

# Wildlife Program

Week of March 9-15, 2015

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

**Sage Grouse:** Section Manager Cynthia Wilkerson coordinated with Public Affairs, WDFW staff, and several partners to create a WDFW Fact Sheet on the Sage Grouse Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances. The fact sheet is available for distribution.

**Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative:** Section Manager Cynthia Wilkerson reviewed and provided suggestions regarding several grant proposals that were submitted through the Great Northern Landscape Conservation Cooperative annual request for proposals. Nine proposals with WDFW partnership were reviewed and seven were submitted. Proposals ranged from work related to landscape actions for lynx and wolverine, life cycle monitoring for salmonids, developing a rangewide system for monitoring ecological conditions throughout the Columbia Basin, identifying climate refugia, applying existing habitat connectivity science to management action, and support for existing Partner Forums.

**Island Marble Butterfly:** Biologists David Hays, Ann Potter, and Ruth Milner attended the annual Island Marble meeting with San Juan National Historic Park staff and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Conservation actions from 2014 were reviewed, and 2015 actions were discussed and planned for the National Historic Park.

## **REGION 1**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Pacific Flyway Waterfowl Wingbee:** District Wildlife Biologist Dana Base participated in the annual Pacific Flyway Waterfowl Wingbee, which was held once again this year at the Coleman National Fish Hatchery near Redding, California. This effort involved compiling & analyzing over 28,000 duck and goose wings/tails collected in the hunter harvest in the fall & early winter throughout the Pacific states. The Wingbee is sponsored every year by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) for each of the four waterfowl flyways in the United States. The Pacific Flyway includes partnerships with a consortium of western Fish & Wildlife agencies. Some 35 personnel assisted in the Wingbee this week, traveling from Alaska, Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. Agencies represented included USFWS, Alaska Game & Fish Department, Arizona Game & Fish Department, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, Nevada Department of Fish & Game, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW), and Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW). The three representatives participating this year from WDFW were Matt Wilson (Migratory Bird Section), Orrin Duvuvuei (Region 2), and Dana Base (Region 1).



*Wings from adult drake Gadwall (on left) and Northern Shoveler (on right) at the Pacific Flyway Wingbee, February 22-26, 2015*

**Douglas County Prairie Grouse Project:** Biologists Atamian, Lowe, Gallie, Schroeder, Braaten, Smith, Brown (Pheasants Forever), and McPherron (FWS) captured eight adult male sage grouse from four different leks in Douglas County. Six of the birds were outfitted with solar-powered GPS transmitters. The two remaining males were not fitted with GPS units due to a loss of tail feathers from the capture on one and a previous injury on the back (likely caused by a raptor strike) on the other.



*Outfitting captured sage grouse with GPS transmitters*

## Wildlife Areas

**Blue Mountains Wildlife Area Complex – RMEF Grant:** We learned a short while ago that the wildlife area is receiving \$30,000 in grant money from RMEF for noxious weed control. As we've done in the past, we're going to target yellow starthistle in an effort to keep a huge problem on elk ranges in check. Kari Dingman is proposing spraying 400 acres of yellowstar on the Wooten Wildlife area. David Woodall is proposing to spray nearly 500 acres in the Joseph Canyon and Black Butte areas of the Chief Joseph Wildlife Area. We are going to work with a neighboring landowner to increase the total number of acres sprayed in the Black Butte area to lower cost. One large spraying job for the helicopter company on two neighboring ownerships makes work more efficient, lowers cost, and allows control on more acres on the landscape, which increasingly benefits wildlife.

## **REGION 2**

**WOLVES:** Nothing to report.

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

## Wildlife Management

**Carlton Complex Spring Deer Classification Surveys:** Biologists Fitkin and Heinlen conducted several spring deer classification surveys this period. Mule deer generally look to be in good physical shape after the mild winter, and spring forage is available in most areas. Thus far, fawn:doe ratios suggest overwinter fawn survivorship is around average. However, several routes remain and final numbers will likely not be available for at least two more weeks. Survey routes in the Carlton Complex Fire area are generally showing good green-up with robust grass cover and forbs coming on strong. Shrub sprouting, particularly in moister areas, is noteworthy also, but almost all sprouts of shrubs palatable to deer have suffered heavy browsing pressure. If this kind of browsing pressure continues at the landscape level, it could significantly retard the recovery of the critical winter shrub forage base for deer.



***Mule Deer in Carlton Complex Fire Spring  
2015*** – Photo by Jeff Heinlen



***Aspen browsed by deer in the Carlton  
Complex Fire*** – Photo by Jeff Heinlen



***Oregon grape re-sprouting after Carlton Complex Fire*** – Photo by Jeff Heinlen

shape and would support nesting burrowing owls. Unfortunately, none of the artificial burrows showed signs of use at this time. Although burrowing owls are not currently using the artificial burrows, a badger took a keen interest in one of the burrows and shredded the entrance tunnels, presumably digging after prey.

***Badger diggings at a tunnel entrance to an artificial burrow on the LCA*** – Photo by O. Duvuvuei

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Chiliwist Wildlife Area Coordinated Noxious Weed Control:** Sinlahekin staff spent a significant amount of time battling noxious weeds on the Chiliwist Wildlife Area. The weeds targeted the most were Scotch Thistle and Dalmatian Toadflax, which have seen vigorous growth following the Carlton Complex Fire (see pictures below). The Sinlahekin staff was assisted by Sherry and Jamie from the Methow Wildlife Area and Fidel and Virgilio from the Wells Wildlife Area – thank you all very much! The group covered approximately 400 acres of the Chiliwist and treated very large patches of Scotch Thistle. Efforts will continue this next week.



**Burrowing Owl Artificial Burrows:** Biologist O. Duvuvuei continued coordinating with the Bureau of Reclamation to locate areas in which we can install artificial burrows to benefit burrowing owls. Although we will continue to pursue opportunities along the East Low Canal, we are widening our burrowing owl enhancement options to include all areas of the Odessa Subarea project footprint within the Columbia Basin Project area. Biologist O. Duvuvuei checked for burrowing owl use and maintenance issues of the thirteen artificial burrows which were installed last fall on the LCA Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area. All burrows were in good



*Patch of sprayed scotch thistle and close-up of sprayed plants (blue) and native Wavyleaf thistle (Cirsium undulatum) – a desirable native species*

