

Wildlife Program

Week of January 26 – February 1, 2015

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Moose Surveys: Biologists Lowe, Prince, and Oyster flew transects in the Little Pend Oreille area in the Colville District. These flights are part of WDFW's new methodology for estimating moose populations in Northeast Washington. Surveys have been held up due to insufficient snow cover and heavy fog in much of the study area this month.



Private Lands/Access

CCAA Meeting: Private Lands Biologist Baarstad attended an informational meeting at the Creston Town Hall to discuss the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA) for Sage Grouse. This meeting was requested by members of the Washington State Cattlemen's Association and attended by approximately twenty-five cattle producers from Lincoln, Grant, and Douglas counties, as well as several WDFW staff. Diversity Division Manager Penny Becker and Diversity Planner Cynthia Wilkerson led the discussion to explain grazing management options under the CCAA.

Whitman County Birds of the Week: House Finch, Horned Lark, Dark Eyed Junco, Tree Sparrow, American Robin, American Crow, Magpie, Raven, Mourning Dove, Eurasian Collared Dove, Rock Dove, Ring Necked Pheasant, California Quail, Mallard, Northern Pintail, Common Goldeneye, Canada Goose, Trumpeter Swan, Red Tailed Hawk, Kestrel, Prairie Falcon, Sharp-shinned Hawk, and Northern Flicker

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

Winter Conditions

District Biologists District 1: Once again, very mild winter conditions persisted this week. Although snow still covers most of the ground in the mountains and valleys of District One, that is not the case further south. DWB Dana Base spent two days in a statistics workshop at EWU in Cheney, WA early this week. Outside it was sunny and pleasant with a temperature of 53 degrees (tee-shirt weather almost). As of January 30th the 49 degrees North Ski Resort is still

holding twenty-eight inches of snow on the ground at the lodge and forty-eight inches of snow on the summit of Chewelah Mountain.

District 2: Weather in District 2 included nighttime temperatures in the upper 20s and highs in the mid-40s, with fog and low clouds for most of the week.

District 3: Mild conditions prevailed throughout the District this past week.

Private Lands

District One: Weather during the week was cool and foggy. High temperatures ranged from the low to upper 30s.

District Two: Mild temperatures all week. Precipitation consisted of light drizzle throughout the week, with dense fog in the mornings and freezing temperatures at night warming to the mid-30s.

District Three: Raising temperatures reaching close to 50 degrees during the day.

Wildlife Areas

Swanson Lakes: Sunny and warm early in the week, with highs up to the low 50s. By Thursday, daily fog or low clouds were the rule, with daytime temperatures in the mid to upper 30s and nighttime temperatures in low 30s. Snow lightly dusted the ground over the weekend, but there was still less than one inch on the ground Sunday night.

Blue Mountains: High pressure and warmer temperatures still prevailed for the week. Snow levels are very low in the Blue Mountains.

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

Wildlife Management

Moose Concerns in Spokane County: Conflict Specialist Bennett, Assistant District Biologist (ADB) Lowe, and WDFW Enforcement Sergeant Sprecher hazed three moose from a suburban neighborhood south of the city of Spokane after receiving calls regarding aggressive moose. The cow, calf, and bull moose were pushed into a more appropriate location just a few hundred yards from the concerned residence. Information regarding moose and safety were provided to the concerned residents.



Cow and Calf moose foraging on residential landscape prior to being hazed out of the neighborhood



The cow, calf, and bull moose were left in a more appropriate location after hazing by WCS Bennett and ADB Lowe

Pomeroy Deer: Conflict Specialist Rasley and Natural Resource Worker Wade continue to work with home owners and the Pomeroy Mayor regarding deer damage in the city limits. We coordinated two deer hunts over a one day period and were able to harvest two deer. We received over a dozen positive comments from the citizens of Pomeroy and no complaints.

One problem deer harvested in Pomeroy

Wildlife Areas

KFES 4th Grade Forest Management: The Kettle Falls Elementary School 4th graders returned to Sherman Creek WLA this week to learn about forest health from DNR Forest Health Specialist Melissa Fischer. On their previous field day the students visited ten plots in the forest stand surrounding the SCWA headquarters to discover, from the basal area of trees on the site, that it is overstocked. As overstocked stands are more susceptible to various forest health issues, Dr. Fischer was able to show the students evidence of bark beetles, dwarf mistletoe, root rot, and other problems that exist in the stand and discuss treatment options.





Dr. Fischer is removing bark from a ponderosa pine tree to reveal the bark beetle galleries hidden underneath and determine which species is causing the problem



The characteristic spaghetti-like gallery pattern of the western pine beetle

Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex – University of Idaho Interns: Wildlife Area Manager Bob Dice was in contact with Dr. Lisette Waits from U of I on the final set up of two intern positions on the wildlife area complex this summer. The selection process for the interns has begun. The interns will be employees of the University assigned to work on the wildlife area. They will live in bunkhouses at Joseph Creek, Smoothing Iron, and the Wooten HQ as they perform a variety of tasks. They will be assisting staff with weed control, fence maintenance, silene monitoring, sheep monitoring, irrigation activities, and many other tasks. Work on the wildlife area will give them an introduction to who we are at WDFW, and fulfill a graduation requirement from the University. This is the first time we've ever set something like this up and will be somewhat of a trial for future internships. We appreciate all of Jeff Hugdahl's assistance with setting up the contract between U of I and WDFW to make this a reality.

REGION 2

WOLVES: Nothing to report.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Wolverine Research: Biologist Fitkin and United States Forest Service (USFS) staff collared the first study animal of the 2015 capture season at the Easy Pass trap in the Hwy 20 corridor. We fitted a previously unknown 30 lb. adult male with satellite telemetry. It will be interesting to watch his movements as we suspect he could be the new dominant male in the heart of the study area following the dispersal of Logan at the end of last winter. We know from cameras that at least two and possibly three other wolverines are currently visiting traps. Additional captures in coming weeks are anticipated.



New adult male wolverine, name TBD – Photo by Scott Fitkin



Built-in wolverine snowshoes and crampons – Photo by Scott Fitkin

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery Winter Surveys: Snow fell in Sagebrush Flat on January 15 and we were able to conduct winter pellet surveys with the advantage of snow. The snow allows us to be much more accurate in identifying currently active burrows. We have been lucky enough to have cloudy, colder days to take advantage of the snow for the last 2½ weeks. Through the collaborative efforts of Biologists Wisniewski, Gallie, Comstock, and O. Duvuvuei, Technician Somers, and PhD Student Demay and Dr. Waits from U of I, along with fourteen students from

their Endangered Species Monitoring class, to date we have surveyed 2,300 acres and collected 120 pellet samples. Results are encouraging, and we are looking forward to genetic results which will tell us how many individual rabbits are using these burrow locations. Another encouraging sign was the fact that we had a visual observation of at least one rabbit every day that people were out surveying, as opposed to one or two for the entire season last year.

Biologist Duvuvuei being vewry vewry quiet during pygmy wabbit survey season. A wild pygmy rabbit on the Sagebrush Flat WLA release area – Photo by J. Gallie

Northern Leopard Frog Project: Biologist Finger met with Columbia National Wildlife Refuge Biologist Gordon Warrick to update him on Northern Leopard Frog Reintroduction Feasibility Project status and discuss wetland management of Marsh Unit 1 for leopard frogs. Warrick has been investing considerable time in determining options for bullfrog control in this marsh unit; perhaps one of the biggest concerns for reintroducing leopard frogs here. Warrick has mapped and documented their capacity to dewater the marsh unit and adjacent small ponds and has demonstrated that they have the ability to dewater a large proportion of this unit to reduce bullfrog productivity. Warrick also shared some ideas with regards to isolation of wetlands using a hardware cloth drift fence and funnel traps to monitor attempted movements by bullfrogs.



