

Wildlife Program

Week of March 23-29, 2015

SCIENCE DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Agency Strategic Objectives

- A. The ecological integrity of critical habitat and ecological systems is protected and restored.
- B. Washington's fish and wildlife diversity is protected at levels consistent with ecosystem management principles, established in the Conservation Initiative.

Recent Publication

Matt Vander Haegen, Mike Schroeder, and former wildlife biometricians Wan-Ying Chang and Shannon Knapp recent published a paper in the Wildlife Society Bulletin entitled "Avian abundance and reproductive success in the Intermountain West: Local scale response to the Conservation Reserve Program". The paper is currently available online on the Bulletin's early view feature.

ABSTRACT: Conversion of extensive shrubsteppe communities to cropland has greatly reduced the habitat available to grassland and sagebrush-obligate birds in the Intermountain West. In Washington State, approximately 600,000 ha of converted farmland have been planted to perennial grasses, forbs, and shrubs under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), currently the largest-scale effort creating perennial grassland habitat in this region. From 2003-2005 we sampled breeding birds and vegetation characteristics on 48 study sites in CRP and in native shrubsteppe. We used generalized linear models to examine characteristics associated with avian abundance and reproductive success. Abundance of shrubland and grassland birds was more closely associated with site vegetation than either management (planting of native vs. exotic grasses) or landscape factors with cover of shrubs the dominant parameter both for shrubland (positive effect) and for grassland (negative effect) birds. Daily survival rate of 1377 nests in CRP was equal to or greater than that for nests in shrubsteppe and was similar for CRP planted with native vs. exotic grasses. Seasonal reproductive success (young/breeding pair) of 2 focal species, Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*; n = 81 pairs) and Savannah sparrow (*Passerculus sandwichensis*; n = 58), also was similar between CRP and native shrubsteppe. CRP has the potential to significantly increase habitat available to shrubland and grassland birds in the Intermountain West and to increase local populations. Because shrubs take significantly longer than herbaceous plants to achieve a size beneficial to birds, CRP grasslands with a well-developed sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp.) component should be viewed as a long-term investment.

- C. Threatened and endangered fish and wildlife populations are recovered to healthy, self-sustaining levels.

Northern Spotted Owl Site Center Database: WDFW manages 1268 Northern Spotted Owl territories statewide. Biologists Lori Salzer & Ann Potter have been working to update the

Northern Spotted Owl Site Center Database for the Olympic Peninsula. Lori recently analyzed survey data & updated twenty sites within Olympic National Park.

Recent Sage Grouse Publications: Michael Schroeder (WDFW research scientist) and Clait Braun (retired Colorado Parks and Wildlife) authored a paper titled “Age and sex identification from wings of sage-grouse” that was published in the Wildlife Society Bulletin. The paper was based on decades of research on greater and Gunnison sage-grouse in western North America, but particularly in Colorado, Oregon, and Washington. The abstract follows and a pdf of the publication is available from the Wildlife Science Division.

We redefine and clarify procedures to classify sex and age (juveniles, yearlings, adults, and breeding-age) of greater (Centrocercus urophasianus) and Gunnison sage-grouse (C. minimus) from wings. Existing keys for greater sage-grouse age and sex classification do not incorporate more recent information on timing and sequence of molt or regional variation. We evaluated keys with the aid of gonadally inspected, hunter-harvested sage-grouse in Colorado (1973–1990) and with birds captured and measured in Washington (1992–1997) and Oregon (2008–2012). The technique is accurate and transferable among biologists who have basic training in reading a key and examining wings (primaries, secondaries, tertials, and coverts). Accurate information on sex and age of grouse, particularly during harvest, is a fundamental component of our understanding of population dynamics, which ultimately enables improved management.

Michael Schroeder (WDFW research scientist), Clait Braun (retired Colorado Parks and Wildlife), and Dave Budeau (Wildlife Biologist, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife) published a report titled “Fall population structure of sage-grouse in Colorado and Oregon”. The report was published as a Wildlife Technical Report for the State of Oregon. The abstract follows and a pdf is available from the Wildlife Science Division.

We studied the population structure of sage-grouse (Centrocercus spp.) based on collection and analysis of 67,679 wings from hunter-harvested birds in 10 areas in Colorado and 12 areas in Oregon during 1973–1998 and 1993–2013, respectively. The harvest age structure for greater sage-grouse (C. urophasianus) varied from 42 to 63% juveniles in Colorado and 27 to 58% in Oregon. Approximately 59% of the Gunnison sage-grouse (C. minimus) harvest was juvenile. The overall adult male:female sex ratio was 28:72 for greater sage-grouse in Colorado, 41:59 (this includes an unknown proportion of yearlings) for greater sage-grouse in Oregon, and 34:66 for Gunnison sage-grouse in Colorado. Proportions of females increased in all fall populations from juvenile to yearling to adult age classes. Estimated breeding success was similar for greater sage-grouse in Colorado (47%) and Oregon (49%), but Gunnison sage-grouse appeared to have higher (60%) breeding success. The average number of juveniles in the harvest per breeding-age female varied from 1.2 to 2.4. There was high annual variation within and among areas. Composite estimated annual survival varied from 46 to 48% for adult males and 56 to 59% for adult females.

WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

South Puget Sound Prairies: Section Manager Cynthia Wilkerson participated in a March 25th South Puget Sound Prairie Communication Partnership meeting along with representatives of Joint Base Lewis McChord, Thurston County, tribes, Wolf Haven, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Center for Natural Lands Management, private landowners, American Farmland Trust, and Capitol Land Trust.

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

eBird Northwest: [eBird Northwest](#) received kudos from eBird (Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology) for our “innovative” regionally relevant content, engaging partners, and direction we are providing in portal management through Committees. Citizen Science Coordinator Wendy Connally worked with Eric Gardner (Acting Deputy Director), Director’s Office Policy Analyst Bill Tweit, Wildlife Program Chief Scientist John Pierce, and our eBird Northwest partners from Klamath Bird Observatory to launch a draft Partnership Charter for review, hone the Content Committee best practices for article creation and approval, and cover an extensive Steering Committee meeting agenda. We are identifying a Citizen Science Committee to craft and review projects for the eBird Northwest portal – a few are in the works now: breeding observations for Double-crested Cormorant and Caspian Tern, any observations for Slender-billed White-breasted Nuthatch, and breeding observations for Clark’s Grebe and Western Grebe (this supports work between Wildlife Diversity Advisory Committee member, Joe Gaydos, and Biologist Gary Wiles).

