

Wildlife Program

Week of February 8 – February 14, 2016

WOLF ACTIVITIES

Region 1 Wolf Activities

Damage Preventative Cooperative Agreement _ Livestock (DPCA_L): Supervisor McCanna, Conflict Specialists Shepherd, Bennett, Rasley, and Biologist Earl attended a meeting in Ellensburg to address changes to the DPCA_L contract language and how they will be utilized starting July 1 of this year.

Four Wolves Sighted: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley received two calls regarding four adult wolves that were seen on Jasper Mountain on and near the Rainwater Wildlife Area. They are also in the area of one livestock producer that is calving right now. None of the four wolves were wearing a collar. District 3 staff members are following up on sightings, as the Tucannon pack wolf collar appears to not be working.

DPCA_L Contracts: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley processed invoices for range riding and sent them to Olympia for payment.

REGION 1

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Moose Survey: Biologists Lowe, Oyster, and Prince flew one day of transects in the areas of Sullivan Lake and the Little Pend Oreille. The surveys are part of a distance sampling effort to estimate moose population abundance in northeastern WA.

Cow moose spotted during an aerial survey in northern Pend Oreille County

Channeled Scabland Spring Waterfowl Survey: Biologists Atamian and Lowe completed the first ground surveys of the Tyler, Ewan, and Lake Creek routes, and distributed updated maps and other notes to participating surveyors. Aerial surveys are expected to begin next week.





The variety of waterfowl using Coffeepot Lake included mallard, bufflehead, pintail, goldeneye, and ring-neck ducks



Bald Eagle along the Tyler ground route

Mule Deer Habitat: Biologist Lewis met with Biologist Baarstad to do a site assessment in preparation for a native tree and shrub project in the Lamont area. Winter/thermal cover (trees/shrubs) will be planted in the eyebrow areas on the 170-acre property. Most of the property



is in CRP grass cover and will be greatly enhanced with the native tree cover. The project is being funded through a grant from the local Spokane chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation.

Baarstad at Mule Deer Foundation project site

Hawk Creek: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Finch met with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Biologists Jason Lowe and Kim Frymire this week at BLM's Hawk Creek restoration field, northeast of Creston. He helped them overplant a few spots in the field (which was planted to grass mix in fall 2015) with showy milkweed. This entailed scattering the seeds and tamping them down.

BLM's Lowe and Frymire over-seeding milkweed at Hawk Creek restoration field



Asotin Creek Wildlife Area Remote Wildlife Camera: Biologist Woodall picked up the remote camera set out to capture wildlife use on the wildlife area. Activity was

pretty slow, with only four pictures of elk. While in the area, he checked the Smoothing Iron

ranch house and found it in good shape. The camera was moved and placed in a different location in hopes of documenting other species.

Elk captured on a field camera

WT Wooten Wildlife Area – Golden Eagles: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Dingman and Volunteer Winkler put out another deer carcass with remote cameras for the golden eagle study. They were also able to participate in a golden eagle capture this week, where a juvenile golden eagle was trapped and fitted with a backpack transmitter.



Juvenile golden eagle captured and marked with backpack transmitter

WT Wooten Wildlife Area CRP & CREP: Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Dingman visited the FSA office in Dayton to get copies of the current CRP & CREP contracts that are on the Wooten Wildlife Area. There are currently two CREP contracts (one expires in 2016 and one expires in 2017) and one CRP contract (expires in 2018).

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

Vulcan Bighorn Capture: Biologist Lowe assisted the ground crew (WDFW Biologists Prince, Base, Oyster, and Roussin, as well as several volunteers) in handling seven bighorn ewes from the Vulcan herd near Curlew. After being net-gunned by Leading Edge Aviation, the ground

crew collected several samples for health testing, fitted six of the ewes with GPS collars, and released the sheep on site.



A ewe is transported to the ground crew for health testing and radio collaring



Access: Biologist Thorne Hadley posted 6,609 acres of Hunt by Reservation land in Walla Walla County.

Hunt by Reservation property in Walla Walla County

GOAL 3: PROMOTE A HEALTHY ECONOMY, PROTECT COMMUNITY CHARACTER, MAINTAIN AN OVERALL HIGH

QUALITY OF LIFE, AND DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE

SCWA Contacts: With the quickly receding snow, Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Palmer is seeing an increase in hikers on Sherman Creek Wildlife Area, likely mostly antler hunters. A member of the Northeast Washington Trailblazers (NEWT) shared the photo below of a moose on Bisbee Mountain. This group is gearing up for annual volunteer work that they perform on the trail system at Sherman Creek Wildlife Area.

Moose on Bisbee Mountain – Photo by Bill Way



REGION 2

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

Wildlife Management

Pygmy Rabbit Recovery: Combinations of staff members and volunteers have completed surveys on approximately 1000 acres at Sagebrush Flat. Our minimum goal is 2500 acres, which is the core area that has been surveyed each year, beginning with the first winter after releases on Sagebrush Flat. Biologist Gallie coordinated with Wenatchee Valley Community College Natural Resource Club to assist with winter survival surveys on the Sagebrush Flats recovery area. Volunteers assisted with transect surveys, looking for active burrow systems and collecting fecal pellets for DNA analysis. Despite a good effort, we only had a single detection for the day.



Student volunteers listening to instructions from Biologist Wisniewski before survey – Photo by J. Gallie



Student volunteers on transect looking for pygmy rabbit burrows – Photo by J. Gallie



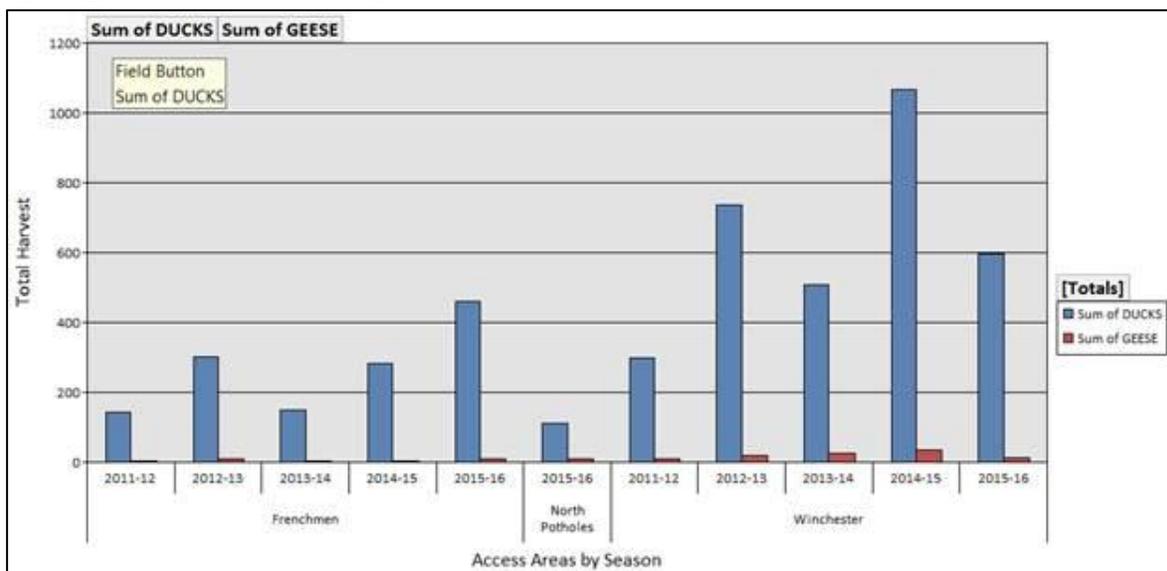
Wild pygmy rabbit found on surveys in Sagebrush Flat recovery area (two weeks ago) – Photo by J. Gallie

