

Wildlife Program

Week of March 2-8, 2015

SCIENCE DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Agency Strategic Objectives

- A. The ecological integrity of critical habitat and ecological systems is protected and restored.

John Pierce is a coauthor of a recently published manuscript in the Natural Areas Journal. This work is the culmination of the Yale Science Panel that developed a conceptual framework for assessing landscape conservation needs in a climate changing environment.

Schmitz, O.J., Lawler, J.J., Beier, P., Groves, C., Knight, G., Boyce Jr., D.A., Bulluck, J., Johnston, K.A., Klein, M.L., Muller, K., Pierce, D.J., Singleton, W.R., Strittholt, J.R., Theobald, D.M., Trombulak, S.C., and A. Trainor. 2015. Conserving Biodiversity: Practical Guidance about Climate Change Adaptation Approaches in Support of Land-use Planning. 35(1):190-203

- B. Washington's fish and wildlife diversity is protected at levels consistent with ecosystem management principles, established in the Conservation Initiative.

Staff from the Wildlife Survey Data Management (WSDM) and the Geographic/Game Information System (GIS) Science team (Gretchen Blatz, Brian Cosentino, Jane Jenkerson, Lori Salzer, Shelly Snyder, and Andy Duff) have completed a first draft of species range and potential distribution maps for fifty-five SGCN species to go along with the twenty-nine species range/distribution maps produced for the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The next step is for these maps to be reviewed by biologists in Diversity and the Regional Offices to finalize for inclusion in the revised SWAP. To facilitate this review, Andy Duff and Treg Christopher have created an online tool to be able to review and edit the maps, noting the reasons for additions and deletions of the HUCs that we are using to define a species range.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Nongame Migratory Bird Technical Committee Meeting: Natural Resource Scientist Joe Buchanan attended the annual spring meeting of the Pacific Flyway Council's Nongame Migratory Bird Technical Committee. Including several joint products prepared with the Pacific Flyway Council's Study Committee, there were thirteen formal recommendations or informational notes submitted by the Nongame Technical Committee. Three management reports were also submitted to the Pacific Flyway Council.

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

Recruitment/Engagement: Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally guest-lectured to more than 250 students and faculty at University of Washington’s Wildlife Seminar. She provided an overview of Citizen Science principles, some WDFW and other conservation partners’ examples, and a list of additional resources.

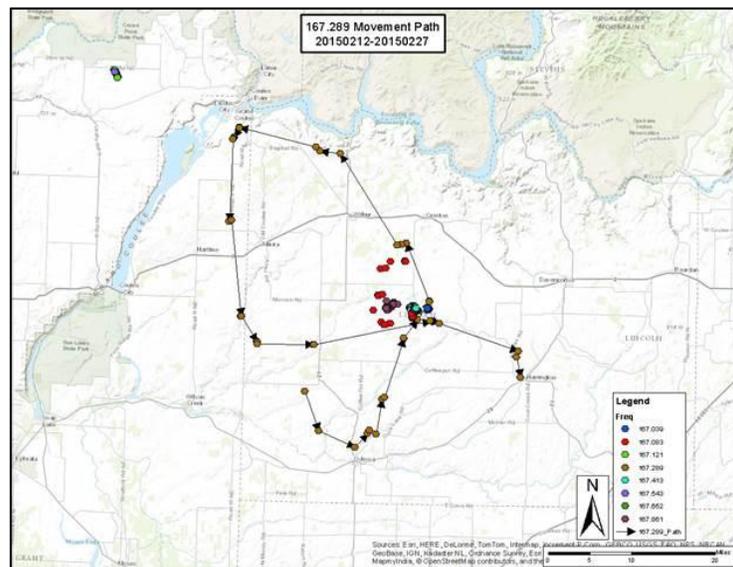
REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Project:

Biologist Atamian downloaded and reviewed the male GPS collar data. One died on or near the lek, four others were hanging out by the lek, but appear to be alive, and the last visited the lek several times, but is still looking around (map to the right). WDFW biologists monitor sharp-tailed grouse and sage grouse with radio telemetry to document survival and movement.



Map of male GPS collar data and movement paths

Elk Surveys: District 3 biologists Wik, Vekasy, and Fortin all took part in the six days of aerial elk surveys last week. For the first time in many years, we were able to continuously fly for six days straight and complete the annual Blue Mountains survey. Lack of snow negatively affected the number of elk we were able to classify due to some dispersal onto summer range already. District Biologist Wik will start compiling and analyzing the data this week to generate a population estimate. This survey is important for monitoring numbers and distribution of the Blue Mountains Elk herd and determining hunting permit numbers.



A medium sized group of cows observed during the survey



A large group of bulls

Wildlife Areas

BLM field restoration – Swanson Lakes: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager (WAAM) Mike Finch inspected the 275-acre “Hawk Creek” field, owned by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This field will be restored to native upland grasses and forbs by WDFW staff through a contract with BLM. Finch inspected dirt clods, and decided the coil packer from the Beeline drill would work to break them up to obtain a smoother summer fallow before seeding in late fall of 2015. He also noticed some small grass and weed sprouts that likely came up last fall, as it’s been too cold for anything to germinate this spring. This restoration project is expected to benefit prairie grouse, mule deer, and a number of other wildlife species.



A bald eagle perched in BLM’s Hawk Creek field, east of Creston. Field will be harrowed soon, fallowed, then planted in fall.

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

Wildlife Areas

WT Wooten Wildlife Area – Lakes: Assistant Wildlife Area Manager Dingman and NRW2 Christian checked the lakes throughout the week. AWAM Dingman put another board in the Deer Lake outlet to hold more water in the lake. She discovered that the culvert that was put in the Deer Lake canal for one of the Large Wood Project staging areas is undersized for the amount of water being pushed through the canal right now and is restricting the flow of water to Deer Lake. AWAM Dingman also put the plywood at the Beaver Lake inlet to direct more water into Beaver & Watson Lakes. She had several fishermen approach her and ask why the fish were not biting. After talking to the hatchery staff it was determined it is due to the cold temperatures that we had in the middle of the week. AWAM Dingman contacted enforcement and reported people parking along the road instead of in the parking areas because they think a Discover Pass or Vehicle Access Permit is not required if they do not park in the designated parking areas. Opening day of fishing season on the Tucannon Lakes made the front page of the Waitsburg Times newspaper this week.



