

Wildlife Program

Week of March 16-22, 2015

SCIENCE DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Agency Strategic Objectives

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

Matt Vander Haegen and staff from Audubon Washington along with volunteers from eastern Washington Audubon chapters completed training sessions for citizen science birders on 6-7 March in Richland and 20-21 March in Wenatchee. The Sagebrush Songbird Survey project was co-created by staff at Audubon Washington and WDFW with a primary goal of collecting data on the current distribution of sagebrush songbirds within the remaining areas of sagebrush steppe in eastern Washington. Secondary goals of this project are focused on building relationships, including the development of a strong, multi-level partnership among WDFW science and outreach staff, the Audubon Washington Conservation Program, and the Audubon chapters of Eastern Washington. This project provides an opportunity for Audubon chapters to work together to address a conservation issue of concern, as well as provide outreach and community science training opportunities for Audubon members. Results from the pilot project completed in 2014 will be presented in a poster at the Northwest Scientific Association Conference in Pasco.

Poster Abstract

SONGBIRD DIVERSITY OF SAGE-STEPPE HABITAT IN EASTERN WASHINGTON: PRELIMINARY RESULTS FROM A COMMUNITY-SCIENCE RESEARCH PROGRAM. **Lori Wollerman Nelson**, Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, PO Box 1900, Richland, WA 99352; **Christi Norman**, Audubon Washington, 5902 S Lake Washington Blvd S, Seattle, WA 98818; **Matthew Vander Haegen**, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Wildlife Program, Science Division, 600 Capitol Way North, Olympia, WA 98501.

In 2014, we launched a pilot program in which non-scientist volunteers surveyed sage-steppe habitat for songbird diversity. Using 14 sites in Benton and Franklin Counties in Washington State, we focused especially on the abundance of five species: three sagebrush-obligate species (Brewer's sparrow, Sagebrush sparrow, and Sage thrasher) and two grassland species (Vesper's and Grasshopper sparrows). Volunteers were trained in classroom and field environments before the surveys began. Volunteers conducted surveys in three time periods (mid-April, early May, and early June) to coincide with the breeding periods of the target species. Each site was visited several times during each time period. Working in groups of 2-5, volunteers counted all birds seen or heard over a 3 min period at a pre-determined sampling location (stationary counts). Environmental variables, including sagebrush cover and windspeed, were also recorded. Groups counted all birds seen or heard during the walk to and from the sampling location (traveling

to/from counts). Each group entered their data into pre-established ebird hotspots (ebird.org) after completing their survey. Volunteers reported a total of 74 species across all sites; the most commonly encountered species was the Western meadowlark (119 observations). The most diverse site had 24 species, the least diverse had 4 species. We observed at least one of the target species at 11/14 sites. This program is expanding to seven Audubon chapters in eastern Washington in 2015. Goals of the program include establishing current distribution of key sagebrush and grassland passerines in eastern Washington and raising awareness of sagebrush songbird conservation.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Greater Sage-grouse: Biologist Derek Stinson facilitated staffing for a Greater Sage Grouse capture and translocation from southern Oregon to Lincoln County, Washington, scheduling personnel from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and volunteers. Trapping and transport was led by Region 1 District Biologist Mike Atamian and Research Scientist Michael Schroeder. Twenty males and twenty female Greater Sage Grouse were captured between 17-20 March.

Oregon Spotted Frog Inventory and Monitoring: The 19th annual Oregon Spotted Frog egg mass count at Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve took place on March 16. Participants included WDFW biologists Lisa Hallock and Stefanie Bergh, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Natural Areas ecologists David Wilderman and Carolyn Wright, and USFWS biologists Deanna Lynch and Shirley Burgdoft. This long-term dataset is important for understanding population trends and year-to-year variation in breeding behavior. For the first time, a second survey will be required because water levels rose so high after the egg masses were laid that biologists were unable to find egg masses at three of the main breeding areas.

Western Pond Turtle Recovery: Biologist Lisa Hallock [by conference call] and Acting Diversity Section Manager Penny Becker [in person] attended a two-day Western Pond Turtle conservation workshop in Oakland, California. The conference was held by The Association of Zoos & Aquariums' (AZA) Saving Animals from Extinction (SAFE) program. As the conservation arm of AZA, the SAFE program will support and bolster the conservation work already being done by various stakeholders for selected species, including the Western Pond Turtle. The meeting was facilitated by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and attended by thirty-four participants from Washington, Oregon, California, and Baja California, Mexico. Participants included biologists from state and federal government, three universities, eight zoos, Behler Chelonian Center, Conservacion de Fauna del Noroeste, The Wildlife Project, and Oregon Wildlife Institute. In addition to attending the workshop, Becker and Hallock provided a presentation on the status of Western Pond Turtles in Washington.

REGION 1

Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Project: Biologists Atamian, Lowe, Schroeder, Smith, Doloughan (BLM), Lowe (BLM), McPherron (USFWS), Thorburn (Commissioner), and several volunteers traveled to south-central Oregon to capture sage grouse from several leks in the Hart Mountain area. Forty birds (twenty males, twenty females) were captured in four nights and translocated to Swanson Lakes Wildlife Area in Lincoln County to augment the population. One male died during transport. This is the first mortality during transport we have had on this project. The project began in 2008 and 280 sage grouse have been translocated to date. All females were fitted with a VHF transmitter and will be monitored throughout the year for survival and productivity.



Leks were located and surveyed in the early morning hours prior to nighttime capture



Male sage grouse just removed from capture net



Male sage grouse receiving colored bands for identification

Colville Junior High School: Biologist Shepherd gave a presentation concerning wolf biology and management to the advanced 7th grade science class.

Wolf Presentation: Supervisor McCanna was invited to the Asotin County Conservation District annual meeting to present on wolves. McCanna gave an hour long PowerPoint on wolf identification, statewide wolf status, and preventative measures to forty-one attendees.

Whitman County Wildlife Workshop: Biologist Lewis and Conflict Specialist Bennett conducted wildlife informational presentations in Colfax, WA. Topics presented by Lewis and Bennett included WDFW access programs, wildlife habitat restoration programs, deer and elk crop damage issues, and wolf identification and information. The meeting was hosted by the Whitman Conservation District.

Turkey Issues: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley continues to work with numerous upset homeowners in Walla Walla and Dayton regarding problem turkeys. “The gobbling starts at daylight and continues all day long” say most of the homeowners. They also said “it’s impossible to put down fresh beauty bark because the turkeys just love to spread the bark all over the yard looking for feed.” We hope to trap some more this week if the birds go back to feeding on our bait site.

Walla Walla Turkeys

Wildlife Conflict

Rules Review:

Conflict Specialists Shepherd, Bennett, Rasley, Hand, Biologist Earl, Supervisor McCanna, and Region 1 Wildlife Program Manager Robinette spent Wednesday in St. John

to review the draft changes to the WACs for wildlife interactions. The group made several comments on the WACs and sent them off for additional review.



Fishing Access site maintenance: Access Manager Young conducted routine maintenance at the fishing access areas at the 4th of July, Deer, Eloika, Hog Canyon, Rock, Newman, Liberty, and Silver Lake access sites. Someone tagged the restroom door at the Deer Lake access site. Thankfully it was a poor grade of paint. Before and after:



WT Wooten WA – Abels Ridge Food Plot: AWAM Dingman and NRW2 Christian checked the food plots on Abels Ridge that were disked up last fall. No grass was coming up yet to spray but due to the predicted dry conditions it was decided to get the food plots seeded soon to take advantage of spring moisture. The food plots were seeded with red clover towards the end of the week.

