

# Wildlife Program

Week of February 22 – February 28, 2016

## WOLF ACTIVITIES

### Region 1 Wolf Activities

**Fox Lights:** Supervisor McCanna worked with an individual in the Spokane area who is willing to supply WDFW with additional fox lights for nonlethal wolf deterrents. McCanna will meet with the individual next week to pick up additional fox lights and discuss other ways to assist WDFW with nonlethal tools.

**Smackout Area:** Biologist Shepherd discussed a livestock loss claim with a rancher. Biologist Shepherd discussed a calving operation and protective strategy with a contract range rider given a high level of wolf sign and presence.

**Burnt Valley Livestock Producer:** Biologist Shepherd discussed a Damage Prevention Cooperative Agreement for Livestock with a Burnt Valley livestock producing family who has a calving operation occurring. At this point in time, Biologist Shepherd and the livestock producing family feel they are able to deter predators with their ongoing fencing efforts.

**Burnt Valley Wolf - Domestic Dog Incident:** Biologist Shepherd discussed wolf locations and fencing with dog owners near Chewelah whose dogs were confronted and engaged by wolves.

**Region One Contract Range Rider:** Biologist Shepherd met with contract range riders to discuss the production of homemade fladry, contract issues, and other miscellaneous issues.

**Monthly Wolf Updates:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett completed the monthly wolf updates for both the Huckleberry area and District 2 (Lincoln, Spokane, and Whitman counties). These updates were sent out to producers and other interested parties in these two areas.

*Table 1: February wolf update for the Huckleberry area*

How reported	Location	Sightings	Camera Work	Depredations
GPS collar	Both GPS collars have been moving between the Spokane Indian Reservation and south of Kettle Falls during this period. The Huckleberry female was re-collared this period due to a malfunctioning collar. One new collar was also placed in the	New information on packs and numbers of animals will be released in March.	No reports in this area for this period.	No reports in this area for this period.

	Huckleberry group. There are a total of three GPS collars that WDFW has access to in the Huckleberry area.		
WDFW Public Sightings webpage		<u>One reported:</u> 1. 02/20 – Chewelah, Two wolves seen	No reports in this area for this period.
WDFW Staff	See notes above.	Flights and collaring by WDFW staff this period.	No photos for this period.

**Table 2: February wolf update for Lincoln, Spokane, and Whitman counties**

County	Sightings (webpage and contact)	Camera, WCS Bennett and District	Depredations
Lincoln	No sightings reported to WDFW for this period.	No cameras out during this period.	No depredations reported to WDFW for this period.
Spokane	<u>Three reported:</u> 1. Spokane – 07/2009, WDFW contacted Two animals reported, confirmed non-wolf  2. Spokane – 02/01/2016, WDFW contacted Two animals reported, confirmed non-wolf  3. Spokane – 02/15/2016, WDFW contacted One white and brown animal reported in Spokane city limits	No cameras out during this period.	No depredations reported to WDFW for this period.
Whitman	No sightings reported to WDFW for this period.	No cameras out during this period.	No depredations reported to WDFW for this period.

**Identification Request for Canid Pictures in Spokane County:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Bennett reviewed and contacted a party that reported two unknown canids photographed in July 2009. Information was provided to the Reporting Party that the canids pictured were not wolves and to contact WDFW with any other questionable photos in the future.



*Photo of two non-wolf canids taken in July 2009 in Spokane County*

**Wolves near Livestock Complaint:** Natural Resource Technician Wade and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley responded to a call and text of several wolf tracks found in the snow, along with numerous livestock tracks with blood in them in the same area south of Dayton. After riding into the area on ATVs, we were able to determine the “bloody tracks” were made by an adult moose who was accompanied by her yearling. Each time the adult cow moose urinated there was a presence of blood mixed with the urine in the snow. As for the “wolf tracks,” they all turned out to be cougar tracks.



*Looking for signs of wolf and livestock tracks*

**Asotin County Landfill:** Biologist Earl contacted several producers this week to inform them of the agreement with the landfill to take carcasses.

**Wolf Location Questions:** Biologist Earl continued to receive calls from various producers across Asotin County who are calving and wanted to know if we have any new information on wolf locations.

**Wolf Dispersing Website:** Biologist Earl was contacted by Garfield County Commissioner Dixon who wanted to know more about the website that WDFW created for tracking single, collared wolves moving throughout southeast Washington.

### **Region 2 Wolf Activities**

**Okanogan County Wolves:** Specialist Heilhecker met with staff members from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Okanogan Conservation District on Tuesday to discuss livestock grazing rotations for this upcoming season in conjunction with possible wolf activity. Specialist Heilhecker met with them again on Thursday to discuss a project proposal and grant to assist northeastern and north central Washington livestock producers. If funded, the project focuses on providing assistance for mitigating wolf-livestock conflicts.

## **REGION 1**

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

**Joint Partner Wildlife Conference:** Director Jim Unsworth, Blue Mountains District Wildlife Biologist Paul Wik, and Wolf Specialist Scott Becker all gave presentations during the plenary session of the Joint Partner Wildlife Conference in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. This was a joint meeting hosted by the Washington and Idaho Chapters of The Wildlife Society, The Society for Northwestern Vertebrate Biology, and Northwest Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation. WDFW biologists from across the state were able to attend this important conference to share information with peers and participate in numerous technical presentations.