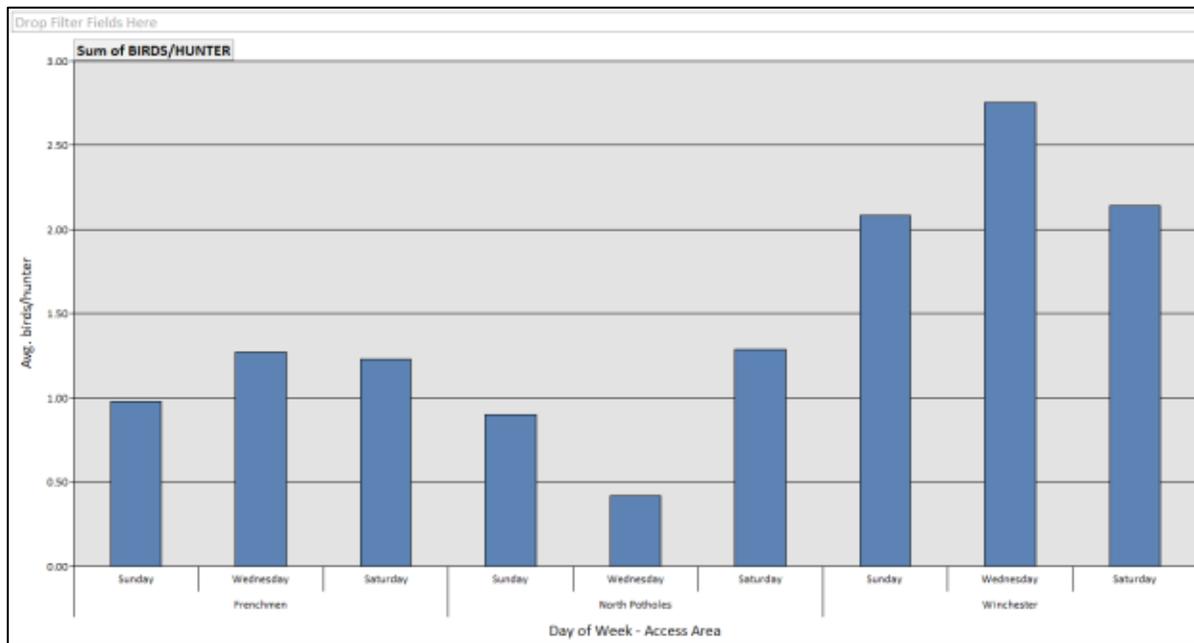
Wildlife Areas

Columbia Basin Wetland Projects: Artesian and Black Lakes test wells were installed this week. The piezometers will be installed next week and we will log data for one year. Finger reviewed summary figures from the Regulated Access Area database. Thanks to Wildlife Area Technician Eddy for data entry! The North Potholes Regulated Access Area (NPRAA) was a bit of a flop this season, but the important thing is that evidence of an impact to reserve function was lacking. During November, the reserve held approximately 32,000 mallards. During the midwinter, the reserve was 100% frozen with no waterfowl observed. The NPRAA received little use from waterfowl hunters overall, with much of the area lacking water during the early part of the season and unfavorable ice conditions after late November. Nevertheless there are still opportunities to harvest ducks in this area when conditions are right, but this area may not be a good candidate for the online reservation system due to spotty use.

The Frenchmen Regulated Access Area (FRAA) had its best season yet (54% increase in harvest above the previous high), and this is likely due in large part to the efforts of Wildlife Area staff members, particularly Technician Eddy, to mow suitable hunting areas at every pond. Additionally, rapid filling of the project provided good water levels early on (as opposed to flooding slowly for gradual food availability, which did not appear to work last year). Lessons continue to be learned, but the upward trend for harvest at these project areas is encouraging. That being said, it's important to note that Mother Nature likely has just as much impact on harvest in these areas as management efforts. The two ADA compliant hunting blinds received relatively low use (approximately 10 visits total), but feedback has been extremely positive and updating the website with new ADA information will hopefully bring some added attention to these new opportunities.

The Winchester Regulated Access Area (WRAA) had an average season. This area continues to be a challenge for filling and Biologist Finger, Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Eidson, and Ducks Unlimited are coordinating to tackle this issue in the next Duck Stamp and Print cycle. Ducks Unlimited will be in the area over the next couple weeks looking this over and preparing for the LiDAR survey.





Harvest data summaries from the Regulated Access Areas showing relative importance of the three areas as well as average hunter harvest by day of week. Clearly, resting the area helps bump up harvest somewhat, but not significantly. Is this worth the lost hunting opportunity? This will be a good topic of discussion at the next Waterfowl Advisory Group meeting coming up April 2.

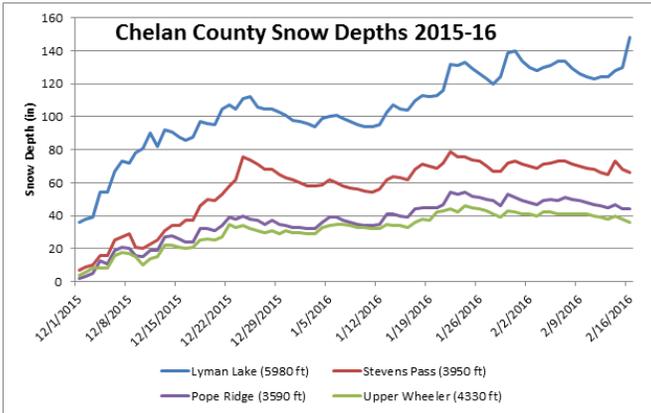
Mansfield Pond, Duck Stamp, and Print Project constructed June 2011. Before this project was built, this area was 95% cattail and held far fewer waterfowl. Now we see swans, sandhill cranes, and a great diversity of dabbling and diving ducks – Photo by R. Finger



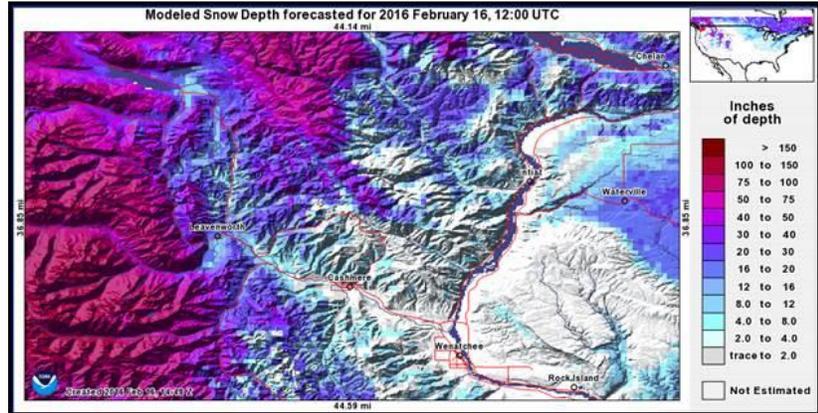
District 7 Observed Environment:

Weather conditions changed over the past week, with increased rain at low to mid-elevation, warmer temperatures and strong winds. Snow depths have been reduced dramatically along the Columbia River and across much of lower elevation deer winter range. Snow continues to accumulate at the highest elevations along the crest of the Cascade Range, typically peaking after April 1. Due to the relatively mild winters over the past few years, we are receiving comments about the severity of this year’s winter and the potential impacts on wildlife. While snow depths are greater this year than last year, data indicates that in Chelan County, this is more or less a historically normal year. Patterns of accumulation match trends we have seen over time, with low elevation snows diminishing as we move into March. I have included two graphs showing current snow accumulation, historic patterns, and projection

