recovers, two of these leks now contain more birds than they did pre-fire.

Impromptu lek location. Sharp-tailed grouse flushed off a lek landed on the rock to resume their displays – Photo by J. Gallie



Wildlife Areas

Columbia Basin Wetland Projects: Assistant Manager Bechtold and Biologists Comstock, Finger, E. Duvuvuei, and O. Duvuvuei planted two of the five Spud Field islands. Two of the islands (featured below) are constructed specifically for hunters accessing the area by boat. This was accomplished by excavating narrow slips (approx. 18’ deep by 8’ wide) to park boats on the large open floodplain. The banks of these slips were planted with willows for bank stabilization and vessel concealment. The rest of the islands are planted with a salt grass understory and patches of great basin wild rye for nesting cover and hunter concealment. The largest island on the Spud Field will be planted with 95% salt grass and minimal nesting cover to maximize crane roosting potential. The other two islands will receive a mix of roosting (salt grass) and hiding/nesting (great basin wild rye) cover. This should provide maximum wildlife benefits and a diversity of hunting opportunities.



Assistant Manager Bechtold and Biologists Finger and O. Duvuvuei plant willow cuttings at a boat slip in the Spud Field – Photo by E. Duvuvuei

Finished boat slip with woven wire fencing in hopes of deterring beavers – Photo by Rich Finger



Supplemental Feed Route Project:

Assistant Manager Bechtold inspected the recently constructed water control structure, access road, and islands at the Spud Field of the Gloyd Seeps Unit for task completion. With one minor exception, all contract tasks were deemed to be complete and all constructed features appear to be structurally sound. The lone exception will be dealt with in the next few weeks. With the completion of work at the Spud Field, DFW’s contract with Partney Construction is nearly finished and the focus of the Supplemental Feed Route Project will shift almost exclusively to weed control and re-vegetation.



New Spud Field water control structure
– Photo by Nick Bechtold

Methow FEMA/Carlton Complex:

Assistant Manager Sample met with CAMP Engineer Scott Alan on the East Fraser Creek Unit of the Methow Wildlife Area to identify several corner points of burned boundary fence. Many of the points were located along Hwy 20 and relatively easy to get to. Others were more challenging to locate up steep hillsides. CAMP Engineer Allen was able to locate the NE corner which required a hike of 1.5 miles cross country. Many of the pine trees burned in the fire left large pits where the root wads had been and there was not a trace left of any remnant stumps or tree trunks.



Photo on East Fraser Creek Unit, taken 4/14 –
Photo by Anna Sample

Private Lands/Access

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE): Biologist Dougherty finalized a Conservation Plan for a CRP-SAFE contract. However, the final touches, signatures, and other approvals are still in the queue because the NRCS has to approve the final product and there is only one individual, in two counties, who can actually approve the plan. Thus Biologist Dougherty began taking steps to proceed further down the federal employee rabbit hole by submitting paperwork to become authorized to approve conservation plans. This extra credential will streamline the conservation planning process by allowing Biologist Dougherty to rely entirely on himself to get conservation plans completed. Biologist Comstock visited SAFE fields to assess their progress. A lot of this involves crawling around on the ground trying to find and identify grasses. Unfortunately a number of SAFE fields are so dominated by non-desirable crested wheatgrass it can be next to impossible to find a native grass.

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

Wildlife Areas

Carter Mountain Parking Area Improvement Project: In a cooperative effort to improve access to the Carter Mountain Wildlife Area, the Okanogan Trails Chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation, Okanogan Valley Chapter of the Backcountry Horsemen, and Okanogan Land Trust donated funds, equipment, and time to improve the parking area adjacent to Hwy 97 south of Tonasket. A group of twelve volunteers participated over the weekend and completed the post and rail fence which surrounds a newly constructed parking area surface. The volunteers included members of the Mule Deer Foundation and Backcountry Horsemen, as well as WDFW & WDNR staff, and 5-year old Parker Marsh. Sinlahekin Wildlife Area staff has been working towards improving this area since 2010 and greatly appreciates the efforts of this group for making the area more accessible.

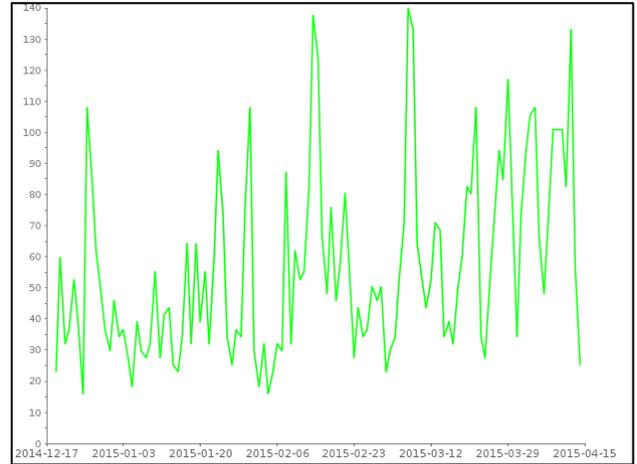


Private Lands/Access

Access Site Use: Access Manager Harmon continues to monitor and collect data off the Traqx vehicle counter that was placed at Blythe access.

Daily totals report, covering 120 days from 12/17/2014 – 4/15/2015

Site Name	Average	Minimum	Maximum
Blythe	57.9	17.0	140.0



April Openers: Access staff spent time this week getting sites ready for the April 25th opener. The concrete fishing platform at Warden Lake was backfilled.



Warden Lake ADA fishing platform before and after

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

Private Lands/Access

Carlton Complex Cooperative Fencing: Specialist Heilhecker finished the cost-share agreements documenting the allocation of materials landowners are receiving as a consequence of the Carlton Complex fire. She sent one contract, as an example, to the conflict program in Olympia for recommendations and to determine how the contracts need to be entered into Novatus. Specialist Heilhecker spent time coordinating the fencing materials ordered from Pacific Fence and Wire. She spoke to delivery drivers and called landowners to notify them of the delivery. Staff at the Wells Wildlife Area accepted the delivery of steel posts and field fence. They noticed that only 207 of the 255 rolls of field fence arrived. She then contacted the vendor to track down missing rolls of field fence. Specialist Heilhecker checked the status of the wood

posts ordered on March 26th. She was told the materials were still being treated and there was no expected deliver date yet. The vendor is getting close to the 30-day delivery deadline.



***Clockwise from top left:
Sunrise on Carter Mountain
Wildlife Area before fence
building, nesting Bald Eagle in
Aeneas Valley, and feeding
goshawk west of Aeneas Valley
within the Tonasket Ranger
District – Photos by Justin Haug***





Methow balsamroot bloom – Photo by Scott Fitkin

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Burrowing Owl WildWatch Cam: District Biologist Fidorra inspected the Burrowing Owl WildWatch camera site to resolve the problem of degrading image quality. A video cable was found to be faulty and needs replaced. The system is currently down but should be repaired in the following week.