**Map of area covered by coordinated effort – Sinlahekin, Methow and Wells Wildlife Areas**

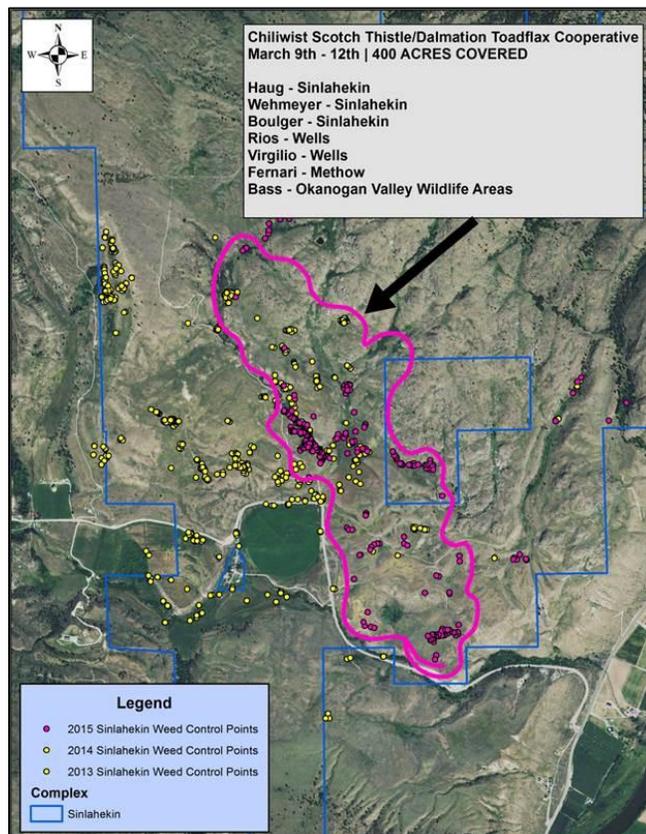
**Sharp-tailed Grouse Lek Surveys:**  
 Manager Olson started Sharp tailed grouse lek surveys this week on Scotch Creek. A total of 29 birds were observed on three leks. This is a slight increase over last year’s count of 21 birds for the Scotch Creek unit. A second round of surveys will occur in approximately two weeks.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**KOMW Weekly Interview: Ops**

Manager Swedberg completed the 62<sup>nd</sup> “Ask Dale” weekly interview with Becki Andrist at KOMW, talking about possible Rx burns planned for the Sinlahekin or Scotch Creek Wildlife



Areas this spring. Manager Swedberg also talked about the importance of fire to the local ecosystems. FYI all interview segments are now online at <https://komwaskdale.wordpress.com/>.

### **Okanogan Valley Wildlife Areas Planning – Public Scoping Meeting:**

Manager Haug attended the public scoping meeting at the Okanogan Public Utilities Building in Okanogan. The meeting was to inform the public on the new planning process, answer questions about management of our lands, and gather suggestions on how to better meet the needs of users. The meeting was well attended by the public (see picture to the right) and there were numerous WDFW staff on hand to field questions. Thank



you very much to all those employees who attended the meeting and Jeanne Demorest and Melinda Posner for putting everything together and pulling off a great public event.

**Sandhill Crane Festival:** The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Sandhill Crane Festival will take place in Othello on March 27-29. Biologist E. Duvuvuei prepared a draft of a poster about the Northern Leopard Frog Translocation Feasibility project for the WDFW display at the festival. Biologist Finger will present information and lead a field tour about Washington Ground Squirrels, and Biologist O. Duvuvuei will present Greater Sage-Grouse research and management strategies.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Emergency Grazing Program:** Olson and Assistant Manager Dupont installed two stock tanks on the Eder Unit to facilitate the emergency grazing lease that is scheduled to occur in April and May this year. We are making this area available to one of our grazing lessees who lost their pasture in the Carlton Complex fire last summer. By providing alternative sites we can allow the complete recovery of the burned area. We improved the site by adding ten yards of rock to harden the surrounding area and installed new 4 x 12 aluminum tanks in two locations.



*New stock tank for the Eder unit –*  
Photo by Jim Olson

## **Private Lands/Access**

**Local Working Group Meetings:** Biologist Dougherty attended two NRCS local working group meetings in order to discuss EQIP funding for 2016. Biologist Dougherty was able to secure 6% of the total allocation for Adams and Lincoln Counties for wildlife related projects, and through a combined effort Biologist Comstock and Biologist Dougherty were able to increase the funding in Grant and Kittitas County from 1% to 2% of the total allocation. In past years, the Grant and Kittitas County allocation was around 3%, but apparently NRCS has not been receiving enough interest in wildlife related projects to keep that level of funding. However, with 2% of the total allocation, there should be enough money to fund wildlife related projects annually. Biologist Comstock and Biologist Dougherty attended the Big Bend Local Working Group for NRCS, which covers Grant and Kittitas Counties. Bioloigst Dougherty sucessfully lobbied NRCS to increase the allocation of EQIP dollars for addressing wildlife habitat from 1% to 2%. NRCS capitulated, however they have seen a decrease in the number of applicants.

## **Winter Conditions**

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

**Short-Term Forecast:** The 10-day forecast is relatively warm with temperatures ranging from the low-30s at night to the mid-60s during the day.

**Long-Term Forecast:** It appears as if the winter is coming to an end and spring is starting to arrive. The upcoming spring is forecasted to be warm and dry.

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

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

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

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

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



*Clockwise From Top Left: Chickadee near Forde Lake on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, Hooded Merganser taking off with crayfish from near Reflection Pond on Sinlahekin Wildlife Area, and Yellow Bells emerging on the Chiliwist Wildlife Area – Photos by Justin Haug*



***Kaden Homestead, Grand Coulee Ranch*** – Photo by Noel Winegeart



***Grand Coulee Ranch*** – Photo by Noel Winegeart



***Spring on the Bridgeport Unit*** – Photo by Dan Peterson



***White-tailed deer, Washburn Island*** – Photo by WDFW

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Manager Lopushinsky assisted Biologist Will Moore with aerial mule deer surveys in units south of Ellensburg. We had good weather and flights went smoothly.

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman updated the SRFB acquisition proposals for Cowiche and Bear Canyon from comments received from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group. Huffman also took some pictures of the

properties to include in the pre-application and worked with Lands Agent Hendrix on a rough budget for the grant request. On Friday Huffman submitted the pre-applications to the Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board. Later that day Huffman was contacted to set up a time to meet during their pre-application conference.

**Tapash Strategic Planning:** Manager Huffman attended the Tapash Strategic Planning meeting in Ellensburg, and presented an update on all aspects of the Oak Creek Project.

**Deer Aerial Surveys:** Manager Huffman and Assistant Manager Berry helped Assistant District Biologist Moore with deer aerial surveys.

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Manager Bjornstrom attended the 2015 State Duck Stamp evaluation meeting in North Bend. The committee discussed 38 proposals while in North Bend and committee members were tasked with ranking the proposals based on several criteria, including habitat potential, cost/benefit ratio, annual O & M costs, matching funds, and cost/year/acre score.