REGION 1

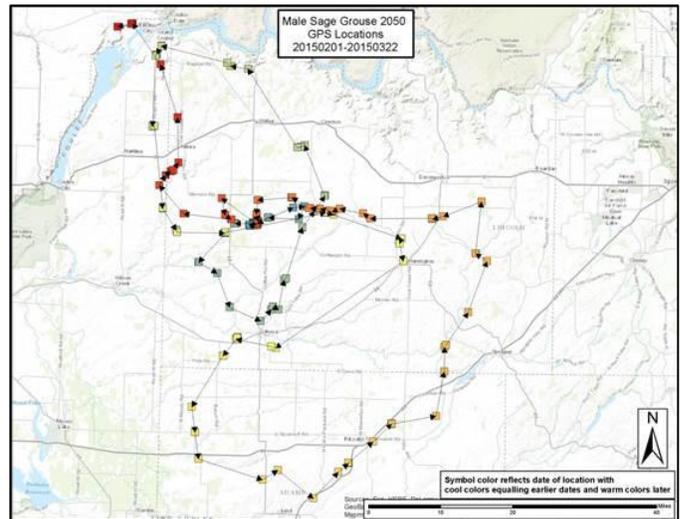
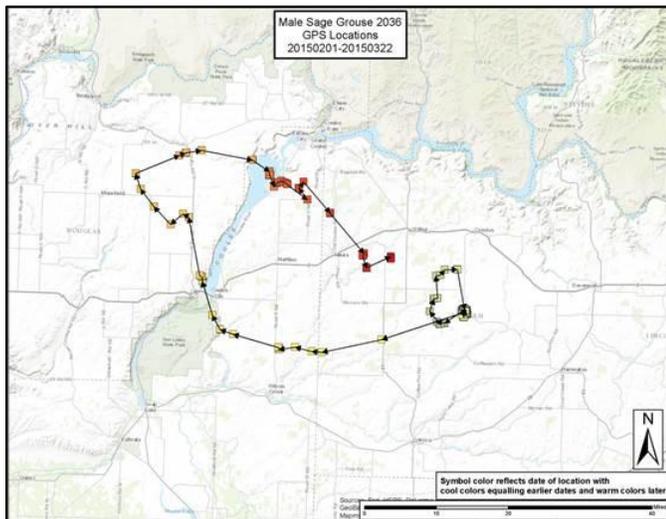
GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Lincoln Cliffs Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Lowe conducted ground telemetry on bighorn sheep in the Lincoln and Whitestone areas. All radio collars deployed in the February capture were functioning normally. Thirty sheep (twenty-five ewes and five rams) were observed in Lincoln and seventeen sheep (seven ewes, five rams, and five last year lambs) were observed near Whitestone Rock. Valuable landowner contacts were also made. In addition, complete health sampling results from the capture were recently received and indicate the Lincoln Cliffs herd is healthy.

Lincoln County Prairie Grouse Project: Biologist Atamian caught up on entering capture data from last week’s translocation and worked with Schroeder and Stinson on drafting a letter to ODFW thanking them for birds and providing the data on leks surveyed during capture and the number of birds translocated from each lek. Biologist Atamian downloaded and reviewed the male GPS collar data from the past week and a half. Two males remain in the lek area and one

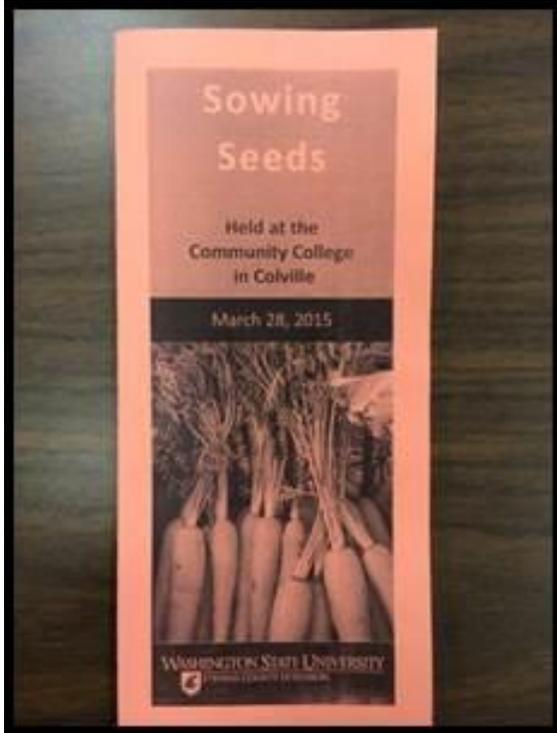
male died approximately a mile NW of the lek. The two roamers from last week are still on the move (maps below). One appears to be heading back to Swanson Lakes while the other has headed over to Douglas County. Maps below show the movements from February 1st through March 22 of each GPS marked male. Cool colored squares are earlier dates (blue is earliest), warm colors are later dates (red is latest). Seven of the eight males GPS marked in Douglas County are alive and are nearby to the leks where they were captured. One male has died, apparently due to a raptor predation.



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

Wildlife Management

Attracting Wildlife Presentation: District Wildlife Biologist (DWB) Dana Base gave a presentation on “Landscaping for Wildlife” at the Washington State University Extension’s Workshop entitled “Sowing Seeds.” The workshop took place at the community college in Colville on Saturday, March 28th. There were about sixty folks attending the workshop, many of whom were coming from a master gardener’s background & interest.



Program flyer and participant building a butterfly roosting box at the public workshop put on by Washington State University Extension



Some resource materials on landscaping for wildlife

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

Wildlife Management

Huckleberry Data Sharing: Biologist Shepherd discussed data sharing with multiple people in the Huckleberry area. Biologist Shepherd delivered fox lights to a rancher in the Huckleberry Mountains. Biologist Shepherd discussed Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock with Huckleberry producers and obtained an agreement with one producer.

Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock: Biologist Shepherd submitted new Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreements for Livestock in the Novatus Contract System

for Profanity Peak producers, checked on the status of Smackout agreements with Olympia, and turned in updated checklists.

Meeting with Stevens County Producer: Wildlife Conflict Specialist (WCS) Bennett met with a producer from Stevens County to go over Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement, the Sensitive Data Agreement, a Damage Claim, and a Wolf Deterrence Plan with a Working Group. The meeting went well and next steps were discussed.

Wildlife Areas

Chief Joseph WA –Clarkston High School Career Fair: Biologist Woodall and Biologist Earl attended the Clarkston High School career fair. The two set up a table of work related pics, antlers, and hides, and answered questions about “What we do” and “How to become a wildlifer.” There were a lot of visits and many expressed interest in this type of career.



Bio Earl at the CHS Career Fair

Bio Woodall at the CHS Career Fair

KFES 4th Grade Forest Health: WAAM Palmer spent a morning with the Kettle Falls 4th grade students who are assigned to consider managing the forested area around the Sherman Creek WLA headquarters from a WDFW perspective. Other groups are assigned a DNR or private industrial management perspective. Palmer helped the students develop general prescriptions for their planned treatments, assisted with improvements to the Forest Practices Applications they’ve been working on, and answered questions and provided guidance for developing PowerPoint presentations that the groups will be presenting next week to a panel made up of their mentors.

This photo shows some of the students preparing to work on their forest treatment prescriptions



Private Lands/Access

Elk in Asotin County: DB Wik, Conflict Biologists Rasley, Earl, and Wade, and WAM Dice met with fourteen farmers and one county commissioner from Asotin County to discuss elk populations and tools available to address damage. Two separate issues are present in the county, ranging from spring and summer damage to large wintering populations leaving the wildlife area. The long term solutions will likely include increasing permit harvest of antlerless elk, utilizing the tools within the DPCA program, and providing quality forage on the wildlife area.

Wildlife Conflict: Biologist Earl continued to work with a cooperater in Cloverland who is experiencing a large amount of damage due to the 400+ head of elk currently residing in the area. Earl made trips to the area this week and it appears the elk are continuing to stay on Harlow Ridge during the day. Earl also met with a landowner in the area that is enrolled in the Hunting Only by Written Permission (HOBWP) program to see if there could be more land enrolled to increase pressure on these elk in the future.