Plywood installed at Beaver Lake inlet to increase the flows into Beaver and Watson Lakes



Fishermen enjoying the sun at Rainbow Lake

REGION 2

WOLVES

Lookout Pack Wolves: Specialist Heilhecker met with a rancher and representative from Conservation Northwest to discuss this year's grazing season. Livestock will be turned out in the middle of May. They are working on finding a new range rider for this season. Specialist Heilhecker talked with a WSU graduate student regarding their study plans for this summer given the Lookout Pack is not collared. It sounds like the students are still planning on collaring cows and tagging calves.

Eastern Okanagan Wolf Management: Biologist Heinlen and WDFW Officer McCormick took the statement from the individual who last week reported two wolves chasing two domestic dogs in GMU 204.

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Wolverine Research Project: Despite numerous closed traps the past week we were unable to corral any new animals, even though at least three different females have been visiting our sites. On the other hand, we continue to recapture the resident adult male we trapped earlier in the winter, a slow-motion video of his latest release has been included attached. The mild spring weather will likely shut down our trapping effort in the next week to ten days. This will finish the capture effort for this ten-year project.



Resident wolverine matriarch Xena – Photo by USFS remote camera

Wolverine track (knife is 4” long) – Photo by Scott Fitkin



Sage-grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA): Biologist Comstock thoroughly reviewed the

Harney County CCAA for Sage-Grouse and spoke with a colleague at The Nature Conservancy who was part of the steering committee that developed the plan over three years. This was the first CCAA for greater sage-grouse completed and many others have spawned off of it. Biologist Comstock helped edit a factsheet about WDFW’s draft CCAA.

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

Wildlife Areas

ADA Blinds: Biologists Finger, O. Duvuvuei, and E. Duvuvuei met with CBWA Assistant Manager Bechtold in the Gloyd to discuss the location and options for ADA opportunity near the Flood Flat. A nice site was selected in an area which should hold shallow water once the Supplemental Feed Route water is started. The biologists also met with Assistant Manager Cole

at FRAA to discuss expansion of the project area and ADA blind placement. Two locations were selected for the new ADA blinds recently constructed by the WWA.

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

Wildlife Management

Chelan-Douglas Land Trust: Biologist Volsen and Research Biologist Myers gave a public presentation to the Wenatchee community on mule deer biology, nutrition and ecology. The presentation was organized by the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust to provide support for, and information about, their recreational trail closures on mule deer winter range west of Wenatchee. Roughly 180 residents attended and the presentation was well received.



Birds in a field – Photo by Eric Braaten



Douglas County Mule Deer at sunrise – Photo by Eric Braaten



Wigeon, gadwall, and mallards lifting off from the Mansfield Pond wetland project area – Photo by R. Finger



Upper Methow Valley – Photo by Scott Fitkin



A map of modeled snow depth (above) and picture (below) in early March 2015 across mule deer winter range in Chelan County



Friday morning drive into work saw hot air balloons rising over the Methow Valley as part of the Balloon Roundup Weekend in Winthrop – Photo by Sherry Furnari





From Top to Bottom: Dusky Grouse near Juniper Point, NW of Loomis (individuals from this group were displaying before flying off), a large group of Mule Deer near Quartz Mountain, NW of Loomis, a group of Bighorn Sheep rams just south of Chopaka Road near Loomis, and spring vegetation greening up on the south-facing slopes in the Sinlahekin Valley.

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Manager Lopushinsky, Assistant Hagan and Biologist Will Moore used the Colockum boat to access a remote site near Quilomene Bay to inspect a dead bighorn sheep. Biologist Moore took lung and trachea samples while Colockum staff observed.

Will Moore and John Hagan taking samples from a recently diseased bighorn sheep along the Columbia River.

Turkey Survey: Manager Lopushinsky also worked with Region 2 biologist Jon Gallie to survey turkeys in the North Fork Tarpiscan, Stray Gulch and Tekison areas.



Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman, along with staff from Yakama Nation Fisheries and engineering staff from Natural Systems Design, toured multiple locations along the Tieton River, looking at areas where structures could be installed to improve edge and side channel habitat along the river. Yakama Nation is looking to complete some design work for projects soon. In the afternoon the group met up with Kat Strathmann from Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group to look at flood plain restoration/reconnection options at areas along the SF Cowiche Creek.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom received an email on Monday notifying him of an oil spill on the Yakima River near Sunnyside which was, reportedly, delivered as far as Prosser. The exact spill origin was uncertain at the time of the report but was reported as coming from the Sulpher Creek Wasteway. Manager Bjornstrom called NRT2 Medina to have him inspect the area and report any oil and/or wildlife affected by the spill. NRT2 Medina decided to shut down water delivery systems to prevent any spread of contaminants into the wildlife area wetlands. NRT2 Medina closed the screw gate that draws water from Sulfur Creek and then installed stop-logs on the control structure at the end of the water delivery system to stop contaminants from reaching the Yakima River. Some oil was discovered in Bridgeman Pond, but NRS was on site and established an incident response station at the McGee parking lot. A handful of waterfowl (ducks and geese) were affected by the spill. The birds have been treated and released.



Incident Response Command Post at the McGee Parking Lot

Wildlife Management

Rattlesnake Hills Elk Survey: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with the USFWS Biologist and reviewed all data sheets for completeness and conducted refinements based on photo counts from the Rattlesnake Hills elk survey. An additional thirty-four animals were added to the total count based on the photo count, resulting in a total of 1,053 elk.

Snake River Local Working Group: Private Lands Bio Stutzman attended the Snake River Local Working Group in Dayton. Attendees set conservation priorities within the area and brainstormed project ideas to address the resource concerns. Later discretionary EQIP funding was allocated to different land use types. No funding was allocated to stand alone wildlife habitat improvements but it was a factor in a number of ranking questions for other priorities.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz ground surveyed the Yakima River Canyon. The survey was mostly to document post winter lamb recruitment. Lamb recruitment was again low and very similar to 2014. Fortunately, survival of adults has been fairly high and the overall herd

appears to be stable. One group of about twenty ewes and lambs could not be classified this week. The group is isolated from other sheep and attempts to count/classify will be made later.

Year	Ewes	Lambs	Ratio
2014	168	14	8:100
2015	148	13	9:100

While surveying the sheep, a mortality signal was heard from a collared ewe. The signal could only be heard from one spot at the top of a cliff.