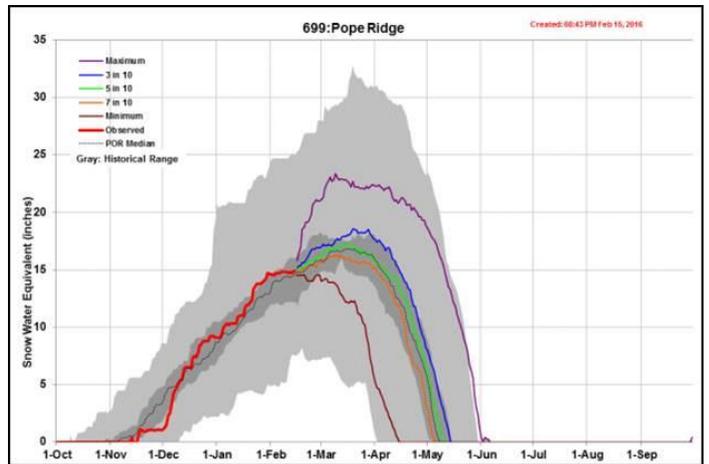
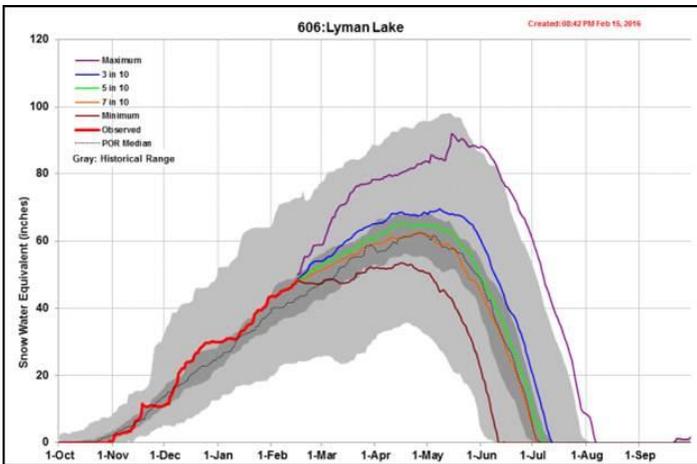
trends for Lyman Lake (high elevation) and Pope Ridge (near core winter range). The data indicates that for 2015/16, snow depths are at or near normal historic trends and that projections for the remainder of the winter should follow a similar pattern. Extreme conditions of high and low snow accumulation have occurred in the past. However, this winter is showing to be very normal. Actual snow depths vary around snow/water equivalent each year based on a number of factors, but these graphs show our winter is shaping up to be pretty average.

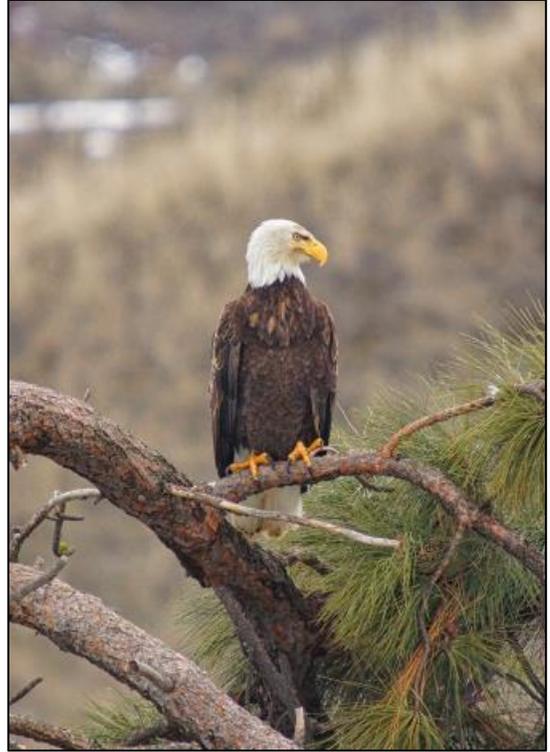


Snow depths recorded from four Snotel sites in Chelan County



Modeled snow depth across mule deer winter range in Chelan County





From top to bottom: a porcupine found dead on top a stump near Hunters Camp, a bald eagle perched over Sinlahekin Creek, a juvenile golden eagle near fire camp, a group of trumpeter swans on Forde Lake, and a pair of otters on the ice – one enjoying a freshly caught bullhead – atop a still frozen Forde Lake – Photos by Justin Haug and taken on the Sinlahekin Wildlife Area



REGION 3

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Areas

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart attended the first meeting of the Snag Conservation Working Group. The group hopes to work with USFS to standardize snag protection policies in their firewood cutting permits, and educate the public about the value of snags in healthy forest systems.

Tapash Meeting: Manager Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt attended a Tapash meeting with WDFW Forester Pfeifle, Ken McNamee (DNR), Reese Lolley (TNC), and Scott Nicolai (Yakama Tribe) to discuss funding sources and forest health projects on the L.T. Murray. A new source of funding recently became available, so the old Robinson Canyon project will be revamped and a proposal application will be submitted by the end of February. Forester Pfeifle is working on a separate L.T. Murray timber management project, which we will try and implement in late 2016.

Elk Feeding/ Winter Conditions: Elk numbers are consistent at both lots, with Watt around 820 and Robinson around 800. It is warming up, with highs in the low 40s and lows in the lower 30s. Highs next week will be in the lower 50s, with lows in the low 30s. Rain and snow are expected throughout the week.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Manager Lopushinsky worked with forester Pfeifle and Chelan County's Natural Resource Department to coordinate forest management in the Stemilt Basin with the NCW Forest Health Collaborative. WDFW will be cooperating with the Collaborative to pursue grant funds to do forest health work.

Elk in Poor Condition: WDFW staff members responded to a report of a bull elk in poor condition in the Colockum Creek drainage. Reportedly this elk was limping and had not moved much in several weeks. This turned out to be a bull ear tagged and radio collared by WDFW in 2013 that has lost its collar. The elk appeared to be feeding and moving normally.

Wintering bull elk #238



Oak Creek Wildlife Area: Oak Creek staff members continue feeding operations at all five feed sites. Counts continue to be at high levels, except at the Junction feed site where most of the elk have left and moved to the HQ, where numbers increased by about 200 elk. Hillside are beginning to green up and elk are roaming and coming back at feeding time.

Elk near the Junction feed site, grazing on newly emerged grass. Feed site numbers at the Junction have dropped off significantly.



Management Plans: Manager Huffman worked on items for the Oak Creek Management Plan and attended the Internal Scoping Meeting in Selah along with Forester Mackey where each program began to develop priorities for the new management plan.

Peak Elk Counts for Week

Headquarters – 1221 total

Junction – 225 total

Nile – 350 total

Sheep – 100 dropped off after trapping on Thursday

Cowiche – 1600

Winter Weather: Weather this past week was very mild with some rainfall. Temperatures over the weekend got into the 50s. High elevation rain, warm temps, and warm wind melted off a lot of snow, causing high flows in streams, creeks, and rivers by Monday. Grasses are greening up, but growth is still short. Elk are ranging off the feed site, but continue to return at feeding time and are cleaning up all the hay, indicating they are not getting adequate forage off the range yet.

Animal Condition: Elk continue to be in seasonally good condition, with a few mortalities of elk that were sick or arrived in poor condition.

Wenas Wildlife Area: Manager Confer Morris and Assistant Manager Taylor met with Regional Program Manager McCorquodale and Conflict Specialist Wetzal to discuss possible strategies to address the elk below the fence in the Wenas Valley.

Feed Site Herding: Assistant Manager Taylor coordinated logistics and staff members for herding elk off private land and into the Mellotte feed site. Manager Confer Morris, Natural Resource Technician Kass (borrowed from Oak Creek for the day), and two volunteers handled ground duties while Taylor herded over 200 elk from the helicopter. Everything went well, with all the animals moved across private land and through a main elk fence gate onto the feed site. So far they are holding on the feed site.



Elk being moved towards the gate to the feed site



Elk moving through the gate to the feed site



Elk through the gate and moving towards the feed site



Last stragglers being moved into the feed site

Winter Feeding

Mellotte Feed Site elk numbers: ~1,430 animals.

Over 200 elk were moved from private land onto the feed site, increasing the Mellotte herd to over 1400 head, a new record.

Winter Weather: Weather temperatures continued to be above normal, with highs in the low 50s and lows mostly in the mid-30s. The beginning of the coming week is expected to be quite warm (highs in upper 50s into the 60s), with temperatures cooling down by mid-week into the mid-40s with lows in the upper 20s. Rain is also predicted for the latter part of the week.

