

# Wildlife Program

Week of February 9-15, 2015

## **GAME DIVISION**

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

**Wolf Conflict:** Section Manager Simek and Carnivore Section Manager Martorello met with Conflict Supervisor McCanna and Conflict Specialist Shepherd to discuss current efforts on Wolf Deterrence Plans, upcoming range rider contracts, and other needs for wolf management. Conflict Specialist Bennett joined the group and all met with the Hancock Timber Land Management team to discuss grazing and managing wolf-livestock conflicts on open range.

**North Cascades Elk Herd:** The North Cascades (aka Nooksack) is the smallest (~1,300 elk) of ten elk herds formally identified and managed by WDFW. Although this is a small elk herd, chronic damage issues in the Skagit River Valley continue to present a challenge for WDFW and its tribal co-managers because using harvest to mitigate elk damage to agricultural crops must be managed in a way that still promotes population growth. Specialist Hoenes has developed a projection model that biologists can use to develop a harvest strategy that will help address damage complaints, but will also ensure that population objectives are achieved within a realistic and appropriate timeframe. Specialist Hoenes will work with Region 4 staff and the North Cascades Elk Herd technical working group on this projection model, as well as review results from the mark-re-sight elk survey analysis.

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

**Pheasant Focus Area Landowner Agreement Selection Criteria:** At the recent Game/Diversity Workshop, Section Manager Calkins and Private Lands Staff from southeast Washington met to discuss criteria for evaluating and selecting private lands to enroll or reenroll in our access program. The program in this part of the state has been a high priority for upland birds and some landowners with quality habitat receive payments in exchange for providing upland bird hunting access. Since the last enrollment, a number of additional landowners have expressed interest and the need for criteria to select properties and document decisions has become apparent due to funding limitations. Calkins has prepared a draft criteria document and sent to private lands staff working in the Pheasant Focus area. Section Manager Calkins responded to comments and questions, some of which will result in changes to the draft, mainly to clarify the intent or definition of various scoring criteria. The final product will be ready for implementation this year.

**Sea Duck and Marine Bird Surveys:** Waterfowl Survey & Sea Duck Specialist Evenson and Assistant District Biologists Murphie and Cyra completed the 2014-15 Annual Winter Aerial Survey of Sea Ducks and Marine Birds within the inner marine waters of Washington State. A total of 18 survey days were flown this winter to complete the survey.

This is the 23<sup>rd</sup> winter that these surveys have been conducted. These surveys are the longest data set documenting trends of winter marine bird distribution and population indices in the greater Puget Sound. In addition, these surveys are used to document population index levels of sea ducks that will determine next year's harvest limits. In addition to birds, marine mammal sightings are recorded, and trends in harbor and Dall's porpoise have been documented.

As part of the survey efforts this year the crew worked on the R&D of obtaining images from the survey to estimate species proportions of scoters, goldeneyes, mergansers, and loons (species groups that have a proportion of observations classified to species group level). They plan on implementing imaging during next winter's survey to better estimate species proportions for these groups.

The efforts and professionalism of Chuck Perry, chief pilot of Kenmore Air, are much appreciated and are key to the success of this project.



*Flock of scoters photographed from the survey plane*



*Biologists Cyra and Murphie observing marine birds*



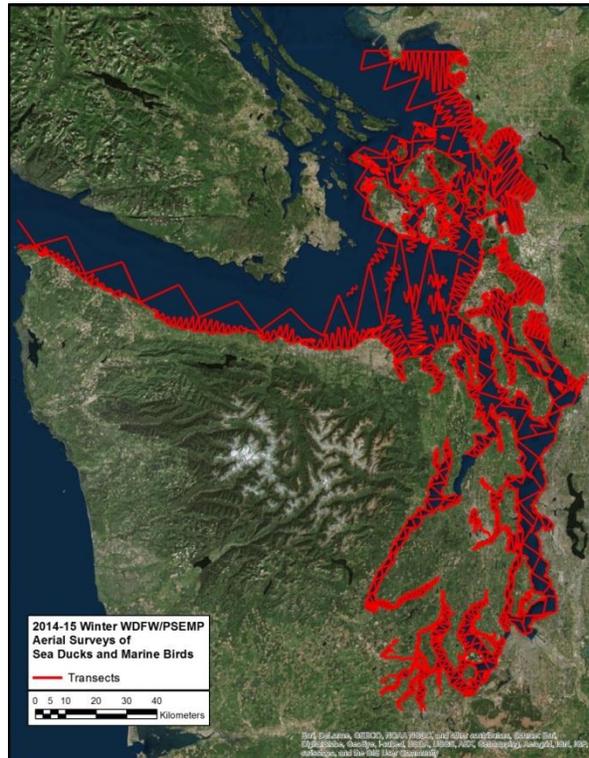
*Survey Crew: Biologist Murphie, Pilot Perry, Specialist Evenson, and Biologist Cyra*

*Compilation of the 2014 sea duck and marine bird survey routes*

**WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

**Spotted Owl Conservation:** Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan helped Lauren Burnes (Washington Department of Natural Resources) give a presentation to the Washington State Forest Practices Board. The presentation provided an overview of a model developed by the Northern Spotted Owl Implementation Team's technical team that is designed to identify and prioritize landscapes where voluntary incentives can be implemented to benefit Spotted Owls. Lauren gave the presentation and Joe responded to several questions posed by board members.



**Brown Pelican:** Biologist Derek Stinson completed the Draft Periodic Status review for the Brown Pelican, which is now available on the web site for a 90-day public comment period. The results of the review and any public comments will be presented to the Fish and Wildlife Commission at a meeting later this year.

**Pacific Coast Joint Venture (PCJV):** The PCJV is now the Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture, announced at the partners' meeting on 12 February. Eric Gardner, Wendy Connally, Don Kraege, and Ruth Milner attended for WDFW. Connally gave a presentation on eBird Northwest, content development, focus and relationship to WDFW SGCN, and upcoming Citizen Science projects we'll be sponsoring on the portal.

**State Wildlife Action Plan:** Acting Diversity Division Manager Penny Becker and Biologist Lynn Helbrecht attended the first SWAP Public Meeting in Olympia this week. Attendees were updated on WDFW's progress on compiling the plan and given opportunities to comment and contribute their ideas to the finalization of the plan.

Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan drafted a first version summary that will accompany the collection of fact sheets created for 51 avian taxa. These fact sheets will be part of the revised State Wildlife Action Plan that will be finalized in the months ahead. Biologist Wiles completed extensive edits to the 44 mammal fact sheets that will go in the Plan and prepared an introductory account summarizing all SGCN mammals. Wendy Connally contributed a section (1 of 2) relating the value of Citizen Science to WDFW's SWAP implementation.

**Final Reports for Tufted Puffins and Steller Sea Lions:** Biologist Wiles spent time revising the final tufted puffin status report and the final Steller sea lion periodic status review. This included the addition of an appendix to each report that summarized the public comments received during the 90-day public review period and 14-day SEPA review period, and WDFW's responses to those comments. Both revised reports have now been posted online.

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

**Project Wild:** Wendy Connally coordinated with Sara Livesay from the Council for Environmental Education to find a suitable implementation and training home for Project Wild, Growing up Wild, Aquatic Wild, and Flying Wild outside of WDFW.