Seeding red clover in the food plots on Abels Ridge



REGION 2

WOLVES

Lookout Pack Wolf Monitoring: Remote cameras deployed by a USFS contract biologist in the Lookout Pack territory captured photos of three wolves together. This supports our current estimate of three to four animals in the Lookout Pack.



Lookout Pack wolves – Photo by USFS remote camera

Biologist Heinlen checked the tail camera placed near a recent sighting of a lone wolf in the Aeneas Springs area. There were many photos of white-tailed deer and one coyote. However, no photos of wolves were captured.



Coyote – Photo by WDFW Remote camera

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

North Cascades Wolverine Research: The crew closed the final open wolverine trap late last week, ending the capture phase of this ten-year project. We only caught and radioed one wolverine this year (resident male Special K), although we caught him six times in all. In

addition, we had at least four other individuals visiting our traps and we are hoping to get them on film and collect DNA during our run-pole survey effort this summer. In the interim we will conduct aerial den searches in the known territories of three previously collared females, including Mallory, the beauty in the photo to the right.



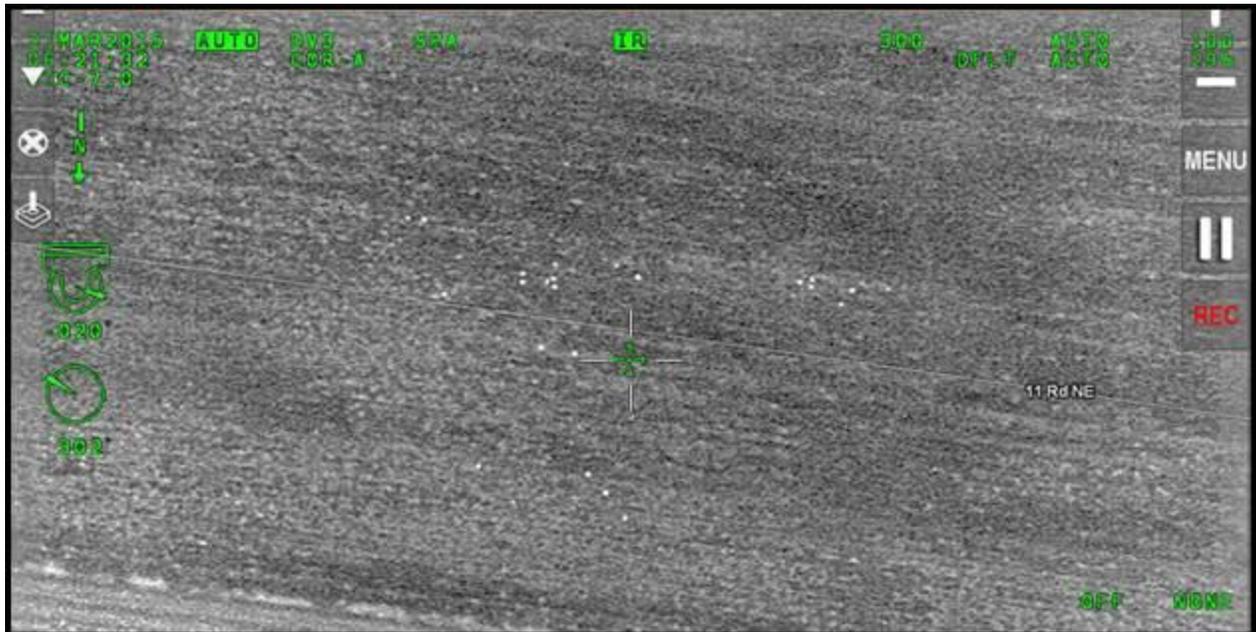
Wolverine Mallory during a previous capture – Photo by Scott Fitkin

Mountain Goat Survey: While conducting spring deer surveys Biologist Heinlen was able to get an opportunistic survey of the Chopaka Mountain Goat herd, finding six animals (five adults and one kid). This herd is a remnant of what used to be a large herd back in the 1940-50s. Conifer encroachment reducing forage availability over the decades is likely the biggest factor in this herd's decline.



Mountain goats on Chopaka Mountain – Photo by Jeff Heinlen

IR Sage Grouse Surveys: In coordination with the Sage Grouse Initiative and BLM, infra-red aerial surveys for grouse are being conducted in Douglas County this week. A detailed summarization will be presented when surveys are complete. However, results to date are encouraging and have resulted in the discovery of new grouse leks. Other species (deer, coyotes, pheasants, and mountain lions) are equally observable with the technique.



Grouse on a lek in Dougals County observed with IR imagery. The image is from 1500 feet in elevation, and from more than a mile from the lek.



Mule deer observed during grouse IR surveys in Douglas County. Deer were observed from 1500 feet in elevation, and in this image the camera is zoomed in on the deer group.

Chelan Mule Deer: Biologists continued spring green-up surveys for mule deer to assess winter mortality, fawn ratios, and prevalence of Hairloss Syndrome. The very mild winter suggests we should see below normal winter mortality. So far herds look to be in good condition, with very few incidents of hairloss, and herds are widely distributed on snow free areas, taking advantage of early green up conditions (away from orchards). To date, about 60% of the routes have been completed with nearly 1200 deer observed, with a very healthy F:A ratio of 60, and prevalence of Hairloss at <1%. More routes will be completed next week and the ratio could change.



Wildlife Areas

Methow Post-fire Forest Management Project: Hauling for the sale finished up this Friday as a contract was finalized to sell cull logs. The harvesters will be finishing up any necessary road work, brush clean up, and removal of equipment necessary over the next couple weeks. While the sale did not manage to treat the full 160 acres due to mild winter conditions, blue stain, and beetle infection, areas where green survivor trees exist and areas near roads and campgrounds were completed. This will dramatically increase safety, operability, and health in the forested units. Proposals were being made and considered by Forester Jamie Bass this week for the removal of remaining slash and otherwise unmerchantable logs to further reduce fuel loading on the landscape. Operability is limited since after spring melt the value of any remaining timber is almost entirely lost, and summer operations have to be considered carefully. The lack of available harvesters to work on “small” or low economic value projects continues to limit options for WDFW staff.

As a side note, while GPSing harvest areas, Forester Bass found that in most of the area back-burned by the Okanogan Prescribed Fire Team during the Carlton Complex infrastructure protection efforts, hearty spring green-up is occurring with an abundance of wildflowers and ceanothus sprouting. This continues to show that even in unfavorable conditions, prescribed fire has a beneficial effect on the landscape.

Chiliwist Wildlife Area Noxious Weed Control: Sinlahekin staff continued to treat noxious weeds on the Chiliwist Wildlife Area. The weeds targeted the most were Scotch Thistle and

Dalmatian Toadflax growing robustly following the Carlton Complex Fire. Assistant Manager Wehmeyer and technician Boulger covered an additional 50 acres of ground and treated a number of large patches (see pictures). Efforts will continue this next week.



Patches of sprayed scotch thistle on the Chiliwist Wildlife Area within the Carlton Complex Fire – Photo by Brandon Boulger

Riparian Restoration: Scotch Creek staff and crew members from the prescribed burn program worked to install a drip irrigation system at Scotch Creek to provide water to approximately 2,400 trees and shrubs planted along Scotch Creek in 2014. Existing shrub rows were cleaned out from last years weed growth and mortalities were marked for re-plants. Out of 2,400 plants from last spring, 1,517 need to be re-placed. The large mortality was from a combination of draught, extreme competition from Reed Canary grass, and browsing from deer and field mice. The WCC crew out of Wenatchee will join us next week to plant 1,000 native Water Birch, Quaking Aspen, Douglas Hawthorn, Wild Mock Orange, Ninebark, and Red Elderberry along Scotch Creek. Intensive maintenance will be needed to ensure these plants survive. The primary objective here is to enhance a critical riparian area for wintering Sharp-tailed grouse habitat.