Biologist E. Duvuvuei collected water quality data from eleven sites in the NLFMA, nine sites on the CNWR, and four sites in the Gloyd Seeps. This data will be used for comparison of baseline overwintering conditions.

Wildlife Areas

Methow Post-fire Forest Management Project: Work continues on the Timber Sale. Forester Jamie Bass has been out admiring the sale every day. The harvester has two harvester processors, but mechanical issues with one had slowed progress earlier this week. However, despite a learning curve, the crew is making better progress now and conditions continue to be perfect. Weather outlook is maintaining freezing temperatures with a chance of more snow, which bodes well for being able to continue operating through February. There have been several issues this week, mainly pertaining to the proper removal and sorting of logs. We received a notification earlier this week that logs were not meeting minimum diameter specifications at one of the mills, and after a discussion with the crew working the landing, the issue was addressed. Other issues were that crew operating skidders were missing merchantable logs, not cleaning them up and getting them to the landing, and as a result merchantable material

was being damaged by equipment. There has been a concentrated effort to clean up and remove material since then, and as snow levels drop, there may be more clean-up efforts, as much of the missed logs get covered with snow and can't be seen. However, due to campground proximity, much of the remaining stubs and slash will be cleaned up by campers looking for firewood.

Private Lands/Access

Sage-grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA): Biologist Comstock attended a meeting with cattlemen in Creston to discuss the draft CCAA for Greater Sage-Grouse. The meeting covered the purpose and need for the CCAA, as well as the proposed conservation measures, which were greeted with a luke-warm reception. Biologist Comstock completed mapping the potential CCAA participants within the Priority Areas for Conservation



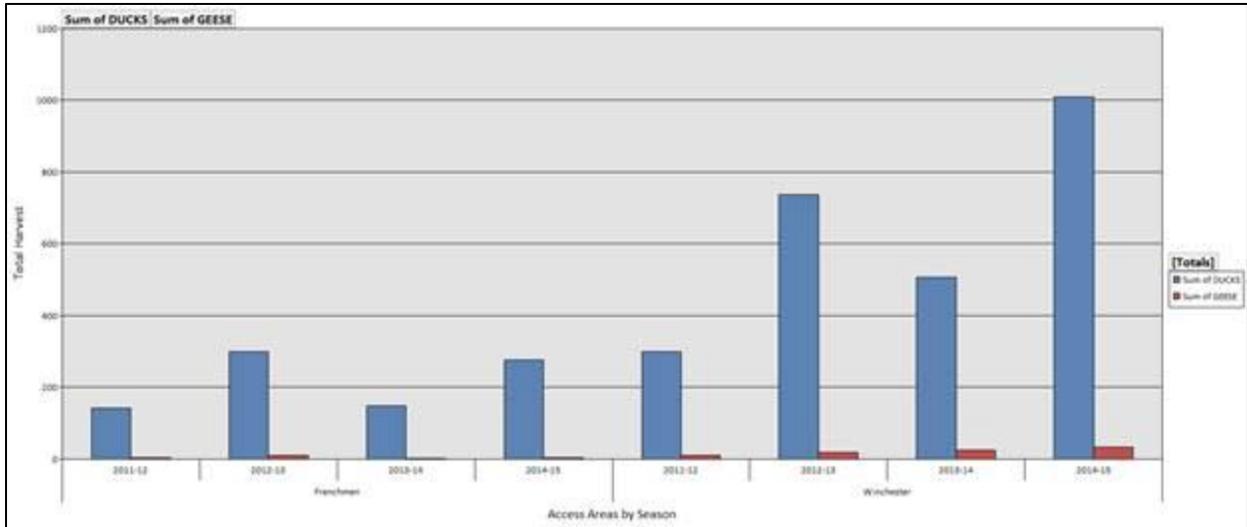
for sage-grouse, for Grant, Adams, and Lincoln Counties. Private Lands Biologist Braaten attended the cattleman's meeting in Creston. Lively discussions about CCAA content led to a cooperative effort by the end of the evening to assist WDFW in developing grazing parts of the CCAA. Twenty-five private landowners from Grant, Douglas, and Lincoln Counties were in attendance, as well as several WDFW regional and Olympia staff.

CCAA meeting – Photo by Eric Braaten

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

Wildlife Areas

Quality Waterfowl Hunting Areas: Biologist E. Duvuvuei completed the first drafts of the Excavated Ponds, Impoundments, and Methods sections of the WMP. She also entered the remaining waterfowl registration/harvest cards from the Regulated Access Areas. The 2014-15 hunting season was very good at the regulated access areas, particularly Winchester RAA where over 1,000 ducks were harvested.



Desert Unit Deer Hunt: Biologist O. Duvuvuei called hunters that successfully drew a Desert Unit (GMU 290) deer tag this past fall. Duvuvuei sought to determine success rates and hunter satisfaction with this quality hunt. Success rates of hunters that have reported to date are very similar to previous years (70%). This rate is expected to change as more hunters return calls and survey letters. Overall, most hunters were happy with their experience hunting in this unique unit and some hunters harvested some very nice bucks. Hunters commented that ease of access and low hunter numbers are reasons that they enjoyed the hunt. The largest complaint was that the Desert Unit received heavy waterfowl and upland hunter pressure that coincides with the deer hunt.



A couple happy hunters that were successful during the 2014 Desert Unit (GMU 290) deer hunt. Photographs and permission to distribute were submitted by the successful hunters.



District 5 Observed Environment

Past Weather: Temperatures have been mild with lows in the 20s and highs reaching 40.

Short-Term Forecast: The 10-day forecast is relatively warm with temperatures ranging into the mid-40s.

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

Habitat: Recent snows quickly melted and exposed forage at all elevations within a few days.

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 Observed Environment

Recent Weather: The District experienced a dry week with near normal temperatures. . Additional melting occurred on south facing slopes.

Short-Term Forecast: Above normal temps with light rain/snow showers expected for the coming week. No significant additional snow accumulation expected.

Long-Term Forecast: Warmer and drier than normal weather still forecast at least through February.

Snow Depths: Snow depths declined at the lowest and highest elevations and held steady at mid-elevations over the last week. Minimal snow pack exists at the lowest elevations in the Okanogan Valley. In the Methow, bare ground on south facing slopes is evident as far up valley as Winthrop. Winter range areas generally have below average snowpack with only a few inches or less below 1500 feet down valley from Twisp. Snow-water equivalent remains slightly above average at the highest elevations near the Cascade Crest.

Snotel sites*

Hart's Pass (6500 ft): 71 in

Salmon Meadows (4,460 ft): 19 in

Muckamuck (4,470 ft): 19 in

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

Habitat: With below average snowpack and expanding bare ground, forage is available throughout the District on most deer winter range areas outside of the burn. Within the burn, forage is limited. However, some green forage is available at the southern end of the district.

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 mid-winter. Significant numbers of deer still remain around some orchards near Pateros.

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

Mortality: Some mortality of smaller than average fawns has been reported.

District 7 Observed Environment

Past Weather: Low precipitation and higher temps have characterized the early portion of the winter.