***WDFW staff participates in the Plenary Session panel, with Unsworth and Wik (far right) and Becker (far left)***



***WDFW Biologists Wiles, Stinson, Prince, Lowe, Hansen, Gallie, and Director Jim Unsworth listen as Biologist Paul Wik speaks to collaborative bighorn sheep management during the Plenary Session***

**Chief Joseph, WA George Creek Riparian Tree and Shrub Plantings:** Biologist Woodall worked alongside two crews of Washington Conservation Corp members to plant native trees and shrubs along the banks of the stream channelization project. Since the re-channelization work three years ago, there have been some nice silt and gravels that have accumulated along the banks, which provided a nice medium to plant shrubs and trees. This project was funded and sponsored by the Salmon Recovery Board and Tri-state Steel-headers.



*Newly constructed pool is sure to be holding fish*



*Newly planted trees*



*WCC Crews planting trees*

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

**Amber Lake:** Manager Dziekan met with a work party of volunteers from the Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club and the Spokane Fly Fishing Club at Amber Lake this week. The goal at Amber Lake was to provide a safe area for anglers launching small pontoon boats away from anglers launching trailers. Over the years, the constant use of trailer launching has eroded away a part of the launch, creating a steep, treacherous slope for anglers on foot to navigate. Gravel was spread to bring the slope to a lesser angle and make walking to the shore line easier.

An area on the opposite side of the ramp from the foot traffic was cleared away to allow enough room for trailers to still have access to the lake. Large boulders will be placed to keep trailers away from foot traffic.



*Left of ramp, area cleared to ensure room enough for trailer launching*



*Existing ramp blockage, cleaned up. Another boulder will be added to close gap*



*Right of ramp, area where foot traffic will be, gravel added to reduce slope*

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

**Deer Clover Trapping:** Biologists Atamian and Lowe assisted Conflict Specialist Bennett and Kujala in setting up clover traps inside a fenced tree farm experiencing damage from white-tailed deer. Traps were baited but not immediately armed to allow for the deer to become accustomed to them. Biologist Atamian assisted Kujala, Myers, and two experienced volunteers processed a doe and fawn captured in a clover trap in Greenbluff.

*Atamian and Kujala setting up clover trap for white-tailed deer*



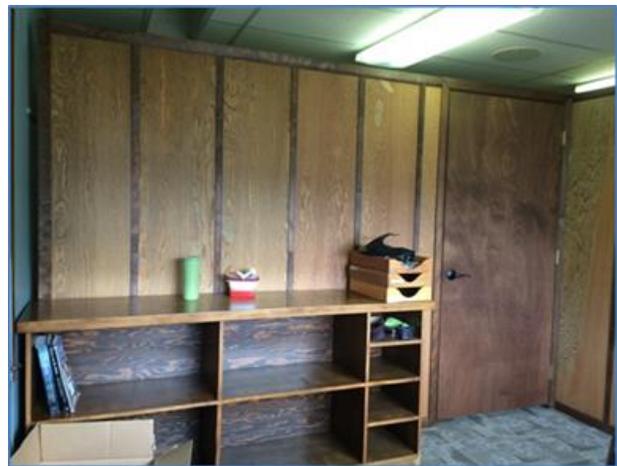


*Fawn deer hobbled in sled in route to be processed*



*Doe being released*

**District 1 Office Wall Partitions:** Wildlife Area Assistant Manager Daro Palmer spent most of the week installing the office wall partitions in the District 1 Office in Colville. Many hands helped with the construction and installation of these walls, including Access Manager Dan Dziekan, Area Habitat Biologist Sandy Dotts, Private Lands Biologist Scott Bendixen, and Assistant District Biologist Annemarie Prince. A large room on the west end of the building was transformed into four separate office spaces to house personnel working in private lands, fisheries, conflict, and carnivores. The left photo below shows the outside wall of the four offices, and the right photo shows the inside of one office.



## **REGION 2**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Douglas County Sage Grouse:** Private Lands Biologist Braaten visited two sage grouse leks this week and found sage grouse near lek locations. Snow depth and unplowed county road sections will impact access to several Douglas County sage grouse leks for the next few weeks. Telemetry data shows southern sage grouse populations more active near leks than northern populations. Last year at this time, sage grouse were displaying on most of our leks in Douglas County. This will move the timing of lek counts back a little.



#### ***Snow bound roads in Douglas County***

#### **Mount Hull Bighorn Sheep:**

Biologist Heinlen received an update from British Columbia Biologist Aaron Reid on the provinces latest bighorn sheep capture efforts north of the US border. They are conducting a multi-year study of the effects of the Psoroptes mite in bighorn sheep. Of note is the collaring of a two year old ram along the US/Canadian border directly above the US Mount Hull bighorn sheep herd. It will be interesting to see if this ram interacts with the Mount Hull herd.

**Multi-Carnivore Survey:** Biologist Fitkin and US Forest Service (USFS) staff members finally succeeded in getting to Harts Pass to deploy remote cameras despite punishing trail conditions. Along the way we checked a site with a long-term, automated lure dispenser and we were gratified to find it still completely operational. It will be interesting to compare this site with the baited sites recently deployed.



#### ***Jack Mountain from Harts Pass*** ***Pass*** – Photo by Scott Fitkin



**Lynx:** Biologist Volsen has been assisting two local high school students with a wildlife camera project in north Chelan County. Over the past two years the project has returned a number of great observations, the latest being this image of a lynx. The students captured enough images for us to determine the cat is a male and thought to be an adult.