2016-2017 Ferruginous Hawk Surveys: District Biologist Fidorra participated in a conference call with Diversity staff in Olympia to discuss plans for the 2016-2017 Ferruginous Hawk surveys which will require a significant amount of time and resources in District 4 with 142 sites to survey. Some support from BLM and USFWS may be available and Fidorra will continue to collaborate with those entities to determine if they can cover their respective properties using WDFW protocols. Assistance from WDFW staff from outside District 4 may also be arranged, and a training program for gaining assistance from skilled volunteers was also discussed.

Ferruginous Hawk Volunteer: District Biologist Fidorra met with a volunteer who has assisted in Ferruginous Hawk surveys in the past and is looking forward to assisting again this year and next. She will continue to scout territories this season and will likely assist in the 2016 statewide survey.

Canada Goose Nest Surveys: District Biologist Fidorra entered data from the previous week of Canada Goose Nest Surveys and submitted this data to WDFW Waterfowl Specialist Wilson.

Sage Grouse Leks: Private Lands Biologist Stutzman and Natural Resource Technician 2 Kaelber surveyed the Yakima County sage grouse lek this week where at least seven males were observed displaying. Stutzman and Kaelber found a potential satellite lek that is not visible from where the surveys have been done. A follow up is needed to determine if the location is being used by separate birds or if the birds seen on the main lek earlier that day had dispersed to the secondary area.



Gobblers in Chelan County – Photo by J. Gallie

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz radio tracked collared bighorn sheep in the Yakima River Canyon. Most of the collared sheep were found and were alive and well. Lambing is well underway.

Sheep Deterrent: Biologist Bernatowicz corresponded with WSDOT biologist McAllister and the owner of “Seadust” regarding a potential study on the effectiveness of “Seadust” deterring sheep from licking salt off highways.

Western Gray Squirrels: Biologist Bernatowicz organized tubes and corresponded with Olympia staff regarding both protocols for the tube surveys and possible camera surveys in Cowiche. One question has been about roads and how close is “close”.

Ferruginous Hawk Surveys: Biologist Bernatowicz reviewed sights in the Region and corresponded with Olympia staff regarding helping out in District 4.

Mountain Goats: Biologist Bernatowicz started organizing a ground survey of Mountain Goats between I-90 and Highway 2. The new chapter of the Rocky Mountain Goat Alliance wants to do the surveys the weekend of June 6th. The chapter president also had numerous questions about current permit levels in other units.

Waterfowl: Biologist Bernatowicz contacted Yakama Nation Biologist Blodgett about a wood duck banding project Waterfowl Specialist Wilson is trying to get started. Biologist Blodgett is interested in participating and also had questions about Harlequin ducks.

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: General turkey season opened this week, with the North Fork Tarpiscan and Colockum Creek areas receiving the most hunter pressure. Two hunters were checked with a bird taken in Stray Gulch.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor, along with RPM McCorquodale, SM Posner, CAMP staff, and Hunter Ed staff, met with the A&E firm, Traho, and their subcontractor, TRS, hired to assist with the design and development of the shooting range proposal for the Wenas Wildlife Area. They had an office discussion followed by a field tour of the four sites along Sheep Company proposed as possible locations for a developed shooting range. Staff also participated in a conference call with HQ lands staff and AAG Schwartz to discuss risk and liability issues related to target shooting on the wildlife area.

Field and Stream Club Meeting: Manager Confer Morris and RPM McCorquodale attended the Kittitas County Field and Stream Club meeting, giving a presentation on the Wenas Wildlife Area target shooting proposal. The proposal was well received, with numerous clarification questions asked.

Mellotte Feed Site: Manager Confer Morris met with Cleman Mountain Archers Club members to field review the Mellotte feed site for an upcoming archery shoot. They were very happy with the size, topography, and vegetation at the site. She will meet with them on-site in June to review their plan after they have flagged the proposed courses.

Left Behind Camp: Assistant Manager Taylor packed out a camp left behind at Umtanum Falls.



Camp left next to Umtanum Falls



Umtanum Falls

Hardy Canyon Hikers: Assistant Manager Taylor contacted some hikers on Saturday getting ready to take a hike up Hardy Canyon. The winter closure sign at the pedestrian gate had been removed or stolen. The gate was still locked, so hopefully that would have deterred them. Taylor had a good conversation with them and directed them just across the road to Black Canyon for their hike.

Access Program

Access staff worked with Volunteers from CWU on Saturday for Earth Week. They had forty-three volunteers and picked up 400 pounds of trash from Mattoon and Fio Rito Lakes Fishing Access Sites.



Volunteers at Mattoon



Volunteers at Fio Rito

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

Wildlife Areas

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris and NRT2 Kass participated in the Sheep Company and Durr Road shooting range clean-ups sponsored by Wenas Valley Muzzleloaders (south end) and Kittitas County Field and Stream Club (north end). Enforcement officers were also at both clean-ups. Both user groups commented that the amount of garbage was substantially less than in past years and speculated about it being due to the extra enforcement at the shooting areas, or perhaps the 3.5 month closure last year, or even that folks were finally starting to pick up after themselves (we can hope it's that last one).



Sheep Company road clean-up – Entrance busy with volunteers and public accessing WLA



Sheep Company road clean-up



North Durr road clean-up



Reward at end of clean-up – Grilled burgers on the north end and hot dogs on the south end

Wildlife Management

Cherry Orchard in Benton County: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored deer activity and damage issues at a newly planted cherry orchard above McNary Dam in Benton County. Heavy hazing activity and human disturbance has resulted in only minor browsing damage observed.

Deer Hazing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand spent one early morning assisting a large wine grape operation near Crow Butte with hazing deer to minimize damage to new bud growth on their highly prized grape varieties.

Landowner Habitat Project: Private Lands Biologist Stutzman conducted a field visit with a Benton County landowner and Technician Hightower from the Benton Conservation District (BCD). The landowner is applying for BCD funds to do a habitat project and Stutzman and Hightower met with her to discuss the options for the site. Stutzman began working on the conservation plan so the landowner and BCD staff can put together a bid.

Disabled Hunter Vehicle Access: Stutzman received a call from a beginning, disabled hunter looking for vehicle access for the fall. Stutzman put her in touch with one of our access cooperators in Yakima County who is more than happy to accommodate disabled hunters.

Elk Hazing: Conflict Specialist (CS) Wetzel and herder Leuck monitored and hazed elk from a landowner's field at Elk Heights. He called to report that elk were damaging his fences and alfalfa.

Beaver Damage: CS Wetzel was contacted by a landowner in Green Canyon about beaver damage to his irrigation supply. He was given contact information for a local WCO.

Fowl Losses: Cameras and Foxlights were checked at a location in Ellensburg that had experienced losses to fowl. The cameras showed only feral cats in the area. One small cougar was removed by enforcement north of the location the previous week.

Deer Complaint: CS Wetzel responded to a deer complaint by homeowners in Cle Elum. Deer are being artificially fed by neighbors in this area and are growing in numbers. They were advised to try to get their neighbors to stop feeding deer and given advice on living with wildlife.