Short-Term Forecast: We anticipate rain and warmer temperatures through the coming week, pushing snow levels higher

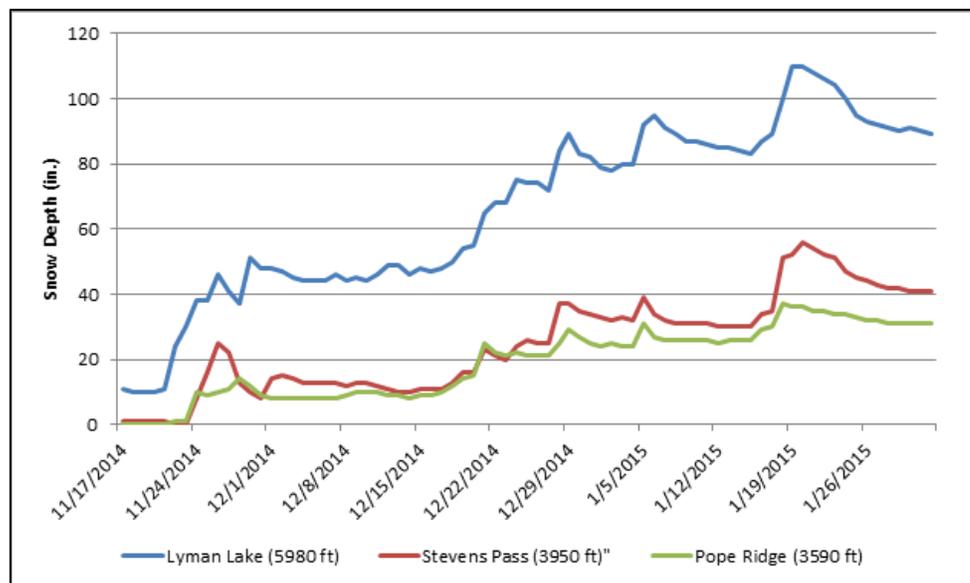
Long-Term Forecast: The long-term forecast for winter 2014/2015 is for higher temperatures and drier conditions.

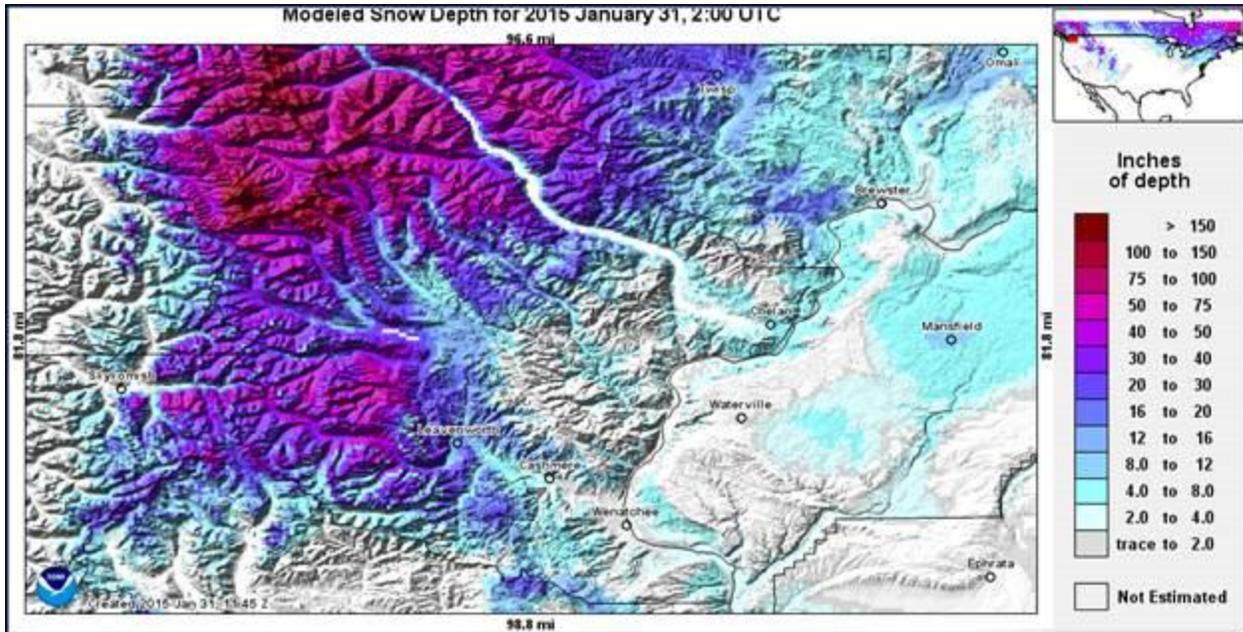
Habitat: We anticipate an earlier than normal green up if current conditions continue.

Mortality: No reported mortality in excess of normal winter conditions.

Public Contact: No reports of concern have been forwarded from the public.

Snow depths recorded from three of the Snotel stations in Chelan County. Lyman Lake is near the Cascade Crest at high elevation. Steven Pass is at the Crest at mid-elevation and Pope Ridge is near winter range at mid-elevation.





Modeled snow depths in Chelan and Douglas Counties. The current areas depicted as gray or light blue in color are typical mule deer winter range in Chelan County. These modeled data reflect observations made from the ground.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area

Winter Weather Conditions: Weather this week was mild and dry, with lows in the 30s and highs in the 40s at lower elevations. Low elevations are almost snow-free, and local hikers and recreationists are making use of the conditions to access the wildlife area.



Forecast for the West Bar area, February 2-6, 2015, Colockum Wildlife Area

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman and Assistant Manager Berry checked on the WCC crew working on the Oak Creek Large Wood Replenishment Project. The project is looking great, with the crew getting close to wrapping up for the season.

Trees placed by WCC crew on Oak Creek. High flows will push the trees around and trap sediment, eventually building up the channel and reconnecting the flood plain.

Manager Huffman met with Ecologist Burnham and Merg to look at options for establishing some non-weed vegetation on the winter feed site at the HQ. It was decided a small trial will be done on ½ acre plots to see what kind of cover establishment we get from barley to compete with the weeds.



Peak Elk Counts for Week:

Headquarters-
Junction- 373
Nile-293
Sheep-170
Cowiche-

Winter Weather: Weather this past week was seasonally mild, but with several days of fog. Weather for this coming week will be above freezing during the day with chances of precipitation, primarily in the form of rain.

Elk are in the area and come into the feed site occasionally. Access to vegetation remains good with no snow at lower elevations. There is minimal grass green up.

Elk are in seasonally good condition.

Wenas Wildlife Area

Winter Feeding

Mellotte Feed Site elk numbers: 300+ animals.

Elk feeding continues on a light scale, with ~300 head waiting on the feed site and others drifting in later. Elk are in seasonally good condition. It appears that another calf was killed in the feed site.

Winter Weather: Weather temperatures were in the upper 30s for highs, with lows in the low 30s. Temperatures for the coming week are expected to be similar, with highs in the 40s and lows in the 30s. Precipitation, primarily as rain, is expected throughout the week.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart, Assistant Manager Hunt, and Tech Schnebly posted signage for the Whiskey Dick winter motorized closure Saturday, January 31st. The Naneum Rec Plan was finally adopted by both WDFW and DNR on Thursday, prompting implementation of the closure.

Winter Conditions

Weather: This week lows were from the upper 20s to low 30s with highs in the mid-30s to mid-40s. Forecasts for next week have similar temps with a chance of showers all week.