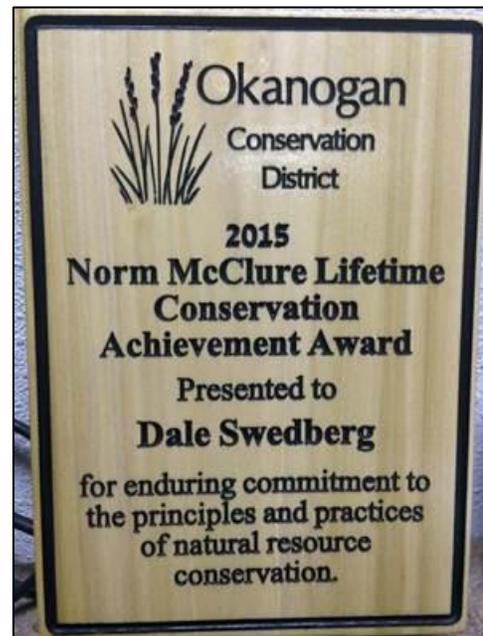
### Wildlife Areas

**Feral Swine:** Biologist Finger helped to facilitate the closure of two square miles of the Desert Unit of the Columbia Basin Wildlife Area to give USDA Wildlife Services space to operate safely and efficiently to remove what is believed to be the last remaining pigs from the unit. This included coordination with Wildlife Services to develop a general plan for the month-long closure to ensure that aggressive measures would be taken to wrap this issue up, seeking signatures for the PAM to implement the closure, developing and ordering signs, coordination with Eastern Washington Public Information Officer Luers, and outreach through three local news outlets. The last step was providing Wildlife Services with a map of public lands and a public land shapefile to upload into the aircraft. Aerial reconnaissance found no evidence of swine after a couple hours of flight. The following day, Biologist Finger and Program Manager Monda explored the area by boat, traveling the Winchester Wasteway and walking a short section of the east side of the W20 Drain. No evidence of pigs was found.

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

### Wildlife Management

**Okanogan County Conservation District Annual Awards Banquet:** Regional Director Brown and Okanogan Lands Operations Manager Swedberg attended the annual awards banquet. Much to Manager Swedberg’s shock, he was awarded the Norm McClure Lifetime Conservation Achievement Award. He figures this is a bit much “for just doing his job.”



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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Recurring Training RT-130 Annual Fireline Refresher:** Most of the Okanogan Lands Operations staff members attended the annual fireline refresher training taught by Fire Management Specialist Leuschen. We also hosted State Parks employees and the Chief of the Conconully Fire Department.

**Work Capacity “Pack Test”:** The following successfully completed the pack test at the “arduous level”, which entails carrying 45 pounds for three miles in 45 minutes: Sinlahekin Manager Haug, Assistant Manager Wehmeyer, Sherman Creek Assistant Manager Palmer, Colockum Manager Lopushinsky, Assistant Manager Hagan, Scotch Creek Assistant Manager Dupont, and Lands Operations Manager Swedberg.

The following successfully completed the pack test at the “moderate level”, which entails carrying 20 pounds for two miles in 30 minutes: Fire Management Specialist Leuschen and Maintenance Mechanic Boulger.