Carlton Complex Fire Recovery: Ed and Natural Resource Technician Kevin Vallance (Chelan Wildlife Area) spent the week at the Chiliwist Wildlife Area rebuilding watering points. Angel painted T-posts to be used for marking fence corners and other features at the Pateros, Indian Dan Canyon, and Chiliwist Wildlife Areas. Dan reviewed another set of maps/plans for the reconstruction of the Indian Dan Canyon boundary fence. Dan and Construction Project Manager Scott Allen marked fence corners at Indian Dan Canyon to prepare for the reconstruction of the area's boundary fence.

Private Lands/Access

Washington Ground Squirrel: Biologist Finger and Private Lands Biologist Dougherty visited a private land SAFE site in Collier Coulee of eastern Adams County where a pollinator plot (i.e. forbs to a hungry squirrel) is planned for planting this fall. The landowner appears to be amenable to a reintroduction effort and site conditions appear to be favorable (i.e. 240 acres of contiguous uncultivated deep soil habitat), particularly if habitat enhancements are reasonably successful.

Potential ground squirrel reintroduction site in eastern Adams County, currently in a chemical fallow state awaiting fall planting of native perennial bunchgrasses and pollinator forbs – Photo by Rich Finger



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

Wildlife Management

Regulated Access Area Hunter Surveys: Biologist E. Duvuvuei summarized results of the hunter surveys collected at Winchester and Frenchman Regulated Access Areas during the 2014-15 waterfowl season. These surveys were designed to get hunters’ opinions on topics such as: satisfaction with the online reservation system, options for potential changes to the online reservation system, drop-in hunting times, shot shell limits, and blinds. Fifty-nine Hunter Questionnaires were returned at WRAA and forty were returned at FRAA. Duvuvuei also summarized reservation use at WRAA.

It is not clear whether the reservation system adds value to the project. Based on hunter registration cards from WRAA only 67 of 128 reservations (52.3%) were utilized this season. This number was calculated by comparing the data from the online reservation system to the Wild ID numbers recorded on hunter registration cards deposited in the registration box. Due to intense competition, most hunters (86%) secured three or fewer reservations. Because of the apparent low reservation use, there is a need to improve participation for reservation holders to encourage cancellation if they are unable to use their scheduled reservation. Hunters demonstrated a clear preference for a first-come, first-served system for online reservations (i.e. no lottery system). There was a slight preference towards free-roam over other systems of hunter placement (within pond, within stake distance, or specific blind). Drop-in hunters are currently able to access WRAA at 9:00, and the majority of hunters selected 9:00am as the appropriate time for drop-in hunting. Hunters were overwhelmingly against shot shell limits. At FRAA, hunters were overwhelmingly opposed to a reservation system, but hunters were split about the potential use of shot shell limits. A slight majority of hunters supported construction of blinds at FRAA.

Private Lands/Access

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP): Biologist Dougherty has continued working on habitat projects related to the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Much of the recent work involved assessing the impact/benefits of this type of habitat work from past years. Additionally, Biologist Dougherty submitted a proposal to Section

Manager Calkins asking for funds to aid producers in the upcoming General CRP sign-ups. The goal would be for WDFW to provide assistance with some aspects of the sign-up in exchange for hunter access. The assistance would mostly come in the form of cost sharing for wildlife beneficial practices. The future of this proposal is uncertain, but Biologist Dougherty is hopeful that some funding could be provided.

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

Wildlife Management

Sandhill Crane Festival: The 18th Annual Sandhill Crane Festival will take place in Othello on March 27-29. Biologist E. Duvuvuei finalized 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.

Frenchmen Coulee: Biologist Finger met with Assistant Wildlife Area manager Eidson at the Frenchmen Coulee site where US Air Force conducts survival training. Of potential concern is a landing zone which will be used intensively for one day to train in the vicinity of cliffs used by nesting falcons. Falcons are protected by the migratory bird act and any activities resulting in abandonment would be considered 'take'. Finger suggested requiring the permittee to delay this training until as late as possible (preferably after July when falcons are fledged) and to avoid flying any closer to cliffs than the drop zone, which is over ¼ mile (though most cliff habitat in this area is considerably further away) from the nearest cliffs.

The landing zone site is in the vicinity of cliffs, which could potentially be occupied by nesting falcons. Nearest cliffs on left side of photo are approximately 0.28 miles away –

Photo by Rich Finger



Private Lands/Access

Stemilt Elk Fence: A little over two years ago, six landowners approached District Biologist Dave Volsen about their plan to connect existing fenced orchards, with the plan of creating a large drift fence to alleviate orchard damage associated with elk in the area. In an effort to help the landowners, Dennis Beich, at that time the WDFW Regional Director for Region 2, worked with Senator Linda Evans Parlette to acquire funding in the amount of \$210,000, which is what

the landowners estimated it would cost to complete the project. There were many hurdles that needed to be cleared, but the perseverance by many department personnel helped see this project through to completion. Lastly, the timing of the project could not come at a better time! With the planting of >300 acres of new cherry trees, this fence will help deter elk from browsing on the succulent new vegetation that the elk tend to focus on.



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

Wildlife Areas

Hazardous Trees: Maintenance Mechanic Wottlin and Assistant Manager Sample felled several large Aspen trees that had been severely burned at the base, causing them to be a potential hazard to people that will be working in close proximity to the fish screen. Maintenance Mechanic Wottlin dropped the trees and instructed Assistant Manager Sample about how to size up standing trees, make a face cut, and drive in wedges to the back cut, leaving appropriate hinge wood for correct falling procedure. Safety was a top priority and extreme care was taken.

Maintenance Mechanic Wottlin sawing potentially hazardous Aspen trees





Sharp-tailed grouse flushing lek – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW



Columbian sharp-tailed grouse in Douglas County – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW



Sand dune habitat at Frenchmen Coulee
– Photo by Rich Finger

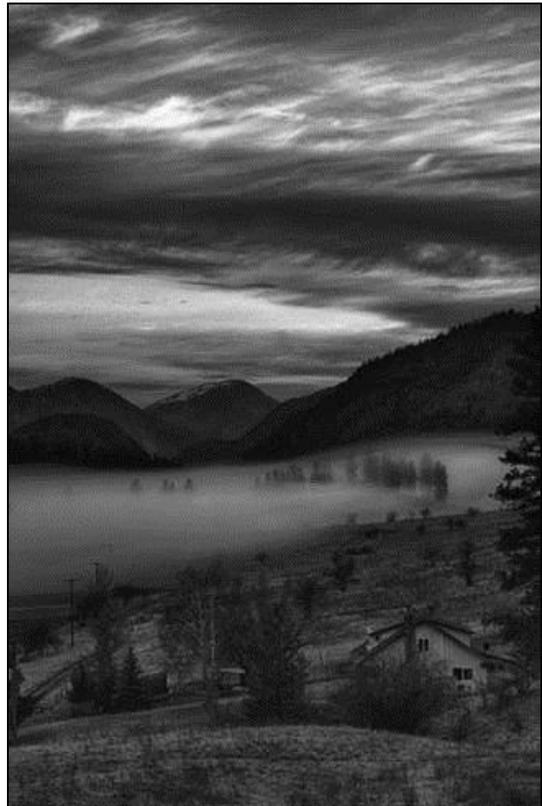


Red squirrel in “squirrel proof” bird feeder –
Photo by Scott Fitkin



Northern Flying squirrel – Photo by Scott Fitkin





From Top to Bottom: Dusky Grouse on Chiliwist Butte, newly blooming spring flowers: bluebells, spring beauties, and arrowleaf balsamroot, a trio of swans over Forde Lake, and a foggy morning near the Sinlahekin Residence — Photos by Justin Haug



