

# Wildlife Program

Week of December 26, 2016 – January 1, 2017

## **WOLF ACTIVITIES**

### **Region 1 Wolf Activities**

**Contract Range Rider Payment:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett provided a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement for Livestock range rider a payment form for work completed in December. Turbo fladry supplies were also given to the range rider for upcoming calving season.

**Report of Three Wolves:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley received numerous reports of three wolves running together south of Lyons Ferry and west of Starbuck. Rasley attempted to locate some tracks with the producers, but the weather failed to cooperate.

## **WILDLIFE DIVERSITY DIVISION**

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

**Bats and White-nose Syndrome:** Fish and Wildlife Veterinarian Katie Haman and White-nose Syndrome Coordinator Abby Tobin attended the Washington Invasive Species Council meeting this past week to present information on white-nose syndrome and provide an assessment on listing white-nose syndrome as an invasive species. There was a positive response from the Washington Invasive Species Council about white-nose syndrome and it has now been added to the Washington Invasive Species Council Top 50 Invasive Species Priority List. In addition, Abby has worked closely with state, federal, and tribal agencies to coordinate white-nose syndrome surveillance this spring. This project will aid in our understanding of the geographic distribution of white-nose syndrome and identify reservoirs for this deadly bat disease. As part of this work, a new partnership has been developed with Bat Conservation International. Bat Conservation International received private funding to assist the Pacific Northwest with this surveillance work and Abby will be working with them during the next month to develop the best approach to use their skills.

## **REGION 1**

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

**Predator/Prey Project - Cougar Capture:** Wildlife Biologist Annemarie Prince assisted Carnivore Research Scientist Brian Kertson and other capture crew members with the first week of cougar captures within GMU 117. Two male cougars were captured and radio-collared as part of the predator/prey research investigation.

*Adult male cougar captured and radio-collared on December 21 in GMU 117*

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

**Routine Site Maintenance:** Dziekan took advantage of a couple nice days during the week. The roads were clear and the warmer temperatures kept ice off. Dziekan made sure his sites were still clean. He cleaned the restrooms, disinfecting the handles and toilets, and restocked everything with fresh toilet paper. He shoveled snow away from the restrooms, and before he left he made sure there wasn't any litter lying around.



**REGION 2**

No report submitted this week.

**REGION 3**

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Babik met with the Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group to discuss three potential restoration projects on the wildlife area. Babik proposed addressing a head cut on Taneum Creek and working to reduce damage to the riparian and streambed habitat from motor vehicles at two other locations. They will jointly apply for grants for this work in the new year.

**Winter Feeding Update:** Elk numbers continued to climb at both feed sites this week. There were 493 counted at Watt and 450 counted at Robinson. Observed elk condition is unchanged from last week. New bulls are entering the sites a few at a time. Highs were in the upper 30s and lows were in the mid-20s. The weather is supposed to get considerably colder next week, with highs in the upper teens and lows near zero. There is a chance for some more snow later in the week.

**Locked Gate:** Natural Resource Technician Hill hiked to the top of the view road above the Robinson feed lot to close and lock a gate to prevent unsanctioned vehicles from entering.



*Gate at the top of the view road now locked*



*Looking south across the Kittitas Valley from the view road*

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Oak Creek staff members continued with winter feeding operations at all feed sites. Elk numbers are holding steady, but new snow on New Year's Day will probably bring additional animals in. Staff members uncovered hay at the end of the parking lot and have almost finished up the three year old supply.

**Peak Elk Counts for Week**

Headquarters – 709

Junction – 81

Nile – 177

Sheep – 0

Cowiche – 1158

**Winter Weather:** Seasonal temperatures with some additional snowfall occurred this past week. New snow accumulation on New Year's Day was approximately five inches at Oak Creek Headquarters. This coming week's forecast is for continued seasonal temperatures with a few chances of snow or rain. Elk appear to be in seasonally good condition.

**Wildlife Management**

**Owls:** District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra visited burrowing owl artificial burrows in Franklin County and contacted two landowners after signs of upcoming construction projects were observed on sites. At one site, expanded agricultural development is planned and Fidorra is working with the landowner and producer to ensure the burrows are relocated nearby prior to the nesting season and construction activities. One burrowing owl was present at the burrows to be relocated, so nesting is probable to occur in spring at the site.