**WildWatch Cams:** After repairing the damaged camera system prior to January 1 at the Bald Eagle site to be within USFWS guidelines and avoid disturbing new nest construction, it seems the eagles have chosen a different site. With a willing private landowner and collaborator supportive of our efforts, we're sorry to lose the opportunities this camera has provided over several years. Better luck next year! Wendy Connally, with Greg Falxa and others, will be working on several other cam relationships and systems to determine how and if we move forward with those sites the remainder of this year and plan for next biennium's needs/opportunities. Maintenance on the seal cam this month will provide a better viewing experience.

**eBird Northwest:** Wendy Connally, Bill Tweit, and the eBird NW Content Committee delivered new Northwest Crow, Crossbill, Northern Flicker ID, Great Backyard Bird Count, Oregon 2020, and select eBird main portal articles for our eBird NW users. WDFW is leading the effort to develop a draft charter to guide the Steering Committee and future partner engagement. Connally is working on a Citizen Science framework and committee development for the eBird NW portal.

**REGION 1**

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Vulcan Mountain Bighorn Sheep Capture Efforts:** District biologists Dana Base and Annemarie Prince helped coordinate a bighorn sheep capture at the Vulcan area. Leading Edge Aviation, Inc. was contracted to net-gun bighorn sheep from the air using their Hughes



***Bighorn sheep ram (ear tag # 22) released after capture at Vulcan on Feb. 10, 2015***

500 helicopter. Unfavorable weather prevented flying the first day, which left only a short time the next day subsequent to successful captures at Lincoln Cliffs for the helicopter to work Vulcan. As a result, only one bighorn sheep was caught, an adult ram. This ram was processed for disease and parasite surveillance along with genetic sampling, fitted with a GPS radio collar and ear tag (white # 22), and released in reasonably short order. All members of the team, including the helicopter pilot, the capture crew, agency staff, veterinary & student volunteers, and local landowners, contributed to a successful operation.

**Lincoln Cliffs Bighorn Sheep:** Biologists Atamian and Lowe, along with Section Manager Harris and State Wildlife Veterinarian Mansfield, coordinated and implemented a helicopter capture of bighorn sheep in the Whitestone and Lincoln areas of northern Lincoln County. After many hours of waiting for fog to clear, twelve sheep were captured and sampled and ten GPS collars were deployed. The capture was successful due to the efforts of WDFW staff from several programs, as well as a cadre of volunteers from the WSU vet school, Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, and Northwest Sportsman's Club.



*Leading Edge Aviation carrying bighorn sheep to the awaiting ground crew in Lincoln*

### **Private Lands**

**Blue Mountain Community Foundation:** Biologist Earl worked all week to design a project to submit to this grant that was set up with the development of the Lower Snake River Wind Farm. Earl worked closely with Biologist Thorne-Hadley and Conflict Specialist Rasley for additional input. Earl and NRT Wade attended the Garfield County Conservation District meeting to promote this grant and gain additional assistance.

**Local Birds of the Week (Spokane and Whitman Counties):** Mountain Chickadee, White Breasted Nuthatch, Red Breasted Nuthatch, House Finch, American Robin, W. Meadowlark, Red Winged Blackbird, Grasshopper Sparrow, Killdeer, Belted Kingfisher, Great Horned Owl, Red Tailed Hawk, Swainson's Hawk, Northern Harrier, Prairie Falcon, Hairy Woodpecker, Trumpeter Swan, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Green Winged Teal, and Canada Goose.

## Wildlife Areas

**Asotin Creek Wildlife Area – Lick Creek Winter Closure Gate ATV Violation:** While out mountain biking on Sunday (his day off) along the North Fork of Asotin Creek, WAM Bob Dice observed two adults with three young boys operating ATVs behind the winter closure gate. The adults lifted the ATVs (two ATVs and one had a trailer) around the gate and proceeded into the closure. Dice photographed the violators and caught up with them about two miles past the gate. They were advised to leave the closure area and did so immediately. Details and photographs of the incident were passed on to enforcement officers who have indicated they will take action. The incident does show that we can do more to deter illegal activity behind the



gate. We will be modifying the gate with a stronger steel structure to keep ATVs out. The large rock that is present now simply isn't doing the job. These winter closures are to minimize disturbance by motorized vehicles to wintering big game.

What's good access for pedestrians and horseback riders is not keeping ATV's out of the Lick Creek winter closure. The subjects Dice contacted on Sunday rolled their left tires over the top of this boulder to gain access to Lick Creek. We'll be making some changes.

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

## Wildlife Management

**Big Read:** Supervisor McCanna presented on a panel for the Big Read at Gonzaga University Thursday night. The panel consisted of the following:

Gonzaga: Dr. Brian Henning, Professor of Philosophy and Environmental Studies

SFCC: Andy Barks, Philosophy lecturer and Environmental Ethicist

Stevens County Cattlemen: Justin Hendrickson, Rancher affected by wolves

Inland Northwest Wildlife Council: Leonard Wolf, representing sportsman

Conservation Northwest: Jay Kehne, representing non-lethal solutions for wolves

WDFW: Joey McCanna, Private Lands and Wildlife Conflict Supervisor

Moderator: Rich Landers, Spokesman-Review, Outdoor blogger and has written articles on wolf issues

Gonzaga estimated around 250 people in attendance, with the first hour being presentations from the panelists and the next hour questions from the audience. This is one of the better meetings we have had, with a lot of great questions and a diverse audience.

## Private Lands/Access

**Moose in Saint John:** Conflict Specialist Bennett, Supervisor McCanna, Private Lands Biologist Lewis, and several members of the Saint John community hazed a young bull moose from the city. Paintball guns, rubber bullets, ATVs, and UTVs were used to push the moose to a suitable location.

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

### Wildlife Areas

**Assist Wildlife and Enforcement staff:** This week, Young assisted local Wildlife and Enforcement Program staff with moose relocation from a residential area back to wild country.

*Young helped with a moose capture in south Spokane Valley this week. This is one of the two moose in a trailer with Sergeant Mike Sprecher.*



## **REGION 2**

**WOLVES:** Nothing to report.

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

### Wildlife Management

**North Cascades Wolverine Research:** Project partners on the USFS Lake Chelan District captured photos of study animal Sasha in the Holden Village area. We originally captured her in the Twisp River drainage in February 2009. Shortly after capture she dispersed to the Glacier Peak Wilderness and set up home range where she



***Wolverine Sasha last month near Holden Village*** – Photo by Remote Camera (USFS)

has remained ever since. Over the years we have had several remote camera photos from her in the Entiat drainage and now have documented her in the Chelan watershed. Of the four study animals for whom we have good dispersal data, two moved north into Canada and two moved southwest into the Glacier Peak Wilderness. In addition, we have one capture and other photo evidence of what appear to be animals dispersing to and/or thru our study area. This suggests both immigration and emigration are important components of the population demographics of the WA North Cascades.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Pateros Unit Deer Fence:** Work continues on this fence along the border of the Pateros Unit and Naumes Orchard. In the past week, Natural Resource Technician Kevin Vallance and Maintenance Mechanic Ed Pierson assisted WCC crews from Spokane and Wenatchee working on the estimated 44 rock jacks that will be needed on the 2.5 mile fence. After a rocky start trying to decipher the specifications and design of the rock jacks, the crew was able to complete a dozen rock jacks. Crews also worked on reinforcing H-braces and corners to bring them up to specs.



*One of many rock jacks completed on the Pateros Deer Fence* – Photo by Ron Fox

**Methow Post-fire Forest Management Project:** Work continues on the Timber Sale. Forester Jamie Bass has been out administering the sale every day. The road to Cougar Flats is now open and harvesting is ongoing in that higher elevation unit. Temperatures have barely held out for harvesting to retain standards regarding ground disturbance, and skidding and hauling has been regulated to night operations. This road system is unsafe to the public as log trucks are operating on snowy, windy roads. Signs have been hung up at the entrance to warn the public of the presence of log trucks, and Bass has worked to inform anyone she comes across about the road. The last of the loads will have come out of Bear Creek Unit either by the end of the day Friday or early next week. A few continued issues with the log loader kept the harvesters from getting this out this week.