Elk: Elk numbers were steady in Robinson at 450 head and also at Watt with 550 head. One day was an exception at Watt, with only 61 head counted. Low numbers were likely due to human disturbance – two people were reportedly seen walking in the feed area. Elk numbers returned to average the next day.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Sak and NRT2 Medina received a sickly bald eagle from enforcement. They brought the eagle to the Prosser Animal Hospital for a diagnosis. The veterinarian ran tests on the eagle that showed positive results for lead poisoning. The veterinarian was unsure if the eagle would recover.

Assistant Manager Sak at the Prosser Animal Hospital with a sickly Bald Eagle

Wildlife Management

Private Lands Bio Stutzman attended a preliminary meeting to discuss and design an aerial pronghorn survey in Yakima, Benton, and Klickitat counties. Stutzman's main contribution was identifying known pronghorn locations to focus survey effort. Other DFW staff, Yakama Nation biologists, and members from the local Safari Club International were in attendance and a basic survey design was developed.

Stutzman attended the cattlemen's meeting in Ellensburg where some specifics of the CCAA were discussed. Landowners were open to many of the CCAA's conservation measures, but



would like further clarification and the opportunity to provide comments on the draft before committing.

Stutzman met with NRCS staff in Benton County about the CSP program and how wildlife improvements may be implemented to help landowners meet program requirements.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz worked with the Vecronics GPS Plus software. The collars programmed last week and left out over the weekend appeared to functioning properly. Unfortunately, the collars may not be deployed this year due to warm winter weather. Sheep feeding has stopped, and the long term forecast is for warm weather to continue.

Post-season Ratios: Biologist Bernatowicz received all the survey data from December and calculated ratios for each PMU. Only Pine Mountain Ranch was surveyed in PMU 36, which probably inflated buck ratios.

| PMU | n | Ratios Per 100 does | |
|-------|-----|---------------------|------|
| | | Fawn | Buck |
| 32 | 248 | 51 | 12 |
| 33 | 230 | 61 | 20 |
| 36 | 175 | 51 | 31 |
| Total | 653 | 55 | 19 |

Golden Eagle Offal: Biologist Bernatowicz reviewed pictures from a camera set on a deer carcass in November. The site was visited frequently by at least four eagles.

One of Many Eagle Photos

Bear Den Work: Moore worked with Ben Maletzke and Rich Beausoleil to immobilize a two year old male black bear near Steven Pass. The work focused on replacing the GPS collar to accommodate growth and to collect standard biological measurements.





2 year old bear processed and ready to go back in the den



Black Bear Den

Colockum Calf Ratio: Biologist Moore spent a portion of a day attempting to gather calf ratio data for the Colockum Herd. This effort is taking place as a supplement to our annual aerial survey. Conditions were less than ideal since the majority of the winter range was still in fog. Only five groups were observed and two of those contained only bulls.

Bulls observed near Wildhorse Wind Facility

Great Horned Owl Nest Occupancy: Biologist Moore was asked by the Habitat Program to check a nest in Ellensburg for Great Horned Owls. The tree containing the nest was scheduled for removal by a local developer. Therefore, WDFW’s Habitat Program needs to determine if a Migratory Bird Treaty Act Take Permit would be necessary. Surveys suggested the nest was unoccupied.



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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Assistant manager Hagan spent time designing and coordinating with Julie Howard to develop a sign for the Yoyo Rock Boat Launch. We are improving the signage at the wildlife area entrance and adding signs to direct the public down to this out of the way boat launch.

Assistant Manager John Hagan responded to a phone call from a person worried about their friends hiking on the Colockum. The two ladies had not returned and it was now past dark and the fog was setting in. Hagan hiked out from the headquarters with a light and helped them get back to their vehicle. Kudos to John for responding to this situation and helping some folks get home safely.

Wildlife Management

2015 Hunting: Biologist Bernatowicz reviewed disabled hunter opportunity for the 2015 season in preparation for a meeting next week. Biologist Bernatowicz also worked on the Pine Mountain LHP. The LHP contract will expire this spring and the ranch manager had previously asked about more deer opportunity. Pine Mountain Ranch winters most of the deer in the PMU and had a post season ratio of 31 (20 adult) bucks per 100 does. Biologist Bernatowicz contacted section Manager Calkins about the LHP guidelines and the possibility of providing more permits. The idea of increasing permits was also discussed with the ranch manager who was happy with the prospect, but wanted to think about exact numbers more.

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 Conflict Specialist Hand handled a subject that walked into the District 4 office wanting to have a bobcat sealed. After viewing what the subject thought was a “cross bred” bobcat, it was determined he had harvested a large feral housecat.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand followed up on a deer and elk damage complaint to a newly planted block of cherry trees near Benton City. Non-lethal techniques like propane cannons and active hazing were used to haze animals out of the orchard with positive results.

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with a landowner from Rattlesnake Mountain to assist with general season and damage tag reporting.

Ellensburg Area: Conflict Specialist Wetzel arranged for a master hunter to haze deer from an area off Hansen Road. Cracker shells and rubber buckshot were used to move deer away from the area, and the deer have not returned in several days. Prior to hazing the deer frequented the area on a daily basis.

Conflict Specialist Wetzel and another master hunter pair hazed deer from a location in Thorp. The deer have not returned since hazing on Monday.

Elk were located by hunt master Keisel and two Fairview permit hunters harvested two elk. The next day the elk were not in the area and are presumed to have moved east.

Over the weekend a master hunter was removed from a landowner's property where a large number of elk (300+) were located. This area has new fences and the landowner prefers to not kill elk but move them slowly on his own due to fence damage concerns. No elk were harvested.

Turkeys were reported in an area off Thomas Road. Conflict Specialist Wetzel talked to several landowners in the area who like to feed the turkeys because they like seeing them. They were provided with advice and urged not to feed wildlife, including turkeys. Other residents in the area do not like the turkeys on their property, mainly citing concerns about the "mess" they leave behind.



Turkeys foraging near Thomas Road



These turkeys near Thomas Road appeared quite tame and were easily approached

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Manager Lopushinsky made some minor adjustments to the Colockum Management Plan Update and sent it to RPM McCorquodale for approval.

Manager Lopushinsky tentatively scheduled a Wildlife Area Advisory Committee meeting for March 12, 2015.

Manager Lopushinsky coordinated plans for spring road maintenance work with Engineering and Regional staff. Colockum staff developed a preliminary list of road maintenance and RMAP projects to be accomplished.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris met with Section Manager Posner to develop a project timeline for the proposed target shooting micro-range and to discuss design drawings needed for meetings with neighbors and the public. Morris and Posner then met with CAMP mapping and design staff to review the needed products and a timeline for completion. Manager

Confer Morris also met with Engineer Kuykendall to review the A&E process and what information we need to pull together to move forward with hiring a design consultant.

Manager Confer Morris completed and submitted the position description for her proposed on-call NRS2 position. She also completed the BPA quarterly report in Pisces.

Assistant Manager Taylor finalized his portion of the Cottonwood #2 fire investigation report, along with a supplemental report on restoration costs, and provided them to DNR lead investigator Gilmer.

Oak Creek staff came over to help Assistant Manager Taylor install our last kiosk at the Hardy Canyon gate. All entrance points to the wildlife area now have kiosks. At three locations, including Hardy, there wasn't a need for a reader board, so we will be installing a separate map board to display the green dot map.



New kiosk at Hardy Canyon gate

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Oak

Creek Staff began working on road repairs to Bethel Ridge Road behind the HQ. Staff picked up a backhoe from the Sunnyside Wildlife Area to help with loading rock. Staff used the dump truck and backhoe to haul rock from the stockpile to place on the road, and used the dozer to repair damage and spread the rock. Staff repaired failing ditching and built up the road prism with rock to hopefully prevent future erosion. The project is still on going and will be worked on as time and weather allow.