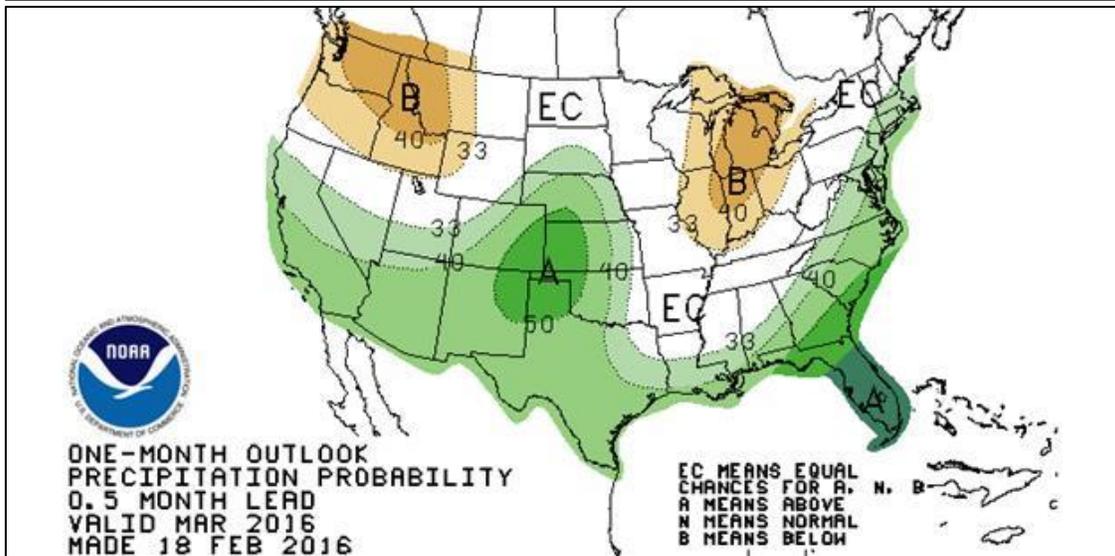
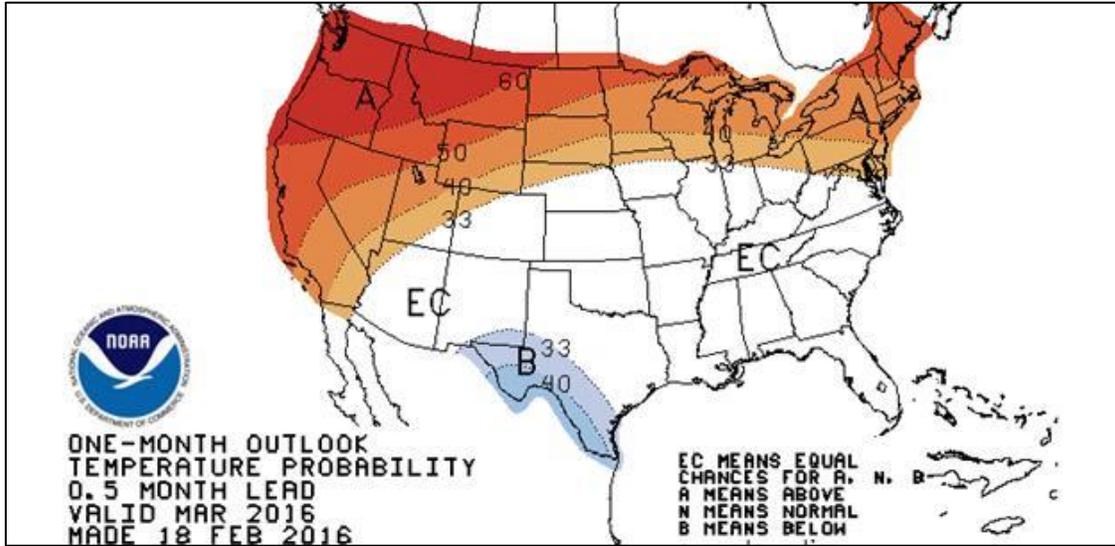
Successful completion of the Pack Test at the appropriate level for their fire qualified positions is required of Burn Team members and all WDFW employees wishing to participate on prescribed burns or any wildfire suppression actions.

*A play-doh sage grouse crafted by Biologist Comstock*

**District 6 Winter Conditions:** Conditions continue to ease with spring conditions beginning to dominate in the Okanogan Valley and more bare ground appearing in the Methow.

**Recent Weather:** Last week brought a combination of sun and light rain that continued to melt snow at lower and middle elevations.

**Short-Term Forecast:** Off and on rain showers with mostly above normal temperatures are forecast for the coming week.



*Mule deer foraging on green vegetation in the Okanogan Valley*  
 – Photo by Jeff Heinlen

**Animal Concentrations:** In general, deer are concentrated in the lower elevations where green vegetation is available or on bare south facing slopes. Some are beginning to move higher in elevation as snow recedes.

**Animal Condition:** Adult deer generally look to be in fair condition for late winter. As expected, a significant number of fawns are exhibiting poor condition as winter ends.

**Mortality:** Some fawn mortality has been reported, which is expected at this point in the season. Above average levels of road killed deer along State Highway 97 continue as snow leaves the area and deer become more mobile.



*Mother cougar and cougar kittens on a deer kill* – Photo by WDFW remote camera



*Public patiently waiting for the North Quincy gate to open on February 23 – Photo by Joe Graves*



*The upper Methow Valley still is retaining a bulk of the ample snow it's received this season, despite warming temperatures in lower Okanogan. While the river valley is usually shrouded in clouds, the Methow Wildlife Area is usually sunny and clear up at the top of Bear Creek Road – Photo by Jamie Bass*





*From Top to Bottom – A bighorn sheep trio across from Connors Lake on the Sinlahekin, a pair of bighorn rams on the southwest side of Palmer Mountain, a golden eagle along Pine Creek Road, a prairie falcon just east of Mansfield, the sagebrush buttercup welcoming in the spring, a snowy owl northeast of Mansfield, and ray of sunshine in the Sinlahekin Valley from Palmer Mountain above Loomis – Photos by Justin Haug*

## **REGION 3**

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

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**LT Murray Wildlife Area Elk Feeding/ Winter Conditions:** Warm weather has melted all the snow at the Watt feed lot and most of the snow at Robinson. The cold nights have kept the elk coming back to the feed lots though, with 700 head in both Watt and Robinson. Warm weather is expected to continue next week, with rain early on. Highs are forecast to be in the lower 50s, with lows in the upper 20s at night.

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Feeding operations continued at the Cowiche, Nile, and HQ feed sites. Elk numbers are still fairly high, but dropped off a little by the weekend. Elk are still ranging off the feed site daily and coming back for feeding. Bulls have begun to shed their antlers, and several antlers were collected off the feed sites.

**Seeding:** Forester Mackey and Forester Pfeifle also used snowmobiles to access the areas disturbed by last year's harvest operations. Round trip, they covered about 40 miles to access the area, plus one mile on foot. They were still about a week early to seed the areas planned because most of the area was still covered with snow, but they were able to seed one landing area with a short hike.



*Forester Mackey hiking back out from area free of snow after seeding a landing*



*Next closest landing still covered with snow. Sled was used to transport materials.*

**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Manager Confer Morris hiked up Little Pine Canyon from Hessler Flat. The canyon moved quite a bit of water during last week's melt off and is still running a significant amount of water, particularly for this drainage.