**Seeding and Weed Control:** Assistant Manager Buser requested biological control bugs from WSU, continued with seeding projects on the wildlife area, monitored water levels in wildlife area wetlands, and continued with weed control efforts. Phillip was able to get ground disked, drilled, and roller packed at all of the sites. Sites included five acres at Mesa Lake (which will also be enhanced with shrubs later this spring), one acre at the Mesa Lake diversion, and one quarter acre of old crop field access trails at Windmill Ranch. The South Columbia Basin Irrigation District filled their canals and is sending water to local irrigators.

**LT Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt worked with other program staff to address a beaver complaint on an old upland game bird parcel in the Badger Pocket area.

### **Wildlife Management**

**Sage Grouse:** Private Lands Bio Stutzman visited a Yakima County landowner that has had sage grouse on his property. The landowner gave Stutzman a tour of the property and pointed out where the grouse have been seen. The landowner is very enthusiastic about the grouse and is a good candidate for a CCAA in the future. Stutzman also coordinated with the Yakama Nation on the location of a potential lek and will assist reservation biologists with surveys starting this week.

**Habitat and Access Management:** Stutzman sat down with a landowner to talk about both habitat and access issues. The operator returned the 2014 permission slips from his HBWP ground and signed a new access agreement that extends his Feel Free to Hunt ground for another five years. He also had questions about farm bill programs that might help with post-fire habitat restoration.

**Franklin County Habitat Projects:** Stutzman contacted the Ringold chapter of Pheasants Forever about collaborating on habitat projects in Franklin County.

**Golden Eagles:** Biologist Bernatowicz surveyed the Oak Creek Golden Eagle territory and located the active nest. The area is popular with Rock Climbers and sections of the cliff are open or closed depending on where the birds nest. The Junction Territory was also checked and found to be active. Last year, the Junction territory was occupied early and the birds vanished at about the time of egg laying. One of the known nests was active in the Junction territory this year.

**Diversity Section:** Biologist Bernatowicz drafted the 2015-2017 Diversity Section work plan, communicated with Olympia staff of Western Gray squirrel (WGS) surveys, and inventoried WGS supplies. Biologist Bernatowicz talked with Forester Mackey and Manager Huffman about responded Goshawks. An accipiter was seen by Forester Mackey that may have been a Goshawk. Goshawk survey protocols were obtained from Biologist Desimone and forwarded to Forester Mackey and Manager Huffman.

**Deer Surveys:** Biologist Bernatowicz worked with Biologist Moore on planning aerial deer surveys.

**Bighorn Sheep:** Biologist Bernatowicz communicated with WSDOT and a local SCI member about bighorn sheep on Highway 12. Bighorns are again licking salt from the highway. SCI has been placing salt off the highway for the last three years in an attempt to keep bighorns off the road. Ideas have also been proposed for applying chemical deterrents to the roadway, but WSDOT doesn't appear to be interested in trying deterrents.

**Turkey Hunting:** Biologist Bernatowicz updated the Regional Turkey harvest by GMU and forwarded the information to a few hunters and a reporter inquiring about Region 3 Turkey hunting.

**Colockum Elk Survey:** Biologist Moore entered the raw data collected during the previous week's survey. We observed 6000 elk overall and a calf ratio of 32 calves per 100 cows. The population modeling should be completed by next week.

**PMU 33 Deer Survey:** Moore worked with Manager Lopushinsky, Technician Schnebly, and Assistant Manager Berry to perform an aerial survey of Deer Population Management Unit 33. All went well over the two day effort and the number of deer observed in the units flown appears to be similar or better than recent years. An additional two units will be flown next week.

**Colockum Bull Study:** Biologist Moore scheduled arrangements for a fixed winged flight to search for VHF beacons of bull elk collars that have failed GPS reporting. Central Washington University Graduate Student Lewis Meyers flew the entire study area, including all of the Yakima Training Center, and only one collar was found. This was the third attempt to fly failed collars.

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman used the ATV to access roads and trails in the NF Cowiche Area, checking and downloading data from the vehicle counters and checking trail cameras set up in the area. The area continues to receive a lot of ATV and jeep use. Huffman continued on to the west checking out numerous roads and trails and locating some past timber harvest activities on the formerly private land.

**LT Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Winegeart attended a meeting to discuss USFS's plans to designate trails specifically for WATVs (off-road vehicles that are licensed, street legal, and operated by a licensed driver) such as side-by-sides. WATV interest groups have put forth several proposals to locate the new trails, and some tie into WDFW Green Dot road systems. Several of the proposed trail systems are located in Region 3 – Table Mountain, Gnat Flat, Bald Mountain, and Naches. More meetings are forthcoming to discuss enforcement and monitoring, but implementation is tentatively scheduled for this summer.

**Gnat Flat Maintenance:** Assistant Manager Hunt evaluated road and gate issues in the Gnat Flat area in preparation for both RMAP work and an upcoming meeting with USFS to discuss the development of a road management agreement. Most all main travel routes at that high elevation are already drivable, amazingly enough. Another week of dry weather and the Taneum 3330 road will be dusty.

**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Manager Confer Morris met with numerous neighbors and user groups throughout the week to discuss the Sheep Company Shooting Range proposal and gather feedback. Confer Morris, RPM McCorquodale, RD Livingston, and SM Posner met with Becky Hyde. Confer Morris, RPM McCorquodale, and SM Posner met with Larry Hull, Kevin Curnutt, Tanya Smuin, and Ralph Berger. Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor met with Sue and Joe Griffin. In addition, Confer Morris attended the Wenas Valley Muzzleloader's and Wenas Valley Backcountry Horsemen's monthly meetings to present the proposal and take feedback. Maps and a fact sheet were provided to everyone that staff met with. There was a lot of support for the proposal, particularly limiting target shooting to the two designated sites and developing the 'micro-range' at Sheep Company. One neighbor was concerned about increased fire risk and the safety of landowners west of the proposed range location. Most felt that limiting target shooting to the developed range would significantly reduce fire risk and increase the safety of users and neighbors compared to the current situation. A general neighbor meeting will be held in early April to ensure that anyone potentially affected by the proposed changes has a chance to voice their concerns.

**Access Program:** We have several old fiberglass outhouses at Fio Rito that need to be replaced. Access staff has spent a lot of time over the years trying to keep these toilets useable.



*Fio Rito toilets*

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Manager Lopushinsky and Assistant Manager Hagan spent time this week preparing for and attending the Colockum Wildlife Area Advisory Committee, which was held in Wenatchee. Other WDFW staff in attendance included RPM McCorquodale, Regional Director Jim Brown, Melinda Posner, Jeanne Demorest, and Graham Grant. Agenda items included new information on WAAC administration, membership, and an overview of a draft charter. Other items discussed included an update of the Colockum Management Plan, an update of Stemilt Basin developments, and an update of the Naneum Recreation Plan.