Pre and during road work on lower section of Bethel Ridge Road

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt worked with Leah Hendrix to clarify the status of grant funds allotted for management needs on the Gnat Flat acquisition. We need to draft a budget for the estimated use of the money toward weed control, signage, fencing/gates/barriers, etc. Hunt is working on a rough first draft. There is \$160,000 set aside for this, less \$50,000 plus slated for administrative costs.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom worked with Jeff Hugdahl on specs for a new pivot that will be purchased for Windmill Ranch.

Manager Bjornstrom will be meeting Biologists Blewett and Heck on site next week to discuss plans for the future regarding management of the WB-10 Wasteway, a BOR property managed by WDFW.

Assistant Manager Buser spent a couple of days repairing split-rail fence at the Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch parking lots.

Recently repaired fence at the Bailie Memorial Youth Ranch access site

Assistant Manager Sak purchased two gates as replacements for the damaged Bus Road parking lot gates at Byron Ponds and worked on a year-end spray report to fulfill requirements of a BPA contract.



NRT2 Medina monitored waters levels at Johnson Wetland, Rice Paddies, and Hay Stack Ponds, continued with cleanup efforts at the Sunnyside HQ facilities, and notified enforcement about an individual hunting waterfowl out of season. The individual was located by enforcement, observed hunting over decoys, and issued a citation.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Elk Trapping: Biologist Yarborough and biologists from the Point Elliot Tribes successfully captured and collared a cow elk near Concrete. The GPS collar provided by WDOT will collect data related to highway crossings for the next two years.

Clover trap used to trap elk for collaring in the Skagit Valley



Mid-Winter Swan

Surveys: Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn continued to compile data generated by cooperators during the annual mid-winter swan surveys of Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, and King

Counties. As predicted, we again saw an increase and a record number of swans. It is interesting to note that the number of swans has just about doubled since 2005, with the number of tundras staying pretty much the same.

| County | Tot Sw | Tot Trus | Ad Trus | Juv Trus | Tot Tun | Ad Tun | Juv Tun | tot unk | |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|---------|----------|-------------|--------|---------|-------------|--------------|
| Whatcom | 3055 | 3055 | 2516 | 539 | | | | | |
| Skagit | 11395 | 9377 | 7835 | 1542 | 1643 | 1418 | 225 | 375 | |
| Snohomish | 2147 | 1069 | 598 | 471 | | | | 1078 | |
| King | 107 | | | | | | | 107 | |
| Island | 121 | 121 | 103 | 18 | | | | 0 | |
| San Juan | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | 0 | |
| Grand Total | 16825 | 13622 | | | 1643 | | | 1560 | 16825 |

Swan Mortality and Morbidity

Project: Science Tech Anderson and Biologists DeBruyn and Yarborough 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

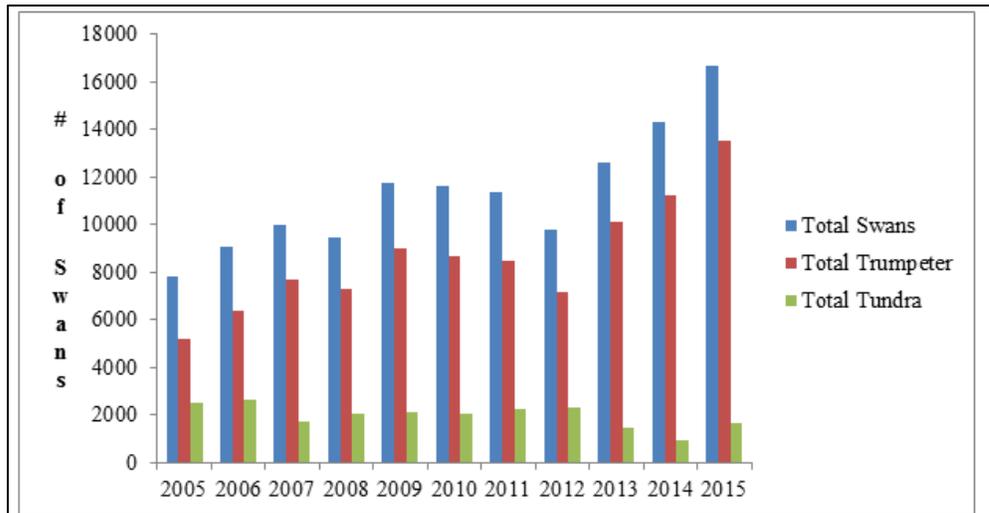


Figure 1. Total number of Tundra, Trumpeter, and all swans taken from annual swan surveys conducted by WDFW and Cooperators in the Skagit, Whatcom, King, and Snohomish Counties.

responded to public inquires placed via the hotline throughout Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom Counties. This week ten trumpeter swans were collected in Snohomish, Skagit, and Whatcom

Counties. A grand total of 160 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 three mortalities recovered this week, with “unknown” cause of death making up the remainder. Swan mortalities recorded as unknown causes of death are swan carcasses recovered in and or near roosting areas and appear to have succumbed to disease. Laboratory results will confirm or deny the suspected presence of avian diseases and lead poisoning.

| | Lead | Power line Strike | Trauma | Unknown | Feather Pile | Total (per county) |
|------------------|-------------|--------------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Sumas | | | | | | |
| Whatcom | | 22 | 4 | 37 | 12 | 75 |
| Snohomish | 4 | 6 | 5 | 4 | | 19 |
| Skagit | | 25 | 3 | 30 | 7 | 65 |
| San Juan | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| | | | | | | 160 |

Avian Influenza Surveillance: Biologist DeBruyn continued to respond to calls regarding dead birds. He shipped a Cooper’s hawk and a widgeon, as well as swabs from thirteen swans to the National Wildlife Health Center for testing. Biologist Anderson collected a dead bald eagle that was fine one evening and found perished the next morning. It will be sent in for testing to see if it was local territorial eagle antics or otherwise.

http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/health/avian_flu/index.html

Hozomeen Wolf Project: Biologist DeBruyn and a biologist from the National Park Service took advantage of high lake levels and warm weather to boat up Ross Lake to check on trail cameras set up to monitor for the presence of wolves in The North Cascades National Park. Thick fog slowed the trip up the lake but cleared in time for the return trip. For the second winter in a row very little snow has fallen in the area, making for very few deer and a complete absence of large carnivores.



Ross Lake before and after the fog lifted

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.

It is the time of year when all the heron plan assistance requests come in. Many projects near heron colonies, due to local code, request WDFW for non-jurisdictional consultation to meet their permitting and code requirements. These can include residential, business, and currently a couple with University of Washington. This is due to the WA Growth Management Act regarding wildlife planning and occurrence consideration in land-use change proposals.

Anderson assisted King County DOT with wildlife planning consideration needs regarding road maintenance projects proposed in the wildlife interface areas of District 12.

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/>

Heron Colony Reoccupation – Black River Riparian Area, Renton:

Biologist Anderson received word from citizens regarding herons reoccupying a colony that has not shown any use since the breeding season of 2011. Four years later we have birds showing early season territorial and pairing activities.



Great Blue Heron in breeding display at a nest within the Black River Colony, Renton, 2015 – Photo by Mike Hamilton

Wildlife Areas



The Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association and students from Bellingham Technical College installed 100,000 chum salmon eggs into the remote site incubators in Terrell Creek close to the Lake Terrell dam. This was twice as many chum eggs as was placed in the incubators last year.