Mule deer lazing about at Indian Dan Canyon – Photo by Dan Peterson, with help from Scott Allen



Indian Dan Canyon – Photo by Dan Peterson



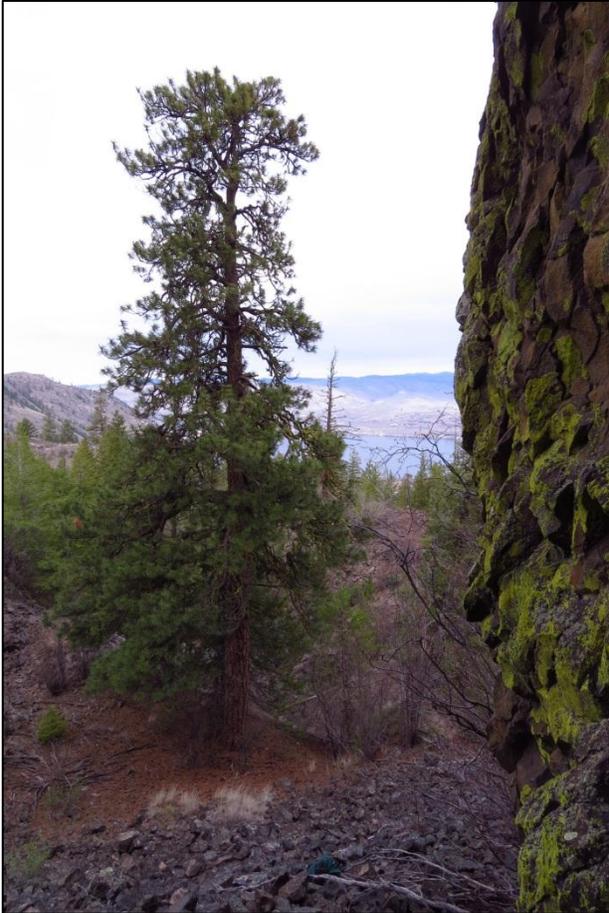
These wretched creatures are out and about again – Photo by Dan Peterson



Bald eagle nest overlooking the confluence of the Columbia and Okanogan rivers – Photo by Dan Peterson



Bald eagle nest overlooking the confluence of the Columbia and Okanogan rivers – Photo by Dan Peterson



REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman attended the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) pre-application review at the Yakima Basin Fish and Wildlife Recovery Board Office. The meeting was informative and provided some good input on the process and needed improvements. After the meeting Huffman discussed the projects with RPM McCorquodale and decided to move both projects forward to the application phase. Project materials are needed in PRISM by April 24th.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart attended the Sagebrush Songbird Survey training in Wenatchee put on by the Audubon Society. WDFW and Audubon are partnering to establish long-term shrub-steppe bird surveys on the Columbia Plateau to track changes in avian communities and update WDFW's Priority Habitat and Species (PHS) data.

Joe Watt Facility: Assistant Manager Hunt and Rocky Mountain Elk Ranger Tech Schnebly met staff from Tarp-it at our Joe Watt facility. Tarp-it picked up tarps rented from them that had been pulled off some of our outside hay during the very short 2015 feed season. Hunt and Schnebly also inventoried our hay on hand, and began some tentative planning for the moving of hay to make room for filling the old drainage moat and improving stack capacity.

Wildlife Management

New District 4 Wildlife Biologist: Jason Fidorra was welcomed as the new District 4 Wildlife Biologist starting March 16th. The occasion was celebrated throughout the week with orientation, policies, and paperwork.

Burrowing Owl WildWatch Web Camera Repair: Biologist Fidorra coordinated with volunteers and WDFW Staff, including Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally, RPM Scott McCorquodale, and Greg Falxa to facilitate the repair of the popular burrowing owl WildWatch web camera, which has been down in recent weeks. The update to the system is expected in the coming week.

Lizard Specimen: Biologist Fidorra received a lizard specimen from Wildlife Conflict Specialist Don Hand which had hitchhiked in a citizen's vehicle back from a trip to Arizona. The species was a young Western Banded Gecko found to be dead upon inspection.

Sage Grouse Lek Count: Private Lands Biologist Stutzman assisted biologists from the Yakama Nation with a Sage Grouse lek count in Yakima County. Six displaying males and one female were observed at the site which is located on private land. WDFW and the Yakama Nation will continue to survey the lek twice per week for the next few weeks.

Sulphur Creek Oil Spill: Stutzman banded ten mallards that had been affected by the recent Sulphur Creek oil spill. Stutzman met Focus Wildlife in Pasco where the rehabilitated birds were being held. Focus staff planned to release the birds later that day. Stutzman was more than happy to do some spring duck banding.

Introductions: Stutzman met with new District Biologist Jason Fidorra to get acquainted and discuss the district's operations.

Deer Surveys: Biologist Bernatowicz ground surveyed deer in PMU 33. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe surveyed the north end of the PMU. Combined, about 500 deer were surveyed with slightly over 50 fawns per 100 adults. Surveys will continue this week. The goal is to estimate fawn recruitment over the entire PMU for incorporation into population models.

Colockum Elk Survey: The Colockum Herd continues to grow and is well above the goal of 4500. There were over 6103 elk in the surveyed portion of winter range and possibly another 700-900 in the west portion on GMU 328. Spike recruitment was at a record level (221). Prior to "True-spike," the average spike recruitment was 77.

Colockum Elk Survey: Biologist Moore completed the Aerial Survey population estimate in PMU 32. The table below compares the last five years of estimates. Overall the population is doing well.

		Total	Cows	Calves	Spike Bulls	Adult Bulls	Total Bulls	B:100C	C:100C
2011	SM	4880	3695	995	121	68	189	5	27
2012	SM	5305	3924	1121	153	107	260	7	29
2013	SM	5712	4057	1265	164	227	391	10	31
2014	SM	6018	4517	1226	154	121	276	6	27
2015	SM	6103	4275	1344	221	264	485	11	31

PMU 33 Deer Survey: Moore flew two additional units in the PMU and ran the Aerial Survey modeling to produce a population estimate. Overall the population seems to be slowly increasing.

2003: 5049+666
2004: 5067+1065
2006: 2633+275
2007: 2549+244
2011: 2961+206
2013: 3364+265
2015: 4168+365

Population estimate by year

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

Wildlife Areas

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: NRT2 Medina went to the Thornton Unit to post new signs on the two kiosks installed last week at parking lots. Staff cleaned up trash at the Case Road parking lot and fixed part of the fence that was down.

Clean Up: Staff took a trailer load of tires to the land fill. Staff also went to the Byron Unit to post (No Entry) signs and continued with HQ clean up.

Kiosk at Rothrock Road parking lot on the Thornton Unit



Kiosk at Case Road parking lot on Thornton Unit

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Hunt worked on assisting Leah Hendrix with permitting information for the upcoming Alpine Back Country Horsemen’s Chapter ride in May. He also sent maps and discussed plans for the LDS Trek coming in June, and denied them early access inside our Murray winter closure area for scouting the route. We may let them spend a day in mid-April or later, once our elk have dispersed more.



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

Wildlife Management

Franklin County Deer Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand inspected for deer damage at a young block of cherry trees in the north Franklin County vicinity. Although some deer activity was observed, damage was minimal.

Kahlotus Area Deer Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand monitored damage permit use and deer activity in several winter wheat fields in the Kahlotus area. Mild weather has deer densities spread out throughout the area which is good news concerning damage impacts.

Benton County Deer Hazing: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to coordinate with a large wine grape operation in southern Benton County to haze deer and minimize damage through non-lethal techniques, as well as limited damage permit and Master Hunter permit hunt utilization.