Elk herd on Ag fields south of Cloverland this week

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

Wildlife Management

Region 1 Wolf Management Team Conference Call: Supervisor McCanna prepared the agenda and completed minutes from the March 25th Region 1 wolf management team conference call. Region 1 staff are starting to gear up for the upcoming grazing season.

REGION 2

NO REPORT SUBMITTED

REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman used the dozer to clear sediment, brush, and fallen trees out of the irrigation ponds. The ponds had become overgrown and required days of clearing by hand each spring to get water flowing to the lower pond. Now water efficiency should be improved and the ponds should be better wildlife habitat, as they were originally designed for.

Oak Creek Wildlife Area Observations: Manager Huffman spent a beautiful Friday checking out parts of lower Clemens Mountain on the wildlife area. Over the years, ATV tracks have been seen and the area has several guzzlers that have never been located. The old roads that show on maps are mostly not drivable with 4-5 foot sagebrush and bitterbrush growing on them. The area is bordered by private land so there is very limited access and use of the area. Most of the habitat is in good shape with some patches of old disturbed ground still in cheatgrass or crested wheatgrass. There are pictures below of wild flowers and two guzzlers. No recent access was observed, but there were a lot of deer and chukar in the area.



A canyon with interesting geology on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area



Wild flowers in bloom on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area



Two old guzzlers located on the Oak Creek Wildlife Area. One is in complete disrepair with the metal blown off, while the other is still partially functional. Neither have good access for repairs so it is unlikely this will be worked on.

Wenas Wildlife Area: NRT2 Kass sprayed the forb plots and about 70 acres of the Cottonwood #2 fire rehab with a mixture of Select herbicide to try to address bulbous bluegrass and annual broadleaf weeds. Other portions of the Cottonwood rehab were sprayed the previous week with a lite Glyphosate application for cheat grass and bulbous. Kass also sprayed reseeded fields at McCade with a lite Glyphosate application.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: The Washington Waterfowl Association came to the Sunnyside HQ Unit to install nesting tubes on Giffen Lake, Hay Stack Ponds, and Johnson Wetland. They replaced wood duck nest boxes that were destroyed by spring 2014 wildfire, and did a spring cleanup on waterfowl hunting areas, picking up trash and empty shot gun shells.

Wildlife Management

Burrowing Owl WildWatch Camera: District Biologist Fidorra coordinated WDFW Staff Greg Falxa and volunteers on Monday and Tuesday to complete repairs to the popular Burrowing Owl WildWatch camera which had been down in recent weeks. The update to the system was completed and live images of the nest burrow are now viewable online:

http://wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch/owlcam/video_burrowing.html

Greater Sage-Grouse Survey: District Biologist Fidorra and Private Lands Biologist Stutzman conducted a Greater Sage-Grouse lek survey in Yakima County. Eleven displaying males and at least two females were observed at the lek located on private land.

Canada Goose Nesting Surveys: District Biologist Fidorra coordinated with WDFW Waterfowl specialist Wilson, Biologist Bernatowicz, and USFWS staff to plan for the Canada Goose nesting surveys to be conducted in early April.

Trapping Seals: District Biologist Fidorra placed state seals on three otter pelts and two bobcats that hunters/trappers collected this season.

Yakima County Sage-Grouse Count: Private Lands Biologist Stutzman and District Biologist Fidorra did a Greater Sage-Grouse lek count in Yakima County on Thursday. The main lek was a popular place with ten males actively displaying and at least two females hanging around. A male displaying nearby brought the total to thirteen individuals.

After the survey, Stutzman gave Fidorra a tour of south Benton County. Among other things, Stutzman and Fidorra discussed local agricultural practices, private lands hunting access sites, pronghorn antelope, and upland game birds.

Wildlife Habitat/Pollinator Plantings: Stutzman contacted six to eight landowners about their interest in partnering with the Benton Conservation District to do wildlife habitat/pollinator plantings. In general, most were open to pursuing projects so Stutzman and BCD staff will follow up this week to get applications in.

Deer Surveys: Biologist Bernatowicz completed ground deer surveys in PMU 33. A total of 610 deer were classified (with significant help from The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe) with a ratio of 52 fawns per 100 does. Fawn ratios were fairly consistent across the geographic range of the PMU, ranging between 50 and 54 fawns per 100 adults.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz participated in a conference call regarding domestic farm flocks in bighorn range. While surveying deer, Biologist Bernatowicz noticed bighorn sheep coming off Clemens Mountain and licking salt off Highway 410. A total of thirty-two sheep were temporarily hazed from the highway. The sheep returned to salt licking fairly quickly. Bighorns have been observed frequently on the highway this year. The local Safaris Club International (SCI) has been placing salt off the highway in hopes of short stopping the sheep,



but the sheep seem to prefer the highway. Dr. Cramer (Utah State) was contacted regarding a study she was working on in Montana involving “Game Away.” Dr. Cramer indicated bighorn sheep in Montana were not deterred from licking highway salt by “Game Away”. To date, no products have been found that keep wildlife off highway salt. A product called “Sea Dust” has apparently worked at keeping wildlife from browsing trees, but has never been tried on highways.

Bighorn Sheep on Highway 410

Colockum Bull Study: Biologist Bernatowicz investigated the cost of new GPS collars and participated in a conference call to discuss the current status of the study and preferred sample sizes.

Other: Biologist Bernatowicz responded to a question regarding moving problem beavers and took waterfowl specialist Wilson on a tour of local wetlands that should be good for wood duck nest box projects. Bernatowicz also took some supplies to Manager Huffman for the squirrel/camera monitoring and filled out the Hemorrhagic Disease Activity worksheet for the district.

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Hagan prepared additional green dot readerboards. Muddy roads this week delayed moving these to higher elevations for installation. Hagan also checked road conditions after numerous calls from the public ansy to get out on the Colockum.

Turkey Season: Colockum staff fielded phone calls with questions about the upcoming turkey season, antler hunting, and requests for green dot maps.

Yoyo Rock Boat Launch: Colockum staff coordinated with Region 2 Director Jim Brown and Grant County PUD on the reopening date for the Yoyo Rock boat launch. The reservoir is now at full pool elevation. We will reopen the launch on April 1 after the PUD finishes a final evaluation of riverbank cultural sites.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris participated in several conference calls to discuss the Wenas Wildlife Area target shooting proposal. She provided a timeline on the target shooting issue to RPM McCorquodale and provided information/edits on several documents.

Sheep Company Range Proposal Conference Call: Manager Confer Morris participated in a conference call with the NRA technical specialist, along with SM Posner and DM Whipple to discuss some of the concerns that had been voiced by neighbors regarding the Sheep Company Range Proposal. Confer Morris also participated in a conference call with CAMP to interview an A&E firm that would assist with design and provide expertise on development of the 'micro-range' proposed for the Sheep Company road area.