Wood Duck Nest Box Materials: Manager Kessler used Duck Stamp funds to purchase wood duck nest box materials. Enough wood was bought to make 74 nest boxes. Master hunters, high school students, and Boy Scouts will build the boxes which will be installed on most of the units of the wildlife area.

Leque Island Project Stakeholder Committee: Projects Coordinator Brokaw worked on a draft meeting summary for last Thursday's meeting and sent to the Project Team for review. Brokaw also drafted a survey that will be sent to the Stakeholder

Committee this week to collect additional input regarding the design alternatives and to get suggestions on how to improve the WDFW process when working with stakeholders on restoration projects. The WDFW and Ducks Unlimited project team met to plan an upcoming public Open House scheduled for Wednesday, February 25th at 6:30 pm at Stanwood Middle School. Projects Coordinator Brokaw will begin sending announcements for the meeting this week.

Lower Nooksack Property Acquisition Outreach: Projects Coordinator Brokaw sent a response to an individual who submitted comments regarding a property proposed for acquisition by WDFW in the Nooksack River floodplain. Comments from the public were invited through WDFW's Lands 20/20 process, which is a set of steps WDFW takes prior to acquiring a property to ensure the public is notified and that the proposal is reviewed sufficiently by multiple WDFW programs. More information on the Lands 20/20 process and the Lower Nooksack proposal is available at: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/lands/acquisitions/>.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm replaced damaged signs at the Crescent Lake Unit. While there, Manager Boehm noticed that with most hunters done for the season, different users are coming to the Wildlife Area. Birders, wildlife photography, and fishers are now enjoying the spring-like weather in the valley.



Various users of the Crescent Lake Unit of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area

Natural Resource Tech Otto observed and photographed a Canvasback on Lake Terrell

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

Wildlife Management

Waterfowl Survey: District staff summarized data from 2015 winter waterfowl surveys and submitted them to Managers Kraege and Link.



District 12 Elk Damage: Biologist Smith met with landowners experiencing intermittent deer and elk activity on agricultural (nursery, Christmas trees, hay fields) properties in King and Snohomish Counties. Non-lethal and harvest options were discussed with landowners. Landowners agreed to install fencing (new or upgrades to existing) in several locations to attempt to exclude animals from plantings.

Elk in a King County agricultural field during mid-day

Shorebird Identification Class:

Biologist Milner finalized the slides and worked on inputting typical calls of selected species into the PowerPoint presentation for a class that will be taught at the Port Susan Snow Goose Festival at the end of the month.



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.

Wildlife Areas

The remodel of the Tennant Lake raised wood boardwalk continued with our Capital & Asset Management Program workers installing the fiberglass grating in the two open water landings. The handicapped accessible section of the boardwalk has been reworked and will be completed this week.



Lake Terrell Illegal Garbage Dumping: In broad daylight, someone with a box truck dumped a full load of construction debris in one of the Lake Terrell parking lots. This illegal dumping was witnessed by a member of the public and is being investigated by our Wildlife Agent. Scientific Techs Otto and Deyo worked with Manager Kessler to clean up the garbage.

A full load of construction debris was dumped in a Lake Terrell parking lot



Skagit Wildlife Area Waterfowl Program:

Cosgrove removed Safety Zone and temporary Game Reserve signs from the Samish, Jensen, Fir Island Farms, and Johnson/DeBay's Slough Units. Meis and Manager Rotton met with a potential lessee for the Samish Unit to discuss agricultural crops for the 2015 season. Cosgrove removed stop-logs from water control structures at the Samish Unit two days this week to begin a slow drawdown of sheet water. Cosgrove and Meis removed stop-logs from the Seattle Pond tidegate water control structures on the Island Unit to begin drawdown of sheet water. The Barn field tidegate was too far underwater to remove the stop-logs. Cosgrove will try to remove them next week after water levels drop. Cosgrove rolled down the remaining standing corn at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit to improve accessibility for waterfowl.

Post season rolling of standing corn to provide feeding access for waterfowl

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



Bald Eagle Nest in King County

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Manager Rotton and Meis worked on draft agricultural lease summaries for the 2015 agricultural year. Contacts were made to growers to discuss the upcoming agricultural season. Cosgrove graded roads and filled potholes at the Headquarters Unit entrance road and boat launch parking area. Meis met with WDFW Habitat Engineer Bob Barnard about current

spur dike conditions on the Headquarters Unit. They examined the spur dike and looked at areas that are slumping and cracking. Barnard plans to return for a site visit during a lower tide to assess the situation more thoroughly.

Island Unit: Meis and Manager Rotton met with Kat Kelly, WDFW Staff Archeologist to discuss managing cultural resources on the WLA for daily operations and special projects. They toured the Island Unit Barn Tidegate Project site in context of cultural resources questions related to permitting. The Wildlife Area staff will be taking the technician training that Kat offers to improve project efficiency thru the permitting process. Manager Rotton and Meis met with local stakeholders about the barge retrofits, barge contract, and other related issues regarding the Island Unit. Staff will be receiving a price quote for the proposed retrofits within the next week. Manager Rotton and Meis met with a local contractor about continuing the Island Unit Ditch Maintenance Project. The group toured the work site and was able to receive a cost estimate for the completion of the ditch maintenance work.

Leque Island: Manager Rotton attended a debrief and planning meeting for the Leque Island Stakeholders meeting. Meis took down the safety zones signs at Leque. There are signs of off-

road activity near the parking area and an old Leque house site with freshly rutted fields. Meis met with a potential lessee for the Leque Unit discussing agricultural crops for the 2015 season.

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with landowners in Skagit County who were upset with ongoing elk damage to fences and livestock issues created by the fences being down. He spoke to a landowner about his fencing strategy being ineffective. The landowner stated that he would be willing to assist with solutions. WCS Witman coordinated damage control hunts in the Birdsvie and Concrete areas of Skagit County. WCS Witman also discussed private elk fencing in the Acme area with Co-Managers and agreed to provide assistance when available. Lastly, WCS Witman identified several landowners with elk on their property that agreed to trapping/collaring.

Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and District Biologist Yarborough met with a Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands Silviculturist to discuss black bear damage. During this meeting, prevention measures were addressed, including feeding station use/non-use, feeding station location strategy and placement, and damage identification. The group also discussed maps, locations, sizes, and number of trees being potentially harmed by black bears. Two areas were identified as potentially having major issues. It was agreed upon that future management strategies would need to be taken if/when damage was verified by WDFW staff. Given that this is the case two options will be explored in the upcoming weeks to address damage issues. Several meetings will take place in the coming weeks to determine which strategy is optimal. Afterwards, a follow up meeting will take place with Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands to discuss agreed upon management actions.

Private Lands/Access Management

Order Payment Form Meetings and Data Entry: Biologist Caldwell and staff met with several landowners that participated in the Private Lands Access Program during the 2014-15 waterfowl hunting season to sign order payment forms. Tech Otto and Deyo entered use survey and hunter success survey sheets into excel.

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 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, will take the work production and complete the process of correcting the presentation so it will be ready to make available to the hunter education volunteer instructors in Washington for their use in presenting the traditional course material. Coordinator Dazey also mailed four instructor applicant packets to hunter education volunteer applicants who had passed background checks and were ready to continue the Pre-Service Training process.