*Bear Creek Campground (south end) post-harvest* – Photo by Jamie Bass

**Wenner Lakes/Chalfa Dam:** Over the weekend, due to increasing temperatures and flood watch advisories, Manager Furnari went out to inspect the status of the dam and surrounding environmental conditions as part of CAMP's Emergency Action Plan. Photos and an assessment were provided to CAMP & local managers.

*Water level at the southwest end of the lake of the unbreached Chalfa Dam* – Photo by Sherry Furnari

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

### **Wildlife Areas**



**Wildlife Area Planning KOMW Weekly Interview:** Ops Manager Swedberg completed the 60<sup>th</sup> “Ask Dale” weekly interview with Jeanne Demorest, DFW Lands Planning Project Manager, talking about the Okanogan Valley Wildlife Area planning effort, with Becki Andrist at KOMW. All interview segments are now online at <https://komwaskdale.wordpress.com/>.

**Okanogan County Commissioner Meeting:** Manager Swedberg and Jeanne Demorest met with the Okanogan County Commissioners. Managers Olson and Haug also attended. Jeanne gave a presentation on the planning effort. Questions from the Commissioners were received and considered. Manager Swedberg attended the first Okanogan Valley Wildlife Area Advisory Committee meeting. There were a total of 22 individuals representing 13 organizations in attendance.

**Okanogan Valley Wildlife Area Wildlife Area Advisory Committee Meeting:** Manager Haug, Scotch Creek Manager Olson and wildlife area planner Demorest coordinated the 1<sup>st</sup> of three Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) meetings to help gather information used to draft the Okanogan Valley Wildlife Areas new management plan. A total of 22 people attended the meeting and provided valuable input for the new management plans. Individuals represented a number of organizations/agencies: WA Department of Natural Resources, Okanogan County, Backcountry Horsemen, Audubon Society, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Okanogan Wildlife Council, Trout Unlimited, and local farming and ranching interests. The next meeting associated with the planning effort will be the public scoping meeting scheduled for next month.

### **District 5 Winter Conditions**

**Past Weather:** Temperatures have been warming with lows in the mid-30s and daytime highs in the mid-50s.

**Short-Term Forecast:** The 10-day forecast is relatively warm with temperatures ranging from the low-30s at night and the low-50s during the day.

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

**Habitat:** Green vegetation with little to no snow cover.

**Snow Depths:** 0” at lower elevations with minimal and very patchy snow at higher elevations.

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

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

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

### **District 6 Winter Conditions**

**Recent Weather:** The District experienced another warmer than normal and mostly dry week.

**Short-Term Forecast:** Dry conditions with near normal temperatures are forecast for the next 7-10 days.

**Long-Term Forecast:** Warmer than normal temperatures and normal to below normal amounts of precipitation are forecast for the remainder of the winter and early spring.

**Snow Depths:** Snow is largely gone from lower elevations in the Okanogan Valley and the remaining snow in the lower Methow Valley is going fast. Most all south facing slopes in core deer winter range areas even at middle elevations are bare. All areas and elevations in the District lost snow pack this past week.

#### **Snotel sites –\***

Hart’s Pass (6500 ft): 79 in

Salmon Meadows (4,460 ft): 18 in

*\*No snotel sites exist in core deer winter range areas.*

**Habitat:** With below average snowpack and considerable bare ground, forage is available throughout the District on most deer winter range areas outside of the burn. Within the burn, more residual forage is being exposed daily and new green-up is starting to occur at the lowest elevations.

**Animal Concentrations:** In general, deer remain well distributed on the landscape and the low snowpack has allowed some animals to drift back up to higher than average elevations for late winter. Pressure orchards near Pateros appear to be easing.

**Animal Condition:** In most areas, deer generally look to be in average condition for this time of year.

**Mortality:** Some mortality normal for this time of year has been reported.



*From top to bottom – Juvenile eagle near Chiliwist Wildlife Area, clouds blanketing the Aeneas Mountain above Connors Lake on Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, juvenile eagle and magpie on carcass upon frozen Connors Lake, and a group of swans on Forde Lake, Sinlahekin Wildlife Area – Photos by Justin Haug*

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman met with John Marvin of Yakama Nation Fisheries to discuss the next phase of the Oak Creek Large Wood Replenishment and future projects. A timeline for additional thinning and wood placement for Oak Creek was worked out. Huffman and Marvin also discussed a future project on SF Cowiche Creek and the Tieton River. Yakama Nation is planning to use BPA funding for some design and engineering work for an edge enhancement project on the Tieton River and large wood replenishment on Cowiche Creek.

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

Headquarters-  
Junction- 420  
Nile-306  
Sheep-  
Cowiche-

**Winter Weather:** Weather this past week was very mild with highs in the 50s. This coming week is a continuation of the same, with some colder nights with below freezing temperatures. There is no precipitation in the forecast.

Access to vegetation is good with a lot of grass green up.

Elk are in seasonally good condition.

#### **Wenas Wildlife Area Winter Conditions**

##### **Winter Feeding**

**Mellotte Feed Site elk numbers: ~20 animals by end of the week.**

Feeding continued on a light scale through the week, with elk numbers dropping as the week progressed. The end of feeding appears to be imminent. Elk are in seasonally good condition.

**Winter Weather:** Weather continues to be mild, with above normal temperatures. Temperatures for the coming week will continue to be above normal, with highs in the 50s and lows in the 30s. The warm weather has south-facing slopes greening up.

#### **LT Murray Wildlife Area Winter Conditions**

**Elk:** The actual count at Watt was 619 total head, with three branched bulls and eleven juveniles. Robinson estimated at over 500 head, with 24 branched bulls but zero juvenile bulls.

**Weather:** So far there have been unrealistic winter temps, if you can call it winter. Lows have seen temps at 38-42 degrees and sunny, while highs have seen temps at 48-52 degrees. There is currently no end of the current conditions in sight.

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Manager Lopushinsky and Assistant Manager Hagan worked on modifying an existing RMEF grant to take advantage of the spring-like conditions we are experiencing on the Colockum. We have approximately \$10,000 remaining from a grant for native grass seeding after the Colockum-Tarps Fire. After receiving approval from RMEF this week, we are redirecting these funds to be used for native shrub planting to help speed post-fire habitat recovery. Time this week was spent purchasing shrub seedlings and lining up a crew to plant them next week.

**Weather Conditions:** Unseasonably warm weather this week caused creeks on the Colockum to rise as snow melted quickly from all lowland areas. Weather this week was very mild with high temperatures into the low 60s and lows in the 40s.

The forecast for next week:



***Forecast for the West Bar area, February 17-21, 2015 Colockum Wildlife Area***

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Manager Bjornstrom met with biologists from Ducks Unlimited at the WB-10 Wasteway Unit to tour the area and discuss habitat projects. Tina Blewett of Ducks Unlimited will be developing a grant application to fund evaluation of WB-10 Wasteway potential. Several ideas were discussed among the group, but a proper analysis of the water supply, topography, etc. needs to be completed before developing habitat projects at this site.

Assistant Manager Buser worked with a volunteer from the Richland Rod and Gun Club to haul a gallinaceous guzzler up into the Horse Heaven Hills outside of Prosser. After delivery, other volunteers worked to replace an old guzzler that burned up during a fire last year.