Video Tracking: A local videographer (Charles) who has been filming canyon sheep for the last few years dropped off a video to review. Charles has named many of the ewes at the south end of the canyon and has been tracking the ewe and their lambs for a few years. The video was reviewed, but there wasn't much that could be used for scientific purposes.



One group of Yakima Canyon Bighorn Sheep

Ram Mortality: Biologist Moore noted a dead ram while flying bighorn sheep in the Quilomene. Samples were collected and shipped to WSU. Initial results indicate the ram did not die from multi bacterial pneumonia.

Elk Hoof Issues: Biologist Bernatowicz collected samples from limping elk west of Ellensburg with a lot of great help from LT Murray WA staff and Conflict Specialists Wetzels and Hand. The symptoms appear to be different than hoof disease in southwest Washington. Samples were shipped to Dr. Sushan Han at the CSU Diagnostic Lab.



Discolored lung of elk calf



Hoof lesion on elk

Bighorn Sheep Survey: The Quilomene Bighorn Sheep Herd is surveyed annually by air. This year Moore and Lopushinsky surveyed the unit and all was going as planned until an adult male was found dead and intact about midway through the survey. Almost immediately after finding the dead ram the survey was interrupted by our pilot being called back to respond to a request by Washington State Department of Ecology for helicopter assistance on an oil spill near Sunnyside. Moore, Lopushinsky, and Hagan traveled to the location of the dead sheep via boat to collect samples. The samples were sent to Washington State University for analysis and the results are still pending. The survey was completed later in the week but the data will need to be reviewed due to the interruption. Special thanks to Lopushinsky and Hagan for making an extra effort to enable the collection of these samples.



Moore performing a field necropsy

Colockum Elk Survey: Moore worked with Manager Lopushinsky, Technician Schnebly, and CWU Graduate Student Meyers to perform an aerial survey of the Colockum Elk Herd. All went well over the two day effort, elk were abundant throughout the survey, and a population estimate will be computed in the coming days.

Elk observed during the survey

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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area:

Assistant Manager Berry spent the better part of two days performing road work on Bethel Ridge Road above the HQ. Sections of the road have large erosion gullies and failing ditches. Berry is working to move material back into the road, construct rolling dips and re-establish ditches.



A repaired section of Bethel Ridge Road above the Oak Creek Headquarters. The road previously had deep erosion gullies.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart coordinated with USFS staff to try and schedule a meeting regarding cooperative road and recreation management on the new Gnat Flat parcels. WDFW acquired these lands from Plum Creek Timber last summer, and they are intermixed with USFS land.



Permit Requests: Assistant Manager Hunt began email dialogue with a second LDS Church group requesting permitting from WDFW Lands Agent Leah Hendrix for another hand cart trek. This one will require that USFS permit the event as well, and the proposed route may have to be modified. The new request is for early July, and the first one that we were already working on is for late in June. Luckily they are for different areas, and we should be able to accommodate both without too much concern about resource damage.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris continued to spend time on the Sheep Company Shooting Range proposal. She provided contact information to SM Posner for one-on-one neighbor meetings, finalized maps, and edited the draft fact sheet for upcoming meetings. She also contacted local user groups (Wenas Valley Muzzleloaders, Kittitas County Field and Stream, and Wenas and Yakima BCH) to attend an upcoming meeting to discuss the proposal. Confer Morris and RPM McCorquodale met on-site with Ed and Bob Peyser on Friday to discuss

the proposal and what concerns they may have. They supported the idea of the agency building a range and restricting where target shooting occurred, but didn't support the location, particularly for the rifle range. They were concerned with the safety of the landowners west of the range and horseback riders that use the area.

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Colockum staff continued coordination and planning of a spring work party with members of the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Colockum Chapter. This will be an overnight work party to collect and roll up barbed wire from derelict fences in the Tekison, Brushy, and West Bar areas.

Wildlife Management

Possible Cougar Encounter: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and handled a call from a landowner in the Finley area of a possible cougar observation. The landowner reported that their kids heard loud "screams" in an area near a dead domestic sheep. A site visit to the area provided no further evidence of the cat and the landowner was provided advice on cougar behavior and safety.

Fencing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with a large wine grape producer in northern Benton County near Hanford concerning possible cost share fencing.

DPP Permits: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored harvest of DPP permits in Elk Area 3721. No elk were reported this past week on DPP permits. Harvest since the August 1 opener is forty-nine antlerless and six spike bull elk.

Landowner Contacts

Ellensburg and Cle Elum Area: Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted again by a landowner in Cle Elum about turkeys. Turkeys were hazed from that area. At another location several miles south, another large group of turkeys were hazed from a horse barn.



Turkeys at two locations in the Cle Elum area

Elk Conflict: Elk have started to appear in section 15 near Caribou Creek several days this week. Lethal removals may occur through the month of March in this specific area.

Elk Conflict: Hunt master Keisel moved elk north out of the Reecer Creek damage area; one additional elk was harvested.

Yakima Area: Conflict Specialist Wetzel met with an orchard owner and the orchard manager near Naches to construct an electric extension fence to block elk from entering his orchard and damaging newly planted seedlings.

New electric fence extension to block elk from entering an orchard near Naches. Note multiple elk trails that were entering the orchard.



Wolf Activities

Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a livestock owner in Green Canyon to report a missing calf and a dead cow in his upper calving range. The livestock owner did not suspect wolf depredation as the dead cow had died from calving complications. A search of the area could not locate the missing calf. A camera was placed nearby and turbo fladry was used to protect the carcass.



Dead cow in upper calving range and dead cow with hydrated lime on carcass to deter scavenging

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 worked on drafts of two Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) grant pre-proposals and submitted them for review to our partners. The grants are for acquisitions of inholdings on SF Cowiche Creek and the Tieton River.

Oak Creek Forester Position Description: Manager Huffman met with Forester Mackey to review the Oak Creek Forester Position Description and to set up expectations for the remainder of the review period. Huffman then spent some time putting the PDP expectations together. This will be finalized over the next couple of weeks.

Oak Creek Thinning Project: Forester Mackey continued to have contact with other potential purchasers and to refine the appraisal for the Oak Creek Thinning Project. Mackey continued to draft the purchaser agreements to send to Olympia for review, with a goal of having something ready to send next week.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart worked with Real Estate Manager Hendrix on finalizing funding request paperwork for acquisition of the Campbell property. Once Federal approval is granted, WDFW can put out bids for an appraisal.