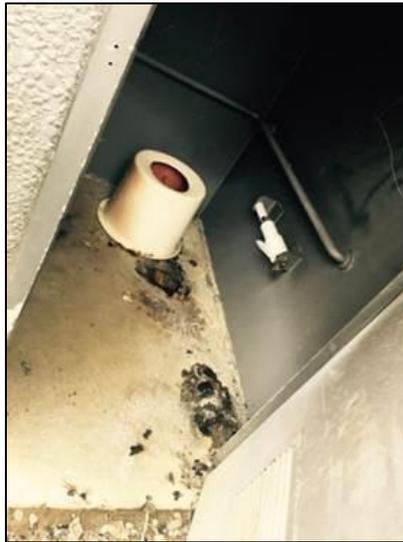
Backcountry Horsemen Meeting: Manager Confer Morris attended the Central Washington Backcountry Horsemen's monthly meeting and presented the Wenas WLA target shooting proposal and took feedback. The group was less familiar with the Sheep Company area and the target shooting issues, but liked the idea of providing a safer area to ride. One member, who lives on Huntzinger road, was concerned about increased noise if the range was located on the west side of Sheep Company road.

Access Program

Career Seasonal NRW2 Barbosa came back on March 16 and access staff serviced the following access areas: Hyde, Whitstran, Snively, Duportail, Ringold, Vernita, Woodhouse, Lavender

Lake, Bell, Teanaway Junction, King Horn Slough, Mattoon, Fio Rito, Thrall, MP 8-10, Rowe, Tim's Pond, Oak Creek, Mellis Rd, Fitzsimmons, Ponds 4 & 5, Buena, and Zillah Bridge.

On his second day back, NRW2 Barbosa discovered that someone started a fire in the Zillah Bridge bathroom (see photos below). Staff removed the damage and prepped it for repairs, which they will work on over the next two weeks.



Zillah Vault Toilet after fire

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

Wildlife Areas

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Hunt and Rocky Mountain Elk

Ranger Schnebly addressed the Johnson beaver problem on Wednesday. Contract trapper Falwell live-trapped one young male beaver for relocation, and determined that was the only one on site. Hunt and Schnebly then breached the dam to allow for flow to return through the old upland game bird parcel owned by WDFW. The Johnson Ag Drain flows through a good portion of the prime Badger Pocket Ag lands in the area, and this beaver activity had begun to back up water onto irrigated hay ground. Once irrigation season hit full swing, and wastewater flows increased, the dam would have caused considerable problems for producers in the vicinity. Before and after photos have been included below.



Wildlife Management

Ellensburg Area: Conflict Specialist Wetzel worked with several master hunters again this week to haze or harvest elk from locations in Park Creek, Caribou Creek, Reecer Creek, and the lower Coleman Creek areas. Six elk were harvested near Caribou Creek. New elk are entering and leaving all areas in the north zone.

Undetermined Depredation: A landowner near Naneum Creek called Conflict Specialist Wetzel to report back on several lost Emus. She found three killed and eaten and one alive, the cause of the losses is undetermined. Two cameras were placed at cache locations to try to determine what predator, if any, is involved.

A camera placed at cache location to find what may have killed missing fowl

Wolf Activities

Conflict Specialist Wetzel searched the Dawson Creek area for wolf tracks after receiving a report that a wolf was seen in the area. No wolf sign was observed in the new snow.



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

Wildlife Areas

Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Manager Huffman and Forester Mackey attended a meeting with Prescribed Burn Team Lead Leuschen and the US Forest Service Naches Ranger Station to discuss prescribed burning in Oak Creek. There is interest in moving forward, but the Forest Service needs to figure out the environmental review and if the Elderberry Timber Sale EIS is still valid.

Unit Inspection: Manager Huffman, Forester Mackey, and Forester Pfeifle spent a day driving around and inspecting units for thinning and roads for maintenance needs in the Rock Creek Unit of the wildlife area. It was a good trip, with snow encountered at the higher elevations limiting access.

Grazing Lease: Manager Huffman met with staff and volunteers from the Cowiche Canyon Conservancy (CCC) and Range Ecologist Burnham on the logistics for monitoring the grazing lease on the NF Cowiche Property that the CCC holds the grazing easement on. Weather was poor, so a site visit was postponed.

Bear Canyon Maintenance Project: Manager Huffman coordinated with Back County Horsemen, who want to do a trail maintenance project on the Bear Canyon Trail and make it passable on horseback. They are planning a project for the weekend of April 18th.

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt met with Ken Ratliff (USFS Roads Engineer), and Kim Larned (USFS Recreation) to discuss road management in the new Gnat Flat area acquisition in T18N, R15E. There are more roads to deal with that are USFS controlled than Ken realized, so he plans to inventory them and research easements, etc. We'll then draft both a Road Maintenance Agreement and a Road Right-Of-Way Construction and Use Agreement patterned after the ones done between USFS and Plum Creek Timber (the previous owners of what is now WDFW land). This won't be a quick one, but in the meantime we have agreed on a few of the more immediate needs in the area regarding roads and infrastructure.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Colockum staff met with Foresters Doug Kuehn and Rod Pfeifle on the Colockum this week to look at past timber thinning and potential future projects. We inspected the 2006 work done in Section 5 of the South Fork Colockum Creek, and looked at Section 9 in Colockum Creek as a high priority project to get started.

Retiring WDFW Forester Doug Kuehn and new WDFW Forester Rod Pfeifle inspecting a timber enhancement project done by Kuehn on the Colockum Wildlife Area in 2006



REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

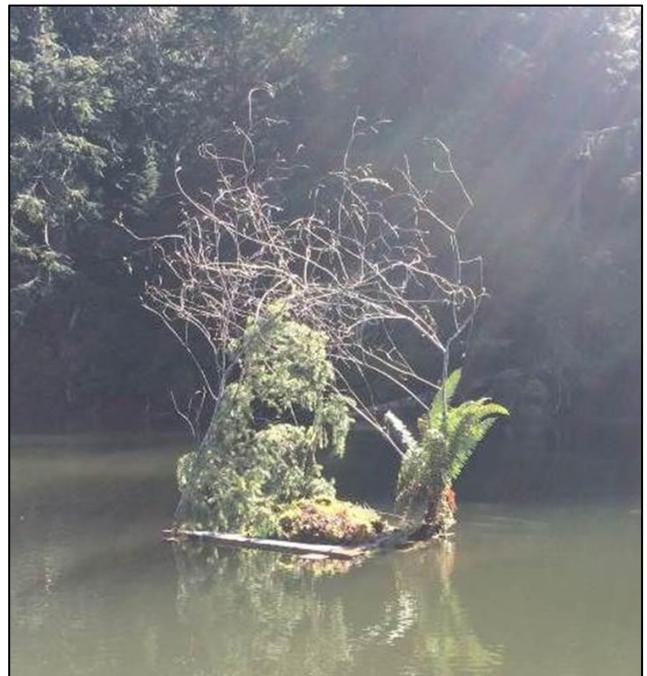
Wildlife Management

Cormorants: Biologist Yarborough responded to sixty dead cormorants near Lummi Island. Biologist Yarborough sent bird carcasses to the National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, WI for further analyses.



Dead cormorants near Lummi Island

Common Loons – Platforms: Biologists Anderson and Smith installed one nesting platform at an area lake. Two adult loons were present at the lake at the time. An additional platform was retrieved from this lake and will be deployed in the coming days at another area lake for potential loon nesting use. Anderson and Smith also replaced lead tackle warning signage that had been vandalized. This is the second year in a row that signage has been removed and or destroyed.