**Deer Surveys:** Biologist Bernatowicz surveyed deer west of Yakima. Only 32 deer were observed, mostly at backyard feeding operations. Access to some of the range was restricted by snow and private gates.

***A piebald mule deer/black-tailed deer***

**Deer Study:** Biologist Bernatowicz hiked into an area where a deer collar was transmitting on mortality mode. The cause of mortality was obviously cougar predation. The deer appeared to be in good shape prior to being killed.



***A radio-collared deer buried by a cougar***

**Deer Surveys:** Biologist Moore performed another half day of deer ground surveys in the Quilomene. Very few deer were observed while searching from Vantage to the Wild Horse Wind Facility. These observations will be added to the total for the East Slope Cascades Mule Deer Management Zone.

***A few deer enjoying the open south facing slopes of the Quilomene Wildlife Area***

**Bighorn Sheep Risk of Contact Modeling:**

Biologist Moore completed a summary spreadsheet of the modeling outputs.

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



**Wildlife Areas**

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Manager Babik worked to design new reader boards for the wildlife area. Current reader boards are not large enough to post all necessary signage, so regulatory signs are scattered around the entry of the wildlife area. The desire is to have a kiosk



style reader board where visitors can find all necessary regulatory signs, a map of the area, and some interpretive information about the wildlife area all in one place.

***Kiosk style reader board in consideration***

**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Access Worker Barbosa serviced Tim's Pond, Oak Creek, Rowe, Mellis Road, McCormick, Fitzsimmons, Donald Road, Pond 1 & 2, Pond 3, Pond 4 & 5, Buena, Zillah Bridge, Woodhouse, Mattoon, and Fio Rito.

Barbosa took supplies up to Oak Creek for

use while Access Manager Garcia is on leave. Oak Creek staff members will service their restrooms until he returns.

**Damaged Fencing:** Last Thursday while working on Pond 3 with the juveniles, we discovered the fence on the property boundary was cut. ATVs have been crossing through Fish and Wildlife property, apparently to access the river for hunting. Repairs have been made and additional signs have been posted.





**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Wildlife Area staff members assisted Hunter Education and Volunteer Coordinator Aaron Garcia with a pheasant hunting clinic at the Sunnyside Wildlife Area HQ. The local Pheasants Forever chapter provided additional help and resources for the clinic.



*Pheasant clinic participants at the Sunnyside Headquarters Unit*



*Clinic participants hunting for pheasants*



*Participants and volunteers at the pheasant clinic at the Sunnyside Headquarters Unit*



*Hunting clinic participants and volunteer guides prepare to disperse into the field*

*Two hunting clinic participants and a volunteer guide with a dog*



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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Othello Sandhill Crane Festival:** District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra was contacted by organizers of the Othello Sandhill Crane Festival to make a public presentation. Fidorra agreed to prepare a 50-minute lecture on ferruginous hawks and their ecology and status in the state of Washington for the March festival.

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Winegeart composed a letter that would express the minimum foot print necessary for the L.T. Murray to store equipment and carry out day to day functions in preparation of a new office building being built in Ellensburg. This also addresses and the possible loss of the current shop/compound being rented for the wildlife area.

## **REGION 4**

No report submitted this week.

## **REGION 5**

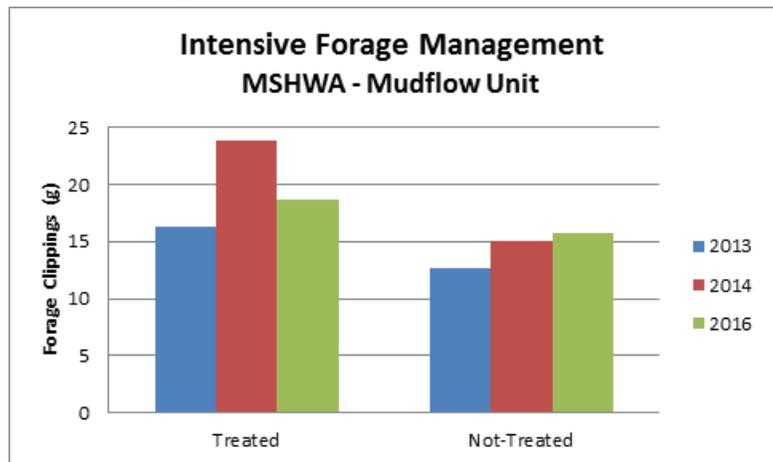
***GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE***