Animal Condition: Elk are in seasonally good condition.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Natural Resource Worker 2 Medina and Assistant Manager Sak lowered the water level at the Byron Ponds. Three beaver dams were found in the system with a

lot of water behind them. SVID wanted to go in and remove part of the dams to keep the water level at the normal water level on the Bus Road crossing. We started lowering the water at the outlet structure of the pond system to help keep a large volume of water from going downstream onto private land. We also set a beaver trap and caught one beaver off of the last dam. Natural Resource Worker 2 Medina released the Byron beaver in the Lower Rupley Unit.

Wildlife Management

Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow Workshop: District Biologist Fidorra attended the Conservation Leaders for Tomorrow (CLfT) workshop near Chicago with Biologists Meyer and Yarborough. CLfT is a professional development program designed for student and professional leaders within the natural resource sciences. CLfT focuses on hunting awareness and conservation education among academic programs and government agencies. CLfT consists of four day workshops that blend interactive classroom discussion with field experiences. Workshop participants engage with leading natural resource professionals and conservationists in a highly interactive educational setting. This was the first time WDFW has been represented in the workshop, which was composed of wildlife professionals from various state and federal agencies. Travel and workshop expenses were provided by CLfT and their partners.

WDFW staff members completed the CLfT workshop, which culminated in a hunting exercise at the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation



Elk Antler: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a report and picture from a landowner near Rattlesnake Mountain who had picked up a fresh dropped antler from a bull elk.

Rattlesnake Mountain landowner with a fresh elk shed



Ferruginous Hawk Surveys: Private Lands Biologist Stutzman continues to work through the landowner database created by District Biologist Fidorra for the upcoming Ferruginous Hawk surveys.

Bighorn Sheep: Biologist Bernatowicz attended an internal workshop the covered working with owners of small flocks of small domestic sheep and goats near wild bighorn sheep.

Final test results from early December testing of Cleman Mountain bighorn sheep came back negative. It appears there was a false positive, most likely from prior contamination being sent to the lab. Due to the delay in getting the results and potential risk of contact with domestics, a decision was made to retest the Cleman Mountain sheep prior to translocating. Biologist Bernatowicz reset a portion of the trap and found the sheep cooperative. Personnel were schooled for the next day and a successful capture and testing was run by Biologists Moore and Rowan, with help from the Yakama Nation. The lab was contacted and asked to rush testing. Warm weather is reducing the chance of trapping with every day that passes.

Elk Surveys: Biologist Moore and Wildlife Area Manager Lopushinsky finished Yakima Elk Surveys on Monday. The combined raw counts indicate the Yakima elk herd is still slightly above objective, but down from the last survey in 2013. The elk herd is much stronger north than south.

Yakima Elk Herd Surveys: All the survey data has been entered and the new R-sight software was downloaded. Moore attempted one run using the new software, but was unsuccessful. Therefore he'll have to do some troubleshooting. The raw count data indicates the Yakima herd is still doing well, but the 2016 estimate should be slightly lower than our last estimate in 2013.

Colockum Bull Study: Biologist Moore was asked to present a study update to the Game Management Advisory Counsel in March. To prepare, Moore met with Regional Program Manager McCorquodale to discuss past presentations and Central Washington University Graduate Student Meyers to gain insight on his progress. Meyers has been making progress and is currently analyzing data. Moore will incorporate this information into his presentation.

Cleman Mountain to Quilomene Bighorn Sheep Translocation: Since the MOVI positive result from our December sampling effort has been investigated and resolved, it was decided to do another round of disease testing prior to translocation. Biologist Moore worked with Biologist Rowan and the Yakama Nation's Biological staff members to capture and sample 10 bighorn sheep at Cleman Mountain. Everything went smoothly and samples were sent off to Washington State University. Special thanks to Casey Kass for meeting Moore at the trap early to help set up.

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

Wildlife Areas

LT Murray Wildlife Area: Manager Winegeart worked on several tasks related to the Naneum Recreational Plan, including participation in a coordination meeting between WDFW and DNR. Winegeart worked with DNR's GIS staff members to revise and print local Green Dot maps. Winegeart and Assistant Manager Hunt attended the public information meeting Thursday night regarding implementation of the Recreational Plan. The meeting was attended by approximately 50 people from the community.

Sunnyside Wildlife Area: Assistant Manager Sak gave a tour to two local back country horsemen that are looking for other places to ride. Sak showed them the Lower Rupley Unit, and both horsemen were very surprised that the unit was so big and open. It seems they have found a new favorite spot to ride.

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

Wildlife Areas

Colockum Wildlife Area: Manager Lopushinsky worked with WDFW Archaeologist Katherine Kelly on the preservation and display of the mammoth tooth found on the Colockum. The tooth will be kept and displayed at the Wanapum Heritage Center Museum near Wanapum Dam.

Wildlife Management

Skunk Complaint: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and handled a nuisance wildlife complaint of skunks at a residence in Pasco. The problem skunk had taken up residence under an outbuilding and the owner was worried her dog would get sprayed. Several nonlethal preventive strategies were discussed, as well as contact information for a local wildlife control operator.

Deer Damage: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand patrolled multiple wine grape vineyards in the Smith Canyon area in Franklin County for deer damage. Early spring-like weather conditions have put development ahead of schedule this year, and although some deer sign was present, no deer were observed or damage noticed.

Rattlesnake Mountain: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand held landowner meetings with property owners on Rattlesnake Mountain to discuss Damage Prevention Permit use and coordination as well as spring winter wheat planting schedules.

Elk Hazing: Conflict Specialist Wetzel hazed elk from areas north and south of I-90 several times this week. Most slopes in that area are now snow free.

Elk Plan: Conflict Specialist Wetzel met with a Thorp hay grower about elk and deer. A neighborhood elk plan appears to have been adopted in this area and will be implemented soon.

Elk Herding: Approximately 26 elk were herded into the Wildlife Area by L.T. Murray and Wildlife Program staff members this week. Wenas Wildlife Area staff members also herded over 200 elk back to the feed site and off private lands this week. Wildlife Area staff members throughout District 8 have been vital at helping to reduce elk conflict in the past two months and deserve special thanks.

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 Hunt completed the vehicle survey requested by Chris Miller in Business Operations. It was designed to gather information on agency owned vehicles and how they are used as the agency transitions into mostly Motor Pool vehicles. Traditionally, Motor Pool vehicles have not been a good fit on Wildlife Areas, but some changes in rules and limitations may improve that situation.

Vehicles: Assistant Manager Hunt took care of elk feeding duties Thursday with volunteer Schnebly while Technicians Hill and Leuck drove to Olympia to pick up our 2015 Chevy 2500 (our second Motor Pool vehicle), which replaces the old 1998 Chevy. Hunt and Technician Hill finished removing any useful equipment off the old 1998 Chevy, which is destined for surplus.

Colockum Wildlife Area: Warm temperatures have started spring runoff on the Colockum this week, with stream flows rising but no flooding reported.

Whitson Canyon spring runoff at Tarpiscan Road, Colockum Wildlife Area



REGION 4

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

East/West Bear Project: Biologist Smith assisted Bear and Cougar Specialist Beausoleil and Biologist Maletzke with ongoing bear den work. This portion of the project entails locating dens, placing cameras to document emergence and cub numbers, recollaring/adjusting collars on sub-adult males, recollaring/adjusting collars on adult females, and potentially collaring yearling cubs. Work where newborn cubs are known to be present will be limited (camera placement only) to avoid den abandonment.



GPS collar replacement on the West Side during the East/West Bear Project

WDFW King County Citizen

Breeding Amphibian Monitoring:

Biologist Anderson continues occasional identification and/or landowner access assistance (generally via email or phone) in collaboration with Woodland Park Zoo and project volunteers.