Loon nesting platform recently deployed on an area lake

Oregon Spotted Frogs: Biologists Fenner Yarborough and Sherman Anderson continued to survey for Oregon Spotted frogs in areas in Skagit and Whatcom County. We are surveying sites that haven't been surveyed before and monitoring known occupied sites. We have found frogs hatching in certain areas.



Oregon Spotted frogs near Acme

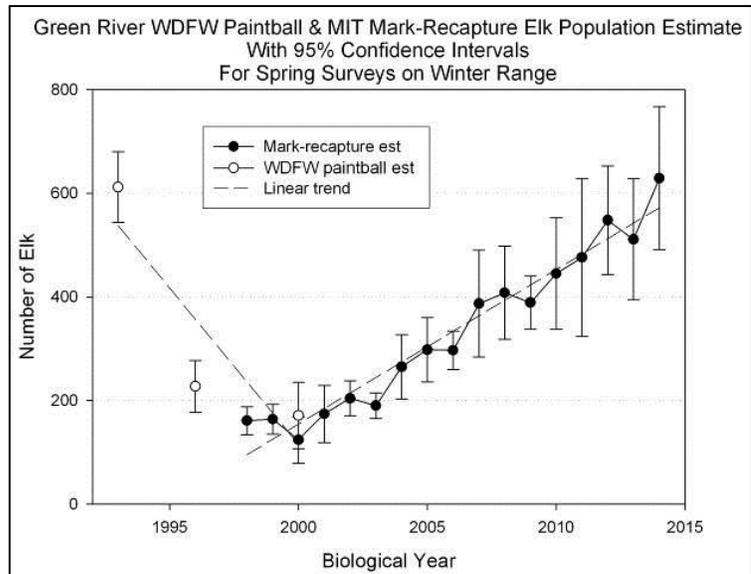
Washington's East-West Bear Research Project: Biologist Smith hiked in to document a den location used this past winter by one of the collared bears. As Smith came within range, it was determined (with telemetry gear) the bear had re-entered the den. The den will be revisited at a later date to collect characteristic measurements.



Tolt Reservoir viewed from the trail into an area used by one of the collared black bear in western Washington

Green River (GMU 485) elk survey: Biologist Smith, Tacoma Water and Muckleshoot Indian Tribe staff completed the annual survey of elk in GMU 485. Results of the survey estimated approximately 600 (629 ± 138) animals in the herd.

A graph created by Muckleshoot Indian Tribe staff of estimated elk numbers in GMU 485 over time





Two cameras capture Point of View (what the observer would see) and Forward Looking images



Aerial view of the Headquarters Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area

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 complete a sighting 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. Data transcriptions still need to be performed followed by analysis by USFWS statisticians on the east coast.

Elk Trapping: Biologist Yarborough continued elk trapping throughout the week. All traps were shut down for the season on Friday due to the calving period for cows.

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.

Crescent Lake Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that the Werkhoven Agricultural Lease for 90 acres of cropland is in the final signature phase. This lease agreement provides for approximately 30 acres of corn, barley, and pasture grass retained for

wildlife forage and cover. Werkhoven will work the fields and harvest approximately 60 acres of corn, winter wheat, and grass for hay.



Natural Resource Tech Deyo put wood duck nest box kits together using materials purchased with Duck Stamp funds. The pieces are all cut, drilled and packaged to be given to youth groups to construct and then install on units of the Wildlife Area.



The Rainbow Pond water control had a new collapse which caused Rainbow Pond to drop three feet in water depth



Natural Resource Tech Deyo removed wood and mud materials that beavers had placed on the water control that makes the Restoration Pond at Lake Terrell

Noxious Weed Control: Natural Resource Tech Deyo sprayed herbicides on noxious weeds, including Scotch broom and poison hemlock on the Intalco and Lake Terrell Units.

Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw participated in a Technical Advisory Group

meeting organized by the City of Stanwood to discuss plans for a newly acquired city property that is directly across the river from Leque Island. Brokaw provided information to the group regarding the process and status of the Leque Island Alternatives Analysis and Design Project. WDFW and Stanwood will continue to coordinate closely on these parallel projects, as there will likely be opportunities for each project to complement the other.

Fir Island Farm Final Design Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and a project consultant spent a day on the site uploading water level, salinity, and temperature data from monitoring devices in groundwater wells and surface water drainages. Brokaw and the consultant disassembled eleven devices and replaced them with devices from a different manufacturer that have a longer warranty and are reputed to be very reliable. Later in the week, the consultant

transferred all project monitoring equipment to WDFW and trained Brokaw on data compensation and management. The consultant's scope of work has ended and all water quality monitoring activities will now be the responsibility of WDFW.

Milltown Island Meeting: Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Habitat Planner Jenna Friebel, and Habitat Biologist Bob Warriner met with staff from the Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program (ESRP) and Skagit River Systems Cooperative (SRSC) to discuss past and future work on Milltown Island in the Skagit Wildlife Area. SRSC has completed several restoration project phases on Milltown Island in the past, and the group discussed needs for future work.

Skagit Headquarters: Cosgrove cut and removed lupine and other weed species along the dikes at the Headquarters Unit. Meis monitored the cattail project area located just west of the Wiley Slough, specifically looking for new growth of cattail and other marsh vegetation after the manipulations that occurred last fall.

Private Lands/Access Management

Decontaminate Field Equipment: Otto continued the decontamination of field equipment (including the gator ATV and field trucks) throughout the week 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

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

Spencer Island Unit: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm is working with Department of Ecology on a flood debris clean-up project at Spencer Island. The Marine Straits Division has access to funding and a Washington Conservation Crew to handle removal of flood debris and garbage from tidelands around Puget Sound.

Nooksack Unit Garbage Clean Up: Manager Kessler and Natural Resource Tech Deyo cleaned up garbage that had been dumped along the dike on the Nooksack Unit. The remains of a homeless camp were gathered up and dumped.

Bass Fishing Club Coordination: Manager Kessler coordinated with the bass fishing clubs that have four bass fishing tournaments scheduled for this year. Kessler informed them of the upcoming lake management projects which could affect fishing at Lake Terrell this year. We will be performing the five year lake drawdown this year to help control vegetation in the lake. We

are also working to secure funding to perform control work on the Eurasian milfoil that has established itself in the lake.

Skagit ESA Restoration and Waterfowl Management (ERWM) Plan: Habitat Planner Jenna Friebel, Program Manager Link, and Projects Coordinator Brokaw worked together to draft a two page summary document of the ERWM plan. Once it is reviewed by the cross-program WDFW ERWM Team, the document will be distributed to stakeholders for input.

Samish Unit Enhancement Project: Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Rotton completed responses to three comments received through the Skagit County Special Use permit process.

Private Lands/Access Management

Spring Bear Hunt Coordination and Management: Biologist Hans worked with DNR Biologist Peter Hurd to create a Monroe area hunt map for the upcoming hunter meeting on April 11th. Biologist Hans contacted the Campbell Group representative to confirm gate location. Hans spoke with a hunter who is unable to attend the meeting and set-up a time for him to come to La Connor. Hans contacted law enforcement to discuss hunters on the North Skagit and Monroe list. Biologist Hans and Natural Resource Technician Otto toured the Monroe hunt site and verified gate coordinates. One of the gates was vandalized and reported to Supervisor Caldwell.