Yakima County Area: Herder Leuck hazed elk from areas in the Wenas near the Bass Ranch. Elk numbers are decreasing in this area due to normal spring elk movements.

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

Wildlife Areas

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Buser monitored the replacement of a center pivot system on Circle 5 at Windmill Ranch. Salvaged parts of the six old towers of Circle 5 will be used to refurbish the three towers on Circle 9.

A new irrigation pivot being installed on the Windmill Ranch Unit

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor attended a Kittitas County pre-fire season meeting. The fire season is looking similar to last year, with very dry condition and little precipitation anticipated. Forested areas are expected to be at high risk by July, meaning a good chance for an early start to fire season.



Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman checked on the completed work on the Naches-Selah Irrigation Canal. Over the winter and into this spring the irrigation district completed canal improvements, which required moving a short section of elk fence. The irrigation district installed an eight foot culvert to allow residents to still access the wildlife area and WDFW provided some materials to rebuild the fence. In exchange, WDFW was given permission by the irrigation district to use the canal access road to get to the fence for inspection and maintenance.

A relocated section of elk fence adjacent to the Oak Creek Wildlife Area and the Naches Selah Irrigation District Canal, the fence is located on private property. The irrigation district replaced the wooden trestle with a berm and lined canal, which required moving the elk fence.



New NF Cowiche Creek Property: Assistant Manager Berry posted boundary and Discover Pass signs on the new property in the NF Cowiche Creek. Long term plans include kiosks and maps. Enforcement was notified that the property is posted. Signs will need to be checked often as they are likely to be removed and shot at a lot.

Newly posted Discover Pass sign and Wildlife Area Boundary sign on the NF Cowiche Property. As you can see from the three month old “please close gate” sign, it is likely that the new signs will make great targets.



Cowiche Unit Maintenance: Assistant Manager Berry performed dozer work on an access road to a property on the Cowiche Unit. This was a cooperative project with Cowiche Canyon Conservancy (CCC). The road on the CCC’s, which accesses an inholding owned by WDFW, had significant erosion making it nearly impassable to a vehicle. The road now has a ditch and water bars to move water off the road into the adjacent native vegetation.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Manager Lopushinsky met with WDFW Engineering staff and inspected work sites in the Tekison Creek area for upcoming work in June. They discussed access routes for equipment and potential sources of rock and materials. This is culvert and drainage work along the Brewton and Tekison Roads. Manager Hagan checked out a rock pile DFW inherited from DNR in the land exchange. This pile is conveniently located and should be useful for road work this summer.

Rock pile inherited from DNR located at the end of the Crossover Road, Colockum Wildlife Area



LT Murray Wildlife Area: Permitted livestock were turned out on WDFW's Lower Parke Pasture late in the day on April 15th. Only half of the allotted livestock were turned out in response to low moisture and slow spring growth. The additional allotted animals will be added if growth improves. Manager Winegeart completed 'pre-cow' forage monitoring in the pasture prior to livestock turn-out.



Hotwire Fence Installation: Manager Winegeart, Assistant Manager Hunt, and a local volunteer Rocky Mountain Elk Ranger installed hotwire fences in riparian areas within Lower Parke pasture. This will protect our rehab project area, the artesian well riparian, and the impoundment in Little Parke from resource damage by grazing cattle. Some posts were driven in a little too far by dead volunteer aspen.

Aspen as post-driver

Field Data Gathering: Assistant Manager Hunt completed gathering field data in T18N, R15E (the Gnat Flat acquisition) for anticipated RMAP work this

spring, and began putting together a scope of work for the Yakima Construction Shop crew. Hunt observed significant mudding damage in the Frost Meadows area adjacent to upper South Fork Manastash Creek.



Mudding damage observed in Frost Meadows

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Raptor Nest Monitoring: Biologist DeBruyn surveyed one of two known golden eagle territories in District 14. The site near Mt. Baker is occupied and it appears that a nesting attempt is underway. The Barometer mountain goat herd was in the vicinity and provided respite from boredom while waiting for the eagles.



Barometer Mountain Goats on Golden Eagle Cliff

Common Loons – Monitoring: Biologist Smith monitored loon nest platforms at three area lakes and visited three additional lakes with anecdotal reports of loon activity. Loons were present at four of the visited lakes (all three platform locations). However, no nests were located at any of them. Continued monitoring will be required to document nest locations and potential success.



Loon nesting platform anchored in a lake in District 12

Westside Cougar Project: Biologist Smith assisted Research Scientist Kertson and others with re-capturing an adult male Cougar. The previously fitted collar had malfunctioned and was replaced.

Adult male cougar captured to replace a malfunctioning collar

Wildlife Permitting and Consultation:

Biologist Anderson provided consultation related to various projects recommended for wildlife management consideration per state or local laws. Projects included a pipeline replacement project with Seattle Public Utilities, Puget Sound Energy, and various residential projects. Species included great blue heron colonies and osprey nests, and also provided information and coordination regarding changes to bald eagle management, WDFW data, and federal contacts.



An adult great blue heron on a new nest at an urban heronry – Photo by Chris Anderson



A local urban osprey being “harassed” by our tenacious resident Anna’s hummingbird – Photo Mike Hamilton

Lowland Pika Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra performed a survey of known sites and potential habitat within the project area in the lower Stillaguamish Valley. Trail cameras were placed to capture pre-dawn activity. Visual and vocal observations were obtained at several sites.

Peregrine Falcon Management Conflicts: Assistant District Biologist Cyra continued surveying the Index Town Wall site for Peregrine Falcon presence and activity. This is an annual activity in conjunction with Washington State Parks which manages the site and is a location with intensive rock climbing activity. The local climbing community works with State Parks to inform climbers of area restrictions when it is determined if and where the falcons are nesting.

USFWS Aerial Detectability Study: Assistant District Biologist Cyra obtained the necessary software files and began processing observational data from the earlier surveys.

Northern Puget Sound Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra began analyzing options for coordinating breeding surveys with USFWS Refuge staff and SGCN surveys in the northern Puget Sound area.

North Cascades Elk Herd: Biologist Yarborough continued to work on the North Cascades Elk Herd Plan. He also attended the North Cascades Elk Technical group meeting where the group worked on the population estimates from the last aerial surveys.

Wildlife Areas

Corson Wildlife Preserve: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm delivered 100 pounds of millet and 50 pounds of barley seed to be used for wildlife forage. Approximately five acres of grain will be planted by the neighboring landowner.

Spencer Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with staff from Ecology and Snohomish County Parks to discuss a cooperative marine debris clean-up project planned by Northwest Straits. Funding through Northwest Straits will be used to pay for a Veteran's Conservation Corp crew and removal of debris. The project is scheduled for the first week of May. Manager Boehm also met with a boy scout to continue plans for an Eagle Scout project to install three benches along the trail of the unit. The benches will be used by bird watchers and waterfowl hunters that frequent the unit.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Sno-Valley Farms representatives to discuss planting plans for the new agricultural lease on the middle and west portions of the unit. Approximately 150 acres of various crops will be planted with 30 acres retained for wildlife forage and cover.