Sheep Grazing Allotment: Manager Winegeart finished billing for the LT Murray sheep grazing allotment.

Wenas Wildlife Area: NRT2 Kass installed new 'No Unauthorized Vehicle' signs on the North end of the Durr road where they had been removed. Enforcement officers had notified staff of

the missing signs and requested they be replaced to aid in enforcement of the area. He also replaced the Discover Pass sign at the Sheep Company shooting site.

Access Program: Access Manager Garcia met with Juvenile Court's project coordinator and went over potential projects in the lower valley. He also retrieved data from the car counters at Thrall and Vernita Bridge and worked on Joseph Barbosa's HR action form to get him restarted March 23rd, a week earlier than normal.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Manager Lopushinsky and Assistant Manager Hagan travelled to Omak to complete the RT-130 fire fighters refresher training. Hagan and Lopushinsky also successfully completed the "arduous" level of the Work Capacity Test (previously called the "pack test".) Both the RT-130 and the arduous WCT are required to meet the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards and allow wildlife area staff to participate in prescribed fire activities. Hagan and Lopushinsky assisted in burns with the Okanogan County WDFW prescribed fire crew in 2014 and plan on helping out again this year.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Manager Bjornstrom reviewed a job posting for the NRW2 position at Sunnyside HQ Unit, activated Voyager Cards, followed up on status of surplus vehicles, reviewed insurance claim documents, followed up on the Windmill Ranch pivot bid process, set a meeting with Kevin Fulks of CAMP to discuss the Whitstran Access Site Relocation Project, worked with Habitat Biologist Ritter on cost estimates and justification for habitat restoration on the Sunnyside fires, and contacted Heather Hollis of FWS about signing a release-of-interest form for the grader at Sunnyside HQ Unit.

CRP and Shrub-Steppe Restoration: Manager Bjornstrom contacted Vegetation Ecologist Merg to discuss CRP and shrub-steppe restoration opportunities in Benton County. Manager Bjornstrom will be developing a grant proposal related to mitigation opportunities through a private, non-profit, science, and technology enterprise.

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Oregon Spotted Frogs: Biologist Yarborough and Anderson surveyed for Oregon Spotted Frogs in Whatcom County and helped the Samish Indian tribe with a training trip. We found Oregon Spotted Frog egg masses at a site near the headwaters of the Samish River in a historical location.



Large mass of spotted frogs



Oregon Spotted Frog being held by a volunteer

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

Citizen Science – WDFW and Woodland Park Zoo Amphibian Egg Mass Monitoring: Biologist Anderson continues to work with Woodland Park Zoo staff and volunteers, many of whom are professional biologists, professors at University of Washington, and ZooCorp teens. There are several others with diverse backgrounds as well.

Bellevue Master Naturalists: Biologist Anderson provided a class for the annual Bellevue Master Naturalists program. Anderson went through urban ecology, various taxa found in suburbia locally and up into the exurban fringes, and management needs, techniques, current local and national efforts and issues. The volunteers were provided with an extensive literature compilation related to these topics. They should now be equipped to provide urban wildlife management outreach to assist community members in Bellevue and locally in greater Seattle.

Marine Waterfowl Aerial Detectability Survey: Assistant District Biologist Cyra worked with Marine Waterfowl Specialist Evenson and Assistant District 15 Biologist Murphie to schedule dates for upcoming USFWS detectability surveys and complete required training for flying in USFWS aircraft. These flights, using double blind observers and photography, will be used to determine a correction factor for the aircraft (a Kodiak turbine) and observers that the USFWS uses in surveys that are similar to our winter flights. WDFW performed detectability surveys using our aircraft (a DeHavilland Beaver) and observers several years ago and we are lending our experience, support, and equipment to the USFWS.

Lowland Pika Surveys: Taking advantage of the mild, dry weather, Assistant District Biologist Cyra made an early season visit to known lowland pika locations to determine early season activity. Pika presence was observed at a third of the locations surveyed. Additional potential lowland pika habitat will be identified this spring with follow-up surveys as the summer progresses.



First Pika of the season. Markings on this individual match markings seen on a pika at this site last year.

Elk Trapping: Biologist Yarborough and members of the tribes continue to trap elk. We have caught numerous bulls and calves, but are focusing collaring efforts on cows.

Wildlife Areas

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm submitted an agricultural lease package to WDFW staff for review and signatures. The renewal lease with Werkhoven Dairy for ninety acres of cropland will provide forage and cover for wildlife, waterfowl, and pheasant.

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm submitted a draft agricultural lease package to WDFW staff for review and signatures. This new agricultural lease with Sno-Valley Farms provides for 150 acres of cropland on the Middle and West Lobe of the unit.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: The WDFW and Ducks Unlimited project team participated in a conference call meeting to debrief from the public Open House hosted the previous week. Each team member relayed comments, questions, and concerns they heard from attendees at the breakout stations to be recorded in a consolidated list. The team also discussed the next steps in the project, including finalizing a modeling report of the alternatives, meeting with local tribes, and recommending a preferred design alternative by the end of April.

Fir Island Farm Monitoring: Projects Coordinator Brokaw received a shipment of new water quality monitoring equipment and began preparing to deploy it in the field. The new equipment will replace equipment that has not been as reliable as needed. The equipment monitors water depths, salinity, and temperature in groundwater wells and sloughs on and near the site. Data collected now will be used to compare data that will be collected after implementation of an estuary restoration project on the site.

Tennant Lake Boardwalk: Manager Kessler coordinated with a preschool teacher who would like to bring a class to the Tennant Lake boardwalk for an interpretive tour. Kessler connected her to the Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park group who may lead the tour.

Wood Duck Nest Boxes: Natural Resource Tech Deyo completed building fourteen wood duck nest boxes using materials purchased with Duck Stamp funds. The boxes will be installed on the Lake Terrell and Intalco Units, replacing old well-worn boxes.

Lake Terrell Island Closure Signs: Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo installed the island closure signs on Lake Terrell. This closure runs from March 1 – July 1 to protect nesting waterfowl from disturbance. Kessler and Deyo also worked on a new design for the closure signs and floats to make them more visible to the public.