Wallula Deer Damage Complaint: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a deer damage complaint in an orchard near Wallula. Several hazing strategies were discussed and the owner referred to Region 1 conflict staff for further assistance.

Master Hunter Elk Hazing: Conflict Specialist Wetzel (CS Wetzel) worked with several master hunters this week to haze or harvest elk from locations in Park Creek, Caribou Creek, Reecer Creek, and the lower Coleman Creek areas. Two elk were harvested near Caribou Creek. Hazing and hunting have been moderately effective. Elk leave these areas for a period of days and nights, then return several days later. New elk are also moving through the area and these are hazed as well.

Elk Presence in Hay Field: CS Wetzel was contacted by a landowner in Cle Elum who reported large numbers of elk in a hay field. One small group appears to be resident, while several larger groups are migratory. The landowner was instructed to haze the migrators and only if necessary use a landowner permit on the residents.

Elk Hazing: A landowner in South Cle Elum called CS Wetzel to report elk in his newly seeded timothy. Hazing devices were provided to the landowner and fence construction was discussed.

Cougar Depredation: A landowner near Naneum Creek called CS Wetzel to report a cougar killing her geese and a dog. Advice on avoiding depredations of livestock by cougars was offered and the landowner was encouraged to retain any future animals killed by cougars for possible use in a cougar trap. The incident was referred to enforcement.

Elk on Private Lands: CS Wetzel patrolled the Weaver Road area and located 105 elk on private lands in the High Ranches development. These elk enter a newly seeded alfalfa field each night; the hay grower and landowner were placed in contact with a local master hunter who will use landowner permits to haze and possibly remove an elk from this group.

Wolf Activities: Range Rider Ward reported a possible picture of a black wolf in the Spring Gulch area east and north of Ellensburg. A photo may be available, and he will follow up on obtaining it. No other wolf activity was reported in the area.

Coyote Images: A camera card was recovered from a location in Green Canyon where two wolves were reportedly seen last month. Only large coyotes were seen on captured images both during the day and at night.

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

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Berry spent most of week finishing up road repairs to Bethel Ridge Road out of HQ. Berry cut ditches for drainage and added a few rolling dips to get water off roads. A few spots will need rock in the near future.

French's Canyon Fencing: Assistant Manager Berry and NRW2 Farias finished up the week getting to and from downed fence south of French's Canyon and making necessary repairs. Several rock jacks had tipped over. This fence borders private property where the neighboring landowner likes to cut holes in the fence to allow elk access to sell Master Hunters access. It is unknown if the fence tipped over on its own or if it was done intentionally.



Before and after pictures of elk fence repairs completed on Oak Creek Wildlife Area south of French's Canyon

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart, Assistant Manager Hunt, and Tech Schnebly finished repairs to the livestock fence in the Lower Parke pasture and started repairs on the Vantage pasture. Livestock turn out is scheduled for April 15th in the Lower Parke pasture. Winegeart discussed 2015 grazing monitoring tasks with Range Specialist Burnham.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Colockum staff worked with Grant County PUD and WDFW habitat staff to remove the creosote-soaked pilings at the WDFW ferry landing at Crescent Bar. Considerable effort was required to acquire permits and approval from both agencies to accomplish this work in the short time frame available. The pilings were all that was left of the WDFW ferry operation used by a share-crop farmer to grow grain across the river on the Colockum Wildlife Area. Now in CRP, at one time there was up to 2000 acres in production on West Bar and on the flats both north and south of Tekison Creek. WDFW and Grant PUD took advantage of the low water due to the drawdown of the Wanapum Reservoir to remove the pilings before the water was scheduled to come up again in the next few days.



Colockum Assistant Manager John Hagan cutting ferry pilings at Crescent Bar

REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management



Biologist Yarborough assisted members of the Point Elliott Treaty tribes with the collaborative elk trapping/GPS collaring effort



Biologists Yarborough and DeBruyn, as well as Point Elliott Treaty tribes conducted two days of helicopter elk surveys within the core area of the North Cascades Elk herd

Common Loon Management: Biologist Anderson visited known loon summer resident lakes in District 12. One territorial pair was located occupying what appears to be a dual lake territory: one nesting lake and one feeding/loafing lake. Banding of loons assists in determining this and other use and demographic status of pairs short and long-term.

An adult loon capture net set and decoy with territorial pair coming in to defend

– Photo by WDFW



Marine Waterfowl Aerial Detectability Survey: Assistant District Biologist Cyra worked with Marine Waterfowl Specialist Evenson and a crew from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to begin a detectability test using the USFWS aerial survey platform, a Quest Kodiak amphibious floatplane. The USFWS is using these aircraft and pilot/biologist observers to fly most of their continental waterfowl surveys in North America. These surveys are the first step in helping to determine correction factors for aircraft, survey technique, and observers. Based on techniques that WDFW recently pioneered, these flights use double blind observers and aerial photography to determine a correction factor for the impact the aircraft (a Kodiak turbine) has on waterfowl species, and detection/miss rates of observers. Flights will continue next week.



A USFWS turbine powered Quest Kodiak at Port Angeles



Two cameras image the 50 meter wide survey transect. The strut mounted forward looking camera images the area ahead of the aircraft, the POV camera images the observers view of the transect.

Oregon Spotted Frogs: Biologist Yarborough attended a field training trip to Alpine Meadows with members of the Whatcom Land Trust, and WDOT to look at Oregon Spotted Frog egg masses and discuss survey protocol.



Member of WSDOT, WDFW, and Whatcom Land Trust looking at Oregon Spotted Frog egg masses



Oregon spotted frog egg masses found near Sumas

Sharp-tailed Snake Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra surveyed cover boards placed the last two years in appropriate habitat on Orcas Island for Sharp-tailed Snakes. No snakes were observed on this early season visit. Additional modified cover boards were placed in areas previously identified as known or potential habitat.



Sharp-tailed Snake

Seattle City Light Wildlife Research Grants: Biologist DeBruyn reviewed five proposals for grants from this federally mandated program. City Light is required by the terms of their license agreement to provide funding for research to mitigate effects of their hydroelectric project in the Skagit drainage.

DeBruyn met with the committee and funding for four of the five proposals was approved. Research proposals on cougars/wolves, lynx, and mountain goats were funded.

Lowland Pika Surveys: Assistant District Biologist Cyra completed a second early season visit to the remaining known lowland pika locations to determine early season activity. Pika presence was not observed on this visit. Additional potential lowland pika habitat will be identified this spring with follow-up surveys as the summer progresses.

Wildlife Areas

Ebey Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm met with Sno-Valley Farms to tour the middle and west portion of the Ebey Unit. Crop selection, field layout, access road locations, and infrastructure improvement needs were discussed. This new agricultural lease with Sno-Valley Farms provides for 150 acres of cropland on the Middle and West Lobe of the unit. Additionally, Manager Boehm coordinated with Steve Dazey, Region Four Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator, to establish a crew of Master Hunter volunteers to assist with the removal of obsolete fencing on the unit.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that the Werkhoven Agricultural Lease for ninety acres of cropland is in the final signature phase. This lease agreement provides for approximately thirty acres of corn, barley, and pasture grass retained for wildlife forage and cover. Werkhoven will work the fields and harvest approximately sixty acres of corn, winter wheat, and grass for hay.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw compiled all responses received from Stakeholder Advisory Committee members regarding each of the six design alternatives currently under consideration. Input was solicited from the Committee through March 18th. This compilation of input will be reviewed by the WDFW team that will recommend the preferred design alternative for Leque Island. Additionally, Ducks Unlimited provided cost estimates for each of the six design alternatives. These cost estimates, as well as the Committee input, will be included in an Alternatives Analysis document that will be posted on the project webpage once it is finalized.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Habitat Planner Jenna Friebel, and Waterfowl Section Manager Don Kraege participated in a conference call organized by Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton to discuss waterfowl forage needs on the Fir Island Farm Reserve and adjacent property during and after the estuary restoration project is implemented.