Chief Instructor Assistance: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey answered questions from instructors on class issues and also assisted Chief Instructors in completing their Chief Instructor Financial Report (CFR) and forwarding the report to Olympia. The CFR's are due into Olympia by 1/31/2015 and need to be filed for possible audits. Coordinator Dazey answered a question from a chief instructor on whether the instructor is allowed to read the questions on the On-Line Field Skills Evaluation quiz to a student. The instructors are to read the questions to a student who may have difficulty reading but are not able to assist the student in selecting an answer. The student needs to know the material. Dazey also assisted Chief Instructor William Richmond in getting applications for a couple of instructor applicants that he is working with.

Volunteer Coordination: Volunteer Coordinator Dazey assisted Master Hunter Permit Program applicant Kendal Wallace to get approval for a service project that would build, install, monitor, and maintain wood duck boxes at Kellogg Lake. Dazey referred volunteer Dan Maul to Biologist Cole Caldwell for a project to remove accessible duck blinds after the end of waterfowl season. Dazey met with Snoqualmie Wildlife Area manager Brian Boehm to discuss the upcoming removal of barb wire fence from the Ebey Island Unit by master hunter volunteers. Dazey met with Biologist Patricia Thompson to discuss the need for a volunteer to enter data from wildlife rescue organizations. A possible volunteer has been identified and coordinator Dazey is working to get her and Biologist Thompson together.

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

Wildlife Management

Conflict Training: Staff attended a one day training class in Mill Creek.

Student Assistance – Shoreline

Community College: Biologist Anderson conferenced with a biology instructor at Shoreline CC regarding potential ongoing data collection for WDFW via annual class efforts. Anderson is also in touch with one particular student regarding 2015 survey and sharing data with WDFW.

A Coastal Tailed Frog while out on collaborative Citizen Science Survey

Ethics Training: Projects Coordinator Brokaw completed the required online Ethics Training module.



Private Lands Biologist Offer and Onboarding Preparation: Biologist Caldwell made an offer to the selected candidate for the Region 4 Private Lands Biologist position out of La Conner, WA. She accepted. The new Private Lands Biologist will be Kelsey Hans. Kelsey Hans

is a graduate from both Northwestern University and the University of Michigan. She will officially start work on February 9th. We are all looking forward to her arrival. Biologist Caldwell prepared all required new employee materials and sent out uniform and phone requests forms to appropriate staff.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Golden Eagle Study: Biologist Anderson is currently working with Research Biologist Watson, Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven, Technician Davis, and volunteers C. Flick and S. Fletcher studying golden eagle exposure to lead contamination through the evaluation of eagle scavenging rates on deer carrion. This project is being accomplished by documenting eagle behavior with remote trail cameras placed in select areas of Klickitat County. The information is being used to better understand the potential exposure of golden (and bald) eagles to lead fragments in deer carcasses. Spent ammunition is one of the primary sources of lead contamination in avian scavengers, especially during the fall period. There is current evidence that lead contamination may be a contributing factor in many golden and bald eagle mortalities found throughout the northwest. This information will help researchers evaluate potential mitigation measures that can be put in place to reduce these factors that may be impacting golden eagle populations.



Golden Eagle Foraging on Deer Carcass

Western Pond Turtle Health Team Meeting: Biologist Bergh attended the Western Pond Turtle Health Team meeting in Olympia this week. The health team is comprised of veterinarians and staff from WDFW, Oregon Zoo, Woodland Park Zoo, PAWS, Washington State University, and private veterinary clinics. The purpose of the health team is to research the etiology and treatment of ulcerative shell disease (USD) in the Washington state populations of

western pond turtles. At the meeting, prospective research projects for 2015 were discussed and recommendations will be given to the WPT working group for their meeting next month.

Columbian White-tailed Deer Translocation: Biologists Bergh and McDonald joined volunteers and staff from the USFWS to translocate deer from the Westport, OR area to Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. This is the third year of the effort to establish a viable population of these endangered deer at the Ridgefield NWR. Trapping by drop-net occurs once per week and this week a doe and her fawn were captured at Westport. For more information on CWTD and the translocation see:

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/julia_butler_hansen/conservation/columbian_white_tailed_deer_recovevery.html

Biologist McDonald helping untangle a CWTD doe from the net

Assistance to Habitat Program: Biologist Holman worked with Habitat Program staff on a number of issues including: a fisheries enhancement proposal with potential impacts to spotted owls and several native amphibians, proposed powerlines, a proposed development of an area in Cowlitz County which contains several priority habitats, and a situation involving peregrines and Osprey on a bridge. Each of these land-use related situations involve a complex mixture of regulatory oversight and influence at the State, Federal, and local level. Often outcomes can be influenced such that wildlife resources are considered in development but this requires early and consistent engagement in these processes.



Elk Hoof Disease Studies: Biologists George, Holman, and Stephens all continued work in preparation for upcoming field work related to the hoof disease situation 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/

Hoof Disease Prevalence Survey: Biologist George worked with Biologists Anderson, Holman, Bergh, and Stephens, along with Private Lands Biologist Harris, this week to assess the validity of sample points associated with the hoof disease prevalence surveys. Points were considered against private lands access, distance, and elevation. Several points will have their classifications changed and will be added or removed from the pool of points available for volunteers to survey. The hoof disease prevalence surveys are scheduled to begin in March.

Wildlife Areas

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Fuels Reduction Project: The request for quotation for Phase I of this project was finalized early this week and was sent out for bid proposals. The time window for submitting bids is January 28 to February 10. Tours of the project work site will be offered on January 31 and February 2. While working in the field to remove old barbed wire fencing that presented a nuisance within the work area, Technician Davis discovered that much of the ribbon marking the project boundaries and western gray squirrel nest trees had been taken down. Davis had to work 2½ days to replace the missing ribbon in time for the tour of the project on January 31.

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

Access

Shillapoo North: Unfortunately someone raced around the parking lot causing damage and ruts. While they were destroying State property, the vehicle lost control and hit a 600+ pound boulder, causing it to move six feet and slam into the restroom door and concrete wall. Meanwhile, the vehicle continued out of control and hit another boulder, moving it several feet before the vehicle crashed through the wire fence and slammed into the bank. The vehicle looks like it must have sustained a large amount of damage from the nuts, bolts, washers, and grease left at the impact zone. The boulders also showed impact and tire marks.



Damage caused by vehicle vandalism and the repair at Shillapoo North

Langsdorf landing: The Clark County work crew was busy cutting back brush and blackberries from around the parking lot this week.

Clark County work crew

Vancouver Lake: Access staff Spangler and Rhodes picked up 300 pounds of trash, including a loveseat, building materials, and several paint cans that were thrown and dumped on the ground, causing a labor intensive cleanup.



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

Wildlife Conflict

D-10 Wildlife Conflict

Elk Damage: Conflict Specialist Conklin sent a master hunter to a dairy in Randle experiencing elk damage. Conklin escorted a master hunter onto property in Randle that had safety concerns. The master hunter did an excellent job of safely harvesting an elk on the second day. This will go a long way in this small community to perhaps begin utilizing master hunters to assist with damage. In addition, Conklin responded to a call in Grays River of an elk that had electric fence wire tangled around its antlers and an additional thirty feet trailing behind it.

Cougar: Conflict Specialist Conklin provided advice to a Deep River resident who recently saw a cougar. He was concerned the cougar may depredate on new born calves. Conklin gave advice such as having a secure calving area or cleaning up debris on the farm that may attract smaller wildlife and ultimately cougars. Conklin will meet next week with the landowner and install a trail camera and possibly a critter gitter to use as a noise deterrent.