***Richland Rod & Gun Club volunteers with a newly restored guzzler***



## Wildlife Management

**Bighorn Sheep:** Biologist Bernatowicz spent much of the week on Yakima River Canyon sheep. Radio collared animals were tracked earlier in the week in preparation for capture. Seventeen sheep were captured, of which two were euthanized, and one was not collared. Fourteen individuals originally captured in 2013 were retested for *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia*. The capture was called off early due to unseasonably warm temperatures and some captured sheep having high body temperatures. There were concerns for post-capture mortality, so radioed sheep were tracked at the end of the week. Thirteen of the fifteen captured sheep were found alive and well. No radio signal could be found from the other two collared sheep.



### *Capture sheep being processed*

Biologist Bernatowicz spoke with biologist Lewis about wolverine, fisher, and time commitments in the next biennium. A local Phd student was contacted about a possible western gray squirrel sighting. A trail camera will hopefully be set.

### **Umtanum/Selah Butte Bighorn**

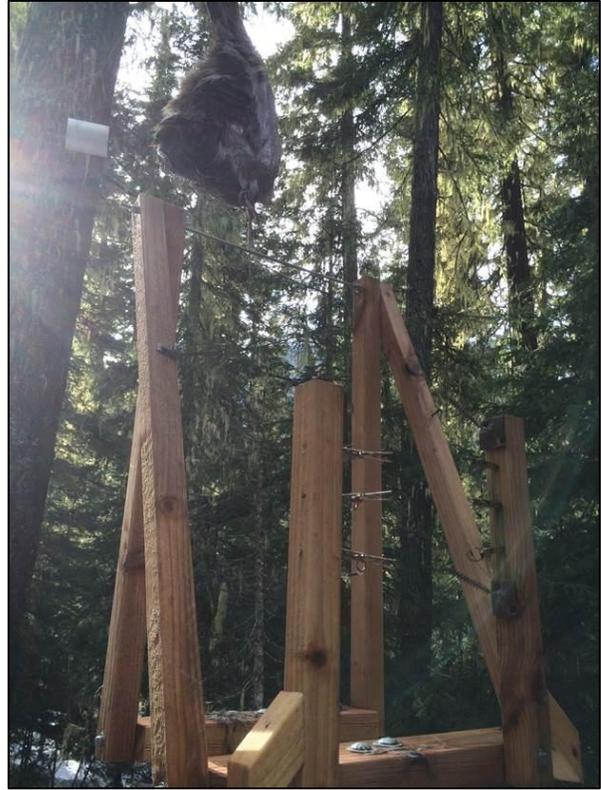
**Sheep Capture:** Biologist Moore worked with District Biologist Bernatowicz, Section Lead Harris, State

Veterinarian Mansfield, Idaho Fish & Game Bighorn Sheep Specialist Francis Cassier, and numerous other WDFW staff and volunteers to capture sheep in the canyon. The capture was performed to increase our knowledge on the disease issue within the herds.

**Wolverine Camera Station Maintenance:** Biologist Moore worked with U.S. Forest Service Biologist Aja Woodrow to check and maintain three camera stations in the upper Cle Elum River. Two of the three stations had activity by wolverine, and the photos will need to be reviewed to determine if it is the same male that has been in the area or a new animal. Snow pack was extremely low for this time of year.



*Moore getting ready for travel after checking a camera station*



*Wolverine camera station hair snares reset and baited*

**Golden Eagle Consultation:** Biologist Moore spent time reviewing literature and discussing Puget Sound Energy's draft monitoring protocols with Habitat Biologist Brent Renfrow.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**LT Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt met with Jill Johnson (DNR GIS) to create/ update two Wildlife Area maps. One is an updated Whiskey Dick winter closure map for reader boards, and the other is an updated coverage of RMAP formally abandoned roads, ownership, and our new Gnat Flat ownership in T18N, R15E.

**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Taylor cleaned the Hanson Pond reader board and kiosk after they were the target of paint balls, and then checked the North Durr area for problems. He also took a load of old tires and chemicals to the dump and purchased security screws for mounting a green dot map onto the kiosk at Hardy Canyon.

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Manager Lopushinsky prepared to install a new reader board at the Tarpiscan Road entrance to the wildlife area. He contacted the local utility companies to confirm

there were no buried gas lines, phone lines, etc. since we will be digging adjacent to the county road. A tractor with backhoe from the Wells Wildlife Area was delivered for our use to dig holes for readerboards.

Manager Lopushinsky worked on scheduling a Wildlife Area Advisory Committee meeting for March 12, 2015. He reserved a meeting room in Wenatchee and sent out reading material to the WAAC members.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**LT Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Winegeart gave an elk presentation to a group of local Girl Scouts. The girls were very excited to see the animals up close and had a lot of good questions.

***Girl Scouts at the Watt feed site***

**Wildlife Management**

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand traveled to several wheat fields in the Kahlotus area to monitor for deer damage. Milder weather has deer concentrations scattered throughout the area, thus minimizing the impact to winter wheat plantings. Less than 80 deer were observed and hazed from this year's wheat crop.



Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand inspected and repaired over five miles of stock fence near the ALE boundary that is historically damaged by elk leaving Hanford to forage in wheat fields on the southern flanks of Rattlesnake Mountain.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with a landowner near Prosser who was concerned about a fox he scared out of an old building and the threat it may pose on his domestic animals.

Private Lands Bio Stutzman did two field visits with landowners in Benton County considering the SAFE and Field Border programs. Both had a number of questions about reseeding requirements and payment scenarios. Stutzman will follow up with both this week.

Stutzman met with two Franklin County landowners about extending/amending their access agreements. One landowner agreed to go from HBWP to Feel Free to Hunt for the remainder of his access agreement but the other is considering backing out of an extension to his agreement.

Stutzman sat down with three CHAI cooperators to get their payments paperwork signed and get their final impressions of the program. All were happy with how the program worked this year and would be interested in enrolling again this year.

Elk were located by hunt master Keisel near Reecer and Park Creeks. A change occurred this week in these areas. Elk numbers increased similar to spring elk migration movements. Heavy pressure was applied by permit Master Hunters in Reecer Creek where three elk were harvested over the weekend. Elk moved closer to Park Creek but were not hazed since they stayed high on the Operation Engineers ownership and in the Green Gate areas.

A landowner from Brick Mill Road stopped to report that four large elk bulls were becoming tame and that people were approaching them far too closely. Conflict Specialist Wetzel, hazer Leuck, and Hunt master Keisel hazed the elk away from the location for several days. Several landowners were spoken to about living with elk. They were advised to stop feeding the elk and to haze them if possible and keep them out of their yards. One of the large bulls shed an antler on one side late last week.

**Yakima Area:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a landowner near Cowiche Mountain to report that someone vandalized the main gate at the end of Tieton Road and it was open. Some elk were in the area. Conflict Specialist Wetzel repaired the gate for the time being but other repairs will be needed in the future, including new hinges.

***Vandalized gate and fence near Cowiche Mountain***



**Wolf Activities**

Conflict Specialist Wetzel met with the Swauk-Teaway Grange to talk about wolves in the state and specifically wolf activities in the Teaway. There appeared to be good interest in the PowerPoint presentation and good discussion about proactive livestock measures that have been employed in the Teaway area.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman attended the monthly Wildlife Education Corp (WEC) meeting. RPM McCorquodale attended the meeting as the guest speaker, answering

numerous questions about WDFW and wildlife issues. The group also discussed having one more training this season, even though it is unlikely the visitor's center will open. The annual awards dinner and season wrap up dinner will be held on April 8<sup>th</sup> at the American Legion Hall in Yakima.