<http://www.zoo.org/citizenscience>



Northern red-legged frog egg mass near the Region 4 Headquarters office that a volunteer group found in survey



Long-toed salamander egg mass at Mercer Slough. All observations are made without handling masses, keeping them in water to avoid stress to embryological development, and with e.g. white cutting boards to assist in identification as seen here.

Great Blue Heron Monitoring and Management: Biologist Anderson and Milner received word from a local birding and photography enthusiast regarding pre-nest staging of herons at Edmonds Marsh. This is thought to be a social behavior that leads towards entry and initiation of territoriality at the nest within a colony. Herons, which are usually solitary outside of nesting – and very territorial when feeding – can gather at a site that is relatively near a colony location and initiate forays into a nest site. Birds nested at Edmonds a few years back, but now location(s) are unknown. Such staging occurrences are a great opportunity to provide observation and reconnaissance efforts to locate new colonies, if time affords for staff members or if volunteers are willing. WDFW Habitat Program maps these staging areas as they are thought to be significant in breeding activities of local herons. Herons are not seen conducting this behavior outside of the Pacific Northwest, for some odd reason. Anderson has initiated conversations with Habitat regarding mapping of current known sites.

Anderson and King County area habitat biologists continue to collaborate, when needed, on various municipal wildlife management requests provided via the state Growth Management Act and housed under the WDFW PHS program. Biologists Heller and Anderson are working on a

University of Washington request for management consideration to meet Seattle Code regarding the demolition of current biology buildings and the construction of a new Life Science complex.



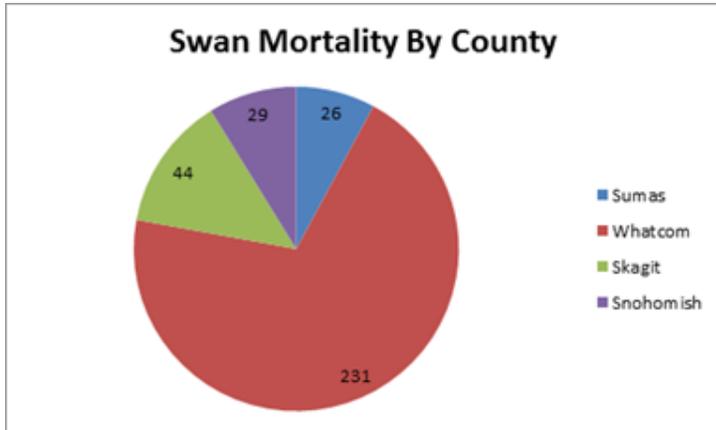
Great blue herons staging at Edmonds Marsh, signaling the initiation of soon to come nesting activity within a local colony site. It is not normal to see herons this close outside of staging areas and during the breeding season in highly productive, concentrated food source areas (got to feed those hungry babies rather than scrap with your brothers and sisters). – Photo by Bill Anderson

Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary: Biologist Anderson examined operations needs and discussed items with web staff. Anderson conferenced with National Wildlife Federation regarding current agreement for “joint certification” and moving forward collaboratively in future if both parties can meet needs. Anderson provided a volunteer citizen group with graphics and photos for their library display and lecture presentation.

Swan Mortality and Morbidity Study: Biologist DeBruyn and Swan Technician Trejo continued to monitor for swan mortality and morbidity in northwest Washington. Thirteen mortalities were recorded this week, bringing the season total to 305 mortalities in Washington. One swan was also obtained from King County this week, and it is expected to be lead-exposed.

Weekly Swan Mortality Report (as of February 16, 2016)

	Lead suspect	Powerline suspect	Other trauma	Undetermined	Feather Pile	Total
Sumas	11	1	1	3	10	26
Whatcom	156	32	2	11	30	231
Skagit	15	19	2	5	3	44
Snohomish	8	19	0	2		29
	190	71	5	21	43	330



Lowland Pika Project: District 13 staff members submitted all the final materials required by this contract to our contact with the US Navy. Required materials included the final report, photographs, shape files, and GPS locations for various aspects of the project.

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Program: District 13 staff members attended a call to discuss the

outcome of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Program’s planning effort, which occurred a few months ago. Although we suspect this effort may not have direct applicability to our work in Region 4, we appreciate the hard work and willingness to engage that the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Program staff members have devoted to the project.

Fir Island Farms/Leque Island Avian Monitoring Project: District 13 staff members met with partners from Ecostudies Institute to review project progress and discuss plans for upcoming surveys. We will be co-presenting a shorebird ID class at the Port Susan Snowgoose and Birding Festival, so that project was also discussed.

Wildlife Areas

Tennant Lake Swan Watch: The Friends of Tennant Lake & Hovander Park held the annual Swan Watch at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center. The public was invited to come see the swans resting on Tennant Lake and dispersing to local farm fields to feed. Over 200 swans were present on the lake. WDFW Swan Technician Nick Trejo and Alysha Elsby from the Whatcom County Humane Society gave presentations on swans in the county. Four rehabilitated swans were banded and collared and then released on the Lake Terrell Unit. The event was well attended, with over 25 adults and children taking the time to learn about swans.

Hovander House Bat Colony: Manager Kessler coordinated with the Park Manager from Whatcom County Parks on the bat colony at the Hovander House. Last year the roof was replaced on the house, and any entrance holes were plugged up in an attempt to discourage the bats from roosting in the house. The plan is now to move the existing maternity box to a closer location near Hovander House and add a second maternity house on the opposite side. Two Rocket-type bat houses will also be installed near the house for the male bats to use.



Inside a rocket bat box

Bat rocket box showing body oils at entry point

Lake Terrell and Rainbow Pond Water Levels: Due to recent heavy rains, the water levels in Lake Terrell and Rainbow Pond are at close to flood levels. Manager Kessler fully opened the water valve at the Lake Terrell dam to keep the lake from flooding Lake Terrell Road. The water control at Rainbow Pond was replaced last August, and the pond is now completely full. The water control is working perfectly. This week, Kessler will be removing boards from the control to keep the water at a safe level.



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

Wildlife Management

Mountain Goat Samples: Biologist DeBruyn shipped blood samples from hunter harvested goats in the Mount Baker area to WSU for Mycoplasma ovi-pneumonia analysis.

State Prohibited Species Needs – Management Planning Conference with Fish and Wildlife Programs – Region 4 efforts: Biologist Anderson, Milner, and Link discussed planning and needs with Olympia Wildlife and Fish staff members regarding prohibited species concerns, pathogen concerns, and overall steps in management needs in the coming 2016-17 seasons. Anderson and Milner will work with Fish staff members to determine appropriate Region 4 Wildlife involvement and provide this to Manager Link and others in the Wildlife Program.

State Prohibited Nutria in a live trap taken in a past effort on Lake Washington



State Wildlife Grant Reporting: Biologist Anderson followed-up with Biologist Sato to provide more detail regarding State

Wildlife Grant reporting needs. State Wildlife Grants help to drive meeting the Washington State Wildlife Action Plan, managing for species of greatest conservation need (many listed but not all), assisting with populations of need, and keeping common species common for current

and future generations to enjoy recreationally. They also aid in providing for ecosystem function and biodiversity maintenance.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Planning: Biologist Anderson and Milner examined Species of Greatest Conservation Need lists to “short-list” those that are known, likely, or could be on area properties of the Snoqualmie Wildlife Area. These were submitted to Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Boehm.



Townsend's big-eared bat, a state Species of Greatest Conservation Need – known to occur in the lower Snoqualmie Valley wildlife management units (Stillwater, Cherry, Crescent Lake) due to WDFW citizen monitoring efforts – Photo by C. Anderson



Mylitta crescent on Taylor Mountain during a butterfly hike – Photo by Tracy Anderson

Outreach – Bellevue Master Naturalist Training – Living with Wildlife: Biologist Anderson provided a three hour lecture/hands-on specimen session covering basics of urban ecology, human-wildlife conflicts, human intrusion to wildlife, conflict reduction, and long-term management techniques to support coexistence with urban wildlife to the current crop of Bellevue Master Naturalists. Anderson provides the wildlife/conflict reduction/wildlife laws portion of this training annually. Anderson passed out bird nest boxes to all participants so they can use them in outreach and as part of their naturalist volunteer efforts.