Cherry Valley Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Sound Salmon Solutions staff to discuss continuing salmon restoration projects on the Cherry Valley and Stillwater Units. Continued planting along Waterwheel Creek will provide up to ten acres of riparian vegetation and continued blackberry control will occur along Harris Creek at the Stillwater Unit. Funding from a number of sources and partners will continue these on-going restoration projects.

Lake Terrell Waterfowl Trapping: Wildlife Biologist Debruyne and Natural Resource Tech Deyo have started trapping waterfowl on the Lake Terrell Unit. Numerous wood ducks have been trapped and banded. Several are using nest boxes on the area.



Waterfowl Trapping at the Lake Terrell Unit of the Whatcom Wildlife Area

Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association Earth Day Tree Planting: The Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association held an Earth Day tree and shrub planting on the British Petroleum Unit. The trees and shrubs were planted by over 200 volunteers along Terrell Creek. Manager Kessler posted informational signs on the area and monitored the project, making sure there were no user conflicts.



The Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association held an Earth Day tree and shrub planting on the British Petroleum Unit, part of the Whatcom Wildlife Area

Lake Terrell Barley Fields: Natural Resource Tech Deyo started working up the barley fields at Lake Terrell. A total of 60 acres will be planted this year using a combination of State and Duck Stamp funds. The barley is left standing for winter waterfowl feeding.

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

Wildlife Management

Wood Duck Nesting and Banding

Project: Biologist Yarborough and Deyo toured Lake Terrell and checked wood duck boxes. This is part of a project supported by duck stamp funds to provide nesting habitat for waterfowl. Biologist DeBruyn helped Deyo install and maintain a floating trap in Terrell creek to capture and band wood ducks.



Wood Ducks and Trap at Terrell Creek on the Whatcom Wildlife Area

CITES Pelt Sealing Needs: Biologist Anderson met with trappers and hunters to seal bobcats and river otters. Anderson worked with Enforcement regarding a hunter that came in for a seal, but did not have a small game license. In purchasing your licenses please ensure you have ALL the options you intend to use for recreation efforts – don't leave your place of purchase without triple-checking.

Hunting Pamphlet: Biologist Anderson began answering inquiries and providing specific guidance regarding D12 hunts outlined in the 2015 Big Game pamphlet.

ALEA Grant Project Review: Biologist Milner met with the evaluation committee for two days to score and discuss a total of 96 proposals that were submitted.

Wildlife Areas

Friends of Tennant Lake and Hovander Park Meeting:

Manager Kessler attended the monthly meeting of the Friends of Tennant Lake and Hovander Park. He also coordinated with the Whatcom County Parks Manager on current and upcoming projects.



The Pond Jumperz bass club held a Saturday fishing tournament on Lake Terrell. The weather was great, and the tournament was very well attended.

Lake Terrell Pheasant Pen Repairs: A Master Hunter volunteer worked two days to repair portions of the pheasant pens, where old poultry wire had broken down. He removed the old wire, and prepared it for the installation of the new wire.

Samish River Unit Wetland Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Manager Rotton met to review budget materials prepared by the Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) and to plan the next steps needed to advance the project to construction this summer. Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed and submitted Floodplain Development, Grading, and Temporary Access permit applications to Skagit County.

Samish Unit Enhancement Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Manager Rotton attended a Diking, Irrigation Improvement, and Drainage District #5 meeting to plan details related to the dike and ditches on the property with the Commissioners. The District is working on drafting an agreement for WDFW to place water control structures and crossings in a ditch that will improve WDFW's ability to control water levels for agriculture and waterfowl. Excavation spoils from the project will be deposited on the District dike for their use in dike maintenance. Following the meeting and with agreement from the District, Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed and submitted a Shoreline Exemption permit application to Skagit County.

Johnson DeBay's Slough: Meis met with a tree removal company to get an estimate to limb up and remove some trees at the DeBay's Unit. Cosgrove and Meis removed non-native or problem trees from the Game Reserve parking area at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit. Cosgrove returned the following day and mowed the access area.

Island Unit: Cosgrove and Meis continued removing trees and brush that are encroaching on agricultural fields on the Island Unit and removed down trees and limbs on the dike top. Wildlife Area Staff (Cosgrove, Meis, and Rotton) toured areas adjacent to the Island Unit with Weed Crew Leader Tom Wampler. These were the locations where cattail crushing occurred last summer.

Private Lands/Access Management

Diversity/Wildlife Viewing Site: Natural Resource Technician Otto established a new diversity site on Swan Road in Skagit County. In the coming weeks he will install wood duck boxes, bat boxes, and visitor comment cards. Technician Otto will check the site throughout the season for use and general upkeep.

Spring Bear Hunt Management: Natural Resource Technician Otto surveyed the Monroe and North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt areas. Biologist Hans was contacted by several hunters regarding gate issues in both areas. Technician Otto took care of the gate issues and spoke with logging contractors and timber company security to ensure continued access for hunters. Biologist Hans contacted all spring bear hunt participants who did not provide vehicle information on their hunter access agreements. She entered vehicle information into a spreadsheet and distributed the information to the appropriate parties. Biologist Hans also contacted seven hunters who need to meet with her. Throughout the week she met with hunters who did not attend the meeting on

4/11. Technician Otto assisted with hunter meetings and met with an additional hunter who Biologist Hans was unable to meet with. Technician Otto explained access and hunting rules and provided the hunter with all of the necessary paperwork.

Washington Waterfowl Association Meeting: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Hans met with the Skagit County Chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association to discuss the 2014-15 waterfowl hunting season. Supervisory Biologist Caldwell presented hunter success, use and satisfaction results from the 2014-2015 Waterfowl Quality Hunt Data. Overall the group was pleased with the Department's sites and effort but offered several recommendations for improving next year's hunting season. All recommendations were noted and will be discussed at a later date to determine their feasibility before the start of the 2015-16 hunting season.

Private Land Evaluation and Criteria Meeting: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell met with Manager Rotton and staff to discuss recent private land evaluation efforts in Snohomish and Skagit Counties. Habitat and land use criteria were discussed to ensure optimal selection and maximum usage on lands under evaluation. Separately, Biologist Caldwell and Refuge Technician Meis surveyed a 292 acre piece of private land for suitability. During this survey, ten or more access points were identified. Overall, the habitat met staff criteria. Follow up contacts will be made with the appropriate parties in the following weeks to inquire about other site details.

Volunteer Coordination: Volunteer Coordinator Dazey continues to work with Master Hunter applicants to find volunteer service opportunities with WDFW. Volunteer work included scan archival slides into digital format, and volunteer projects on the Snoqualmie Wildlife area. Dazey also assisted a volunteer to register on the departments CERVIS website.

Advanced Hunter Training: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey contacted the Hunter services division of the NRA to explore the possibility of using their advanced hunter education program in Washington. The NRA hunter services rep will send syllabi and other information on the program.

Students with Special Needs: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey assisted two students with special needs to register and gain assistance at a hunter education class. One student needed an instructor who spoke Spanish and one student needed material read to him as he was dyslexic.