*Looking downstream from Hessler Flat*



*Looking upstream at multiple channels*

### **Winter Feeding**

#### **Mellotte Feed Site elk numbers: ~50 animals by end of week**

With the continued warm weather throughout the week, the elk began moving off the feed site on Saturday morning, just as Assistant Manager Taylor was pulling in to feed. Taylor will continue to monitor in case animals don't find enough green up and return to the feed site.

**Winter Weather:** Weather temperatures continued above normal, with highs in the upper 50s and even into the 60s. The weather for the coming week is expected to be cooler, with temperatures near normal. The forecast calls for highs in the low 50s and lows in the 20s and 30s. Precipitation is expected on and off throughout the week.

**Animal Conditions:** Elk are in seasonally good to fair condition.

### **Wildlife Management**

**Ferruginous Hawk Survey:** District Biologist Fidorra worked on landowner access and volunteer coordination for the Ferruginous Hawk Survey. Fidorra is organizing a training event for volunteers on March 8 at the Richland Public Library. Several landowners were contacted this week and have granted permission to access their property for the survey. Volunteers were sent sign-up instructions and are formally registering for the project through the CERVIS program.

**Dead Pigeons:** District Biologist Fidorra responded to a call from the Pasco railway yard of more than 100 dead pigeons located on site. Fidorra met the staff, who showed him many pigeon carcasses in various states of decay. A few fresher carcasses were also found. Disease testing was not recommended, as the cause of death was determined to be gun shot. After meeting with the site superintendent, who was unaware of the call to WDFW, it was confirmed that their Pigeon Control Contractor has not been removing carcasses as stated in their contract. The

railway will resolve the issue by working with their contractor. Railway staff members were very thankful for WDFW involvement and response.

**Injured Wildlife on I-182:** District Biologist Fidorra, Conflict Specialist Hand, and Officer McGary responded to calls about an injured moose, elk, or deer on the side of I-182. After much searching, the animal, which turned out to be a deer badly injured by a vehicle, was found and staff members resolved the issue.

**Burrowing Owl:** District Biologist Fidorra managed volunteers assisting with repairs to the artificial burrows for burrowing owl prior to the season. Minor repairs were conducted on sites that had been damaged by off road farm equipment or experienced natural wear from the elements.

**Columbia Basin Mule Deer:** District Biologist Fidorra coordinated with WDFW staff members to review the Columbia Basin Mule Deer survey report and schedule a meeting to finalize the report and improve protocols for future surveys.

**Sage Grouse:** District Biologist Fidorra spoke with Yakima Training Center staff members regarding sage grouse work this spring. A translocation request was not approved by the supplying state, so no releases will occur. Fidorra will continue to coordinate with the Yakima Training Center regarding upcoming research projects this season.

**Ferruginous Hawk:** Stutzman finished parsing the list of landowners who need to be contacted for the upcoming Ferruginous Hawk surveys and provided the contact information for the landowners he knows to District Biologist Fidorra. Stutzman also began contacting landowners about accessing their property for the surveys.

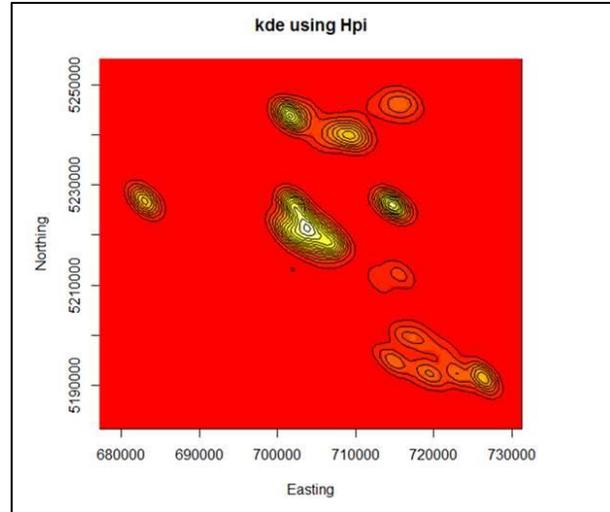
**Habitat Improvement:** Stutzman contacted a landowner near Chinook Pass who would like to make some habitat improvements. A field visit will occur as soon as the snow melts and the road into the property becomes passable.

**Bighorn Sheep:** Biologist Bernatowicz started taking down the bighorn sheep trap. Warm weather has made it very unlikely trapping would be successful until next winter. Bernatowicz also reviewed the latest "Risk of Contact" model by Andrea Lyons from Washington Conservation Science Institute. Lyons was contracted by USFS to run the latest model for the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The results show that all USFS allotments in District 8 pose significant risk to the viability of local bighorn sheep populations. The Cleman population is at the highest risk. Model outputs for individual allotments put risk of contact three to eight times higher than acceptable (as defined by Payette National Forest and US District Court). The risk is of bighorns moving to a domestic sheep allotment and returning to core range.

**Colockum Bull Study:** Biologist Moore continued preparations for the upcoming Game Management Advisory Counsel presentation. Moore updated a few graphs and created new home range estimates for collared bulls during the winter survey season. Geospatial Modeling Environment (GME) is the software typically used for this analysis, but for one reason or another it was not functioning properly. Thanks to the R training Moore received from the Muckleshoot

Indian Tribe, he was able run this analysis directly in R. The created home range estimates will be used to illustrate differences between the defined aerial survey area and winter collared bull elk home ranges for 2014 and 2015.