Wildlife Conflict Management

District 12 Elk Conflict Management: Biologist Smith met with landowners with complaints of elk activity on agricultural (primarily dairy farms) properties in King County. Non-lethal and harvest options were discussed with landowners. Smith is working with a local volunteer group in the Enumclaw area to install a temporary single line electric fladry fence at one location (~180 acres). The fencing is being installed above existing barbed-wire fencing (with significant repairs to barbed-wire fencing in some areas) as a test to determine if this might deter elk from entering these fields. Should the effort be successful, landowners at this and several other locations in the area have agreed to try the method on their properties.



Single-line temporary electric fladry fencing being tested to determine if it will deter elk from entering fields near Enumclaw



Fladry installed above barbed-wire fence in need of repair. Tracks indicate the barbed-wire fence was damaged by elk entering and/or leaving the fields over previous days/weeks.

Private Lands Access

Decontaminate Field Equipment: Otto continued decontamination of field equipment, including the gator ATV and field trucks throughout the week after leaving regional areas and entering other agricultural areas

Swan Collection: Otto received a call by a property owner in the Edison area that had a dead swan on his pond and another sick one at the same location. Otto made contact with the individual, was able to collect both swans, and delivered them to the La Conner field office for later sampling. Later in the week, Otto was on his way home and noticed a dead swan in a silage grass field. Otto was able to retrieve the bird and load it into his personal truck. The bird looked as if it struck the powerline above. Otto made contact with the Puget Sound Energy Biologist and gave location details along with the pole number. This bird was also delivered to the La Conner office.

Injured swan likely hit a nearby powerline



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

Wildlife Management

Pacific Flyway Study Committee: Biologist DeBruyn attended the Pacific Flyway meeting to discuss issues involving avian influenza and brant seasons.

Wildlife Areas

Samish Unit pond and barley field being used by mallards, wigeon, and green-wing teal

Lacey Construction Shop Site Visits to Samish Projects: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, and Natural Resource Specialist Meis met with construction supervisors from the WDFW Lacey construction shop at the Samish River Unit and Samish Unit sites. The group reviewed plans for both projects to



determine whether or not construction will be contracted through a bid process to a private contractor or be built by the WDFW shop.

Samish Unit Enhancement Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton, and Natural Resource Specialist Meis met with an adjacent farm owner and dike district commissioner on the site to review details of the project plan. WDFW and Ducks Unlimited have partnered on this project to improve WDFW's ability to manage water on the site. The project plan involves installation of adjustable water control structures, cleaning of existing ditches, and connection of existing ponds to ditches with adjustable valves. Construction is planned for summer of 2015.

Private Lands/Access Management

Negotiating Access on Private Timberlands Meeting: Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell, Private Lands Biologist Hans, and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands (WCTL) staff to tour their lands and discuss access and game management issues. During this meeting, WCTL staff identified areas that will be used to focus public access efforts in the future. It was agreed that identified lands would be held in consideration for the 2016 North Skagit Spring Bear Hunt. Follow up meetings will be held in April of 2015.

Waterfowl Season Blind Removal: Otto continued waterfowl unit breakdowns in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish counties. All materials were cleaned and delivered to storage for the off-season.

Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination

Volunteer Coordination: Volunteer Coordinator Dazey welcomed Region 4 master hunter applicants and encouraged them to complete their volunteer service and CORT training early in the process. With the list of projects from Region 4 bios and wildlife area managers we have many needs and many opportunities for Master Hunter applicants to assist us in meeting our mission. Master hunters have been referred to Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm to meet several project needs. Curran Cosgrove of the Skagit Wildlife Area identified volunteer opportunities that Dazey will follow up on with Skagit Area Master Hunter applicants. Coordinator Dazey referred two Eagle Scout candidates seeking service projects to the appropriate Wildlife Area managers.

Whidbey Island Deer Survey: Volunteer coordinator Dazey assisted a Boone and Crockett Fellow from the University of Montana to recruit volunteers to conduct a phone survey of hunters on Whidbey Island. This project was coordinated with Biologist Ruth Milner and will gauge hunter opinions on various aspects of deer hunting on Whidbey Island.

Hunter Education: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey received and reviewed three hunter education instructor applicants. The applicants were forwarded to Olympia for the mandatory background checks.

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

Wildlife Management

Coyote Story: Biologist Yarborough was interviewed by journalism students from Western Washington University for an upcoming story of coyote occurrence in the City of Bellingham.

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

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Manager Rotton prepared and sent bid packets to interested growers in the area and continued to work on agricultural lease packages for this growing season. Cosgrove mowed, sprayed thistle, and picked up litter at the two parking areas at the Headquarters Unit. Manger Rotton is coordinating with Capital Assets Management project manager Ray Berg and Dike District #22 Commissioner John Wolden regarding the installation of the final aspects of the pump station project.

Leque Island Unit: Manager Rotton participated in a debrief conference call following the Leque Island Unit public meeting in Stanwood last week. The group identified the next steps in the process.

Samish River Unit: Manager Rotton, Meis, and Restoration Projects Coordinator Brokaw met with Capital Assets Management Program construction project managers Craig Gallagher and Dennis Cohn to discuss the details of the Samish River project and to tour the site. Gallagher and Cohn will provide a scoping report for review.

Island Unit: Manager Rotton participated in a conference call with Contracts Specialist Ted Nelson and Jeff Hugdahl to discuss potential options and the next steps for the barge and boat lease agreement. Meis and Cosgrove continued vegetation management on the field edges and removed downed trees on the Island Unit. Meis and Cosgrove installed a new wood duck box near the bridge area. The wood duck box was donated by the local Washington Waterfowl Chapter. Cosgrove performed annual maintenance on two tractors used for agricultural and moist-soil enhancements on the Island Unit. Cosgrove and NRS Meis charged barge ramp batteries at the Skagit moorage facility and Cosgrove prepared the jetsled for a ferrying operation proposed next week pending approval from the barge owner.

Fir Island Farms: Manager Rotton has requested quotes from local contract farmers for the planting of the restoration portion of the site.