Downy woodpecker excavating in a pillar of a house. Keep dead trees up where they do not create a hazard! – Photo by C. Anderson



Wildlife Areas

British Petroleum Hunting Season Review: Manager Kessler attended a hunting season review meeting with the British Petroleum security and environmental managers. This past hunting season went very well, with no reported problems. Hunting on the BP property adjacent to the refinery is a unique opportunity. No other refinery in the US allows hunting on their property. BP approves of our current agreements, and intends to keep them going for the next hunting season.

Snoqualmie Wildlife Area: Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that a change in user groups is occurring at the units. These include people fishing, bird watching, and wildlife viewing. Issues continue to arise at the Crescent Lake Unit, where people are allowing their dogs to chase and harass protected swans and nesting geese. Wildlife Enforcement was contacted and requested assistance.

Post-waterfowl Season Projects: Cosgrove and Meis continued swan and waterfowl surveys of the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit and Nookachamps Creek area. Over 200 swans and many ducks were observed in the alfalfa and corn on the Game Reserve field, and hundreds of mallards and wigeon were in the hunt field. Meis and Cosgrove also picked up litter at the unit.

Meis and Cosgrove continued gradual drawdown of water in the agricultural areas on the Samish Unit by removing more stop-logs in various water control structures. Thousands of ducks (mostly wigeon, but also pintail, mallards, and green-wing teal) were observed on the unit.

Cosgrove and Meis removed the stop-logs in the two water control structures on the Island Unit. Cosgrove dug two small surface ditches to facilitate drainage out of agricultural fields. Mallards, wigeon, pintail, and green-wing teal were observed feeding in a number of the fields.

Swans are still very active in Skagit County

Swan Outreach on the Whatcom

Wildlife Area: Technician Trejo gave a talk at the annual Swan Watch, which is a cooperative effort between the North Cascades Audubon Society and the Whatcom Wildlife Area at the Tennant Lake Interpretive Center. Watchers gather before first light to view roosting swans on the lake, watch them leave for the day, and meet for a slide show and refreshments.





Collaring a rehabilitated swan at Tennant Lake Interpretive Center



Tech Trejo banded, collared, and released five rehabilitated swans at Lake Terrell. A swan that was taken to the Whatcom Humane Society Rehabilitation Center last week was one of the five swans that released.

Private Lands/Access Management

Wildlife Viewing: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Private Lands Biologist Wingard met with Whatcom County Audubon and Land Trust representatives to discuss topics centered around how to expand wildlife viewing opportunities on private lands. The group also discussed issues involved with access and how Private Lands Access staff members can help alleviate those issues. The meeting was very productive and Private Lands Access staff members are looking forward to increasing coordination with these groups to expand future wildlife viewing opportunities on private lands.

Spring Bear Damage Hunt: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Private Lands Biologist Wingard drafted and reviewed letters to be sent to hunters who successfully drew a spring bear permit in either the North Skagit or Monroe hunt areas. Slight changes in the management of the hunt are scheduled for this year, most importantly the mandatory attendance of a pre-hunt meeting for North Skagit hunters.

Public Comment and Questions: Private Lands Biologist Wingard and Supervisory Biologist Caldwell responded to public comments and questions regarding private land access and hunting for waterfowl and bear species. Information was provided on habitat conditions, waterfowl use, hunting success, and web-based access options for reserving and viewing private land access sites across the state.

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and Natural Resource Technician Cogdal continued monitoring elk activity, nuisance complaints, and other issues along the Highway 20 corridor and along Highway 9. Cogdal constructed preliminary Elk Exclusionary Fence Project work in the Day Creek area of Skagit County.

Elk Damage: Biologist Smith continued to work with landowners experiencing elk damage to grass crops and fencing. Smith coordinated with, and delivered materials to, volunteers who repaired fencing in the area over the weekend. Smith also coordinated with South Sound Master Hunter elk tag holders.

Wildlife Areas

Skagit Headquarters: Manager Rotton participated in a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Network conference call with other staff members from WDFW, Audubon, and the U.S. Forest Service to discuss the outcome of the most recent Site Assessment Tool.

Boom Log Installation: Meis and Cosgrove measured the area around the new pump house outfall at the Headquarters Unit in preparation for installing protective boom logs. Cosgrove coordinated with Dike District #22 personnel regarding the project and purchased supplies. Rotton met with Sharon Riggs from Padilla Bay to discuss their planning effort and potential coordination projects.

Meeting: Wildlife area staff members met with Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm to discuss upcoming agricultural leases, wildlife area planning processes, and other general administrative tasks.

Island Unit: Rotton scheduled a permitting meeting for the tide gate repair process and coordinated a discussion of construction processes with CAMP Engineer Ray Berg and Island volunteers for project construction. Cosgrove and Meis collected full garbage bags and other trash that was picked up last weekend on the Island Unit during the Washington Waterfowl Association clean-up day. Fourteen Washington Waterfowl Association members were present for the event. Cosgrove prepared equipment and coordinated with volunteers to ferry the John Deere 5300 to the Island Unit to begin knocking down corn. Natural Resource Technician Cosgrove canceled the ferrying due to high winds Friday morning.

Map showing the location of the Skagit Wildlife Area's Island Unit

Wood Duck Nest Boxes: Cosgrove, with assistance from Meis, installed four wood duck nest boxes on the Island Unit and two on Wiley Slough at the Headquarters Unit. Cosgrove brushed trails, cleaned, and added fresh cedar shavings in three existing wood duck boxes on the Island Unit.



Samish Unit: Removed plywood boards out of some of the water control structures mainly focusing on drying out the agricultural fields on the west side while still holding water on the eastern half of the Samish Unit.

Samish River Unit: Rotton met with current and retired Natural Resource Conservation Service Biologists Kathy Smith and Kathy Kilcoyne to discuss the planting project for the site. Placement and species composition of the planting area were identified. Mapped areas of known salt concentrations were also discussed.

Private Lands/Access Management

Washington Waterfowl Association Coordination: Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Private Lands Biologist Wingard met with members of the Skagit chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association to discuss how the season went, what issues arose, and potential opportunities for the future. Supervisory Biologist Caldwell and Biologist Wingard were invited to present the results of Waterfowl Quality Hunt Unit surveys at the next meeting of the North Sound Chapter of the Washington Waterfowl Association. Supervisory Biologist Caldwell prepared a presentation that will be presented to the group sometime in the near future.

REGION 5

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Western Pond Turtle Management: District Biologists Anderson and Bergh met with Dr. Storms (Veterinarian, Oregon Zoo) and Graduate Research Assistant Gilliom (Evergreen College, Sustainability in Prisons Project) at the Larch Corrections Center (Clark County) to monitor the progress of the western pond turtle treatment project. The Oregon Zoo has been

working with WDFW to monitor and evaluate a group of western pond turtles experiencing an unknown shell disease found in Washington. The Larch Corrections Center is assisting the project by providing a treatment facility and inmate staff members to take care of the turtles post treatment at the Oregon Zoo in Portland. The Larch Corrections Center is currently holding nine western pond turtles in recovery prior to their spring release in the Columbia River Gorge.



Dr. Storms, Oregon Zoo, conducting turtle exams with Larch Corrections Center Inmates responsible for western pond turtle care

Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area

Volunteer Tree Planting: Volunteers from the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation assisted Wildlife Area staff members with building and installing 175 tree cages onto planted and naturally regenerated conifer saplings along Bear Creek on the Mudflow Unit of the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. These trees were planted in the floodplain of the creek in hopes that they stabilize the creek banks and promote understory shrubs and grasses to establish once the trees have matured. The cages will protect the young trees from ungulate browse damage. A huge thank you to the six volunteers that helped with this effort.