***Kernal Density Estimation created from winter 2014 Colockum Collared Bull Elk GPS data***



**Muckleshoot Indian Tribe Deer Mortality Investigation:**

Moore assisted Muckleshoot Indian Tribe biologists with private land access and provided snow mobiles to travel to a remote mortality in the North Fork Manashtash area. Accessing the site went well and the scene revealed signs of a classic cougar predation.

**Bighorn Sheep Risk of Contact:** Moore attended a meeting between WDFW and USFS staff members to review and discuss a presentation given by Andrea Lyons from Washington Conservation Science Institute on the Application of the Bighorn Sheep Risk of Contact Model in the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Hunt worked with Lands Program Manager Hendrix and Manager Winegeart to schedule another large event (horseback group) on the L.T. Murray in late June. One more and we'll already be booked for our allowable large group permits in 2016. Hunt also provided some information to Jennifer Hackett of Manastash Mapping for updates to her GIS coverage of recreational opportunities and infrastructure in Kittitas County.

**Sign Installation:** Natural Resource Technician Hill put up additional signage along the open roads adjacent to the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area motorized winter closure. He put blue clam shell tops at the beginning of Box Canyon, Scammon's Landing, and Whiskey Dick Creek roads to clarify that these roads remain open to motorized travel in winter.



*New carsonite with blue clam shell at Scammon's Landing (road open in winter)*



*No Unauthorized Vehicles sign at the Jackknife intersection in the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area (road closed in winter)*

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman coordinated with the USFS on a NOVA motorized trails grant awarded to WDFW. Some of the work is on USFS land and RCO wants assurances that the section of trail will stay open for the life of the project. The USFS is willing to set up an agreement that will meet RCO's needs so the funding does not have to be returned.

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

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman coordinated with KING 5 Environmental Reporter Allison Morrow to do a story on the feeding program at Oak Creek. Captain Mann assisted, providing an interview on the closure and shed hunting, as well as other aspects. The story was supposed to run on Wednesday, but was pushed to Friday. The story focused on the hard winter and why we feed the elk. It did not mention shed hunting or the public entry closures. Huffman provided some additional information via email, including annual costs for winter feeding. Overall it was a good story that should provide people with some good info.

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Acting Manager Buser provided information at the request of the statewide drug task force regarding access to certain wildlife area units. A meeting has been set up for this week to review the details.

### **Wildlife Management**

**Goose Conflict:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received a damage complaint from geese in the Grandview area. Several nonlethal hazing techniques were discussed and Hand gave a referral to USFWS for further assistance if other measures are needed to address the damage.

**Deer Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand investigated deer damage and conducted hazing operations in areas along the Columbia River just upstream of McNary Dam for deer damage to wine grape and fruit trees.

**Meeting with Vineyard Manager:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand met with the vineyard manager of a large wine grape company near Paterson to set up several LP gas cannons and plan and schedule possible late season DPP and Master Hunter hunts.

**Rattlesnake Mountain Elk:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand patrolled winter wheat fields on Rattlesnake Mountain for elk activity. Multiple landowner contacts were made to coordinate DPP late season hunts and hazing efforts.

**Elk Monitoring:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel monitored elk from areas north and south of I-90 several times this week. Elk have crossed to the north and numbers appear to be diminishing, but elk have been reported in the area each day. A final master hunter fence removal project will conclude this weekend, hopefully allowing elk to return north and away from the I-90 corridor.

**Elk Monitoring:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel monitored Thorp area and Weaver Road elk this week. Elk were present, road and field conditions are very soft and muddy, and no removals were attempted due to access conditions.

**Deer Hazing:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel made several field visits to a hay field in the Thorp area at the request of the landowner. About 75 deer are in the field at this time, and no damage has been reported. The landowner was concerned that deer would linger into the later green up period so some nonlethal night hazing will occur this week with the help of a local master hunter to help move deer across the river and out of the agriculture area.

*Deer using a dormant hay field*



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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Manager Lopushinsky and Assistant Manager Hagan attended a weed management workshop sponsored by the Chelan County Noxious Weed Board. This was a good opportunity to touch base with county Weed Board staff members, learn new weed control techniques, and gain pesticide license recertification credits.

**Training:** Manager Lopushinsky and Assistant Manager Hagan attended the fire fighters RT-130 refresher course in Okanogan. While there, they also both completed the Work Capacity Test in the arduous category, allowing them to participate in firefighting activities and prescribed fire work for 2016.

**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Taylor rewired problem electrical lines on the feeder and installed a new battery in the D-8 crawler. He also worked on removing a log caught in the Hardy Canyon bridge break away. Tying off and hand winching hasn't worked, so he may have to cut the butt end of the 25 foot, 18 inch dbh waterlogged cottonwood.



***Original location of log – tied up in break-away***

*After being winched into channel – still not moving*

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Assistant Manager Hunt arranged for trucking and delivery of just over 14 tons of small bales (three tie alfalfa) to the Joe Watt hay barn. He met the Martin Hay Company for a late evening delivery on Tuesday. We keep small hand bales on hand to cover breakdowns and elk bait needs. Our small bale supply was depleted this year, mostly due to problem elk that were regularly baited to return from outside the elk fence back onto the wildlife area. Conflict Specialist Wetzels also needed some at various times.