Vandalized gate on the Monroe hunt site

Private Lands Access Hunting for Elk on Private Land Meeting Coordination:

Supervisory Biologist Caldwell, Biologist Hans, and Conflict Specialist Witman met with landowner in Acme to discuss parcels for Elk hunt. During the meeting the landowner also showed the WDFW staff two sites that could be added to the WQHP. These sites will be discussed by Caldwell and Hans at a later date.

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

WQHP Meeting: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Hans met with a Skagit farmer to discuss potential WQHP sites for 2015-2016 and discussed barley planting locations on the Bayview sites. The staff will work with Wildlife Area Manager Rotton to coordinate blind locations to ensure they do not interfere with the farmer's crop location.

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

Wildlife Conflict Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: This week, Wildlife Conflict Specialist (WCS) Witman contacted a landowner in the Acme area of Whatcom County that has recent elk damage to a newly planted grass crop. WCS Witman provided information to the landowner on conducting hazing and is working with nearby residents to alert the landowner of elk presence on the property. WCS Witman answered questions for several berry farmers in Whatcom County on how damage would be addressed after the March 31st damage hunt deadline. WCS Witman traveled to Darrington to survey a landowner's property where there has been past elk damage and address the landowner's concerns about several elk that have recently entered back onto the property. Lastly, WCS Witman received a call of a possible livestock depredation in the Acme Area of Whatcom County. WCS Witman responded to the property and found the only remnant was an ear tag from a calf. WCS walked the property with the landowner and found several suspect tracks that had been washed out by recent rains. Cameras were installed along several game trails that border the livestock area to monitor wildlife activity.

Landowner Meetings: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman accompanied Conflict-Private Lands Supervisor Caldwell and Private Lands Biologist Hans to meet an Acme landowner interested in the Private Lands Access Program for providing hunting opportunities for waterfowl and elk. The access program for elk would provide access opportunities for big game, while also addressing agricultural damage concerns on the property.

Weyerhaeuser Columbia Timberlands Meeting: Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell met with a Weyerhaeuser representative in Skagit County to obtain keys for documented bear damage to trees.

Snoqualmie Valley Elk Damage: Biologist Smith met with a landowner near North Bend to discuss elk damage to agricultural properties. Hunter Education & Volunteer Coordinator Dazey arranged for Master Hunter volunteer help to assist Smith and the landowner in erecting a single strand electrified fladry fence above the existing cattle fence.

Single line electrified fladry fence designed to deter elk from entering agricultural fields



Wildlife Areas

Volunteers removed approximately 2,200' of obsolete barbed wire at the Ebey Island Unit

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. Four volunteers removed approximately 2,200' of obsolete barbed wire at the Ebey Island Unit. The fencing needed to be removed to allow for field preparation for the new agricultural lease scheduled to start in April. The volunteers are interested in other projects on the Island and at the Cherry Valley barn facility.



Skagit Headquarters: Cosgrove and Meis pressure washed the interpretive center and repaired missing cedar siding. Manager Rotton plans to use volunteers to assist with the painting of the center. Cosgrove sprayed weeds on dike tops and parking areas at the Headquarters Unit. Cosgrove and Meis graded the office and shop parking area and added new gravel to improve drainage of the area. Cosgrove painted the shop bathroom at the Headquarters Unit. Meis weeded and sprayed under fence lines throughout the Headquarters Unit parking lot areas and dike top trail. Manager Rotton coordinated with volunteers for trash removal on the Samish, DeBay's Slough, and Leque Island Units. Rotton also contacted an Eagle Scout candidate about project opportunities.

Island Unit: Cosgrove sprayed an area of reed canary grass in a field on the Island Unit. Manager Rotton has maintained contact with Island Unit volunteer Darrell Tawes regarding the status of the barge and boat lease agreement. Mr. Tawes will be contacting the owner for further information on the agreement.

Samish Unit: Manager Rotton coordinated with Kristian Tollefson of the Department of Natural Resource creosote removal crew to assist with the remove and disposal of creosote logs and debris that washed up on the shore on the Samish Unit and North Fork Marsh near Craft Island.

Jensen Access: Cosgrove sprayed weeds along the entrance road at the Jensen Unit.

Johnson DeBay's Slough: Cosgrove, with the assistance of Access Area manager Derek Hacker, removed six mattresses and a recliner from the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit. Manager Rotton met with Trumpeter Swan Society Representative Martha Jordon to tour the DeBay's

Slough Swan Reserve and the Hunt Unit to discuss site improvements to include signage and trail developments for bird watching access.

Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordination

Teaching Team Evaluations: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey conducted evaluations of two teaching teams. One team that teaches at the Moose Trap range and one team that teaches at the Snohomish fire station. Both teams are doing an excellent job of teaching the next generation to be safe, ethical hunters.

Instructor Applicant Support: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey entered four new instructors into the Kalkomey database. Dazey also sent out two instructor applicant packets to applicants seeking certification as Hunter Education Instructors.

Statewide In-Service Training: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey finalized logistics for one of the presenters at the statewide In-Service Training (IST) conducted at Wenatchee WA. Dazey attended and helped the hunter education team present the three day IST that included a variety of national speakers and was attended by over 300 instructors from Washington State.

Advanced Hunter Education Clinics: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey contacted the hunter education division of the NRA to explore possible ways that they would be able to assist DFW with offering an advanced hunter education program that would be a follow on to our hunter education program.

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

Everett Herald: Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey proofed an article being written by Noah Haglund of the Everett Herald. The article spoke about the importance and opportunities for volunteers to assist the hunter education program as volunteer instructors.

<http://www.heraldnet.com/article/20150327/NEWS01/150329272/1172/Safer-hunting>

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

Wildlife Management

Training: Biologist Milner completed the on-line portion of sexual harassment training. Otto completed required online ethics training.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

St. Helens Elk Herd Population Survey: Region 5 Biologists Holman, Stephens, Bergh, and George were joined by Region 6 Biologists Novack and Michaelis to conduct the annual survey of the Mount St. Helens Elk herd. The survey effort was completed in four days with pilot Jess Hagerman of Northwest Helicopters doing the flying while the above staff rotated among the various tasks of observing, classifying, spotting, recording, and navigating. Sightability corrected estimates of the elk population in the five surveyed Game Management Units will be developed in the coming weeks. The raw survey results include observations of 2,151 total elk with good representation among the ages and sexes and good distribution throughout the surveyed landscape.



St. Helens elk survey

Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys: Biologists Stephens conducted a hoof disease prevalence survey on DNR and Weyerhaeuser property. No elk were observed 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, encompasses 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.

Oregon Spotted Frog Surveys: The annual Oregon spotted frog egg mass survey was completed this week associated with the Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve. Several follow-up sites were re-surveyed due to fluctuating water levels from the previous week. Biologists Anderson and Bergh assisted Biologist Hallock of the Diversity Division and DNR staff with completion of the annual survey. Approximately 170 additional egg masses were documented this week, improving this year's final count. Although the final numbers have not been tabulated, this year's totals will be less than previous high counts.