Wood Duck Nest Boxes: Natural Resource Tech Deyo completed building ten wood duck nest boxes using materials purchased with Duck Stamp funds. Deyo installed the boxes on the Lake Terrell and Intalco Units.

Private Lands/Access Management

Decontaminate Field Equipment: Brad Otto decontaminated field equipment, 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

CITES Pelt Sealing Needs: Biologist Anderson met with trappers and hunters to seal bobcat and river otter pelts.

Wildlife Areas

Spencer Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm accessed the dike trail at the unit for debris, tree blowdowns, and invasive vegetation regrowth. Last autumn, volunteers cleared the entire trail of blackberry encroachment and debris. Manager Boehm is currently working with an Eagle Scout whose project will construct and install three benches along the trail for bird watching and duck hunting. Additional vegetation control and weed management plans are in progress for implementation during the early spring growing season.

Skagit ESA Restoration and Waterfowl Management (ERWM) Plan: Projects Coordinator Brokaw assisted Program Manager Link in drafting policy language associated with WDFW's need to continue to provide farmed waterfowl forage and walk-in waterfowl hunting opportunity in light of ongoing estuary restoration projects. This policy will tie into the Skagit ESA Restoration and Waterfowl Management Plan that cross-program WDFW staff have been developing over the past year.

Samish River Unit Wetland Restoration Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton participated in a conference call meeting with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to discuss the preparations needed for project construction scheduled for this summer. The project involves restoring freshwater wetland functions to the site, and is required and funded through an easement owned by NRCS on the property under the Wetland Reserve Program. Brokaw and Rotton are coordinating with the WDFW Capital Asset Management Program (CAMP) to receive cost estimates to determine if

the budget needs to be updated prior to construction. Brokaw contacted the Washington Department of Ecology to get more information on a permit that is needed prior to construction.

Intalco Unit Archery Range: The archery range on the Intalco Unit is now open for the season. Manager Kessler coordinated with the Custer Sportsmen's Club on the Intalco Archery Range.

Maintenance:

Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo repaired and refurbished all of the doors on the Lake Terrell headquarters barn



Private Lands/Access Management

Wildlife Diversity Site Set-up and Outreach: Biologist Hans looked into general diversity site information for future meetings with landowners. Biologist Hans also emailed Private Lands Access Section Manager Calkins to discuss the possibility of diversity site information being made available for the public through the WDFW website.

Private Land Access Monitoring & Management: Biologist Hans and Otto toured the Skagit area to scout out future additions to the WQHP and potential quality pheasant hunting parcels. Biologist Hans and NRT Otto also toured Whidbey Island, visiting the WDFW diversity and deer hunt site. Additionally, Hans and Otto also met with Whidbey Island Trust staff. Initially, the meeting was to introduce Hans to a partner in the area, but the staff mentioned WDFW involvement as managers of a new site they have purchased on the water, near the ferry. The staff said they are very interested in our help and would be in touch sometime during late summer. Biologist Hans will follow-up with the staff this summer regarding their new site in addition to the continued management of the Waterman sites the Trust is purchasing.

Spring Bear Hunt Coordination and Management: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell met with DNR Forester Hurto to tour the Monroe Spring Bear Hunt area and look at access issues/changes for the 2015 season. Several access issues were identified. Caldwell will meet with Biologist Hans next week to make changes to access locations and maps. Biologist Hans finished contacting all spring bear hunt stakeholders and following up with law enforcement staff. Biologist Hans finalized the North Skagit map for hunter use and will make edits based on feedback from Supervisor Caldwell and Otto. Otto worked on prepping hunter packets for the meeting April 11th. These packets will include: hunter access agreements, hunter surveys, tooth and tissue sample materials, maps, and other information related to bear hunting and damage identification. Lastly, Biologist Hans finalizing the 2015 Spring Bear Hunt Hunter Survey.

Private Lands Access Hunting for Elk on Private Land Meeting Coordination: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell coordinated a meeting between Wildlife Conflict Program, Private Land Access Program staff, and a landowner in the Acme area to discuss using the Hunt by Reservation system to hunt elk on a conflict area in GMU 407. This meeting will take place next week.

Waterfowl Season Blind Removal: Brad Otto continued waterfowl unit breakdowns in Whatcom and Skagit counties. All materials were cleaned and delivered to storage for the off-season. Biologist Kelsey assisted with site breakdown.



A damaged permanent blind that will need repairing this field season



Brad Otto worked with Volunteer Jim Green to install seven wood duck nest boxes

Hunter Education & Volunteer Coordination

Hunter Education: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey activated eighteen new classes for teaching teams in Region 4 and assisted instructors in Whatcom County to set up classes on line with To-Be-Determined start dates. Dazey met with a group of new instructors who are interested in teaching classes in Mandarin for the Chinese speaking community. This will pose a number of challenges and is still being assessed as to how we will meet those challenges.

Master Hunter Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey continued his efforts to work with the Eyes in the Woods team to provide the required CORT classes in North Region 4. While CORT classes are required of applicants for the master hunter permit program, the Eyes in the Woods calendar lists no classes in the North of Issaquah in Region 4. Service hours opportunities on several projects were communicated to master hunter applicants so that they can gain their required hours of service and also so that the Department can benefit from their volunteering. Dazey coordinated with Jeff Tatro from the Stillaguamish tribe to get the word out to master hunter applicants of an elk fencing project available for service hours in the Acme area.

Volunteer Coordination: Volunteer Coordinator Dazey made a presentation to a Boy Scout group in the Renton area on the availability of service opportunities with WDFW.

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

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. Additionally, Manager Boehm reports that all of the hunting season signage has been removed at all of the Snoqualmie hunting units and replaced with updated seasonal signage.

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist (WCS) Witman contacted a Master Hunter to collect scientific parts, monitored elk traps, finalized a fencing contract for the Day Creek area and obtained landowner signatures to move forward with fencing on twenty-seven acres of agricultural land. Witman also responded to several landowner calls regarding elk damaging private property and discussed management options with the landowners. Furthermore, Witman continued to monitor snow goose depredation in Skagit County and conducted hazing when necessary. Separately, Witman responded to Whidbey Island complaints regarding habituated deer. Witman determined that the deer are becoming conditioned to apples being placed out at certain times of the day by a neighbor. A meeting will take place on April 21, 2015 in Coupeville, WA to discuss these issues with residents. Lastly, Witman spoke with a landlord who was concerned about crows attacking tenants in a residential apartment complex. The landlord was able to utilize information from the “Living with Wildlife” website to deal with the problem. Tenants are now using another route to enter and exit the building where the crows are not nesting. Bio Smith and Supervisor Caldwell met this week to identify and monitor chronic elk damage areas in and around North Bend. Strategies were discussed to avoid and alleviate future problems in this area.

Farm Bureau Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman contacted the Skagit County Farm Bureau president and discussed recent efforts to assist the agricultural community with elk damage.

Bellingham Deer Issues: Biologist DeBruyn attended a meeting to discuss vehicle/deer collisions in the Whatcom Falls area of Bellingham. In attendance were the mayor of Bellingham, a traffic engineer, a representative of Conservation Northwest, and a concerned citizen. It was agreed that a system of keeping track of road kills would be implemented, modeled after one in use for elk on Highway 20. The city of Bellingham agreed to base engineering decisions on data gathered.