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 Rehabilitation: Biologist DeBruyn helped local rehab facilities by sexing some captive Trumpeter Swans and facilitating the capture and transportation of an injured adult bald eagle.

Wildlife Areas

Collaborative Efforts: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reported a large tire dump at the Ebey Island Unit to WDFW Enforcement. Approximately 200-300 tires were illegally dumped in the Ebey Slough parking lot on April Fool's night. Manager Boehm continues to work with the Department of Ecology to establish a plan to remove the tires.

ADA Program: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with WDFW ADA Program Manager Dolores Noyes to tour the Crescent Lake and Cherry Valley Units to discuss access improvements and requirements for the ADA duck blinds used by hunters during the waterfowl season.

Washington State High School Natural Resources Competition: Projects Coordinator Brokaw met with the Washington State High School Natural Resources Competition organizer to plan an "Environmental Analysis" station that will be hosted by WDFW as part of next week's state competition.

Skagit Headquarters: Meis and Cosgrove seeded fescue grass mix on several locations where soils were disturbed during dredge spoil removal on the Headquarters Unit. Manager Rotton met with Dike District #22 Commissioners and Representatives from the Corp of Engineers to discuss the Wiley Slough Spur Dike. Meis and Cosgrove picked up brush piles and cut down some alder trees from the front field, and branches were chipped and placed on the entrance road to the back field at the Headquarters Unit. Meis pruned vegetation edges along the service road of the spur dike at the Headquarters Unit. Cosgrove, at the request of Access Area Manager Hacker, picked up about thirty paint cans from the WDFW access at Sunday Lake. Cosgrove and Meis manually removed blackberries from areas at the Moberg Road property, along the dike road at the Headquarters Unit, and the hedge row among native species plantings for the Wiley Slough project. All staff met with Private Land Supervisor Caldwell to discuss replacement lands evaluation criteria.

Salmon Recovery Conference Presentation: Manager Rotton met with Joelene Boyd of The Nature Conservancy and Brenda Clifton of the Skagit River Systems Cooperative to discuss an upcoming presentation at the Salmon Recovery Conference in May. The group will be presenting information updates on the status of restoration projects in the South Skagit and Stillaguamish deltas. Lessons learned and how this information is being used to inform other projects will be discussed.

Fir Island Farms Unit: Manager Rotton continues to work with Environmental Planner Jenna Friebel regarding construction and land management details for the Fir Island Farms projects. Manger Rotton is working on final details of the agricultural lease with the new lessee and working with a contract farmer for planting the construction area.

Samish River Unit: Manager Rotton and Meis examined ditches on the Samish River Unit for outlets of the tile drainage system.

Private Lands/Access



After photos of work done to the entry road and parking lot at Toad Lake in Whatcom County. 32 tons of gravel was added to the entry road. Pot holes along the entry road were also filled.

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman received a call from a private company requesting information on how to deal with deer depredation on a Christmas tree farm. Specialist Witman advised the company on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) damage prevention process and advised the company on how they could implement deer repellents and/or tree barriers.

Specialist Witman received a call from a landowner experiencing ongoing depredation to chickens from an apparent weasel or mink. Specialist Witman explained the capture and removal process to the landowner so that he could implement a trap for the suspected animal.

Specialist Witman met with a berry grower in Whatcom County and finalized a damage prevention cooperative agreement with the landowner. While there, Specialist Witman inspected several berry fields for deer damage and for potential private lands access during the general hunting seasons.

Specialist Witman met with several Day Creek landowners to discuss future fencing options and projects. While there, he inspected a fence that is being constructed by a landowner on a recent co-operative fencing agreement. The fence is roughly 30% complete and on schedule for the completion time frame.

Specialist Witman responded to a landowner's safety concern about elk entering his property in the Birdsvie area of Skagit County. The elk are apparently entering the property when the landowner's children and pets are present in the yard. Specialist Witman walked the property with the landowner and found several entry points where the elk are jumping the fence. An audible deterrent device was installed at the entry points. The landowner has also agreed to purchase additional deterrent devices.

Biologist Smith met with several landowners in the Snoqualmie Valley and on the Enumclaw Plateau to discuss elk damage to agricultural properties (fences and grass) and the potential for damage to vegetable crops later in the year. Potential fencing and hazing options were discussed. Smith also monitored electrified fladry fencing at three locations.

Master Hunter Coordinator Meetings: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with two Master Hunt Program coordinators in Skagit and Whatcom Counties. During the meeting they discussed future private lands access for big game as well as the master hunter roles anticipated in 2015-2016. The hunt coordinators also provided Specialist Witman with a list of Master Hunters that are willing to assist with bear damage prevention efforts on private timberlands.

Black Bear Tree Damage Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman surveyed a historic bear damage area on Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands in Skagit County. Specialist Witman observed and recorded recent tree damage. Now that damage has been confirmed, Specialist Witman will continue to monitor the area and others for bear damage. Furthermore, damage prevention efforts will be implemented on the plot where the current tree damage has been identified.



Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman discovered this recent Black Bear barking and girdling effort on a young Douglas fir last week while surveying Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands

North Cascades Elk Management Group Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman attended the North Cascades Elk Management Group meeting with co-managers. Conflict staff updated co-managers on seasonal elk damage reports and current damage mitigation efforts.

Instructor Applicant Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey conducted the first session of a Pre-service training for hunter education instructor applicants in the South King County area. The PST was held at the Black Diamond Gun range. This was the class room session for the applicants and will be followed by a practical session where the ten applicants will assist in putting on a class of hunter education students.

Hunter Education Instructor Support: Hunter education coordinator Dazey continued to provide support to Region 4 instructors, answering questions that have arisen about a variety of issues.

Teaching Team Evaluations: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey evaluated three hunter education teams: one in Langley, one in West Seattle, and one in Mill Creek. All three teams continue to offer excellent instruction.

Master Hunter Permit Program: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey continues to receive calls from master hunter applicants seeking volunteer opportunities, CORT training dates, and other questions about the master hunter program.

Instructor Applicant Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey continued to register applicants into two upcoming Pre-Service Training opportunities.

Hunter Education Instructor Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey continued to provide support to Region 4 instructors answering questions that have arisen about a variety of issues. Dazey activated two new classes posted by instructors on Kalkomey. Dazey also assisted several new instructors to locate instructor help for new classes they want to offer. These classes include a number of offerings at the Region 4 office as well as other venues. Dazey assisted instructor Ira Gross to find a venue for classes he will be scheduling monthly up to this coming September before taking a break to go hunting.

Teaching Team Evaluations: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey attended a Field Skills Evaluation held in Oak Harbor to provide support to the teaching team there and to evaluate their class. The team is a new team but is doing very well. While there, Dazey also delivered inert firearms and other supplies to the team.

Master Hunter Permit Program: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey coordinated test proctoring dates with the Region 4 staff and forwarded the dates to be posted on the master hunter webpage.