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman and Assistant Manager Berry attempted to catch a dog that was loose along Hwy 12. Huffman attempted to contact animal control but they did not call back. Huffman and Berry were unsuccessful and the dog got into the creek bottom. The old Doberman pincher was very skinny and limping badly but would not let anybody get close to it. Later that day Forester Mackey and NRW2 Farias saw the dog and were able to get State Patrol and Yakima County Animal Control to help. The dog was captured and is now available for adoption online through an animal rescue organization.

**Wildlife Management**

**Great Horned Owl Hazing:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a call from a landowner in the Burbank area complaining of a great horned owl roosting in his garage and defecating on

his vehicle, as well as “hooting” all night, causing him difficulty in sleeping. Information from our “Living with Wildlife publication was provided and a hazing strategy was established.

**Walla Walla Turkey Conflict:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand assisted Region One Wildlife Program staff with nuisance wild turkeys within the city limits of Walla Walla. With the use of a rocket net, we were successful in trapping fourteen turkeys and relocating them to lands open to hunting in the Blue Mountains.

**DPP Permits in Benton County:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand prepared and delivered DPP permits to Ste. Michelle Wine Estates to address deer damage along the Columbia River in southern Benton County.

**Rattlesnake Mountain Elk Conflict:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with several landowners from Rattlesnake Mountain after receiving reports of elk activity occurring along Hanford’s southern border. With only two weeks remaining in the Damage Permit season, the hope is that hunting pressure will haze the elk to the lower elevations of ALE and away from private wheat fields.

**Ellensburg and Cle Elum Area:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a landowner in Cle Elum who reported a bobcat killing chickens. A visit to the site and also looking at night game camera pictures could not determine if a bobcat, coyote, or weasel had killed the chickens. The landowner was advised to keep a camera working in the area and keep the chickens in their secure coop.

**Elk Hazing:** Herder Leuck moved large numbers of new elk out of the Caribou Creek Area several days this week. He also coordinated with Master Hunters for possible elk harvests.

**Elk Conflict:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel moved elk out of the Caribou Creek Area and coordinated with Master Hunter permit hunters and hunters with landowner permits to harvest one elk.

**Master Hunter Permit Hunters:** Hunt Master Kiesel coordinated with two Region 3 Master Hunter permit hunters in the low Reecer Creek area to harvest one elk. Kiesel also worked with three permit hunters to haze elk from the Caribou and Colockum damage area. No elk were harvested at that location. There will be strong focus during the next two weeks to haze, using lethal means if needed, any elk that are seen using the McMeans property.

**Elk Calf Harvest:** An orphaned elk calf that had been living for approximately three months near I-90 and then moved to an adjacent horse corral for the past four weeks was harvested by the landowner using a permit. The elk would not haze away from the area after repeated attempts.

**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:** Forester Mackey met with Engineer Kuykendal and spent a day in the field reviewing RMAP needs. Following the site visits, Mackey submitted an FPA for some of the RMAP work. Mackey also consulted with Yakama Nation Archeologist David Powell on Arch issues related to RMAP work in Rock Creek.

**Oak Creek Project Appraisal:** Forester Mackey met with Forester Pfeifle to discuss the Oak Creek Project appraisal and upcoming equipment/supply needs for the Forestry Program. Pfeifle agreed to pursue Forest Health funding from DNR through his chain of command to offset potential costs associated with the Oak Creek Project. We also discussed the potential to have DNR do log and load accounting for our timber sales. Pfeifle will follow up with his chain of command.

**LT Murray Wildlife Area:** The grazing committee met to establish the 2015 grazing rotation for the Wild Horse CRM permit. Manager Winegeart and Tech Schnebly began spring fence repair in the Lower Parke Creek pasture in preparation for livestock turn-out in mid-April.

<b>2015 Wild Horse Grazing Rotation (WDFW lands in red)</b>	
South Wild Horse	Apr 1-15
Lower Parke	April 16 - 26
Vantage Highway	April 27 - May 31
Upper Parke	June 1 - 21
Wild Horse Crossing	June 22 - July 13
East WHN	July 14 - 31
West WHN	August 1 - 31

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Colockum staff prepared for a project to assist Grant County PUD in the removal of old creosote-soaked pilings in the riverbed at Crescent Bar. These pilings were the moorage for the WDFW Ferry used for farming operations across the river on the Colockum. We are working to remove these pilings before the PUD begins the final refilling of the reservoir next week. Colockum staff worked with Region 2 habitat biologists to acquire an HPA while PUD staff took care of cultural concerns.

*Some of the Colockum Ferry pilings to be removed at Crescent Bar*

## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Elk Trapping:** Biologist Yarborough and members of the Point Elliott tribes captured and collared two bull elk near HWY 20. This information will help to monitor elk movements and provide marked animals for our elk helicopter surveys.

*Members of the Point Elliot Tribe and Biologist Yarborough collaring a bull elk near Hamilton*

**Co-manager Technical Group:** Biologist Yarborough, Witman, and Caldwell attended the monthly co-manager technical group meeting, providing updates regarding the elk herd plan, trapping and survey efforts, and damage permits. Biologist Milner and Section Lead Harris updated everyone on the last three years of mountain goat survey data for the Mount Baker and Darrington Ranger Districts and discussed WDFW's issuance of an additional hunting permit for the Whitehorse Mountain Area.

**Oregon Spotted Frogs:** Biologists Anderson, DeBruyn, and Yarborough surveyed for Oregon Spotted Frogs in Whatcom County and continued to contact landowners about surveying on their property.

*Oregon Spotted Frog and Eggs*



**Swan Mortality and Morbidity Project:** Biologist DeBruyn transported this season's liver and gizzard samples to British Columbia for analysis.



**Sea Duck Captures:** Biologist DeBruyn assisted biologists from Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service) with capturing sea ducks in White Rock B.C. Seven harlequin ducks and a Barrow's Goldeneye were captured and equipped with satellite transmitters to track seasonal movement.

*Mist net setup for catching sea ducks*

**University of Washington Wildlife Toxicology Presentation:** Biologist Smith gave a presentation to a Wildlife

Toxicology Class (Dr. Grue) at the University of Washington describing lead poisoning of swans in western Washington and the Sumas Prairie of British Columbia.

**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, or heron colonies) given construction or land-use alteration work per local municipal code requirements to work with WDFW. <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/phs/>

**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 which include professional biologists, professors at University of Washington, ZooCorp teens, and others with diverse backgrounds. Anderson worked with Olympia staff to confirm some identification requests and also continued to field volunteer requests for assistance and concerns with difficulty entering data electronically.