**Tractor Purchase:** Assistant Manager Hunt worked on nudging the tractor purchase process along with the help of Chris Cohen in Purchasing. Signatures should be in place and the order out next week.

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman coordinated with the Yakima Construction Shop to repair road damage on the Cowiche Unit. The crew completed repairs and hauled in a lot of rock to build up the road bed. Huffman is coordinated with Yakama Nation Fisheries, who will haul in some gravel soon to go over the road as their contribution to the road repairs. They will also be hauling in gravel to set their coho acclimation tanks on.

**Master Hunter Volunteers:** Manager Huffman met with Volunteer Coordinator Garcia and Eyes in the Woods Volunteer McGowan to organize a Master Hunter volunteer project for the weekend. Routes were laid out on maps for volunteers to hike or snowmobile and check and repost the spring closure boundary signs on the Oak Creek and Cowiche Units. Huffman developed maps and instructions for each route and provided GPS units. Natural Resource Worker 2 Steveson mounted several of the signs on small stakes for use along the western boundary of the Cowiche Unit. On Saturday, Assistant Manager Berry organized the volunteers and sent them out on their seven routes. By 4:00, all volunteers had returned. Waypoints of each sign will be put into GIS to develop a map for use by Enforcement. Volunteers located a section of fence along the Naches River that was down from a rock slide and two other areas where elk were getting under the fence.

**Work Schedules:** Natural Resource Worker 2 Steveson wrapped up his three month stint at Oak Creek and will return to his nine month position on the Blue Mountains Wildlife Area. It was great having Nick here again. Thanks Nick! Work schedules will be adjusted to fill in as needed through the rest of the feeding season.

**REGION 4**

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

**Wildlife Management**

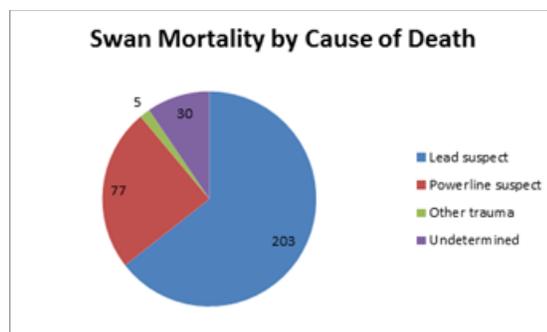
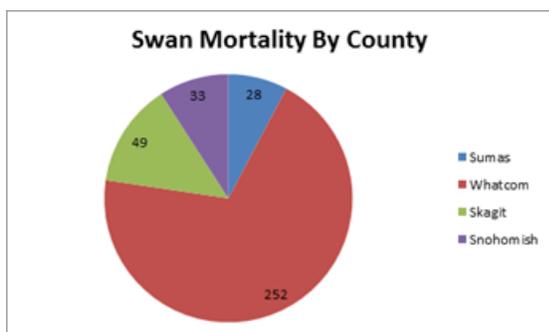
**North Cascades Elk:** Regional Director Everitt, Regional Program Manager Link, and Biologist Yarborough attended the annual policy meeting with tribal co-managers. The group discussed the annual harvest plan, hoof disease, and data sharing.

**Elk Capture:** Conflict Specialist Witman and District Biologist Yarborough captured and collared a female elk near the Acme area. The elk was outfitted with a VHF collar that will help in the upcoming aerial survey to estimate the population in the core area.

**Swan Mortality and Morbidity:** Biologist DeBruyn prepared and transported tissue samples from 250 deceased swans to British Columbia for lead analysis. Environment Canada (The Canadian Wildlife Service) is an active partner in our project and funds the laboratory work. Swan Technician Trejo recorded 10 additional swan mortalities. Four of the mortalities were swans showing symptoms of lead poisoning on Judson Lake. Total swan mortalities have now reached 334. Technician Trejo also captured a swan displaying irregular behavior on the Intalco Unit of the Whatcom Wildlife Area. The swan had low blood lead levels and is receiving Calcium EDTA treatments from staff members at the Whatcom Humane Society Wildlife Rehabilitation Center.

Weekly Mortality Report (as of February 29, 2016)						
	Lead suspect	Powerline suspect	Other trauma	Undetermined	Feather Pile	Total
Sumas	11	2	1	4	10	28
Whatcom	166	34	2	19	31	252
Skagit	18	20	2	5	4	49
Snohomish	8	21	0	2	2	33
	203	77	5	30	47	362
Percent	56.08%	21%	1%	8%	13%	100.00%

*\* Does not include one lead suspect from King County*



**GMU 485 Co-management:** Biologist Smith accompanied Biologist Anderson and Regional Program Manager Link to participate in a meeting with Tacoma Water and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. The meeting was set to discuss the 2016 special hunt season and other ongoing activities in the Green River Watershed.

**Westside Cougar Project:** Biologist Smith assisted Wildlife Research Scientist Kertson and others with an attempt to capture and mark a cougar.

**Estuary Restoration Monitoring:** District 13 staff members met with staff members from Ecostudies Institute to plan shorebird flights as part of the monitoring project underway in the Skagit/Stillaguamish Delta.