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

Training: Several staff completed (on-line) IT Security Awareness and Heat Related Illness training sessions.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle Trapping: Biologists Anderson, Bergh, Doorly, and Holman deployed traps to catch Western Pond turtles at the Sondino population site this week. Additionally, WDFW Aquatics Veterinarian Haman visited the site to instruct the biologists on this season's health sampling protocols. This spring's trapping effort has two goals: one is to find wild turtles that are between 1-5 years old for a study on how bone density and morphology might affect a

turtle's susceptibility to shell disease, and the other is to perform a health assessment and collect samples that will help determine if there are genetic differences between healthy turtles and those with shell disease. Hatchling turtles will be captured opportunistically and brought to the Oregon Zoo as part of the headstarting program to grow them large enough to be less vulnerable to predation. This first trapping effort will last for five weeks, ending in mid-May. During the first four days of the trapping effort, 40 total captures of 36 unique individuals occurred. Of those 36 turtles, 27 were swabbed for veterinary samples and 8 hatchlings were captured.

First week of Western Pond Turtle Capture Effort



Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys Media Interest: Biologists George and Holman conducted a hoof disease prevalence survey located primarily on Forest Service land with an outdoor reporter from a local newspaper. Two groups of elk were observed during the survey. All data generated from this spring effort will be submitted to Hoof Disease Coordinator George and compiled with efforts from volunteers. The survey involves locations throughout southwest Washington and encompasses private and public lands, as well as different habitat types. The effort to document any discernible difference in the prevalence of the hoof disease condition geographically will continue through April.

Black-tailed Deer Research Project: Monitoring of black-tailed does and their associated young continues in both the Coweeman and Washougal Study clusters. Currently in the Coweeman cluster, five adult does that were captured in 2014 remain alive and these females have one surviving young. Currently in the Washougal cluster, two adult does that were captured in 2014 remain alive and these females have two surviving young. During the May-June birth period, all adult females associated with each study cluster will be monitored frequently and multiple attempts will be made to capture their fawns.

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

Tree Planting Maintenance: Wildlife Area Technician Fox finished installing tree protection tubes and weed barrier mats this past week on over 3,000 trees and shrubs that were planted early this year in the North Unit of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. Tree protection tubes are installed to decrease rodent damage and the weed barrier mats are placed to shade out vegetation around the trees, reducing competition for soil nutrients and moisture during the summer months. This approach of protecting the plants results in a typical planting survival rate of 80-95%, whereas without these measures plant survival would be greatly diminished.



Tree protection tubes and weed barrier mats in the North Unit of the Shillapoo Wildlife Area

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

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Turkey Season Opening: Hunter turnout was light during the mid-week opening day. Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven only encountered four parties hunting on opening day. The first pair of hunters indicated they had located birds the evening prior, so they anticipated a successful hunt the next morning. Van Leuven learned of a user conflict between turkey hunters and a party of people shooting ground squirrels in the same area. Van Leuven explained the timing issue with the ground squirrel hunters and they decided to try another day, especially since they weren't seeing many squirrels.

Road Gates Open: The gates on Anderson Road, Old Headquarters Road, and the South Breaks Road were opened in time for the April 15 morning turkey hunt. These gates will remain open until November 1st. The gate on the Sheep Canyon Road will be opened when soils dry out in the wet meadow above the gate in early May.

Campsite Cleanup: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven started collecting litter and cleaning up a large fire pit at a campsite along the Sheep Canyon Road. The work is not finished as there are targets to remove from trees and a vandalized signpost to replace along with some debris still lying around.

Private Lands/Access

Turkey Hunters: Conflict Specialist McDonald fielded phone calls and emails about turkey hunting. For more information about private farmland and timberlands open to public hunting, visit the WDFW public hunting access webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/.

Public Access: Private Lands Technician McDonald performed turkey hunter outreach and picked up three bags worth of trash on Western Pacific Timberland (WPT) in Klickitat County. Handouts with rules for recreating on WPT land and a Feel Free to Hunt agreement area map were given to hunters and placed on windshields of parked vehicles. All hunters contacted appreciated being given a map. Several mountain bikers were out having fun on WPT land in the great weather.

Turkey Season: Biologist Anderson responded to numerous calls regarding access to areas for turkey hunting. Most interest has been associated with the Klickitat River and the Klickitat Wildlife Area.

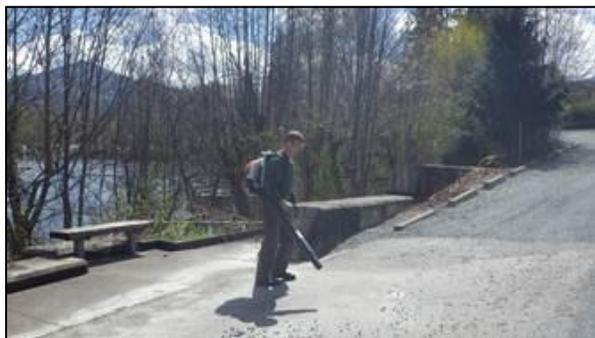
Access

Langsdorf Landing: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes conducted a Discover Pass compliance count. A record 94 vehicles/trailers were counted and checked for a Discover Pass or Vehicle Access Pass. Both parking lots were full with 72 vehicles and another 22 vehicles parked on the side of the road. Fourteen of the 94 vehicles didn't have either a Discover Pass or Vehicle Access Pass that was visible.



Langsdorf Landing

Mineral Lake, County Line, and Barbers Access Sites: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes sprayed herbicide, limbed and cut back brush, and used the blower around the parking areas and walkways. 4,600 gallons of sewage was pumped from all three site vault toilets.



Parking lot maintenance and vault toilet pumping

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Snowy Plover: Biologist Sundstrom continues to search and monitor existing snowy plover nests at both Midway Beach and Graveyard Spit. A total of eight nests have been discovered but four of those nests have been lost within the last week and a half. The unprecedented early spring-like weather has prompted the birds to begin the earliest known nesting attempts in the past 20 years in Washington.

Western Pond Turtle: Biologist Tirhi and staff, along with interns from Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium's Citizen Science Program, processed the last of the turtles and then removed, cleaned, and stored all traps and equipment used for the 2015 turtle trapping and processing season.

Western Pond Turtle Captures: District 11 biologists completed western pond turtle captures in Pierce County with a staggering 228 individuals caught. Twenty-seven radio transmitters were deployed on adult females expected to nest this summer. Two turtles, one adult male and one adult female, were transferred to PAWS for treatment of severe ulcerative shell disease. Both are expected to return by early fall.

Western Pond Turtle Release: Staff released four adult female western pond turtles from Cedar Creek Correctional where they were completing their recovery from ulcerative shell disease. All four were fitted with radio transmitters to monitor nesting behavior and allow biologists to reassess their health in July.