Manager Huffman coordinated with the WCC crew who finished up the culvert removal on Garret Canyon. The crew also removed the green dot reader board and packed it out ½ mile on the washed out road. The WCC crew then spent two days assisting with elk fence work on Cleman Mountain.

Manager Huffman checked on progress of the Naches-Selah Irrigation Districts canal improvements. They are replacing all wood structures. Near the elk fence they are filling in a draw and installing an 8' culvert. They have temporarily moved a section of elk fence and will rebuild it when work is complete. The elk fence is located on private land and irrigation district right of way (picture below).



***Naches-Selah Irrigation District canal improvements adjacent to a section of elk fence on Cleman's Mt. The contractor is going to rebuild the elk fence following completion of the project.***

Oak Creek Staff finished up work on the Cleman Mountain elk fence project. All the fence work is complete but old materials still need to be hauled off site. The crew did a great job on this new section of fence across private property (picture below). A volunteer project will be set up to remove the rest of the old wire and posts for hauling off site.

***A section of the Cleman Mountain elk fence replacement project. Work was completed by Oak Creek Staff with WCC crew help.***

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:**  
Manager Bjornstrom processed ag lessee invoices, provided Jeff Hugdahl with specs on pivot requirements for the



Windmill Ranch replacement, followed up with Wendy Ware on surplus equipment, worked on

facilities upkeep at Windmill Ranch, provided information to Joe Shorin of the AG office regarding insurance requests related to losses incurred by the spring wildfires, scheduled a site visit with State Archaeologist Kat Kelley to survey the Whitstran Unit, and volunteered to sit on the Duck Stamp Project Evaluation Group.

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Manager Lopushinsky used an ATV to survey roads on the lower Colockum this week, looking for problems related to spring runoff, culverts, road drainage features, etc. Given the minimal snowpack, there will be few runoff issues this year. The main problems encountered were ones already known, including the leaking diversion dam in Tekison Creek and the by-passed culvert in Brushy Creek. Lopushinsky took photos of problems and passed them on to Engineering to assist in planning this year's road work.



*Brushy Creek bypassing the culvert on the Little Brushy Road, Colockum Wildlife Area*

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

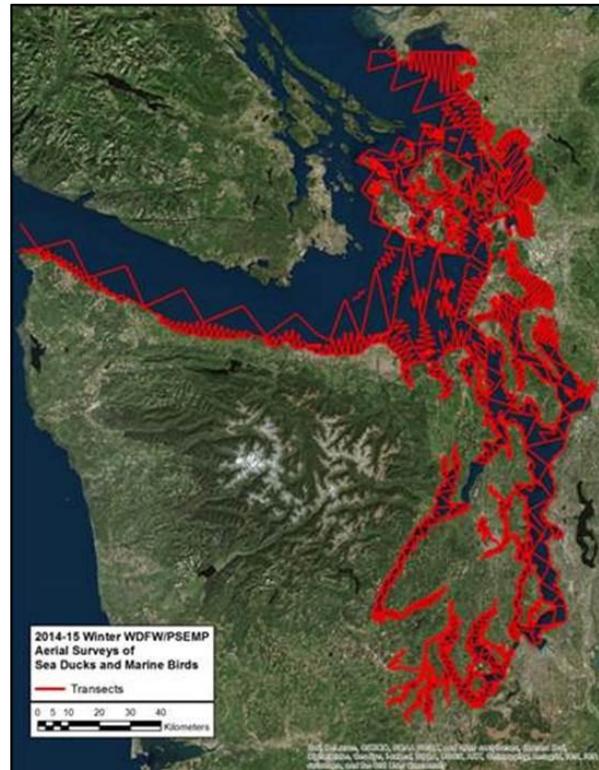
**Annual Marine Waterfowl Aerial Survey:** Assistant District Biologist Cyra along with Marine Waterfowl Specialist Evenson and Assistant District 15 Biologist Murphie completed the 2014-15 Annual Winter Aerial Survey of Sea Ducks and Marine Birds within the inner marine waters of Washington State. A total of 18 survey days were flown this winter to complete the survey. Transcription of the 17,000+ observations has been completed and submitted for data processing.

This is the 23<sup>rd</sup> winter that these surveys have been conducted. These marine waterfowl surveys, the longest running trend surveys of their kind on the west coast, are used to monitor the population health of waterfowl, marine mammals, and other marine avian species throughout the Salish Sea. In addition, these surveys are used to document population index levels of sea ducks that will determine next year's harvest limits. In addition to birds, marine mammal sightings are recorded, and trends in Harbor and Dall's porpoise have been documented.

As part of the survey efforts this year the crew worked on the R&D of obtaining images from the survey to estimate species proportions of scoters, goldeneyes, mergansers, and loons (species groups that have a proportion of observations classified only to species group level). We plan on implementing imaging during next winter's survey to better estimate species proportions for these groups.

***The 23<sup>rd</sup> year of the annual Marine Waterfowl Aerial Surveys have been completed***

**Elk Trapping:** Biologists Yarborough, Witman, and DeBruyn, along with volunteers, captured another cow elk on the north side of HWY 20 near Hamilton. This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the three GPS collars that WDOT purchased to monitor elk highway crossing. Biologist Yarborough and DeBruyn continue to bait sites and look for new trapping locations around HWY 20.



**Oregon Spotted Frogs:** Biologist Yarborough continued to work on looking for new sites to survey for Oregon Spotted Frogs and coordinated with the Samish Indian National about upcoming surveys on the Samish River.

**Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project:** Science Tech Anderson, Biologist DeBruyn, and cooperators from Puget Sound Energy and the Trumpeter Swan Society continued to conduct field surveys this week to monitor for sick and injured trumpeter and tundra swans. WDFW responded to public inquires placed via the hotline throughout Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. This week, ten trumpeter swans were collected in Skagit, Snohomish, King, and Whatcom counties. A grand total of 181 swan carcasses have been collected this season (November 2014-present). Gizzard and liver samples were collected for contaminant analysis. Tracheal and cloacal swabs were taken to monitor for other diseases. Power line strikes contributed to two mortalities recovered this week, with “unknown” cause of death making up the remainder of mortalities. Swan mortalities recorded as unknown causes of death are swan carcasses recovered in and or near roosting areas and appear to have succumbed to disease. Laboratory results will confirm or deny the suspected presence of avian diseases.

	Lead	Power line Strike	Trauma	Unknown	Feather Pile	Total (per county)
King				2		2
Whatcom		23	4	38	12	77
Snohomish	4	6	5	5	1	21
Skagit		31	4	37	8	80
San Juan				1		1
						<b>181(Grand Total)</b>

**Sharp-tailed Snake Citizen Science Project:** Biologist Milner worked on the protocol we will ask people to use on San Juan Island when participating on the project, which is designed to determine locations where the snake may occur. Milner also consulted with partners from the San Juan County Land Bank and San Juan Islands National Park about launch dates, publicity, etc.

**Puget Sound Bird Observatory Project:**

Biologist Milner met with members from the PSBO to discuss their plans for launching a citizen science based waterbird survey that would begin in Snohomish and King Counties. Milner suggested there might be opportunities to overlap with the amphibian surveys which are also being conducted in wetlands in those counties. Staff from PSBO presented their project ideas at the Pacific Coast Joint Venture meeting held later in the week, which Milner also attended.