Volunteers from Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation helping to build and install tree cages onto conifer saplings on the Mudflow Unit of Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area



Eagle Island Habitat Enhancement:

Wildlife Area Manager Hauswald and Biologist Holman teamed up to gain \$16,500 in matching funds for habitat enhancement on the Eagle Island Unit of WDFW's Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area. The funding was acquired as a component of Pacificorp's mitigation requirements under their Settlement Agreement for operation of hydropower facilities on the North Fork Lewis River.

With a matched contribution of \$16,500 from WDFW, extensive rehabilitation of the island can begin. Specifically, the money will be used to chemically treat approximately 100 acres of Scott's broom and mow down the stocks after the invasive plants die. Subsequently, planting of native trees and shrubs will take place to re-establish a riparian forested habitat. Eagle Island is approximately 270 acres in total size, lies roughly halfway between Merwin Dam and the mouth of the Lewis River, and is held entirely in WDFW ownership. Thanks to Pacificorp for funding this project and for their ongoing efforts to improve habitat conditions in the Lewis River Watershed.

Shillapoo Wildlife Area

Chapman's Tree Planting Fencing Project: Last week, Assistant Manager Hand and Technician Fox began the fencing project at the newly planted Chapman's Slough Tree Planting. The fence is roughly 2,500 feet long and provides a 100-150 foot buffer on each side of the slough for the tree planting riparian area restoration project. The fencing also has multiple gates along with an open crossing in the middle for cattle to travel back and forth between the pastures. The fence was constructed to accommodate passage from adult and fawn deer, along with multiple styles for hunter access.



Chapman's tree planting fencing project

Garbage Pickup: Assistant Manager Hand cleaned up and disposed of over 500 pounds of garbage illegally dumped along the Wildlife Area/private property boundary last Friday. Dumping is a constant issue that WDFW staff members encounter on an unfortunately regular basis at the Shillapoo and Vancouver Lake units.



Illegal garbage dumping

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

Wildlife Management

Southwest Washington Management Area 2A and 2B Goose Hunt: The 2015-2016 SW Washington late season goose hunt opened this week with many hunters taking advantage of

the changes in regulations. Late season goose hunting is now open to all SW Washington goose card holders on private lands. This hunt is designed to assist farmers with damage reduction by employing hunters on private lands to haze birds away. Hunters need to obtain permission to hunt on private lands prior to hunting. Anyone interested in participating in the late season can refer to the Washington State Migratory Waterfowl and Upland Game Seasons Pamphlet for further details. The pamphlet can be found on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>

WDFW Biologist Butler and Scientific Technician Miller continued to travel throughout Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties to monitor hunting activity in the field. Large flocks of geese were seen throughout the area, including thousands of snow geese within the Shillapoo Wildlife Area. In addition, many dusky Canada geese were also observed throughout the Vancouver Lowlands, with some mixing in with flocks of cacklers and taverners. This highlights the importance of properly identifying each goose and using caution when targeting geese to avoid harvesting a dusky. In addition, Canada and snow goose numbers greatly increased on Shillapoo Wildlife Area this week.



Collared dusky geese



Dusky geese within a mixed flock

Canada and snow goose on the Shillipoo Wildlife Area

Overall, hunters did very well during the first week of the late season. As of Sunday, February 14, approximately 28 hunters were contacted and 57 geese were checked during the late season. Almost 20 of those geese were reported by hunters over the phone. There were two dusky Canada geese



harvested in the area this week. This brings the total number of dusky Canada geese known to have been harvested in the area to sixteen.

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

District 10 Wildlife Conflict

Elk: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin deployed a youth hunter to several agricultural lands in Randle. One of the landowners assisted the youth hunter near the Cispus River area. The landowner’s wife also provided breakfast to this successful 11-year-old hunter, who harvested his first elk on agricultural lands.



Successful youth hunter who harvested his first elk on agricultural lands

Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin also escorted another youth hunter onto agricultural lands in Randle. The youth hunter crept up on the elk as it fed from a hay feeder. The hunter had great cover from the curious cows who followed her. She made a great shot and harvested a nice cow that still had the evidence in her mouth....



Curios cows providing cover for a youth hunter who was successful in harvesting an elk

In addition, Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin delivered fencing to a vineyard in Toutle and coordinated with master hunter volunteers to assist the landowner with installation of the fence.

District 9 Wildlife Conflict

Beaver: Wildlife Conflict Specialist Peterson is working with the Port of Klickitat to address beaver issues in their lakes along the Columbia River. With increased beaver presence and constant precipitation, port employees have to use emergency pumps to lower the level of the lake. WDFW Conflict Specialist Peterson and Port of Klickitat employees have come up with way of fencing off the pump inlet that will hopefully prevent the beavers from causing future problems.

District 10 & Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area Winter Conditions

Past Weather: November temperatures and precipitation were both below normal, with several days of low temperatures in the 20s. December temperatures were slightly above normal and the month had record high precipitation, causing some flooding throughout the district. January temperatures were average and precipitation for the month was above average.

Short-Term Forecast: Snow levels will fluctuate between 3,500 to 7,000 feet during the upcoming week, with temperatures in the valleys ranging into the 50s. The 6-10 day forecast is for above average temperatures and precipitation and the 8-14 day forecast is for above average temperatures and normal precipitation.

Long-Term Forecast: The February 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 the Wildlife Area being heavily utilized.

Snow Depths: Lower elevations are currently snow free below about 3,000 feet. Snow depths have decreased in the middle and upper elevations this past week. Snowpack is about average for the region.

Animal Concentrations: No unusual concentrations noted to date. The third winter elk survey was conducted on the Mount St. Helens Wildlife Area on February 2, with 141 elk being observed.

Animal Condition: The majority of animals appear to be in good condition, but a couple observed have been in poor condition.

Mortality: Three mortalities have been observed while conducting other work on the wildlife area so far this winter.

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, 2016, to minimize disturbance and associated energy demands on elk wintering there.

District 9 Winter Conditions

Past Weather: Temperatures have moderated even more this past week with milder conditions across the district. Rain and warm temperatures continue to melt the snowpack and creeks are full but not flooding. Current snow water equivalent data indicates that the south Cascades are at 103 percent of normal. The Soda Springs Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area has approximately 20% snow cover, with most of that found under trees and on the north facing slopes.

Winter Severity: Winter conditions continue to be typical of February weather in the south Cascades and Klickitat River drainage. Snow coverage is primarily above 2,500 feet elevation. There are no current concerns for big game populations in eastern Klickitat County, as most animals came into this winter in favorable physical condition.

Habitat: 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 in the White Salmon River drainage. Deer are generally absent from open areas above 2,500 feet as snow conditions have pushed deer into dense forested habitats.

Animal Concentrations: Deer are bunched in normal concentrations throughout the district, with deer in Klickitat County seen more in the timber associated with recent snow depths. Elk are reported in some agricultural areas associated with the Trout Lake and Husum areas, which is common this time of year.

Animal Condition: Deer and elk appear to be in good condition and no winter stress/mortality has been reported.

Mortality: Mortalities this week were primarily associated with road kills. No reports of deer in poor condition.

Public Contacts: No concerns raised by the public this week related to winter conditions.

REGION 6

GOAL 1: CONSERVE AND PROTECT NATIVE FISH AND WILDLIFE

Wildlife Management

Power Line Strike of Trumpeter Swan: Biologist Ament received a call at 0803 on February 10, 2016 from an Audubon member who lives near a known trumpeter swan feeding area. He reported observing a dead lone swan in a field and conveyed that the swan had not been there around 1500 the previous day. Biologist Ament responded to collect the swan. The adult swan was found dead 19 meters west of a set of power lines along Smuck Road, just east of Sequim. She retrieved and examined the swan. The swan appeared to be quite healthy and normal body weight. The only wound found on the carcass was a 4.5 cm x 2 cm site on the lower right side of the neck that was completely void of feathers. The skin was exposed and there was a slight burnt odor at the wound site. It was obvious that this swan had likely hit the power line, but it was unknown if the swan actually died from being electrocuted. She transported the swan to the Greywolf Veterinarian Clinic in Sequim for further assessment. The swan weighed 25.0 pounds and the general body condition of the swan was good. Radiographs were taken of the swan. There was no evidence of chronic disease with the swan and there was no obvious evidence to suspect lead poisoning as the cause of death. However, the gizzard was removed and liver samples were taken. These samples were frozen and will be submitted in the future for testing for lead poisoning. The wings and skull of the swan may be used for educational purposes. Biologist Ament notified Clallam County PUD staff members immediately after collecting the swan. They were very quick to respond in order to prevent future line strikes in the area.