Taylor's checkerspot reintroduction: Biologists Randolph and Johnson (now with DNR) observed the first adult Taylor's checkerspot of the 2015 flight season on JBLM's Range 76 on 8 April. Only a single adult was counted. No checkerspots were observed during a survey of TA7S the same day. The first access to JBLM's Range 50 was on 12 April, when Biologists Linders and Randolph laid flags and conducted a partial survey (6 of 16 lines) under conditions with intermittent sun. An estimated 51 checkerspots were counted at Range 50. A partial survey (8 of 12 lines) at Range 76 the same day under slightly better conditions turned up only one adult checkerspot. These results were unusual as the survey area at Range 76 is twice as large as that at Range 50, with daily counts typically two to three times higher. Surveys were again conducted at both sites on 18 April. An estimated count of 348 checkerspots was reported by Biologists Linders, Randolph, and Hynson from Range 76 that day, with an estimate of 431 recorded at Range 50. Training has been heavy, limiting access to these sites. Plans for expanded training at JBLM



(see <http://www.theolympian.com/2015/04/19/3683159/louder-days-ahead-near-jblm-as.html>) and (<http://www.theolympian.com/2015/04/20/3686423/artillery-and-rockets-coming-to.html>) are a concern due to the ecological significance of these sites, the only two locations where all three federally listed prairie species (Taylor's checkerspot, streaked horned lark, and Mazama pocket gopher) co-occur. Both sites are also occupied by the state-listed mardon skipper.

The first two checkerspots were counted at Scatter Creek on 15 April during a standard survey, with three additional checkerspots observed outside the survey window. No checkerspots were observed at Pacemaker on JBLM on 16 April, although ten were counted at TA7S that day. A survey of Glacial Heritage on 17 April returned an estimated count of 68 checkerspots. Most were in the vicinity of this year's release, although more widely dispersed sightings were also reported.

Taylor's checkerspot captive rearing: Technicians at our two captive rearing facilities, the Oregon Zoo and Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women, are caring for multiple life stages of Taylor's checkerspots. As of 18 April, the Zoo had 97 pupae, 53 larvae and 78 adult butterflies and had initiated breeding introductions. Two of those have been successful so far. As of 14 April, Mission Creek reported 182 pupa and 20 adult butterflies. That jumped to a total of 44 female and 20 male butterflies by 17 April, with more eclosing daily. Three breeding introductions have been successful so far at Mission Creek.

Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Surveys

West of Port Angeles Southern Extant Site

April 15, 2015: Biologist McMillan attempted to conduct TCB surveys on April 15, 2015. Marginal weather conditions were present much of the day, unsuitable primarily due to low temperature and hazy cloud cover.

Three TCBs were observed along the Ridge Road Route and 30 TCBs were observed on the Western Route.

April 18, 2015: Biologist McMillan conducted a TCB survey on April 18, 2015 with excellent weather conditions, 55-64 degrees F, B-1 conditions and 0% Cloud cover. Routes were flagged in segments of 25 meter lengths.

Ridge Road 13 segments – 5 TCBs

Parallel Route 11 segments – 14 TCBs

Jenny Route 22 segments – 16 TCBs.

West of Port Angeles Searching Areas

April 19, 2015: Biologist McMillan conducted searching surveys at Ocean View Cemetery & along the north side of the Port Angeles Airport. Searching also extended into the Little River Valley and the Elwha Valley south of Hwy 101. No Taylor's Checkerspots were observed.

Sequim Site: Biologist Ament conducted her third survey of the season at this known TCB site on April 15, 2015. The survey met protocol with full sunshine and prominent shadows for the entire thing. The temperature was > 55 degrees with a cool light breeze from the west. A total of 754 TCBs were observed during the survey. The highest count at the site last season was 614 on May 1st. It is possible that last week was the peak week of TCB activity at this site and would be a few weeks earlier than usual for the flight season.

West of Port Angeles

April 16, 2015: Biologist Ament and District Biologist McMillan conducted a TCB survey at the farthest west TCB site on April 16, 2015. The upper and lower survey routes were established and flagged at 25 meter segments last season. The weather conditions were very good for the survey. There was full sunshine and shadows present for the entire survey. The temperature was cool but did finally warm to >55 degrees. Biologist Ament conducted a survey of the Lower Route and counted a total of 23 TCBs. Biologist McMillan surveyed the Upper Route and eastern bald openings and counted a total of 134 TCBs. Various other butterflies were observed in flight at the site during the surveys. Biologist Ament stayed at the site following the survey and trimmed shrubs and tree limbs to clear two trails to link survey routes at the site.

April 17 - 19, 2015: Biologist Ament conducted a total of three TCB surveys at a known TCB site located west of Port Angeles last week. On April 17, 2015, she surveyed the eastern lower ridge route at the site. There were suitable sun and shadow conditions but the winds picked up mid-survey and gusts were > 10 mph at times. Only one TCB was observed during the survey. On April 18, 2015, Biologist Ament conducted a survey at the west end survey route at the site. She had suitable weather conditions for the entire survey. She observed a total of 104 TCBs during the survey. On April 19, 2015 Biologist Ament conducted a survey of a high elevation road route at the site. Once again she had excellent survey conditions. There was full sunshine with prominent shadows and very minimal wind for the entire survey. She observed a total of 27 TCBs during the survey. She has completed survey forms for all surveys. The forms will need to be scanned and provided to Biologist Potter.

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

Wildlife Management

Elk Hoof Disease Surveys: Biologist Michaelis conducted two surveys for elk hoof disease. Within one survey area along the Wishkah River, he observed one animal which appeared to limp from an unknown cause. The other survey area was in the extreme SE portion of GMU 667 and no elk were observed. The survey area was close to where a cougar mortality was detected by a cat tagged in the Green and Cedar River watersheds.

Biologist Novack and Conflict Specialist Blankenship conducted a survey for elk hoof disease at a point inside the Transalta Mine property which straddles Thurston and Lewis Counties. Six groups of elk, totaling 86 animals, were seen with a single limping elk verified. Mine manager Tim LeDuc escorted us throughout the mine property during this survey.

Biologist Harris continues to work with volunteers and staff conducting hoof disease surveys. Things are starting to slowdown in the region with most of the surveys completed. He is still trying to contact a few volunteers that have not completed surveys and have not returned phone calls.

Private Lands/Access

Garbage Clean Up: Several Master Hunters and Master Hunter applicants assisted a large forest landowner with their annual clean. Biologist Harris spoke briefly with the landowner's staff and they reported that the volunteers did a great job. The landowner's staff will provide a write up and list of Master Hunters who attended later in the week.

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

Private Lands/Access

Nemah River Access Paths: Biologist Michaelis, upon the request of acting program manager Skriletz, wrote a short description and mapped out proposed pathways to provide public access to the Nemah River Estuary in Willapa Bay. This property is currently owned by WDFW and could provide access for waterfowl hunters and the general public for the purpose of wildlife viewing. Its location along US HWY 101 and the southern portion of Willapa Bay can be a great asset for many years to come.

Wildlife Conflict

New Conflict Specialist: Region Six welcomes Matt Blankenship as the new Wildlife Conflict Specialist. Matt earned his Bachelor's Degree in Wildlife Management from the University of Montana. He then went to work for Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks, where he served as a Damage and Management Hunt Coordinator. Matt will be based at the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area and will be responsible for conflicts on the east side of the region from Pierce to Clallam Counties.