Hunter Education & Volunteer Coordination

Teaching Team Evaluations: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey conducted evaluations of two teaching teams. One team teaches at the Kenmore gun range and the other team teaches at the La Connor fire station. Both teams are doing an excellent job of teaching the next generation of hunters to be safe, ethical hunters. While at the Kenmore range, Coordinator Dazey also presented Chief Instructor Horatio Delgado with a certificate recognizing him having been a nominee for the Terry Hoffer award.

Teaching Team Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey worked to assist teaching teams and also individual hunter education instructors to access the hunter education instructor website, which is password protected. Information on our upcoming state wide In-Service-Training has been posted on the instructor webpage for instructors who are planning on attending. Many questions from instructors can now be answered on the webpage.

Instructor Applicant Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey sent out instructor applicant packets to six new instructor applicants to start them on their way to becoming certified instructors. After passing background checks, a packet of forms and an instructor test to evaluate the applicants hunting and teaching skills level is sent to the applicant. This is followed up with a Pre-Service Training where the final certification process is completed.

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

“Why Farmers and Environmentalists Need Each Other” Webinar: Projects Coordinator Brokaw listened to a presentation from the former Pacific NW regional director of the American Farmland Trust, in which he presented several reasons why the farming industry and environmental groups/agencies need to cooperate in order for both to be successful. The webinar was organized by the Washington Department of Ecology Environmental Assessment Program.

Pheasant Release Program: Biologist Hans read more about the Western Washington Pheasant Release Program, including the summary of the program composed by Biologist Caldwell in 2013. Biologist Hans also researched general information about pheasants, which included several publications on habitat type, in order to potentially assist Biologist Caldwell with future land purchases for pheasant hunting.

Private Land Access Program Staff Meeting: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell coordinated a meeting with staff to discuss the upcoming North Skagit and Monroe Spring Bear Hunts. Specifically, Supervisor Caldwell discussed expectations and duties for the upcoming pre-season Hunter meetings to be held in La Conner and Mill Creek. Some of these expectations and duties included: dates and times of meetings, access modes, GPS locations of access points, hunter packet materials and organization, field work, and time management and communication structures for safety and/or violations found in the field. Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Hans also had a meeting to discuss a list of several tasks for Biologist Hans for the week of 3/16/2015.

Professional Development: Biologist Hans watched several archived webinars from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These webinars included restoration projects in Washington (which included Fisher Slough) and restoration on private lands. Biologist Hans participated in a WDFW webex seminar in order to better understand the current projects of WDFW and what the specific groups of the agency focus on. Stemming from a recent meeting, she also researched articles and websites pertaining to conservation easements. Biologist Hans researched information for Oregon Spotted Frog, including species description, habitat description, life history, habitat status, and conservation status.

Annual Work Planning Meeting: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and RPM Link met to discuss Private Land Access and Wildlife Conflict Program annual work planning.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys: Biologists Stephens and Holman conducted a hoof disease prevalence survey on a mix of agricultural areas visible from County roads and private industrial forestland. One group of elk was encountered during the effort. 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.

Volunteers have been conducting hoof disease prevalence surveys since the beginning of March. Many surveys have been completed and many more are scheduled in the coming weeks.

Columbian White-tailed Deer Translocation: Biologist Holman joined volunteers and staff from the USFWS to translocate deer from the Westport, OR area to Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. This is the third year of the effort to establish a viable population of these endangered deer at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. Trapping by drop-net occurs once per week and this week one doe and one fawn were captured and moved. This brings the total deer translocated for the year to twenty-six.

Columbian White-tailed deer during a capture effort

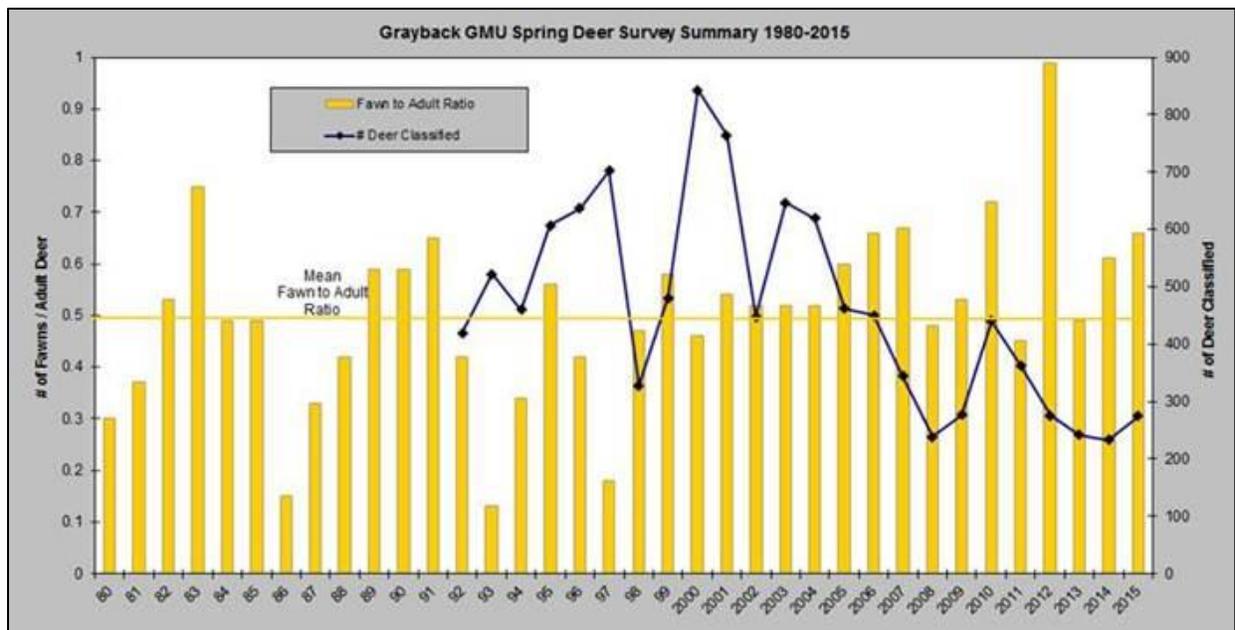


Black-tailed Deer Research Project: Monitoring of black-tailed does and their associated young continues in both the Coweeman and Washougal Study clusters. Currently in the Coweeman cluster, six adult does that were captured in 2014 remain alive and these females have two surviving young. Currently in 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.



Black-tail fawn avoiding detection

Klickitat Spring Deer Surveys: Data from the road-based spring deer survey routes in and around the Klickitat Wildlife Area was compiled this week. Of the 350 deer observed, 275 were classified as adults or fawns, and of those classified eight showed hairloss. The fawn to adult ratio was 0.61, which is above the 36-year average of 0.51. The mild winter likely had a positive impact on fawn survival, although that early spring green-up may have also affected the distribution of deer during the survey. The figure below shows a summary of these surveys from 1980-2015.



John Day Pump Storage Project: Biologist Anderson and Bergh participated in a conference call regarding environmental concerns for a proposed Klickitat County PUD project near John Day Dam on the Columbia River. The project is located in association with the Windy Ridge Wind Farm at Juniper Point. The area is an important raptor breeding and migratory area and is especially important as a golden eagle nesting site. WDFW will provide recommendations for further studies needed to help evaluate the project.

Oregon Spotted Frog Surveys: The annual Oregon Spotted Frog egg mass surveys around the Trout Lake area were conducted this past week. Biologist Bergh assisted Biologist Hallock of the Diversity Division with coordinating an interagency team for the surveys, which take place on both DNR and USFS

ownerships. The weather had been quite dry prior to this weekend when a heavy rain event occurred, flooding areas where the frogs had laid their eggs. Many of the egg masses were found under more than a foot of water, which made for very difficult survey conditions. One site was not surveyed at all because of deep water. If the water recedes enough, a follow-up survey will be attempted next week.