Samish Unit: Following a rash of vandalism at the parking area last week that included sign removal and turning over the porta-potty. Cosgrove and Meis posted a new Use Regulation sign, a Discovery Pass sign, and fifteen Shell Limit signs. Manager Rotton scheduled Honey Buck replacement on the site. Meis and Cosgrove picked up litter along the bayfront dike at the Samish Unit. Volunteer projects to clean blinds and pick up trash on the site have been posted on CERVIS. Meis met with the lessee about the sharecrop lease of the Samish Unit and finalized the lease components for this year. Cosgrove and Meis planted native willows around two duck blinds at the Samish Unit to better conceal the structures.

Jensen Access: Cosgrove graded the shoulder of the access road at the Jensen Unit to make mowing and weed control easier in the future.



Natural Resource Tech Deyo and a Master Hunter volunteer repaired a Parking Area sign that had been knocked down and broken by a vehicle. They replaced the framework and cemented in the new upright post to hold the sign.



The Custer Sportsmen's Club worked to get the Intalco Archery Range set up for opening to the public. Due to the good weather, they had a great turnout and quickly completed the work. They repaired damage to the target frames, installed the targets and mowed the course lanes. The archery range is open to the public from March through August.

Private Lands

Otto researched his old records from 2009 to assist District 14 Wildlife staff with a Japan banded pintail. The bird was shot during the waterfowl season and sampled by Otto. This data was requested for a Pacific Flyway meeting.



Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman contacted a hunter on damage hunt to confiscate harvest materials in Day Creek. WCS Witman worked on finalizing a fencing agreement for a Day Creek landowner which Tribal Co-managers are funding.

Landowner Meetings: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman received a call from a landowner experiencing grass crop loss to snow goose utilization. He spoke with the landowner and advised him of hazing options that could be conducted until the geese leave northward. WCS Witman also explained the Private Lands Access Program for waterfowl. The landowner was very interested in pursuing a contract with WDFW to provide waterfowl access, which would also help mitigate waterfowl damage.

Wildlife Conflict Meetings: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with local Skagit County food bank distributors to discuss the possibility of taking game meat that has been harvested through damage permits for deer and elk. One food bank showed interest in receiving game meat with the condition that the meat has to be processed at a licensed facility.

Master Hunter Coordination: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with a Skagit County landowner who would like to utilize Master Hunters through the remainder of the elk damage season. Witman contacted the local hunt coordinator to assist the landowner.

Day Creek Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman attended a meeting in Day Creek with Co-Managers and local landowners. Local landowners are open to a limited fencing plan that also utilizes an enhanced forage site located on private property.

Instructor Incentive Permit proposal for 2015: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey reviewed the proposed incentive permit program for Hunter Education Instructors for classes taught in 2015. After review of the proposal Dazey offered several suggestions that helped to clarify the requirements for the instructors.

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

Director Meet and Greet: Staff traveled to Mill Creek to attend the Region 4 Meet and Greet with the new director.

Leadership Training: Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm travelled to Olympia to begin the Leadership Training Class provided by WDFW.

REGION 5

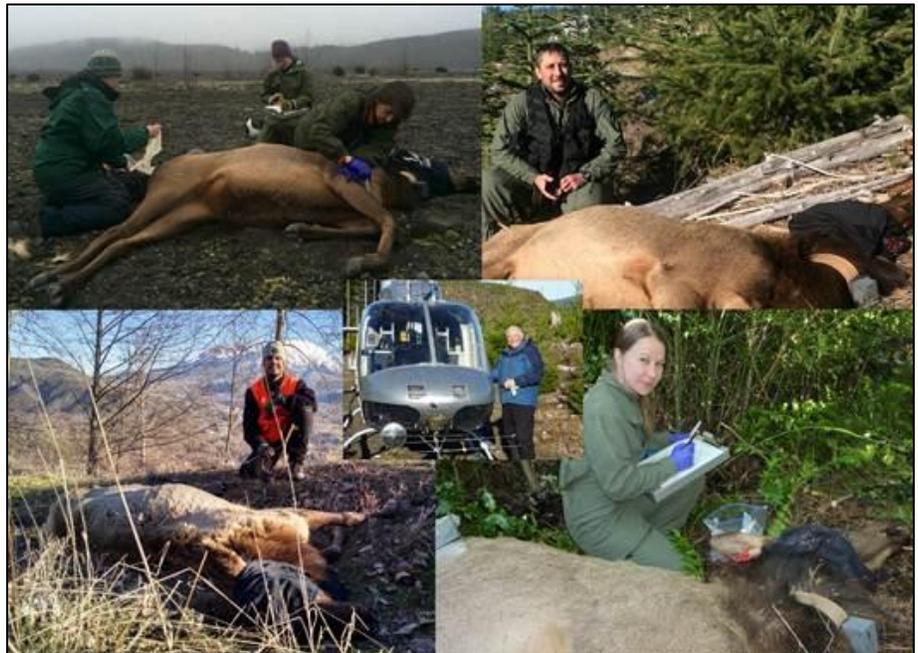
GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Elk Hoof Disease Survival Study: February 27th marked the final day of a nine-day effort to capture elk for the Hoof Disease Survival Study. Statewide Elk Specialist Hoenes and State Veterinarian Mansfield, along with Biologists Murphie, Holman, Stephens, George, Bergh, and Statewide Deer Specialist Hansen participated in the project. National Council for Air and Stream Improvement (NCASI) Elk Researcher Rachel Cook participated as well. Helicopter pilot Jess Hagerman piloted the jet ranger used to conduct the aerial darting capture effort.

The study is an effort to determine the survival of cow elk affected by hoof disease. Seventy-eight cow elk were captured and fitted with GPS collars. Multiple samples were taken and will aid in continued diagnostic efforts, including samples sent overnight to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The elk will be monitored over the next four years for mortalities, movement, and reproduction. Please see the attached photos of the capture effort.

Elk Hoof Disease survival study capture effort





TAHD capture effort

Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys: Staff in Regions 5 and 6 conducted five training sessions in Vancouver, Kelso, Chehalis, Cathlamet, and Montesano for the upcoming hoof disease prevalence surveys. The goal of this citizen science effort is to better understand hoof disease in southwest Washington and to reasonably approximate the percentage of elk affected by the disease. Over three hundred volunteers attended the training sessions. Volunteers will be conducting surveys throughout March and April across nine counties in southwest Washington.

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area March Elk Survey: Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald conducted the March winter elk survey on the Mudflow Unit on March 5th and observed 123 elk on the valley floor. The composition of the elk observed was forty cows, twenty calves, and sixty-three bulls. There is essentially no snow on the winter landscape. Most animals appeared to be in good shape, though one mortality was observed.