Biologist Novack escorted Conflict Specialist Blankenship for a day to start familiarizing him with his area, transfer keys, and other equipment, as well as helping identify hot spots for conflict issues in Thurston County.

Biologist Harris spent the remainder of the week with Matt to help bring him up to speed. They spoke with several landowners and responded to a new damage complaint in cranberries where damage was verified and initiating a DPCA was discussed. Biologist Harris was also able to take CS Blankenship to a fresh bear peel on industrial forest land. While there, they found several peels that were estimated at being one to two years old. CS Blankenship also assisted Biologist Harris in placing fuse rope and crackers on a hay field that had recently become occupied by a group of elk.

Master Hunter Fence Repair: Master Hunters and Master Hunter applicants assisted a landowner with fence repairs in the Smith Creek area of Pacific County. The landowner, who Biologist Harris works with on elk damage, contacted him about getting some help on fence work. He had some health issues and was unable to work on the fence without assistance. The landowner reported that they did a great job and that he and his wife are extremely pleased with the help.

Other

Pierce County Conservation Futures: Conservation Futures is a land preservation program for the protection of threatened areas of open space, timber lands, wetland, habitat areas, agricultural lands, and farm lands within the boundaries of Pierce County. Conservation Futures funds are used to acquire the land or the rights to future development of the land. As a member of the Conservation Futures Technical Advisory Committee, Biologist Tirhi and others toured half of the 2015 submitted projects to become familiarized and assess each site. Several of the projects combined exceptional wildlife habitat preservation with passive recreation. Tirhi and the TAC will finalize site visits this coming week and provide recommendations to the Conservation Futures Citizens' Advisory Board, which reviews each project during presentations and provides the final vote.

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

Wildlife Management

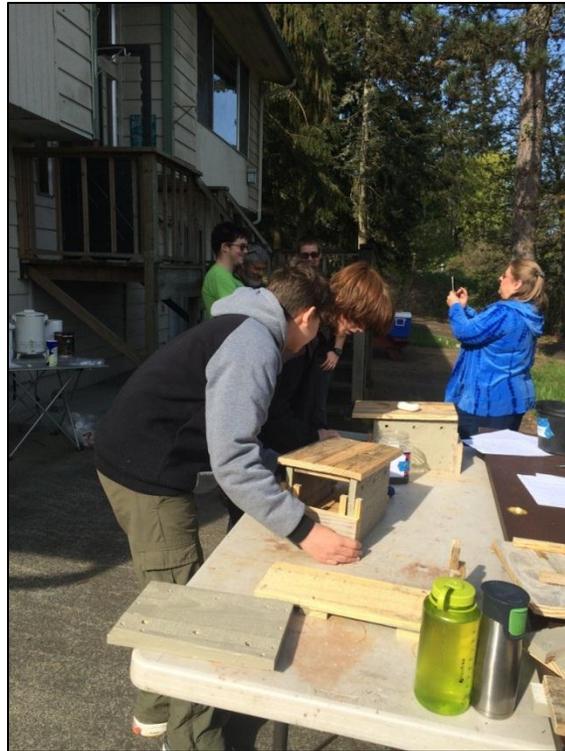
ACUB funding proposals: Biologist Linders was awarded ACUB funds to continue Taylor's checkerspot reintroductions and habitat assessments in 2016. Both projects were funded at their requested amounts.

JBLM contracts: Biologist Linders was awarded two JBLM contracts to provide support for Taylor's checkerspot reintroduction and habitat assessment on Base in 2015.

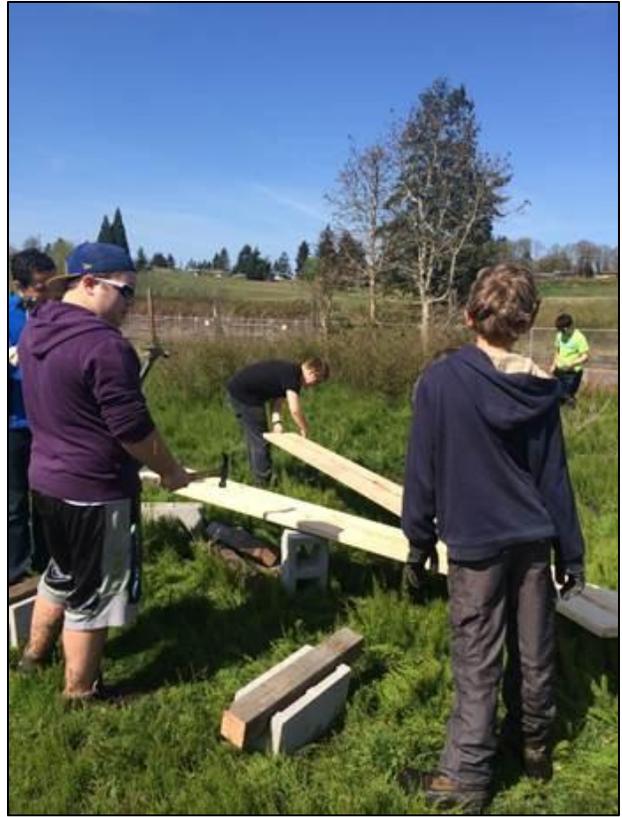
New Fish and Wildlife Biologist 1: Biologist Linders completed hiring details, welcoming Lillian Hynson as a career seasonal Fish and Wildlife Biologist 1 working on Taylor's checkerspot reintroduction, habitat assessment and restoration. The position is the result of a cooperative arrangement with Shane Belson and Dave Hays. Lily earned a Bachelor's degree from The Evergreen State College. She worked with Dave as a work study student for several years and possesses a detailed knowledge of mosses and lichens. She is energetic, a quick learner, and a welcome addition to our team. She is replacing Mike Walker, who retired in 2014 after more than 10 years of seasonal work in District 11.

Other

Boy Scouts of America Eagle Scout Project—South Puget Sound Wildlife Area: Biologist Tirhi supervised an Eagle Scout Project with Troop 474 from Kent, WA. The project was held at the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area, Lakewood. The Lead Scout planned and executed a project to build sixteen purple martin boxes using specifications provided by biologist Tirhi. Purple martins are our largest swallow, a candidate for listing in Washington, and one that nests primarily in man-made boxes. Tirhi is always in need of martin boxes to replace those at existing colonies or for establishing new colonies to aid the recovery of this species. The young man also oversaw the completion of approximately 36' of boardwalk that he and his crew built as an addition to the boardwalk placed by previous Eagle Scouts at the wildlife area. The boardwalks allow staff to safely walk the perimeter of ponds used for management of endangered western pond turtles and reduce the impact to fragile wetland habitat. The scout and his crew did an outstanding job!



Lead Scout from troop 474, Kent, with his work crew building purple martin nest boxes as part of his Eagle Scout project



Members of Boy Scout Troop 474 Kent, WA building a boardwalk at the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area as part of an Eagle Scout project