**Common Loon Management – Annual meeting with Army Corp of Engineers and Tacoma Water regarding management of Green River Watershed and Howard Hansen Reservoir:** Biologist Anderson provided loon conservation and management needs and recommendations for 2015 and long-term collaborative efforts with this working group. Anderson also updated the group on 2014 efforts, territory occupation and success, and landscape-level collaborative efforts.

**Drone use at Snoqualmie Falls – concern over nesting Peregrine Falcons:** Biologist Anderson was contacted via Biologist Thompson from a concerned citizen with a video of drone use, very near the well-known and active Snoqualmie Falls peregrine eyrie. Anderson sent information to USFWS and internal enforcement as an FYI. He discussed this with Puget Sound Energy biologists who are having their staff post outreach signage regarding not using drones around the falls and in particular to not disturb wildlife. Thanks to PSE for taking quick action to help curb this intrusive activity.



***A local bridge Peregrine Falcon –***  
Photo by WSDOT

**Diversity Species Status Reviews:** Biologist Milner worked on the status review for the Mann’s mollusk-eating ground beetle.

**Island Marble Butterfly Meeting:** Biologist Milner attended the annual planning meeting for partners involved in Island Marble Butterfly conservation at San Juan Island National Park. This day-long meeting was sponsored by Park staff and, as always, was very cordial and informative.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**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. Additionally, Sno-Valley Farms worked on tilling and planting approximately 60 acres of spring wheat on the east portion of the unit. Corn, barley, and grass will be planted later this spring for wildlife forage and cover.



***Natural Resource Tech Deyo completed building 25 wood duck nest boxes using materials purchased with Duck Stamp funds. Twenty of the boxes were installed on the Lake Terrell Unit, replacing old well-worn boxes.***

**Rainbow Pond Water Control Replacement:** Manager Kessler coordinated with Ducks Unlimited and the Intalco Land Manager on the Rainbow Pond Water Control replacement. More information was needed to get the required permits for the project. We are still on schedule to get the water control replaced this summer.

**Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP):** Projects Coordinator Brokaw participated in a teleconference with PSNERP staff to discuss updates on the project. PSNERP staff discussed preparations needed for a strategy session to be held in April with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who are the co-sponsors on PSNERP. At the strategy session, WDFW and the Corps will discuss the next steps for PSNERP.

**Fir Island Farm Monitoring:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw set up and calibrated eleven new water quality monitoring devices that will be deployed at the project site next week. 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.

**Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw continues to collect input on six project design alternatives from the Stakeholder Advisory Committee. A reminder was sent to the Committee, and the deadline for submitting input was extended until March 18<sup>th</sup>. After March 18<sup>th</sup>, all input from the Committee will be compiled and reviewed by the WDFW project team.

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

**Decontamination of Field Equipment for Invasive Species Control:** Brad Otto decontaminated field equipment throughout the week, including the gator ATV and field trucks, after leaving regional areas and entering other agricultural areas.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**USFS Hansen Creek Vegetation Proposal – Stakeholder meeting with Mountains to Sound Greenway:** Biologist Anderson, representing WDFW and as the wildlife management representative of the Mountains to Sound Technical Advisory Committee, attended a field meeting with WA Department of Natural Resources, Alpine Lakes Protection Society, Washington Trails Association, Sierra Club, Mid-fork Coalition, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, The Wilderness Society, and the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust regarding the US Forest Service’s proposal for thinning and wildlife openings along the I-90 area on the north and south sides around the Hansen Creek vicinity. Overall, from a wildlife perspective, this project (having four options currently with one preferred by USFS) will have a positive effect for area wildlife and biodiversity in the immediate proposed area over the long-term. Some concerns of others are the immediate visual impacts, if any, management of such, disturbance to recreationists (e.g. helicopter logging), and opportunities to improve trails and collaborate on habitat and recreational enhancements.

***The Ira Spring Trail, an area where some thinning, trail enhancement and habitat work may occur due to the Hansen Creek Proposal***



***Hansen Creek Stakeholder Group discussing thinning techniques, habitat planning and related items on the Pratt Lake Trail***

**ALEA Grant Project Review:** Biologist Milner reviewed and scored more ALEA grant proposals. A total of 94 proposals have been uploaded for review and scoring. Final evaluations will take place on April 15 & 16.



## **Wildlife Areas**

**Tennant Lake Boardwalk Tree Pruning:** Manager Kessler, Natural Resource Tech Deyo, and a Master Hunter volunteer worked pruning vegetation along the Tennant Lake boardwalk to improve the trail. They also removed some vegetation at the lake overlook to improve the view of the lake.

**Nooksack Unit Parking Area Cleanup:** Manager Kessler collected garbage from the Nooksack Unit parking area. He also found medal thieves had stolen 120 feet of ½” cable from the parking lot boundary.

**Intalco Unit Archery Range:** Manager Kessler coordinated with the Custer Sportsmen’s Club on the Intalco Archery Range. He ordered in an ADA Accessible Porta Potty for the archery range.

**Skagit ESA Restoration and Waterfowl Management (ERWM) Plan:** Program Manager Link, Projects Coordinator Brokaw, and Habitat Planner Jenna Friebel met with the Western Washington Agricultural Association (WWAA) to discuss a plan to secure waterfowl hunting opportunity and farmed forage in the Skagit delta in light of ongoing estuary restoration projects. The WDFW ERWM Team then met to discuss the next steps to implement the plan, including outreach to additional stakeholder groups.

**Samish Unit Enhancement Project:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw drafted responses to comments received through the Special Use permit application process. Three comments were received and are generally supportive of the project. There were a few requests to add features to the plans for additional habitat and one concern regarding water quality related to shellfish in Samish Bay.

**Skagit Waterfowl Program:** Meis and Cosgrove coordinated with volunteers, prepped equipment, and ferried equipment to the Island Unit to begin initial field preparations for agricultural enhancements. Cosgrove began disking areas in four fields on the Island Unit that were unseasonably dry due to low river levels and mild weather.

## **Private Lands/Access Management**

**Blind Removal:** Otto continued waterfowl unit breakdowns in Whatcom and Skagit Counties. All materials were cleaned and delivered to storage for the off-season.

**Spring Bear Hunt:** Biologist Hans worked on coordinating a spring bear hunt hunter meeting with Biologist Milner, Fenner, and Caldwell. Biologist Hans also spent time emailing the appropriate parties for meeting attendance. Biologist Hans worked on a final spring bear hunt contract and created maps via ArcMap for the contract. Supervisory Biologist Caldwell coordinated with DNR and WDFW staff to meet and discuss access and management changes during the 2015 Spring Bear Hunt. This meeting will take place on 3/18/2015.