Oregon spotted frog survey crew at Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve

Klickitat Wildlife Area

Goldendale Archery Club Volunteer Project: Nine enthusiastic members of the Goldendale Archery 4H Club and parents cleaned up 4/10ths of a mile of old barbed wire fencing from the edges of a field this week. Old, loose wire can entangle wildlife and also presents a safety hazard to people recreating on the Wildlife Area, and every year Washington Fish and Wildlife partners with volunteers to remove fencing that is no longer needed on the Klickitat Wildlife Area. This group handily picked up and loaded a substantial quantity of wire into a truck for disposal in just one hour. Folks involved in this effort were A. Perry, X. Perry, Q. Perry, I. Perry, R. Perry, C. Kiser, K. Kiser, A. Mains, C. Mains, K. Bolton, D. Bolton, R. James, D. James, B. Campbell, T. Tallman, and C. Tallman. Technician Davis hauled the wire to the transfer station later in the week.



Goldendale Archery 4H Club and parents participating in cleanup of old barbed wire fencing

Completion of Fuels Project, Phase I: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven and Department of Natural Resources Forester Lennon did a final walk-through of the project area this week and "after treatment" photos were taken at established photo points. Manager Van Leuven walked through the area earlier in the week with the Contractor's crew, and work needed to finish up the job was identified. Almost all of these details were completed by the end of the week.



Example of "before" and "after" fuels project treatment – Photos taken at Photo Point 5

Fuels Project Phase II: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven worked with Deputy Contracts Officer Nelson to finalize the Request for Quotation for Phase II of the fuels reduction project, and the RFQ was posted on March 26th. Other preparations for the project were made, such as calling adjacent property owners, making copies of the bid documents for distribution, and removing old fence wire from the project area. A tour of the project site for prospective bidders was scheduled.

Grazing Permit on Fisher Hill Unit: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven visited a segment of the Fisher Hill Unit to conduct an environmental review in preparation for a grazing permit renewal. During the visit, several female Sara orange-tip butterflies, eight blacktailed deer, one adult golden eagle, and many wildflowers were observed. A picture of a nice example of one of the taller flowers is below.



Great Houndstongue

Forest Management Planning: Wildlife Area Manager Van Leuven met with new WDFW Forester Pfeifle and retiring Forester Kuehn to discuss possible management projects on the Klickitat Wildlife Area and to visit an overstocked stand of timber as well as an oak management test plot that is about four years old. This was an opportunity to talk about what work has been done in the local area, consider future activities, and plan collaboration across programs to achieve positive results.

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

Pasture Restoration: Manager Hauswald and Assistant Manager Hand began the Spring 2015 pasture workup last week by spraying herbicide to 35 acres. They used a glyphosate/triclopyr mixture to kill broad leaf weeds and grasses at the sites prior to disking. There are three sites that were treated; 8 acres in the North Unit at the old agriculture field, 12 acres in the South Unit south of Hart Lake, and 15 acres at Vancouver Lake Unit in the southeastern section of the pasture.

Pasture restoration

Weed Control: Assistant Manager Hand has also been busy spraying for poison hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) at various places around the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. Poison hemlock is an invasive noxious weed that is highly toxic to both livestock and humans. Management of hemlock is an ongoing problem, but treatment with herbicide prior to flowering and seeding out prevents effected areas from getting out of control. Another noxious weed teasel, *Dipsacus sylvestris*, was treated for in the South Unit at Eagle pasture. Roughly eighteen acres were sprayed in efforts to control teasel, which is widely abundant and intermixed within the various clovers and grasses.



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

Access

Vancouver Lake and others: Access staff Rhodes met with the Department of Corrections inmate crew and collected 200lbs of garbage and also started weed eating around the paved parking lot.



Department of Corrections inmate crew started weed eating around paved parking lot at Vancouver Lake

Turkey Hole: Access staff Rhodes painted over graffiti on the inside wall of the bathroom. While inside the bathroom, Rhodes encountered an infestation of hundreds of flies.



Bathroom graffiti at Turkey Hole

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

D-10 Wildlife Conflict

Otters: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin checked the trail camera set on the net pens at Mineral Lake. She installed another Critter Gitter on a second net pen in anticipation of the pen being planted with additional trout this week. There have been no river otters detected on the

camera and the care giver states there has been no predation on the fish since the net pens were moved into deeper water and the alarms were attached to the pens.

Depredation: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin checked a trail camera on a farm in Randle after the farmer lost two sheep to cougar depredation. Nothing was detected on the camera but Conklin received a call that same night from the farmer stating another cougar had been sighted approximately one mile from his farm. Conklin will continue to monitor along with WDFW Enforcement Officer Sympson.

Elk: Conflict Specialist Conklin transferred Fladry fencing and materials to a farm in Randle. The land owner will plant the field with oats, then Conklin and the land owner will install the Fladry to protect the crop. This farmer lost approximately 70% of his oat crop to elk damage last year.

Deer: Conflict Specialist Conklin responded to numerous complaints of deer damage on small acre parcels. Advice was given such as using the product Plant Skyd to spray the vegetation and utilizing Critter Gitters to scare the deer away. In addition, Conklin responded by phone to a deer damage complaint on wheat fields and will follow up by sending the land owner a bird banger and projectiles to use to haze the deer off the fields.

Volunteer Project: Conflict Specialist Conklin is working with a Wahkiakum County farmer who requested volunteers for a fencing project. She will contact volunteers next week to assist this land owner.

D-10 & MSHWA Winter Conditions

Past Weather: This past winter has been warmer and drier than normal, with very little low elevation snow and a below average snowpack in the southern Washington Cascades. Snow only accumulated on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area on two occasions this winter, once in mid-November and the other in late-December.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 3,500 to 6,500 feet during the upcoming week. The 6-10 day forecast is for below normal temperatures and normal precipitation and the 8-14 day forecast is for normal temperatures and precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The April 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 green-up at the lower and middle elevations.

Snow Depths: Lower and middle elevations are currently snow free, with minimal depths at the 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: No mortalities were 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 improved this past week with some precipitation earlier in the week. Snow levels came down to 2,000 ft. and snow pack improved, although drought conditions still exist in 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 4,500 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. Some fawns are being seen with hair loss which is typical in the Klickitat population this time of year. Surveys on the Klickitat Wildlife Area indicate good fawn survival from this past mild winter.

Mortality: None reported this week.

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

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Elk Hoof Disease Prevalence Surveys

Biologist Harris continued to direct hoof disease surveys in Region 6. Surveys are being conducted by staff and volunteers. With assistance from Hoof Disease Coordinator Brooke George, all volunteer surveys for the Vail Tree Farm were completed last weekend.

Biologist Sundstrom and Scientific Technician Capelli conducted two surveys in the Grays Harbor area of assigned survey points as part of the protocol driven hoof disease effort. Although no elk herds were detected, many black tail deer were found in addition to Western bluebirds, blue grouse, and a Northern pygmy owl. Surveys will continue next week.

Western Snowy Plover

Biologist Sundstrom installed nearly 70 signs on Washington State Parks land at Midway Beach for the protection of nesting habitat for snowy plover. Additional signs will be installed next week on private land at Midway Beach.

Sundstrom delivered two “Share the Beach” sign kiosks to the Shoalwater Bay tribe for use at key locations on their land.

Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly

Taylor’s Checkerspot Captive Rearing: Technicians running the captive rearing facilities at the Oregon Zoo and Mission Creek Corrections Center scrambled to redefine “normal” diapause activity this year, as larvae at the two facilities reacted in opposite ways to the warm winter weather. At Mission Creek many larvae were highly active by early February, whereas those at the Zoo appeared to settle down and behave as expected. Larvae at Mission Creek were removed from diapause a week ahead of schedule as a result. One week later, Zoo staff were shocked to find that hundreds of larvae had since attempted to molt, and many had died trying. Mortality continued to climb, yet all samples sent to Mississippi State University checked disease free. While 2,340 Mission Creek larvae were split and released at two reintroduction sites in south Puget Sound, pursuit of all possible explanations for what was unfolding at the Zoo continued. Ultimately, a conference call with staffs from the Zoo, WDFW, USFWS, and Jaret Daniels (McGuire Center for Lepidoptera Research) led to a conclusion that larvae had likely suffered through an incomplete diapause brought on by unusually warm and/or dry winter conditions (Portland had the warmest winter on record). Larvae that survived this event appeared healthy and were considered important because they got the cues right in a trying time. The group consensus was to release 490 larvae to an existing reintroduction site and retain a subset at the Zoo to rear to the adult stage for breeding, alongside a group from the Mission Creek facility.

Taylor’s Checkerspot Reintroduction: Biologists Linders and Randolph have been busy conducting follow-up surveys on the recently-released Taylor’s checkerspot larvae at two reintroduction sites in south Puget Sound. Survival of released larvae appears to be particularly high this year, which may help offset a somewhat mediocre flight season in 2014. Weather has been excellent for completing these surveys, but is also driving larval maturation at record speeds. Larvae at Glacial Heritage Preserve began going “walk-about” in search of pupation sites on 13 March. Adults can be expected to fly by 1 April if not sooner, which would make this the earliest flight season ever recorded in the Puget lowlands. Adults were observed in Oregon on 19 March. Access to the Artillery Impact Area on JBLM has been particularly poor this year, precluding our ability to monitor the phenology of that large, extant population. It threatens to compromise flight season surveys as well. Biologist Randolph is busy flagging sites in anticipation of the early flight season.

Taylor’s Checkerspot Rapid Habitat Assessment: Biologist Linders convened a meeting with land managers, biologists, and scientists to review the process and results of the RHA analysis and discuss proposed changes to the data collection methodology prior to the spring season. While concerns were expressed about the requirement that reintroduction sites contain either Puget Balsamroot or nine-leaved Lomatium, no suitable alternative approaches were identified. The group decided to continue data collection using the current set of habitat variables, as there was no basis to justify a change in strategy given current knowledge.

Sea Otter Conservation Workshop

Biologist Ament and Biologist McMillan attended the IX Sea Otter Conservation Workshop at the Seattle Aquarium March 27 – 29. This was the largest meeting of sea otter biologists in the world. The event featured over 50 talks, including discussions on wild sea otter biology, ecology, husbandry, and conservation presented by biologists at the federal, state, and nonprofit level, as well as updates on sea otters and facility husbandry and research from every U.S. institution that keeps sea otters. This international conference, held biennially since 1999, was attended by delegates from the United States, Canada, Europe, Russia, and Japan.



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

Wildlife Management

Satsop/Mason Deer Project: In 2009, WDFW initiated a study of the effects of forest management practices on black-tailed deer reproduction. Two of eight study sites are represented in District 15: Mason and Satsop. The Mason cluster includes seven GPS collared does, while the Satsop cluster has five. We anticipate the collars for the three remaining fawns in the Satsop to fall off anytime now. By design they usually last a year or so. Biologist Murphie recovered the collar from the last Mason fawn, which died of undetermined causes last week. Although the field check was conducted shortly after receiving the mortality alert, it

appears a coyote had moved the collar from the actual site of mortality, thus very little remains were found and not enough to conclude the cause of mortality.

Determining the cause of mortality of a deer when coyotes have been present can be challenging. They can be either the cause or a scavenger at a kill site and often scatter the remains or carry the radio-collar away from the kill site; the radio-collar is a key part to locating mortality sites of collared deer in this study. Coyotes may even bury remains from their prey, such that without the radio-collar they are next to impossible to find. The photos below from a fawn mortality recovered a few years ago illustrate this well.



Photo one of a series of three showing the undisturbed site of remains from a fawn killed and buried by a coyote



Photo two of a series of three showing the partially uncovered remains of a fawn killed and buried by a coyote



Photo three of a series of three showing the uncovered remains from a fawn killed and buried by a coyote



Mason fawn collar recovered last week and a shed antler from a big black-tail buck found while searching for the remains of this most recent mortality

Capitol Forest Deer Project: Biologist Michaelis assessed status of radio-collared does in Capitol Forest. Nine of eleven vaginal implant transmitters were detected.

Hunting Package Review: Biologists Novak and Murphie reviewed and provided comments on draft hunting season proposals for the next three-year hunting season package.

Elk Survey: Biologists Novack and Michaelis spent considerable time on survey logistics and finalized the Willapa Herds Elk Survey flight plan.

Biologist Novack and Michaelis assisted Region 5 staff with Mount St. Helens Elk Surveys.

Other: Biologist Novack provided comments on the USFWS draft CCP for the Black River Unit of the Nisqually Wildlife Refuge to Don Kraege.

Wildlife Conflict

Charity Elk Harvest: Biologist Harris and two Master Hunters harvested two antlerless elk causing damage. Elk were delivered to a local meat cutter for delivery to the Coastal Harvest Washington. The Coastal Harvest Washington is a food distribution warehouse that helps feed the hungry throughout southwest Washington. Coastal Harvest delivers, at no charge, food to over 50 food banks, senior centers, and tribal centers in Grays Harbor, Pacific, Lewis, Thurston, Mason, Jefferson, and Wahkiakum Counties. This is the first time elk have been put into the food bank system in southwest Washington. Many citizens and landowners in the area have requested that we direct more of the damage elk harvested to charities. It has not been an easy task because of the time required and need for funding to have the meat cut up by a USDA licensed cutter. This harvest occurred on lands that are somewhat difficult to hunt because of livestock and other safety concerns, thus it is a very controlled hunt.

Sick Calf: Biologist Harris received a call from a landowner in the Raymond area about a sick elk calf in their back yard. When he responded, he was very surprised to find a calf that was approximately four months old. The calf was emaciated and unable to stand. The calf was dispatched and removed from the property. The calf also had two hooves that were in bad condition.

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

Wildlife Management

Trapper Rendezvous: Biologist Harris attended the Washington State Trappers Association winter rendezvous at the Elma Fair grounds. While there, he sealed 12 bobcat and 56 otters. All of the trappers were very thankful that WDWF staff attended. The only complaint, heard from several trappers, was of the difficulty in getting hides sealed in some regions and areas. Biologist Harris explained that we are spread out and it is often difficult for staff to be on location to seal hides. However he did state that he would pass the message on and maybe we

can improve our service to trappers in the future. On a positive note, one trapper commented on how wonderful the Region 6 front office staff is and really appreciated their willingness to seal hides when a biologist is not available. Several others in line affirmed his comment.

Wildlife Conflict

Biologist Novack continues to provide oversight to Master Hunters operating in Pierce and Thurston counties.

Biologist Novack worked on the following conflict issues: Elk conflicts with a cattle rancher near Graham, elk safety issues with a concerned citizen near Graham, a letter provided to a farmer near Graham regarding elk conflicts and the need for public hunting access, and a problem bobcat eating domestic chickens and ducks in Tacoma.