**East/West Bear Project:** Biologist Smith visited a King County den to document site characteristics (den size, terrain, surrounding plant species). The den was used for part of the winter by an adult male black bear.

***Western Washington black bear den excavated in a large stump***

**Wildlife Management Consultation/Permitting Requests; Municipal, Private Utilities, other:** Biologist Anderson continued work and review for requests of assistance regarding species or habitat management consultation for urban wildlife (e.g. osprey nests, eagle territories, heron colonies) given construction or land-use alteration work per local municipal code requirements to work with WDFW.

Anderson provided advice for some maintenance directly under a heron colony on Seattle Parks property. Anderson also provided marbled murrelet consideration regarding a transportation project. Anderson and Manager Link also provided Take Authorization renewal for Seattle City Light, among more regular weekly requests in this area.

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

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

**Citizen Science – Joint Presentation with Woodland Park Zoo - Amphibian Egg Mass Monitoring:** Biologist Anderson and Woodland Park Zoo School and Community Engagement Supervisor Katie Remine presented a talk at the inaugural Citizen Science Association Conference. The conference was attended by 650+ folks in academic, public, private, and non-profit areas from 49 countries. Anderson discussed other surveys and citizen studies with many of the attendees, including ground goat surveys conducted by the National Park Service which would be useful here, if applicable, in District 12 due to the widespread hiking activity and overall backcountry recreation within the district.

The WDFW-WPZ talk was entitled:

**Partnering for amphibian monitoring: Involving zoo audiences in collecting data on local wildlife**

*Katie Remine, Jenny Mears, Chris Anderson*

*Citizen Science Association Conference Attendees*



### **Wildlife Areas**

**Crescent Lake Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports swan populations at the lake seem to be increasing since the waterfowl hunting season has ended. Bird watchers are common visitors to see the majestic birds.

**Cherry Valley Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Frohning Dairy to discuss planting plans for the coming season. Frohning Dairy would like to expand crop acreage on the unit, which will increase forage and cover for wildlife. Manager Boehm also prepared the lease excise tax report for the 2014 growing season.

**Stillwater Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Frohning Dairy to discuss planting plans for the coming season. Frohning Dairy would like to expand crop acreage on the unit, which will increase forage and cover for wildlife. Manager Boehm also prepared the lease excise tax report for the 2014 growing season.

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Sno-Valley Farms to discuss planting plans for the coming season on the existing agricultural lease. Manager Boehm also prepared the lease excise tax report for the 2014 growing season. Discussions were also initiated concerning leasing more acreage on the Middle Lobe now that the grazing lease has terminated.

**Nooksack Unit River Flooding:** Manager Kessler assessed last week's flooding, which affected the Nooksack Unit river dike. This round of flooding did not cause much additional damage to the riverfront dike. Kessler completed an application to the Whatcom County River and Flood department to get cost share funds to repair the dike later this year.

**Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project Open House:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent an announcement to the Leque Island Stakeholders/Interested Party email list for an upcoming public Open House scheduled for Wednesday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, from 6:30 – 8:30 pm at Stanwood Middle School. At the Open House, staff will present a summary of progress made with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee over the past year and will host stations where attendees can ask questions and provide input. To be added to the email list for announcements on this project, please contact [Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:Loren.Brokaw@dfw.wa.gov).

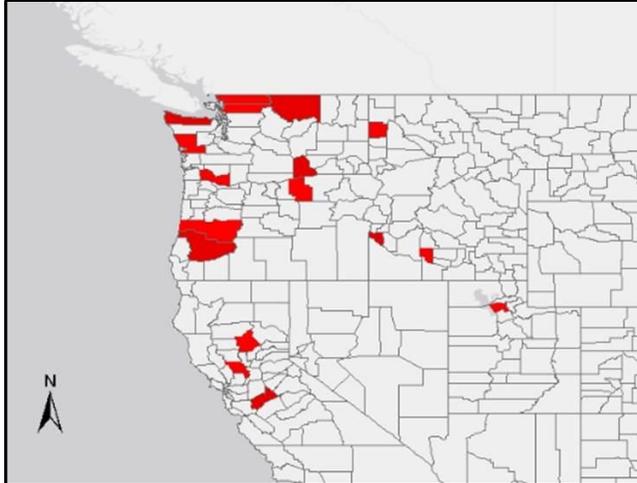
**Leque Island Project Stakeholder Committee:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw collected responses and answered questions related to a survey sent to the Stakeholder Advisory Committee. The survey asks for input on six design alternatives and how to make improvements to the stakeholder process for future projects.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**2015-17 3-Year Big Game Season Setting Process:** Those interested in reviewing proposed big game hunting management during 2015-2017 have an additional opportunity to review proposals and submit comments to WDFW. Major changes to the season structure are set on a three-year cycle and input from the hunting public is valuable as these changes are made. Comments are accepted until February 24 at the following link: <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/news/feb0915b/>

**Avian Influenza Surveillance:** Biologist DeBruyn continued to collect dead raptors for HPAI testing. He collected two sharp-shinned hawks, two long-eared owls, and a great horned owl. DeBruyn also participated in a discussion sponsored by The Falcon Research Group about the ramifications of avian flu in birds of prey and research implications. DeBruyn presented information on the history and geographical distribution of High Path Avian Flu in the Pacific Flyway in 2014 and 2015.



*Occurrence of High Path Avian Influenza in Poultry, Wild Ducks, and Raptors by county in 2014-2015*

**Swan Mortality:** Biologist Smith assisted The Trumpeter Swan Society and volunteers with gaining access and collecting sick/deceased swans in the Snoqualmie Valley. Over 30 swan mortalities were documented. Samples were collected for laboratory testing to attempt to determine cause of death.

*Some of the swan carcasses collected in the Snoqualmie Valley during last week's efforts*



### Wildlife Areas

**Tennant Lake Boardwalk Renovation Project:** The remodel of the Tennant Lake raised wood boardwalk is now complete. All required work was finished, making all of the Loop Trail high and dry, and the short spur now ADA Accessible. This project was funded by the Washington Wildlife Recreation Program. The project was completed on time, and on budget.

**Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park:** Manager Kessler attended the monthly meeting of the Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park. The new Whatcom County Parks Manager, Ben Vanbuskirk, also attended the meeting. Manager Kessler met with Vanbuskirk after the meeting to discuss more upcoming projects they will be coordinating on.

**Intalco Unit Archery Course:** Manager Kessler coordinated with Andrew Gamble, the Custer Sportsmen's Club rep who manages the Intalco Unit Archery Course. They will soon be setting up the course for this year, with it opening to the public in March.

**Ebey Island Land Use Planning:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw had a call with Waterfowl Section Manager Kraege and met with Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm to discuss a proposal to develop a Master Plan for Ebey Island. After the discussions, Brokaw began drafting a grant application to the Washington Migratory Bird Stamp Program for funding and requested

budget information from Ducks Unlimited. The proposal involves working with stakeholders and the local community to develop a plan for Ebey Island with multiple benefits.

**Skagit Wildlife Area Waterfowl Program:** Meis prepared drafts for this biennium's round of Migratory Bird Stamp (aka Duck Stamp) Proposals for the Skagit Wildlife Area. NRT Cosgrove reviewed and provided comments and information for a duck stamp proposal for the Island Unit. The proposals were forwarded to Manager Rotton for review and submittal. Cosgrove observed daytime waterfowl use on the Island Unit continues to increase, especially with high river levels flooding many fields again. Ducks and Canada geese were observed in grass, barley, and corn areas.