**Timberlands Management and Maintenance:** NRT Otto installed a small reader board at the entrance of a local timber company property. He replaced the older, rotten sign that had fallen over. WDFW staff use this sign to post information and restrictions for different hunting activities within the unit.

**Whidbey Island Pheasant Release Site Meetings:** Supervisory Biologist Caldwell met with several landowners on Whidbey Island to discuss pheasant release sites, management strategies, and needs for the future. All landowners expressed a willingness to continue on with the program. Follow-up discussions will be held in June and July.

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

**Hunter Education:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey conducted the final Pre-Service Training (PST) session for four hunter education instructor applicants at the Boy Scout Camp Pigott. Dazey also used this PST session to show new coordinator Aaron Garcia how to conduct a PST session. Coordinator Dazey contacted the two instructors in Region 4 who still have not submitted the required 2014 Chief Instructor Financial Reports to Olympia. Messages were left and attempts to contact are ongoing.

**Master Hunter Support:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey contacted the CORT coordinator to work on getting CORT classes scheduled in the North Region 4 area. These classes are required of Master Hunter applicants before they can certify. Many Master Hunter applicants are eager to satisfy this requirement.

**Volunteer Coordination:** Volunteer Coordinator Dazey recruited volunteers to assist Region 4 staff on several projects, including fence removal on Ebey Island, a Snoqualmie Wildlife Area usage survey, surveying the Upper Snoqualmie Valley Elk Management Group, Duck Blind removal in the Skagit area, and scanning archival slides for the Wildlife Division at Region 4. Coordinator Dazey also did a presentation at the Sammamish Trails BSA roundtable on the availability of projects for Boy Scout and Cub Scout units on our wildlife areas and also Eagle Scout projects.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Wings Over Water:** Biologist DeBruyn manned a viewing station at the end of the Blaine pier to point out birds to attendees of this annual festival. Loons and Grebes were the main attractions with three species of each making appearances.

**North Cascades Ecosystem Grizzly Bear EIS Scoping Meetings:** Manager Link, Biologist DeBruyn, and Biologist Yarborough attended the North Cascades Ecosystem Grizzly Bear EIS Scoping meeting at the Bellingham Public Library.

Representatives of The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The National Park Service, The U.S. Forest Service, the Department of Natural Resources, and Conservation Northwest were all present. The meeting was well attended by the public. Staff assisted Division Manager Becker answering questions regarding the State's role in the process.

*Acting Diversity Division Manager Penny Becker answering questions at the North Cascades Ecosystem Grizzly Bear EIS Scoping meeting in Seattle*



### Wildlife Areas

**Master Hunter Volunteers:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continues to enlist Master Hunter volunteers provided by Region 4 Hunter Education /Volunteer Coordinator Steve Dazey. Ten volunteers have signed up for two projects that are starting soon. One is a fence removal project at Ebey Island. The other is a parking lot monitoring project that will focus on user groups at the four pheasant release units.

**Skagit Wildlife Area Headquarters:** Manager Rotton has been coordinating with Dike District #22 Commissioner John Wolden and CAMP Engineer Ray Berg regarding the need for a trash rack to be installed on the Wiley Slough pump station. Permitting needs are being reviewed and cost estimates for the supplies are being gathered by Wildlife Area staff. Manager Rotton contacted local farms to inform them of lease opportunities that are available this season and delivered bid packets to interested parties. One bid opening occurs on the 16<sup>th</sup> and the other on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March. Manager Rotton reviewed Migratory Bird stamp proposals in preparation for the WDFW Migratory Bird Stamp Proposal review and ranking process. Rotton contacted all the Region 4 staff with proposals to have summary information available for the meeting this week in North Bend.

**Leque Island Unit:** Meis met with the lessee for the Leque Unit to fill out temporary use permit, so the lessee may begin to place sub-surface ditches to better drain the agricultural fields.

**Samish River Unit:** Manager Rotton contacted Skagit County regarding the Clean Samish Initiative to make sure the WDFW is doing everything possible to improve compliance related to concerns about impacts of Wildlife Area users.

**Fir Island Farms:** Meis treated noxious weeds at the Fir Island parking lot area and at the Headquarters Unit parking lot areas and shop area.

**Samish Unit:** Cosgrove coordinated with a Master Hunter to fulfill some volunteer hours cleaning up duck blinds and dikes at the Samish Unit. Cosgrove monitored field and pond drainage at the Samish Unit. Manager Rotton completed the Samish sharecrop lease agreement and forwarded for approval.

### **Wildlife Conflict Management**

**Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman worked on finalizing language to a Day Creek area fencing contract. The contract will encompass approximately 37 acres. WCS Witman also collected parts from elk harvested in the Acme and Concrete areas under a damage permit. Lastly, WCS Witman hazed approximately 5,000 to 7,000 snow geese grazing on agricultural field in Skagit Valley and on Fir Island. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and WCS Smith met with a tribal biologist in District 12 to discuss elk damage and management strategies. WC Supervisor Caldwell coordinated with Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands (WCT) staff to obtain maps and keys to assess black bear damage. WCS Witman will meet with WCT staff next week to gather the materials.

**Landowner Meetings:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with several landowners in Day Creek, Sedro Woolley and Concrete to discuss long term plans for elk exclusionary fencing, DPCA contract renewal, and elk grazing on new pasture grass. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and WCS Smith met with landowners in District 12 to discuss elk damage and management strategies. WC Supervisor Caldwell spoke with two landowners to discuss measures that the landowners could take to prevent deer from damaging ornamental shrubs, flowers, and gardens.

**Sierra Pacific Industries Meeting:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and WCS Witman met with Sierra Pacific Industries Forester Sand to tour their lands and discuss elk damage, habitat management, and game management issues. During this meeting Forester Sand showed Conflict staff fresh elk damage and elk forage enhancement plot locations.

**Food Processor Meetings:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman met with local meat processors to go over procedures for processing game animals taken on damage permits.

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

**The Nature Conservancy Follow-up:** Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell contacted The Nature Conservancy (TNC) staff to inform them of disciplinary actions on hunters that were caught violating site rules on their property. Caldwell also informed TNC staff of harvest success, use, and satisfaction results on their enrolled Waterfowl Quality Hunt site. They were very pleased with the results.

## **Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordination**

**Teaching Team Evaluations:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey attended sessions with two different teaching teams to evaluate the teams' instruction. Both teams were doing an excellent job delivering the hunter education material to their students. One team teaches at the Issaquah gun range and the other team teaches at Kenmore gun club.

**Spanish Language On-Line Evaluation Quiz:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey consulted with two Spanish speaking instructors on the agency's new Spanish language quiz. Both instructors evaluated the quiz and made minor suggestions on language and structure.