D-9 Wildlife Conflict

Coordinated Resource Management Plan Meeting: Conflict Specialist McDonald and Biologist Bergh attended the annual Coordinated Resource Management Plan meetings hosted by the Underwood Conservation District. These meetings were attended by private timberland companies, WA Department of Natural Resources, NRCS, U.S. Forest Service, and cattlemen who lease grazing land in West Klickitat County. All of the cattlemen who attended the meetings have Range Rider contracts with the WDFW. Wildlife-livestock conflict concerns, mostly cougar issues, were discussed.

Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald met with a Klickitat County dairy this week. A temporary electric fence was installed to keep elk out of their commodity barn and silage

bags. The dairy owner has been herding elk away from the silage and off the property with an ATV in the middle of the night.



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

WDFW Supervisor Training: Several members of the Regional Wildlife Program attended the final day of the five day WDFW Supervisor Training. Broken into several units presented over several months, the coursework was designed to recruit, retain, and improve upon an effective team. Participants included staff from Wildlife, Fisheries, Enforcement, and Habitat Programs.

Winter Conditions

D-10 & MSHWA Winter Conditions

Past Weather: November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal. Light accumulations of snow fell on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area the last weekend of November and at the end of December. 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 4,500 to 6,000 feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 and the 8-14 day forecast are for above normal temperatures and precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The February forecast and the three month forecast are 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.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The second winter elk survey was conducted on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area on January 6th, with 145 elk being observed. The composition of the herd was 51 cows, 20 calves, and 74 bulls.

Animal Condition: Animals appear to be in good condition.

Mortality: None reported to date.

Public Contacts: None to report regarding winter conditions.

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

District 9: Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Mild conditions remain in District 9 with little precipitation in the South Cascades.

Winter Severity: The Klickitat Wildlife Area has all south facing slopes 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. Snow pack at select SNOTEL sites in the South Cascades around 4,000 feet and current conditions indicate an extremely poor snow pack.

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

Wildlife Management Black-tailed Deer Study

Pysht Deer Monitoring: Five does, four 2014 fawns, one yearling doe (collared as a 2013 fawn) and one doe (collared as a 2012 fawn) continue to be monitored in the Pysht cluster. A signal from a fifth 2014 fawn has not been heard since June 30th. There were no known collared deer mortalities for the weeks of Jan. 25 through Feb. 1.

Vail Study Area: Biologist Tirhi, Biologist Rice, and staff completed deer captures at the Vail study area. Eleven does were successfully captured, processed, and radio collared. Each doe was also implanted with a vaginal implant transmitter (VIT) which will enable the staff to receive via satellite a message indicating when the doe has birthed. At that time, staff will conduct several searches for fawns, with each captured fawn processed and fitted with its own radio collar. Radio collars enable staff to monitor deer survival, movements, and mortality location from which staff can go to the site and determine the cause of death. This is the third year of a multi-year study over several sites being conducted within the Wildlife Program Game Division.

Biologist Tirhi holding down darted black-tailed deer while anesthesia drugs take effect as part of the Black Tailed Deer Doe and Fawn Study, Vail Tree Farm

District 11 staff investigated the mortality of a recently collared doe within the Vail Tree Farm. It was determined that a cougar depredated this doe. Ten females collared last week remain on the air, as well as four collared in 2013 (plus two fawns). Staff will monitor doe/fawn survival throughout 2015.



Capitol Forest Deer Study: Biologists Michaelis and Novack assisted Dr. Cliff Rice in capturing and radio-equipping black-tailed deer in the Capitol Forest. Fog issues the first three days hampered flight efforts and the weather finally cooperated the last day (Friday). A total of five deer were captured by the crew from northwest helicopters. From these only two adult does were equipped with transmitters. Adult does are being monitored in order to estimate their survival, habitat use, and fecundity rates within varying landscapes and forest practices in regions five and six. Fawns from the collared does are captured and monitored to estimate survival and their recruitment into the yearling age class. This study will continue another two years.

Dead Bird Submission for AI Testing: Biologist Ament has spent time consulting with Vet’s Mansfield and Rowan regarding dead birds to be submitted to the National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC). She also spoke with and exchanged e-mail communications with staff at NWHC. On Jan. 28th, she spent time preparing the required paperwork, packing properly, and shipping a trumpeter swan, Canada goose, two Cooper’s hawks, and a crow to the NWHC. She checked Fed Ex tracking and noted that the cooler of birds arrived to NWHC at 0833 on Jan. 30th. Biologist Ament also devoted time to responding to various calls from the public expressing concerns regarding the recent AI outbreak in the county.

Bald Eagle Mortality: District 11 staff responded to a report of a dead eagle in Puyallup. The reporting party dropped off the carcass at the Puyallup Tribal Fish Hatchery for the biologist to retrieve. The eagle was a 4th year juvenile with no noticeable cause of death. The carcass was shipped to the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, WI for necropsy and avian influenza testing.

Western Pond Turtles: District 11 staff attended a Western Pond Turtle Health Team meeting in Olympia. Meeting attendees included veterinarians and staff from WDFW, Woodland Park Zoo, Oregon Zoo, and the Progressive Animal Welfare Society. Topics of discussion included reviewing test results from shell biopsies taken in 2014 and prioritizing field work in 2015 to continue investigating the cause of ulcerative shell disease in Washington’s endangered Western Pond Turtle.

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

Wildlife Management

Mid-Winter Willapa Bay Flights: Biologist Michaelis summarized mid-winter flight data from the past three years. Data collected from the most recent survey conducted on January 16th was similar to estimates from January 2013 and the mean historical data collected by the USFWS from 1980-2002.

| Species | <u>Survey Dates</u> | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | January 13, 2013 | January 17, 2014 | January 16, 2015 |
| Mallard | 2,645 | 9,176 | 3,044 |
| Wigeon | 614 | 3,072 | 1,729 |
| Northern Pintail | 636 | 503 | 1,253 |
| Teal | 146 | 200 | 195 |
| Gadwall | 36 | 0 | 0 |
| Northern Shoveler | 133 | 0 | 0 |
| Unknown Dabbler | 668 | 2,622 | 197 |
| Total Dabbler | 4,878 | 15,573 | 6,418 |

Table 1: The estimated number of dabbling duck species observed during mid-winter Willapa Bay aerial waterfowl surveys, 2013-2015

| Survey Dates | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Survey Block | Jan.13, 2013 | Jan.17, 2014 | Jan. 16, 2015 | Long-term monthly means |
| Cell 1 | 766 | 5,872 | 1,790 | 1,862 |
| Cell 2 | 205 | 2,413 | 1,718 | 371 |
| Cell 3 | 1,495 | 2,329 | 1,094 | 1,855 |
| Cell 4 | 2,326 | 4,959 | 1,785 | 1,724 |
| Peninsula Lakes | 86 | 0 | 31 | 165 |
| Total | 4,878 | 15,573 | 6,418 | 5,977 |

Table 2: The estimated number of dabbling ducks observed during three mid-winter waterfowl surveys, (2013- 2015) in Willapa Bay from five survey blocks. Also presented is the long-term mid-winter cell block mean estimated by historical (USFWS) flights, (1980-2002).

Sea Duck Surveys: The annual winter marine bird and sea duck surveys continued last week. Biologists Murphie, Evenson, and Cyra conducted surveys in portions of the Central and North Puget Sound region. This effort will sample all the inland marine waters of Washington and take approximately eighteen days to complete this year. One full day of effort in the San Juan Islands remains for completion of this year's effort.