### **Private Lands/Access Management**

**Blind Removal:** Otto and Deyo continued waterfowl unit breakdowns in Skagit, Whatcom, and Snohomish Counties. Despite the extremely saturated soil conditions, Deyo and Otto were able to make slow but steady progress. They removed nine units total. All materials were cleaned and delivered to storage for the off-season.

### **Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination**

**Hunter Education support:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey, along with the Regions 2, 3, 5, and 6 HE Coordinators, met in Ellensburg on January 28<sup>th</sup> to review and update the Kalkomey draft Power Point presentation for the traditional hunter education classes. The draft was a good starting point but needed refinement and correction so as to be pertinent to Washington State game rules and regulations, present first aid and survival policies, and safety practices. The working session was very productive and volunteer Steve Mills, who was also in attendance, took the material generated at the meeting and during this week was able to send corrected Power-Points for chapter 1 "Preventing Hunting Incidents", chapter 2 "Rifles", chapter 4 "Handguns", chapter 5 "Ammunition", chapter 7 "Archery", and chapter 17 "Hunting From Elevated Stands" out to the Hunter Education Coordinators for review. Coordinator Dazey also mailed two instructor applicant packets to hunter education volunteer applicants who had passed background checks and were ready to continue the Pre-Service Training process.

**New Classes:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey activated eight new classes, both Traditional and Field Skills Evaluations.

**Volunteer Coordination:** Volunteer Coordinator Dazey scheduled a presentation at the Sammamish Trails Boy Scout district roundtable to speak with the scouts and adult leaders about volunteer opportunities that are available with the Department. Dazey also prepared an email to the Region 4 wildlife staff apprising them of the availability of 2015 master hunter permit program applicants for volunteer service projects. It is expected to have over 4000 hours of volunteer service available from this year's applicants in Region 4.

***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 Management**

**Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman monitored elk damage to ornamentals on private land. Temporary fencing and an audio deterrent system seem to be working. WCS Witman also updated Master Hunt Coordinators on the current status of damage hunts in Skagit and Whatcom Counties. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with multiple landowners in Skagit County to discuss damage issues.

**North Cascades Elk Committee Meeting:** Wildlife Conflict staff attended the technical meeting of the North Cascades Elk Committee. Staff responded to questions related to elk damage, future hunting options, and conflict management.

**Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands and Tree Farm Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisory coordinated with Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands staff on addressing potential Black Bear damage on their lands. A field meeting was established to introduce staff, assess damage areas, and to discuss management strategies in 2015. This meeting will take place during the last week of February.

**Wildlife Areas**

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Dike District representatives to discuss drainage, agricultural, and mutual interests for infrastructure improvements.

**Community Involvement:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm conducted the first Wildlife Area Advisory Committee (WAAC) meeting for 2015. WAAC roles and responsibilities, Wildlife Management Plan updates, and dog-use issues were discussed.

**Skagit Headquarters:** Manager Rotton is coordinating with Art Kendall of the Washington Waterfowl Association who has proposed to install an ADA viewing blind on the Wiley Slough retention pond. Meis and Rotton met with local Audubon Society members and Mr. Kendall about the design and construction of a viewing blind. Cosgrove removed Safety Zone buoys from the intertidal area at the Headquarters Unit. Cosgrove cleaned buoys and anchors and stored them for use next year.

Manager Rotton attended the Skagit County Hearing Examiner meeting for the Fir Island Farms Restoration Project. Community members and project partners spoke in support of the project. Cosgrove spent the majority of one day cleaning up garbage and other debris washed up along the dikes at the Headquarters Unit. Cosgrove graded the dike road to the new pump house and Wiley Slough tidegates at the Headquarters Unit.

**Island Unit:** Manager Rotton received an estimate from Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group for the fish removal work required for the Island Unit Ditch Maintenance Project. Manager Rotton continues to work with Ted Nelson, Contracts Specialist, on the wording for the new barge lease agreement. Cosgrove cleaned out two hunting blinds on the Island Unit and cleaned out two wood duck boxes.

**Fir Island Farms:** Manager Rotton met with Habitat Environmental Planner Jenna Friebel to discuss post project signage needs for the Fir Island Farms Restoration Project. Meis and Manager Rotton worked on cover crop planting plans for the Fir Island Farm Restoration Project. Meis prepared drafts for the open bid lease process for Fir Island Farms lease and contract planting job.

**Leque Island:** Meis reposted No Authorized Vehicles signs at Leque due to ORV use on the site and the removal of the signs that were previously posted. Manager Rotton continued to coordinate with District Biologists Ruth Milner and Paul DeBruyn regarding the Long-eared owl at Leque Island and the carcass found on a near-by property.

**Big Ditch Access:** With the improved weather conditions, Cosgrove re-graded and shaped the entrance road to the Big Ditch Unit after the WDFW road crew added material to the road last week. Cosgrove widened the shoulders and graded a crown on the road to improve drainage and decrease potholes. Meis picked up dumped car parts at Big Ditch Access.

### **Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination**

**Terry Hoffer Award Nominations:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey met with Hunter Education division staff to review and then forward the three award finalists to the final selection committee. It is planned to have the entire evaluation process finished in time so as to be able to make the award presentation at the March statewide In-Service Training in Wenatchee. The final selection will be made by a committee consisting of last year's recipient, a representative of the Game Wardens association, a representative of the Washington Hunter Education Association (WHEA), and the Hunter Education Resource Organization (HERO). This year, many quality nominations were submitted and it was difficult to evaluate and select three finalists. The Terry Hoffer Memorial Firearm Safety Award honors Terry and recalls his tragic loss in 1984 by annually recognizing one hunter education instructor whose outstanding commitment and/or teaching excellence over the previous twelve months clearly indicate exceptional performance.

**Hunter Education Class Needs:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey evaluated and created a spread sheet for the HE Division staff to use when determining areas of concentration to establish teams and classes. The evaluation shows a county by county comparison of students who reside in the county vs the number of students who took a class in the county. Also shown was the breakdown by Region of residents versus students.

COUNTY	RESIDENTS	COURSE ATTENDEES	Difference
Island	156	222	66
King	2267	1809	-458
San Juan	34	63	29
Skagit	370	439	69
Snohomish	1458	2230	772
Whatcom	482	279	-203

	Residents	Course Attendees	Difference	Residents	Course Attendees	Difference
Region 1	2678	2769	91	16%	16.60%	0.60%
Region 2	1323	1065	-258	7.90%	6.40%	-1.50%
Region 3	1981	2093	112	11.90%	12.50%	0.60%
Region 4	4767	5042	275	28.60%	30.20%	1.60%
Region 5	2143	2497	354	12.80%	15%	2.20%
Region 6	3822	3232	-590	22.90%	19.40%	-3.50%
?????		12	12	0.10%		-0.10%
Out of State		69	69	0.40%		-0.40%

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

**Technician Staff:** Brad and Chad will return and pick-up a new truck in Olympia. They will attend pesticide training Wednesday and Thursday. On Friday they will continue with site breakdown.

**Teaching Team Evaluations:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey performed his annual evaluation of two teaching teams, which include the team led by Myron Olson at Seattle Rifle and Pistol at Machias and the team led by Alan Williams at the Skagit Shooting Range in Burlington. The Olson team was conducting the second session of a four night Traditional class and the Williams team was conducting an On-Line Field Skills Evaluation. Both teams are doing an excellent job of delivering the hunter education material to the students.