*Dead trumpeter swan
found near power lines*



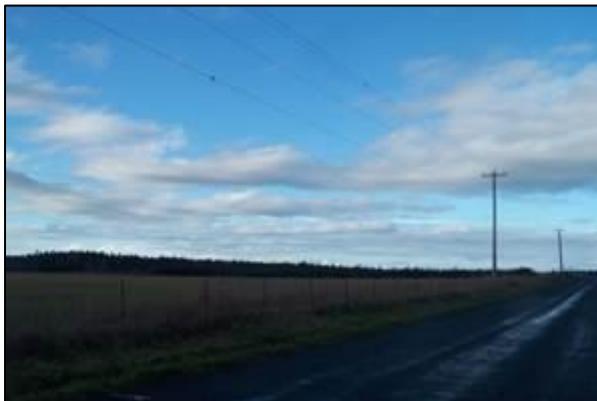


Abrasion on neck of swan where it contacted the power line



Radiograph of dead swan – no obvious metal fragments

Clallam County PUD Install Diverters: The Avian Protection Plan that was just recently finalized with the Clallam County PUD was put to use last week. Biologist Ament had collected a trumpeter swan that died from striking a power line on Feb. 10, 2016. While on site, she collected detailed information on the location of the swan and the power poles in the vicinity. She provided all information to PUD staff members and their response was truly outstanding. Biologist Ament exchanged a few emails and phone calls with Electrical Engineer John Purvis the day of the incident. During the next two days, a PUD crew responded to the site and installed a total of 21 diverters on the power lines. The main group of swans (120+) has been flying in the vicinity daily. They usually have not flown much in the vicinity of the newly marked lines. However, a small wetland pond has formed in a low elevation area of a field and has proven to be very attractive to the swans. Biologist Ament and swan monitoring volunteers are extremely grateful for the prompt response by our local PUD to help prevent further lines strikes in the area.



Diverters installed on power lines where swan was killed (the previous day!)

Trumpeter Swan Monitoring: The swan monitoring volunteers reported the following for last week: *Kendra and I had quite a day yesterday (2/10) counting swans! We started by going on Schmuck Road since I had seen quite a number of them on Sunday morning. They were not near the cabbage field on the Smith farm side of the road but we saw a stopped vehicle with flashing lights about there. When we got up to that point we saw Shelly Ament photographing a dead swan in the field right under the power lines. We stopped to talk to her and could see the main body of swans across the road towards the bay. That side has a nice big puddle in a dip, but the land has rises and dips and, since the swans were somewhat clumped together in groups, it was hard to try and get a good count. Shelly suggested that we might get permission to count from a different angle from the person who runs Sequim Valley Farm (the entrance is just up Schmuck from where we were) and she called him and he said come ahead. We met him at the office of the farm and were told to drive overland up to a rise where we got a good count. 122 total, 26 juveniles. Lyle also told us they were in a field of winter red wheat. From Schmuck we also counted the dead one and three that flew across the road toward the lavender farm in from Port Williams Road. Our total for the area was 126. We came back to Schmuck Road after we surveyed the other areas and the group was on the Smith farm side of the road next to the cabbage field. We only counted 105 swans at that time. We also counted a group at the Clapp farm off Anderson. 29 total with seven juveniles. None at Lamar or along Ward, none at the Carlsborg airport or any of the other places we looked. Lots of bald eagles everywhere, clucking and bonding. The weather was drizzly at first but then sunny. Saw Shelly on our way back and she will be informing us of the probable cause of the death and about her conversation with Lyle at the Sequim Valley Farm.*

Large group of swans foraging in a Dungeness Valley farm field



Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Habitat Improvement Review: Biologist Ament spent time on February 9 reviewing habitat improvement work previously completed by a DNR crew at a Taylor's checkerspot butterfly site located west of Port Angeles. One focus of the project last fall was to complete more tree removal and cut back brush within a defined unit. The crew also completed some cutting/ spraying of scotch broom and burned some of the slash piles on site. Biologists Hayes and Ament reflagged the next unit proposed for habitat improvements on February 3. Biologist Ament will be meeting with a WCC crew on site February 16. The crew will be employed February 16 – February 25 to work on clearing the new unit. She will review the unit with them and provide some comments related to the work completed last fall.

Sea Duck Surveys: As part of a long-term, multi-species monitoring effort, Biologists Murphie, Evenson, and Cyra continued their annual sea duck, marine bird and marine mammal survey effort of Puget Sound. With surveys conducted in the San Juan Islands, they completed this year's effort covering approximately 6,645 kilometers of survey transect lines.

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

Wildlife Management

Sealing of (collared) Cougar Pelt: Biologist Ament was contacted by Officer Branscomb on February 12 regarding the request to have a cougar pelt sealed. She contacted the hunter and sealed the pelt on February 13. This female cougar had a collar that had been deployed as part of the Makah Cougar Research Project. The hunter had contacted Tribal Biologist Rob McCoy and was notified that the collar had apparently quit working. Biologist Ament contacted Mr. McCoy to get more information about the cougar but has not yet heard back from him. To gain more experience, she elected to go ahead and take another tooth and tissue sample. These were sent to Olympia in the collection envelope.

Meeting with Ranch Manager: Biologist Ament met with Sequim Valley Farm Ranch Manager Lyle Hagen on February 10. She originally called him that morning to request access on to the ranch to collect a dead trumpeter swan. She had never met him before and saw this as a good opportunity to discuss various topics. They met at his office located at the ranch. Biologist Ament secured permission for swan monitoring volunteers to enter the ranch property if they are having a difficult time getting a swan count from the public roads. She provided his phone number to the swan counters and conveyed that they must contact him before entering the property. They also discussed the elk hunting program that has been working well on the ranch. Lyle spoke highly of working with WDFW staff members and Volunteer Jerry Anguili. Biologist Ament was pleased to establish this new working relationship with the manager of a large land ownership in the valley.

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

Private Lands /Conflict

Elk Damage Monitoring: Biologist Sundstrom checked several properties in Pacific County for elk herd usage patterns. At one time these properties had sustained a great deal of damage from the elk herds, but at this time it appears the elk usage has been greatly reduced, as no sign of usage in recent months could be ascertained. This is good news for the landowners.

This wasn't necessarily the case in Grays Harbor County after checking on the herds up the Wynoochee Valley. Three separate herds were located in farm fields, totaling 140 hungry mouths feeding and 560 trampling hooves across pastures. Sundstrom also noted several limping elk in the herds, two of which being hoof related.

Post Season Mop Up: With the end of waterfowl season statewide on January 31, Sundstrom spent time removing signs at several private land locations in Mason, Jefferson, and Grays Harbor counties.

The private land owned by the Shorts in Chimacum (Jefferson County) is a site worth special mention – after removing all the signs, Sundstrom was to also pick up all the litter left behind by the hunters, but there was a problem.....Sundstrom could hardly find any trash! Less than a pound of garbage was found and consisted of shotgun shell wads, five or six spent shotgun shells, and an energy drink bottle. The Department would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to all the hunters who treated this private property with respect.

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

Wildlife Management

Wildlife Program Improvements: Biologist Novack reviewed information from the WDFW employee survey and listening session notes. He attended a meeting with various Wildlife Program staff members tasked with compiling the information and providing insights to senior staff members on improving the program.