**Teaching Team Support:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey assisted two teams to order their teaching supplies from the Olympia warehouse. Supplies will be delivered to the teams after they arrive. One of the teams is a new team from the Oak Harbor area that Coordinator Dazey has been working to restart. The other is an established team in the Black Diamond area.

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

**Required Training:** All staff are working on completing the mandatory Sexual Harassment Awareness and Prevention and Ethics in State Government training.

**Professional Development:** Biologist Kelsey took part in a webinar which discussed future waterfowl distribution predictions with climate change. This webinar was interesting because aspects of the discussion could impact hunting dates.

**Survey Routes and Gate Checks Training:** Biologist Hans met Technician Otto at Lake Terrell for a tour of the Whatcom County sites. Technician Otto trained Kelsey on how to take blinds and explained the difference between the permanent, stand up, and lay out blinds. Biologist Hans continued her familiarization with the region training by spending a few hours each day driving Skagit and Snohomish Counties. Technician Otto gave Biologist Hans a full day tour of the Sierra Pacific Industries land, roads, and gates to prep for the upcoming spring bear hunt.

## **REGION 5**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Klickitat Spring Deer Surveys:** Biologists Anderson, Bergh, Davis, McDonald, and Van Leuven, along with Volunteer Cady, completed the four road-based spring deer survey routes in and around the Klickitat Wildlife Area. The survey was done earlier than normal this year because of the warm temperatures and early green up. Weather during the survey was calm, clear, and warm. A total of 350 deer were observed, along with several coyotes and golden eagles. Data will be summarized next week.



*Klickitat group of deer on the horizon*



*Sunset along the Grayback Road*

**Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Survey:** Biologists Stephens and Holman conducted a hoof disease prevalence survey on private industrial forestland. The landscape was a mosaic of production forests of various ages. Two groups of elk were encountered during the effort. One animal out of seven was observed limping. All data generated from this spring effort will be submitted to Hoof Disease Coordinator George and compiled with efforts from volunteers. The survey involves locations throughout southwest Washington, encompassing private and public lands as well as different habitat types. The effort to document any discernible difference in the prevalence of the hoof disease condition geographically will continue through April.

### Wildlife Areas

**Fuels Reduction Project:** Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Technician Davis monitored work activity on Phase I of the fuels reduction project, which was publicly visible along the Glenwood Highway. The contractor has hired crew people to cut small trees, prune



limbs from trees that are to be retained, and pile slash to be mulched. This particular segment of the work area is nearly finished. Passersby have commented on the improvement they are seeing in the WDFW forest land along the highway and neighbors of the Wildlife Area are especially pleased.

*Overstocked trees in fuel break area – example of slash and area pre-thinning treatment*

***Fuel break during treatment while thinning brush are being mulched***

**Grazing Permits:** Klickitat Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven met with Habitat Biologist Johnson and Fish Biologist Byrne to tour a grazing permit area in the lower Klickitat River Canyon. The purpose of the site visit was to do an environmental assessment of the site prior to issuing a permit. Early wildflowers are beginning to bloom and it was a pleasant day, although ticks were in abundance.



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

**Private Lands/Access**

**Public Access:** Conflict Specialist McDonald fielded phone calls from hunters about turkey hunting in Klickitat County.

**Vancouver Lake:** The Vancouver Lake entrance gate, boulders, and bathroom were all painted with lots of graffiti. Access staff Rhodes repainted all these areas and also power washed the restroom roof and outside walls.



***Vancouver Lake graffiti***

**Modrow Bridge and Beginners Hole:** The Cowlitz Fly Anglers Club in Longview, WA have initiated a conservation program in Washington on the Cowlitz and Kalama Rivers to recover monofilament line in heavily fished public access areas that can trap both adult and juvenile fish, as well as birds and animals. The project involves placing monofilament recovery tubes on the Kalama River at the Beginners Hole and Modrow Bridge boat ramps. The recovery tubes were constructed and installed this week by the Cowlitz Fly Anglers and the club will perform maintenance on a regular basis. The funds for this project are from a grant from the International Federation of Fly Fishers (IFFF) and the local club.



*Monofilament recovery tubes*

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

### Wildlife Conflict

#### **D-10 Wildlife Conflict**

**Otters:** Conflict Specialist Conklin worked with the WDFW Fish Program to move net pens containing trout for the opening of fishing season on Mineral Lake. The pens were moved into deeper water to deter River Otter damage. Conklin attached a critter gitter onto the pens hoping the alarm will scare the otters away. A game trail camera was mounted near the pens to capture the reaction of the otters when they set the alarm

off. Hopefully this will help protect the fish until they can be released into Mineral Lake.

#### *Mineral Lake net pens*

**Cougar:** Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to a cougar depredation call in Randle. The land owner had been working with WDFW Enforcement and called Conklin to get further advice on how to better protect his sheep. Conklin advised the land owner on how important it is to keep the new born lambs close to the loafing sheds even after the lambs are weaned from the bottle.



**Elk:** Conflict Specialist Conklin issued a kill permit to a land owner experiencing significant elk damage to crops in the Boistfort Valley area. The land owner typically grows a large amount of hay for local farmers. The elk have come in and ultimately “mowed down” the potential crops for this land owner. In addition, Conflict Specialist Conklin measured the grass inside an exclusionary fence on a farm in Morton. There was a significant difference in growth of the

protected grass compared to the rest of the pasture. Unfortunately this farmer suffers both Canada goose and Elk damage to his pastures.

### *Elk exclosure*

### **D-9 Wildlife Conflict**

**Successful Youth Hunter:** Below is a photo of a successful youth hunter in the February East Klickitat/GMU 382 hunt. Her father inquired about good locations to take his daughter hunting, and Conflict Specialist McDonald connected them with a farmer who has a large amount of deer on an alfalfa-barley field.



### *Successful Youth Hunter*

### **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 5<sup>th</sup>, with 123 elk being observed.

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

**Mortality:** None 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:** Drought conditions are in effect in District 9 with little precipitation this past week. Snowpack is around 34% 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 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. Surveys on the Klickitat Wildlife Area indicate good fawn survival from this past mild winter.

**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 confirmed last week that Oregon Spotted Frogs continue to persist on Stoney Creek, Thurston County. After failed attempts to access the oviposition site located in 2006 from various neighboring properties, Tirhi eventually received permission to access and was able to conduct a thorough survey of available habitat along this section of Stoney Creek (southwestward of Dempsey Creek). GPS coordinates were taken for two clusters and a single mass and egg vouchers taken for genetic confirmation. The previous site used in 2006 is now completely covered with reed canary grass and no egg masses were located. Thank you to biologist Salzer for keeping this location/need on the radar. Data forms will be submitted at the close of the season.