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Columbian White-tailed Deer Relocation Project:** In cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and ODFW, Biologist Stephens and Technician Sample participated in this week's effort to translocate Columbian White-tailed deer to the Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge. Two deer, a yearling buck and a female fawn were captured by drop net this week from the Oregon mainland near Westport. The fawn was released back near the capture site after she was struggling excessively in her transport crate. The near-term goal is to establish an additional population of the Federally Endangered deer on secure habitat and further the overarching challenge of de-listing the species. For more information on the Columbian White-tailed deer relocation project see U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's website at:

[http://www.fws.gov/refuge/julia\\_butler\\_hansen/conservation/columbian\\_white\\_tailed\\_deer\\_recovery.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/julia_butler_hansen/conservation/columbian_white_tailed_deer_recovery.html)



***Technician Sample assisting with CWTD capture and release***

**Elk Hoof Disease Studies:** Biologists George, Holman, and Stephens all continued work in preparation for upcoming field work related to hoof disease in elk. Work to identify details regarding the prevalence surveys as well as development of details related to the survival study is on-going. For more information on the hoof disease situation or to report an elk with hoof disease, please visit the WDFW website at:

[http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof\\_disease/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/hoof_disease/)

**2015-17 3-Year Big Game Season Setting Process:** Those interested in reviewing proposed big game hunting management during 2015-2017 have an additional opportunity to review proposals and submit comments to WDFW. Major changes to the season structure are set on a three-year cycle and input from the hunting public is valuable as these changes are made. Comments are accepted until February 24 at the following link: <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/news/feb0915b/>

#### **Klickitat Wildlife Area**

**Fuels Reduction Project:** Three quotes have been received for this effort. Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis completed the western gray squirrel nest survey of the Phase III project area, and Davis removed fence wires that were within the Phase I project area. More instances of boundary flagging removal have been discovered, so Davis re-marked part of the Phase III project area and checked the Phase II boundaries to ensure the flagging is still present.

**Grazing Permit Review:** Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven met with members of the District Team, including Biologists Anderson (Wildlife), Weinheimer (Fish), and Johnson (Habitat), to discuss three grazing permits that are up for renewal on the Wildlife Area. Discussion focused on determining what specific information or issues need to be targeted for further attention. A field visit with all team members is planned for later in February. Van Leuven will work with biologist Johnson to develop PHS maps for the permits. Additionally, WDFW Range Ecologist Burnham and Van Leuven are currently writing sections of the Soda Springs Unit permit. Permittees were contacted regarding their permits and a meeting is being scheduled.

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

**Wildlife Conflict**

**D-10 Wildlife Conflict**

**Elk Damage:** Conflict Specialist Conklin escorted a Master Hunter onto property experiencing elk damage adjacent to Hwy 12 and Silverbrook in Randle. The Master Hunter was able to harvest an elk safely. In addition, Conklin was contacted by three dairies this week in Lewis County, all experiencing heavy elk damage. She will meet with them next week and verify fresh damage and renew Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements.

**D-9 Wildlife Conflict**

**Deer and Elk:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald issued depredation prevention permits to two properties experiencing deer damage near Goldendale and two properties with elk damage in West Klickitat County. One landowner was issued nonlethal hazing equipment. She also scheduled a Master Hunter from the Region 5 deer damage hunt pool to harvest deer from a nursery. One elk was harvested by a Master Hunter from the Region 5 elk damage pool in Trout Lake this week.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Winter Conditions**

**D-10 & MSHWA Winter Conditions**

**Past Weather:** November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal. Light accumulations of snow fell on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area (MSHWA) the last weekend of November and at the end of December. There has been no additional snowfall on the MSHWA since the first of the year. Temperatures for December were above normal with slightly less than average precipitation. The average temperature for the month of January was slightly above normal and precipitation for the month was below average.

**Short-Term Forecast:** Snow levels will fluctuate between 5,500 to 11,000 feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 and the 8-14 day forecast are for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

**Long-Term Forecast:** The February forecast is for above normal temperatures and precipitation, and the three month forecast is for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

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

**Snow Depths:** Lower elevations are currently snow free, with minimal depths at the middle and upper elevations. Snow pack in the region is only 10-20% of normal.

**Animal Concentrations:** No unusual concentrations noted to date. The third winter elk survey was conducted on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area on February 6th, with 79 elk being observed.

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

**Mortality:** One new mortality was observed this past week by Wildlife Program Staff on the MSHWA.

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

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

### **District 9 Winter Conditions**

**Past Weather:** Mild conditions continued in District 9 with warming temperatures and reduced rainfall in the South Cascades and Klickitat County.

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

**Habitat:** Habitat is open and forage available below 3,500 feet in most of the south Cascades. The current snow pack in the south Cascades is extremely low and below 35% of normal. Noticeable green up is being seen at all elevations below snowline.

**Animal Concentrations:** Elk concentrations are being seen in western Klickitat County and deer are very active and moving with no snow or other weather conditions impacting behavior.

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

**Mortality:** None documented this week.

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

## **REGION 6**

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

**Oregon Spotted Frog:** District Biologist Tirhi conducted surveys for Oregon spotted frogs in Thurston County. Egg-laying had already begun and eggs were detected at all sites visited. This is the earliest detection of oviposition in Thurston County. Surveys will continue through April 1<sup>st</sup>.



**Elk Hoof Disease:** Biologist Tirhi received a report of a limping elk in the Littlerock sub-herd. She located the animals but could find no individuals showing signs of hoof disease.

*Littlerock elk, Thurston County*

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

#### **Private Lands /Conflict**

Technician Capelli delivered a load of tires collected during clean-up activities on private forest lands to Les Schwab. The Aberdeen Les Schwab is graciously accepting the tires we have collected over the past year, free of charge, from timberlands that allow free public access. We truly appreciate Les Schwab for helping us out.

*Les Schwab employee in front of a pickup load of tires delivered by Technician Capelli*



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

**Wildlife Management**

District Biologist Tirhi attended a meeting with the Mount Rainier Elk Foundation. This organization was formed to address elk management and conflict issues on private lands in the Enumclaw and Buckley areas. The group was very appreciative of Michelle's willingness to discuss elk issues ranging from hoof disease to surveys and damage.

Biologist Tirhi also conducted a training class for volunteers and Point Defiance Zoo staff so they could participate in the Great Blue Heron Citizen Science Monitoring Project.

**Wildlife Areas**

Manager Belson coordinated with the DNR Creosote Removal Program and Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group (logistics) to complete clean-up of marine debris from the Union River Unit of the South Puget Sound Wildlife Area. Work was conducted in the saltmarshes of Lynch Cove, located at the terminus of Hood Canal at Belfair. The WCC Veteran Conservation Corps (Department of Ecology) expended 600 hours of crew labor to remove the following from the estuary:

- Seven recreation floats/docks
- One boat hull
- 70 tires
- Five large creosote logs
- Total of 88 cubic yards of debris, including significant amounts of styrofoam
- Total of 14,280 pounds of debris/garbage



This project, posted on WDFW Facebook (February 13, 2015), builds upon similar previous efforts made by members of Washington Waterfowl Association and Ducks Unlimited to enhance this community asset.

**Private Lands /Conflict**

**Grayland Cranberries:** Biologist Harris, Technician Capelli, and two cranberry growers installed a remote cellular-based camera system in hopes that it will provide advance warning of when elk enter the cranberry bogs. Two cameras were deployed, with three being held in reserve for placement at other locations when needed. Eyes in the Woods programmed and tested before installation. This made for a problem-free installation. Biologist Harris and several growers with smart phones should now be notified if the elk trip the cameras. A deer unknowingly tested and a picture was received by Biologist Harris in 1.5 minutes.