Black-tailed Deer Research Project: Monitoring of black-tailed does and their associated young continues in both the Coweeman and Washougal Study clusters. Currently in the Coweeman cluster, six adult does that were captured in 2014 remain alive and these females have two surviving young. One of the Coweeman study cluster adult females died during the final week in February. While coyotes had scavenged the carcass, the ultimate cause of mortality is unknown. Currently in the Washougal cluster, two adult does that were captured in 2014 remain alive and these females have three surviving young. During the May-June birth period all adult females associated with each study cluster will be monitored frequently and multiple attempts will be made to capture their fawns.

Pika Habitat Evaluation: Biologist Anderson and staff from Beacon Rock State Park and the USFS met to evaluate potential impacts to pika habitat by recreational users. Bouldering, a relatively new form of rock climbing, has become very popular in the Columbia River Gorge in the past few years and several of the most popular recreation sites are also known pika locations. Of specific concern are the impacts from recreation on the moss covered rocks that provide habitat for pika. Disturbance of the moss covered talus can significantly alter the temperatures preferred by pika using these rock structures.



Pika habitat evaluation – Beacon Rock State Park & USFS land

Oregon Spotted Frog Survey: Biologist Anderson conducted an early season survey for Oregon spotted frog egg masses at the Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve. This survey is done each year as a population indicator for this Washington endangered species. This was the first week that



egg masses were detected at Trout Lake and the earliest documented initiation date since the beginning of the project over fifteen years ago. Water conditions are also some of the lowest since the beginning of the project.

Oregon Spotted Frog and egg mass

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Tree Planting Site Preparation: Natural Resource Technician Sample completed harrowing fifteen acres on the west meadow

area of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area in preparation for an upcoming volunteer event to plant native bare root trees and shrubs. Harrowing prior to planting trees exposes bare ground and allows the trees, as well as grasses, to establish while discouraging moss from forming thick mats. Some patches of dead scotch broom plants were removed so that trees can be planted in their place.

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Fuels Reduction Project: Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis met with the contractor to conduct a detailed walk-through of the project site on Monday. Participants discussed the special provisions of the project, especially the no-entry buffers around western gray squirrel nest trees and retention of snags for habitat. Entry points for equipment were identified,

expectations for the work were covered, and some training in squirrel nest identification was provided by Wildlife Area staff. The contractor began adding further markings to trees as needed that day, and felling of small trees and pruning of "leave" trees commenced the following day. Wildlife Area staff visited the worksite once a day to check progress and offer clarification or guidance as needed. During the Friday morning visit, four deer were observed foraging on the tops of trees that had been cut.



Deer browsing in fuel break

Grazing Permits: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven met with Habitat Biologist Johnson to develop PHS maps for the grazing permits that are up for renewal. One draft permit was reviewed and sent to Range Ecologist Burnham for his consideration.

Fence Repair: Technician Davis repaired fences along the southwest side of the Glenwood Highway and inspected fences elsewhere on the Soda Springs Unit. He also checked fences on the Sandino Unit. Manager Van Leuven purchased supplies for fence repair to stock up for the spring season.

Cowlitz Wildlife Area

2014 Annual Report: Wildlife Area staff finalized the 2014 annual report for the operation and maintenance of the Cowlitz Wildlife Area. The annual report is reviewed by Tacoma Power with a public comment period, and then submitted by the utility to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The report summarizes management activities for 2014, proposed activities for 2015, and Wildlife Area expenditures. The filing of this report to FERC by Tacoma/WDFW is a requirement of the Cowlitz Hydroelectric Project License.

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

Wildlife Management

Turkey Season Information Requests: Biologist Anderson has responded to several requests from hunters about overwintering turkey populations and the outlook for the upcoming spring turkey season. Most interest has been for hunting access associated with the Klickitat Wildlife Area.

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A Special Late Season Goose Hunt: The 2015 Management Area 2A Special Late Season ended on Saturday, March 7, 2015. The

purpose of this special late season hunt is to assist landowners in mitigating crop depredation due to geese. Since the start of the season on February 4th, Master Hunters have assisted the properties signed up for the program bi-weekly with the hazing of geese. Each of the eight properties enrolled in the program have experienced varying degrees of goose damage throughout the season, ranging from almost no damage to severe depredation. During the special late hunt, 61 Master Hunters harvested a total of 221 geese. Most of the hunters were called several times throughout the season to assist landowners. The harvest quota for duskies during the special late hunt is set to five. During this year's late season a total of three duskies were harvested.

From left to right: Master Hunters B. Chrisler and S. White proudly display their harvest on the last day of the 2015 Management Area 2A Special Late Goose Hunt – Photo by Stephanie Doorly



Private Lands/Access

Public Access: Conflict Specialist McDonald answered hunters' questions about using private lands in access agreements in Klickitat County.

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

Wildlife Management

Local Forester Presentation: Biologist Bergh gave a presentation to a meeting of local foresters, loggers, and contractors. She presented information on different wildlife species that the group might encounter in the forests of Klickitat and Skamania Counties, including rare species like western gray squirrels and bats. She also presented information on elk hoof disease and wolves to help the group with identification and spread the word about WDFW's reporting tools. There was a large turnout and lots of good questions.

D-10 Wildlife Conflict

Otters: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin met with WDFW hatchery personnel at Mineral Lake Resort to view their net pens. They recently had a large portion of trout depredated on by river otters. Conklin provided technical advice to try and deter the otters from continuing to depredate. Some of the solutions were to install a motion sensor alarm or haze the otters with bird bangers. It was also suggested the net pens be placed in deeper water.



Mineral Lake Resort net pens

Deer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin met with a nursery in Morton to discuss replacing an electric fence with stronger fencing to keep out black tail deer. The Nursery does 2.5 million dollars in sales and employs approximately thirty-six people. The deer have been getting into the fenced area and browsing on expensive apple trees and other nursery plants. The Nursery will be entering into a cooperative fencing agreement with WDFW.

Current fencing surrounding a nursery in Morton



D-9 Wildlife Conflict

Wildlife Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist McDonald issued two depredation prevention permits for deer damage and one for elk damage in Klickitat County this week. A master hunter harvested one doe from an alfalfa and barley field with a high concentration of deer near Goldendale. McDonald continues to work with a Washougal landowner who has now lost two rabbits to an unknown predator. Critter gitters are in place to help protect the remaining rabbits and trail cameras will be checked next week.