***Oregon Spotted Frogs confirmed egg-laying again on Stoney Creek, Thurston County. This is the first confirmation since 2006.***

Biologist Tirhi met with headquarters staff and Wildlife Area Manager Belson to tour the West Rocky Prairie Wildlife Area Oregon Spotted Frog oviposition areas and plan future habitat enhancement project using funds acquired by Biologist Hays thru a Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program State Lands Enhancement Grant. Several projects were planned, including increasing the area used for ovipositioning that will be mowed (reed canary grass) each year, constructing another deep water pond for summer-wintering habitat in the same design as the existing pond, bringing in cattle to graze reed canary grass in the easternmost wildlife area to release native wetland plants, cutting willow and alder that are invading the northeastern wetland, and reconnecting small puddles in the northeastern wetland that are being used for egg laying but don't appear to have connectivity for tads/juveniles to migrate outwards.



District 11 staff completed surveys for Oregon Spotted Frog breeding in Thurston County. Survey data were compiled and sent to the corporate database manager in Olympia.

Biologist Michaelis and Officer Mark James conducted another boat survey for Oregon Spotted Frogs in the lower Black River and portions of the Chehalis River. They located an egg mass near the confluence of Cedar Creek and Chehalis River. Eggs will be collected to confirm through DNA. If tests confirm, it will be the first documented presence of Oregon Spotted Frogs in Grays Harbor County. The last time Biologist Michaelis discovered such egg masses was in 2010 near Mima Creek in Thurston County with retired District Biologist Max Zahn.

Biologists Michaelis and Sundstrom also conducted a survey for Oregon Spotted Frogs and their egg masses in the lower portion of the Black River. No frogs or egg masses were observed. One survey remains and it is evident that low flows this year has reduced the amount of favorable spotted frog habitat to search.

**Western Pond Turtle:** Hatchling Western Pond Turtles emerged from two nests this week at a Pierce County recovery site. One nest had a clutch of eight and the second had a clutch of four hatchlings. The mild winter and unseasonably warm weather the past two weeks likely promoted the hatchlings' activity. This is the first documentation of hatchling western pond turtles emerging in spring at this site. Eight nests remain and are regularly monitored for hatchling emergence.

*Western Pond Turtle hatchlings emerging from the nest in Pierce County*

**Olympic Peninsula Wildlife Technical Group Meeting:**

Biologists McMillan, Murphie, Ament, Novack and Michaelis participated in the Olympic Peninsula Technical Meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup> in Blyn. These meetings began in the mid- 1990s as a way to better share and direct data collection, collaborate on research projects, and address any other issues which may be a concern to the Olympic Peninsula. In addition to WDFW staff, this inter-agency meeting included participants from the WA Department of Natural Resources, Olympic National Park, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Olympic Peninsula Tribes, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, and Green Diamond Resources. Topics discussed varied, but included status on state hunting season proposals, wolf management, elk hoof disease, ungulate monitoring activities, tribal ungulate research, fisher monitoring, and coastal raptor surveys. Biologist Ament assisted Tribal Biologist Tim Cullinan by providing him with seventeen pages of notes that she took at the meeting.



**Fisher Project Meeting:** After the Olympic Peninsula Wildlife Technical Group meeting, Patti Happe from Olympic National Park met with all biologists working on the fisher project. She

provided an update about the results from last season, discussed improvements to survey forms, and made a request for any needed gear.

**Black-tailed Deer Study:** The District 16 Pysht cluster (Port Angeles to Sequim Foothills) includes six does with Vectronic collars (five captured in 2015 have VITs, one captured in 2014 did not), four does with fawn collars (3-2014 fawn captures, 1-2013 fawn capture), and one buck with a fawn collar (2014 fawn capture). No known mortalities were detected the week of March 8<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>. Biologist McMillan was able to get the four recently dropped off doe collars delivered to Olympia. HR Consultant Michael Sanchez was willing to transport the collars from the WDFW Port Townsend office to the NRB. Scientist Researcher Dr. Rice got the collars and will be downloading the stored data.

The Mason cluster has seven does and one fawn currently on air. As designed, the collars on two does from the Satsop dropped off last week. However, five new does were collared in this cluster and will be monitored for up to two years. Three fawns collared last spring in the Satsop are still transmitting.

Biologists Novack and Michaelis participated in capturing female Black-tailed deer in Capitol Forest as part of Dr. Cliff Rice's study. Five deer were captured and equipped with GPS-collars and VIT transmitters. Biologist Michaelis conducted additional night darting operations with Research Scientist Rice. They darted and collared three more does, completing the sample size targeted for this area. Olympia staff and other volunteers also participated.

**Trumpeter Swan Project:** The Swan Monitoring volunteers report the following - *Kendra and I did our count on March 11<sup>th</sup>. We had a total of 99 swans, probably all Trumpeters. There were 40 (8 juveniles) off the Port William's road in the Smith farm fields, pretty far back but we got a good look on the lavender farm road that goes into that area. There were 59 (6 juveniles) in the middle of the Clapp farm fields off Anderson.*

This is the highest count for the 2014 -2015 season. Martha Jordan reports: *The swans are indeed moving north from southerly wintering areas. Your place is right on that path. Surveys in the south areas show the swans are moving out or have moved out. In addition, we have swans that will move from Skagit County, maybe Snohomish and King, which may cross over to your area on their way north (collar sightings show this has happened in the past).*

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

**Wildlife Conflict:** Biologist Novack visited an Eatonville area farmer regarding elk damage. His freshly seeded hay field was thoroughly impacted by a group of 40+ elk that resided on the property during the winter. Advice and a pyrotechnics launcher were provided. Master Hunters will be deployed if requested. Novack also continued to provide oversight to Master Hunters operating in Thurston, Mason, and Pierce Counties.

Novack had discussions with a Graham area farmer regarding the twenty-four bull elk that have taken almost full-time residence on his property. The farmer requested a letter from the agency regarding goals and objectives for elk management near Graham.

Biologists Novack, Michaelis, Harris, and Sundstrom assisted Region 5 staff with a training session and registration event for volunteers participating in the hoof disease prevalence survey.

Biologist Novack responded to a sheep operator in Clallam County. The sheep farmer has a history of livestock depredations, including some coyote killed sheep confirmed by WDFW in 2014. His sheep have started to lamb and one lamb has disappeared. He advised the operator to contract with some skilled trappers to remove coyotes from the property. A contact number was given for USDA-Wildlife Services in Poulsbo for further assistance. He also provided guidance to a Jefferson County landowner on how to construct a deer-proof fence. The landowner reported success afterwards.

### **Other**

Along with staff from the WDFW Fish and Habitat Programs, Biologists Novack and Michaelis attended an agency booth at the annual Horns and Hooks sportsman show in Elma. Various questions were fielded and "Herman," our collared Roosevelt's bull, was an attraction as usual.