Biologist Hallock counting Oregon Spotted Frog egg masses

Snared Coyote: Conflict Specialist McDonald and Biologist Bergh responded to a call about a coyote stuck in a snare along a highway in Klickitat County. The caller reported that the coyote had been in the illegal snare for an unknown length of time. The caller first observed the coyote in the snare in the morning when getting children off to school. The coyote was calm and submissive while being handled and did not appear to have any serious injuries. The snare was looped over the neck and under a front leg. The snare was removed, and the coyote jumped up and trotted away when released. The snare, photos, and notes were submitted to WDFW Enforcement for investigation.



Snared coyote in Klickitat County

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Mount St. Helens Tree Planting: Wildlife Area staff and volunteers from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation planted 10,000 trees on the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area last week to enhance and protect wintering elk forage areas. An estimated 2,500 trees were planted along a half mile of the riverbank and debris plain of the North Fork Toutle River to enhance the riparian area and for streambank stability and erosion control. About 25 acres of upland habitat were planted with 7,500 trees in areas that were sprayed last fall to remove scotch broom. Planting of the upland areas should help control any re-infestations of scotch broom by shading and these plantings should also help enhance elk forage and browse in the area.



Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation volunteers planting trees on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Fuels Reduction Project: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven checked on the progress of Phase I of this project and found that the work is nearing completion despite the contractor encountering some difficulties moving machinery around due to moist soils and steeper terrain. Manager Van Leuven also drafted documents for the Request for Quotation for Phase II of the fuels project.

In the course of other duties, Manager Van Leuven photographed a waterfall in Canyon Creek and some unusual desert violets. The violets normally have petals in two shades of purple, but these had deep purple and white petals.



Canyon Creek



Desert flowers

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

Private Lands/Access

Public Access: Conflict Specialist McDonald fielded phone calls and emails about turkey hunting. McDonald picked up three bags worth of trash and replaced damaged signs at access sites on Western Pacific Timberlands in Klickitat County. For more information about private farmland and timberlands open to public hunting visit the WDFW public hunting access webpage at http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/hunting_access/private_lands/.

Access

Vancouver Lake and others: Access staff Rhodes sprayed herbicide around bathrooms and paved parking lots on several access sites this week. Rhodes also met with the Department of Corrections inmate crew and collected 100lbs. of trash picked up from Vancouver Lake, Langsdorf, and Shillapoo.

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

D-10 Wildlife Conflict

Otters: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin reviewed 314 pictures taken from a camera placed on a net pen on Mineral Lake after river otters had depredated over 1000 trout in the pens. Conklin had set up an alarm and a trail camera to observe future otter activity after the depredation. The trail camera pictures did not capture a single otter on the docks or net pens. There has been no loss of the trout in the net pens since the alarm and camera have been set and the pens were moved into deeper water.

Depredation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin responded with Officer Schroeder to a farm in Castle Rock that has lost six Kiko Goats, the last of which was close to 90 lbs. Conklin and Schroeder are working with the land owner to further protect the remaining goats. Four trail cameras and one alarm system have been set. If the predator is caught on camera, Schroeder and Conklin will take further action.

Beaver: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to a Toledo resident concerned about beaver dams on a small tributary near State Route 505. The concern of the citizen was that the beaver dams would back up the creek, causing damage to the Highway Bridge and possible flooding. Conklin visited the area of concern and confirmed there was beaver damage to the creek but believes it will not impact the highway. Conklin will follow up with the Department of Transportation to make them aware of the situation.

D-9 Wildlife Conflict

Deer and Elk: Wildlife damage complaints increased greatly in District 9 over the last two weeks. Deer and elk moved out of the trees and onto bright green farm fields. Conflict Specialist McDonald issued depredation permits to four dairies in the Trout Lake Valley to help alleviate elk pressure to spring growth. Master hunters were scheduled to harvest deer on farms in Klickitat County and Clark County. A new Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement (DPCA) was signed with a dairy with 300 elk on their fields and another DPCA was renewed in Klickitat County. An electric fence was moved from one property to another to help reduce deer damage to an alfalfa-barley field.



Elk on a Trout Lake dairy

Missing Rabbits: Conflict Specialist McDonald reviewed trail camera photos from a Washougal property that had two rabbits go missing over two weeks. A cougar was suspected at first because of a deer carcass found on the property, but it seems that their pet mastiff was likely taking the rabbits. There were hours of photos of the mastiff and another dog harassing the rabbits. Photos showed the mastiff jumping up on the cages and shifting the cages around. Recommendations were made to block entrances to the rabbit barn and to keep the dogs in a fenced yard.



Dogs harassing rabbits

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 2,500 to 11,000 feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 and the 8-14 day forecast are for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The 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 below 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: Drought conditions are in effect in District 9 with some precipitation earlier in the week. Snowpack is around 30% for the South Cascades although some new snow was reported above 6500ft.

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: Some recent mortalities have been reported from the Klickitat Wildlife Area with the cause currently unknown. With the lush spring green up it is possible that the reported deer mortalities were associated with dietary changes from winter forage.

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

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys: Biologist Sundstrom conducted two (2) surveys in the Grays Harbor area of assigned survey points as part of the protocol driven hoof disease effort. Locating elk herds while driving a 50 mile distance from the survey point proved to be a challenge and only one (1) small herd was observed. No elk within that herd were observed limping. Surveys will continue for several weeks.

Tsunami Exercise: Biologist Novack had numerous correspondences regarding proposed Tsunami preparedness exercises on beaches occupied by T&E species.

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

Deer Research: Biologist Michaelis conducted one night of darting efforts to collar and install a VIT inside one doe. This was the last doe required to fulfill the sample size needed in Capitol Forest. The distribution of radio collared deer is representative of the various management types found in the forest.

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. Biologist Murphie recovered the two dropped doe collars and checked the status on the remaining fawns in the Satsop and the new does added. No mortalities occurred.

Elk Survey: Biologists Michaelis and Novack attended training with Region 5 staff in Chehalis on the use of the Tough Book computer program used on the upcoming elk survey flights in Regions 5 and 6. Updates were made to the program from previous years. Logistics for Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties were also discussed. Biologist Novack worked on scheduling for the Willapa flights.

Dusky Goose Survey # 5: Biologists Michaelis and Sundstrom conducted the fifth of six scheduled dusky Canada goose surveys. A total of 1020 duskies, with five marked, were observed by both Sundstrom and Michaelis in Pacific County. Sundstrom observed a total of 149 dusky Canada geese and no marked birds in Grays Harbor County. In addition, Biologist Michaelis surveyed select locations in northern Lewis and Thurston County. This year, the focus of these surveys is to document survival of collared birds and document site fidelity. Over the past many years, Biologists Michaelis and Sundstrom have documented many areas in Pacific and Grays Harbor County.

Recent observations on duskies using areas in Thurston and northern Lewis County have been reported. It is thought, however, that these birds are usually in transition and few dusky actually winter in these areas.

The table below summarizes the goose survey results.

	Species															
Date: 3/16/15	Cackler	# Banded	Aleutian	# Banded	Tav/Lesser	# Banded	Dusky	# Banded	Western	# Banded	Vancouver	# Banded	GWF	Snow	Unknown/Other	Totals
Location																
Grays Harbor County	30	0	0	0	173	0	149	2	129	0	2	0	55	3	73	614
North Pacific County	129	0	0	0	507	0	533	0	142	0	0	0	0	2	158	1,471
Totals:	159	0	0	0	680	0	682	2	271	0	2	0	55	5	231	2,085

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

Wildlife Areas

During the last two weeks, during bad weather, staff constructed six kiosks that will be installed at various access points on Region 6 wildlife areas as part of other maintenance when equipment is on site. Three of them are for the Chinook Wildlife Area.