### **Wildlife Management**

**Mudflow Forage Management:** Assistant Manager Sample completed data collection and analysis for this year's Intensive Forage Management (IFM) clip plots located on the Mudflow Unit of Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. These plots help to determine the benefit of fertilizer treatments (urea and lime) applied in the spring time to specific areas of the mudflow compared to areas that did not receive fertilizer treatments. The goal of this soil enhancement is to promote additional grass and forb growth for increased forage available for elk and other wildlife. Three

treated areas of the mudflow are selected and are compared to three areas that have not been treated. Ten plots are chosen at random at each area. Then, using a Daubenmire frame, the grass is clipped and placed in a paper bag. After the grass has dried in the bags, each is weighed to determine average weight as well as percent difference between sites and between years.

***Comparison of treated vs non-treated areas of the Mudflow Unit, Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area***



Year	Treated (g)	Not-Treated (g)	% Difference
2013	16.32	12.6	22.80%
2014	23.78	15.07	36.60%
2016	18.7	15.67	16.20%

***Table showing average weight (g) and percent difference of treated vs non-treated areas of the Mudflow Unit, Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area***

**Region 5 Canids:** Biologist Meyer followed up with three different people who reported seeing wolf-like canids or their sign in different parts of the region. Two of these reports did not contain enough evidence to confirm whether the animals observed were wolves. The third reporting party followed up saying the tracks were from an English mastiff wandering through the area. The department will continue to monitor and track reported wolf sightings in the region.

**Bald Eagle Management:** Wildlife Biologist Anderson and Wildlife Biologist Mckain of the Habitat Division met with County Forester Decker to provide recommendations for the long-term management of bald eagle habitat on a 100-acre Clark County forest tract. Clark County is currently working on a Forest Stewardship Master Plan for all their forest lands and WDFW was requested to give the county assistance on developing habitat management guidelines for the long term management and protection of bald eagle nesting and roosting habitat on a portion of their ownership. WDFW appreciates the counties interest in managing their lands for a variety of wildlife habitats.

**Southwest Washington Goose Management Area 2:** Biologist Trejo conducted goose hunter compliance checks in Goose Management Area 2. Hunter effort was high, as many hunters enjoyed time off from work for the holiday season. Approximately 40 hunters and 11 geese were checked this week. Goose hunters at Shillapoo Wildlife Area continue to sporadically harvest geese. A handful of hunters have capitalized on opportunities to harvest “bonus” snow geese. To date, a total of three dusky Canada geese are known to be harvested in Goose Management Area 2.

**Access:** Biologist Trejo coordinated with Columbia Land Trust employees to schedule a tour of the Cranes Landing property. Ten thousand dark geese are estimated to use this habitat along with copious amounts of other migratory bird species. The goal of accessing this property is to expand dusky Canada goose survey areas.

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

**Private Lands**

**Special Permit Hunt:** Biologist Meyer spoke with a hunter who drew a special permit hunt for Elk Area 5056 Grays River in February. Meyer then followed up by emailing the hunter more information about the hunt.

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

**Wildlife Conflict**

**Glenwood Elk:** Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Supervisor Meyer met with a landowner in the Glenwood area who typically incurs crop damage by elk during early spring throughout the summer. Hazing options were discussed, and the landowner was open to allowing access to youth special permit holders during the hunting season.

**Carson Elk:** Conflict Specialist Jacobsen met with a landowner in the Carson area who has been incurring damage to his fences by elk. Approximately 50-90 head of elk have been regularly attempting to reach the hay feeders stocked for the landowner's cattle. A variety of hazing and fencing options were discussed with the landowner.

**Golf Course Elk:** Conflict Specialist Jacobsen and Supervisor Meyer stopped by the golf course where they constructed fladry fencing as an elk deterrent the previous week. No sign of elk was observed since the construction of the fencing.

**Camas Bear:** Conflict Specialist Jacobsen received a report about a landowner complaining about a nuisance bear. The bear had been repeatedly getting into the landowner's garbage can over the last month. Conflict Specialist Jacobsen discussed with the landowner about securely storing the garbage in a building as well as sanitizing the garbage container to remove odors that may continue to attract the bear.

**REGION 6**

No report submitted this week.