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. 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. February temperatures were above normal, with slightly below average precipitation.

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

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

Habitat: Forage is available at middle and lower elevations, with some green-up starting at the 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 fourth winter elk survey was conducted on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area on March 5th, with 123 elk being observed.

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

Mortality: One mortality was observed this past week.

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. There was no precipitation this week and snowpack is around 38 % for the South Cascades.

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 5,000 feet in most of the south Cascades. Noticeable green up is being seen at all elevations below the snowline. Eastern Klickitat County ranchers report green up occurring on open range but also express concerns for drought conditions as we move into spring.

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

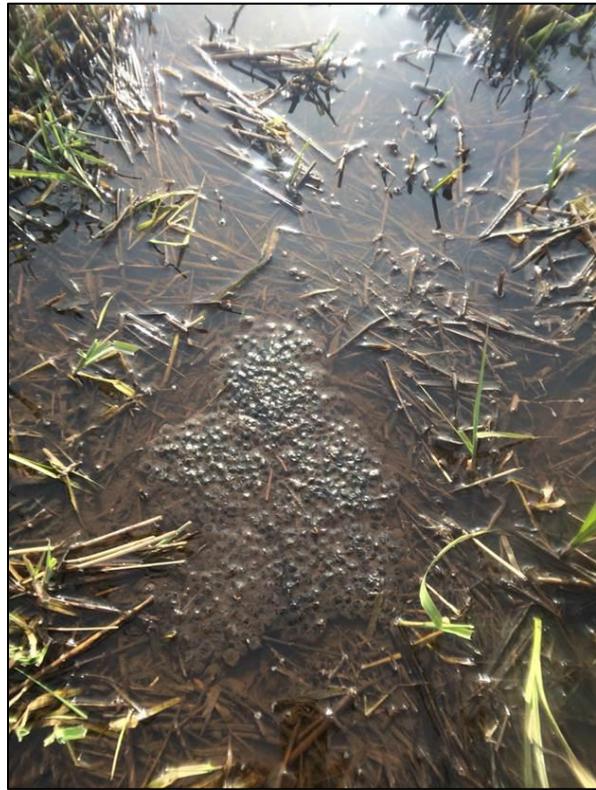
Wildlife Management

Oregon Spotted Frog: Biologist Tirhi and District 11 staff spent much of last week conducting Oregon spotted frog and amphibian surveys in Thurston County. Tirhi focused on the Salmon Creek and Dempsey/Darlin/Stoney Creek systems last week. Tirhi confirmed ovipositioning at a new location on Salmon Creek. One cluster of five egg masses, a second cluster of three masses and several individual masses were located. Tirhi collected one egg from each of the clusters to have genetically tested for confirmation as spotted frog. Tirhi also had a long discussion with the landowner regarding spotted frogs and other amphibians and what having an oviposition site on your property might mean in terms of regulations (spotted frogs are state endangered and federally threatened).

Tirhi also met with JBLM staff and collected one egg voucher for genetics from the one mass found at the spotted frog relocation site on JBLM that might be Oregon spotted frog. This one mass was in shallows but was an oddity and might be part of a red-legged frog egg mass that floated shoreward. Any suspicious egg mass is being genetically tested considering spotted frogs have yet to be confirmed ovipositioning at the reintroduction site (egg masses suspected to be spotted frogs were located in 2009 but were not genetically confirmed and masses have not been located again).

Biologist Tirhi met with a private landowner (husband and wife) who owns property on Allen Creek, Thurston County on which is located one of our largest Oregon spotted frog oviposition locations in South Sound. Tirhi discussed several options with the couple on conserving the back forty acres of their property, which annually floods and is used by spotted frogs to oviposit. The option the couple is most interested in is a conservation easement. Tirhi will be working on grant(s) thru 2015-16 that would purchase conservation easements and/or acquire acreage on several private properties used by Oregon spotted frogs to oviposit each spring.

New Oregon spotted frog oviposition location on Salmon Creek



Oregon spotted frog eggs beginning to hatch and swarm (tads swarming is the dark area in the middle; light-colored spent egg jell on outside)



Metamorphosing oocyte, individual red-legged frog, Thurston County



New spotted frog location on Case Road (Allen Creek drainage) in Thurston County

Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Study: Biologists Harris, Novack, Michaelis and Sundstrom assisted Region 5 staff at volunteer training sessions in Chehalis and Montesano.

Black-tailed Deer Study: As part of Cliff Rice's deer study, Biologist Murphie, Dr. Rice, and Skokomish Tribal Biologist Tropp collared five does in GMU 651 last week. These deer will be monitored for two years until the collar drops off. Additional collars will be deployed on fawns from these does this spring.



A freshly collared doe about to be revived



Biologists Novack and Michaelis along with Dr. Rice and pilot Hagerman, departing to a captured doe location in Capitol Forest

Tick Collection: Biologist Ament met with Department of Health (DOH) staff on March 3rd to provide them with seventeen live ticks that District Biologist McMillan had collected from a Taylor's checkerspot butterfly site on March 1st. On March 7th she collected more ticks from a different area at the same site. One tick was attached to her midsection and the other was exploring her left arm. Three other live ticks were collected from gear and a dragging cloth. Biologist Michaelis was at a meeting with Ament on March 9th and was kindly willing to transport the ticks to Olympia.

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

Centralia Mine Elk Survey: Biologist Tirhi and Tim Leduc (Centralia Mine) conducted the annual survey of the Centralia Mine. Staff located 237 elk over the 1.5 hour flight, including 183 cows, 28 calves, 20 spike bulls, and 6 branched bulls. Error rates are greatest at this time of year between cows and calves (e.g. either of those counts may be skewed by detection error). This marks the highest survey count in recent years. Tirhi has requested to meet with TransAlta staff in March to discuss increasing elk hunting permits for 2016 and beyond. Tirhi will also be using that time to arrange streaked-horned lark surveys for this spring and further the discussions of using the mine as a reintroduction site for western pond turtles.

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

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle: A District 11 biologist attended the Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology meeting in Portland in late February. The biologist gave a presentation on ulcerative shell disease in western pond turtles in Washington and presented a poster on using a field assessment technique to identify the extent and severity of ulcerative shell disease in western pond turtles.