**Peregrine Falcon Management:** District 13 staff members provided State Parks staff members managing the Index Town Wall with a photo delineating past suspected nesting ledges. State Parks and the Washington Climbing Coalition will be using the photo to solicit leads from the climbing community to this season's activity area.



*Net gun mount for use in upcoming capture attempts. If captured, transmitters will be attached to birds in an attempt to monitor changes in wintering and breeding locations.*

**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. More information can be found online at <http://www.zoo.org/citizenscience>

*Northwestern salamander egg masses documented by WDFW-Woodland Park Zoo volunteers at Hazel Wolf Wetland – Photo D. Koch*

Anderson discussed and planned outreach effort with SHADOW (Save Habitat and Diversity of Wetlands) staff members outside of Renton regarding local amphibians, conservation efforts, conservation needs, and providing a field survey prior to class at a small pond outside



of the Richter Interpretive facility. Anderson will be providing this class – more to come as SHADOW gets it lined up on their announcements. For more information, visit the SHADOW website at <http://shadowhabitat.org/>

**PHS and Growth Management:** Biologist Anderson provided for an ongoing request for consultation with King County Housing Authority. Biologist Anderson has sent out a few requests to municipalities and landowners regarding their needs and shifts in wildlife management consultation and guidance from Wildlife to Habitat.

***Kenmore Park and Ride herons standing territory on nests at sunset***

– Photo by Biologist Anderson



**Wildlife Areas**

**Spencer Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that another Spencer Island Eagle Scout project has been completed. Over 20 scouts and parents installed 50 native trees and shrubs along the dike trail and cleared invasive weeds along an access approach to the estuary. A bench will be installed at the waterline for hunters and wildlife viewers to use. The trees were donated by WDFW from the native plant nursery at the Cherry Valley barn.



***Garrett Trail Before***



***Garrett Trail After***

**Agricultural Leases:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm completed draft agricultural leases for the Stillwater, Cherry Valley, and Crescent Lake units. Manager Boehm will meet with farmers next week to finalize them.

**Lake Terrell, Rainbow and Intalco Ponds Water Levels:** Manager Kessler monitored the high water levels in Lake Terrell, Rainbow, and Intalco ponds. Both lake and ponds are at flood levels due to the recent heavy rains.

**Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP):** PSNERP staff members participated in a weekly check-in meeting to update each other on activities.

**Leque Island Estuary Restoration Project:** Project Coordinator Brokaw prepared and submitted grant pre-application materials to the Stillaguamish Watershed Council for consideration in the upcoming Salmon Recovery Funding Board opportunity. The application requests funds for construction of the estuary restoration project, including funds to secure replacement lands needed to satisfy a land use conversion and development of public recreation features.



### *Leque Island*

### Private Lands/Access Management

### **Migratory Bird Habitat Enhancement Project**

**Coordination:** Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell, Private Land Biologist Wingard, and Natural Resource Technician Otto coordinated future work efforts with local Migratory Bird Habitat Enhancement project enrollees and seed vendors.

**Cooperative Fencing and Tribal Co-Management Meeting:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell met with a wildlife biologist from the Stillaguamish Tribe to discuss ongoing and future coordination efforts involving elk exclusionary fencing projects. Specific discussions involved future and ongoing efforts to enroll private landowners into cooperative fencing agreements, outlining future fencing needs, forecasting logistical concerns, identifying project priorities, and comparing different strategies moving forward.

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

### Wildlife Management

**Port Susan Snow Goose and Birding Festival:** Staff members from District 13 and Ecostudies co-presented a basic shorebird identification class on Saturday. This is the fourth year the class has been offered. This year, 32 people attended, and several mentioned they liked it so well in previous years that they came back again this year.

**Fir Island Farms Restoration:** On Sunday, Biologist Milner, Wildlife Area Manager Rotton and Habitat Project Manager FriebeI gave a 90-minute talk on the restoration activities underway

at Fir Island Farms. The presentation discussed the history of the site, the construction of the new dike, and planned ecological monitoring, with emphasis on what we are doing to assess the changes to avian species as the restoration progresses.

**2016 Big Game Harvest Proposals:** Biologist Anderson and Smith provided information and responses to inquiries and requests from the public regarding aspects of proposed WAC changes affecting the upcoming 2016 big game harvests in King County. Anderson provided final needs for some of the special hunts in King County due to annual co-management consultation needs prior to finalization for Section Manager Nelson and proposal to the Commission.

### **Wildlife Areas**

**Volunteer Opportunities:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm worked with the Snohomish Sportsman’s Club to develop volunteer projects at the Corson Preserve.

**Lake Terrell Bass Fishing:** Bass fishing at Lake Terrell has been very popular this last week. Many bass fishermen have been out on the lake every day, with reports of multiple catches of large fish. The fishing pier has also been getting heavy use for trout, catfish, and bass.



### ***Lake Terrell’s new fishing pier***

**Intalco Unit Archery Range:** Manager Kessler met with the president of the Custer Sportsmen’s Club to discuss the management of the Intalco Unit Archery Range. This archery range consists of a loop trail of

30 targets that goes through woods, fields, and wetlands on the land adjacent to and owned by the Alcoa Aluminum Plant. The Sportsmen’s Club has taken care of the archery course for many years, working close with WDFW to improve and promote the course to the public. The course is open from March to August, with several 3-D Shoots weekend events occurring during the summer.

**Skagit Acquisition Team Meeting:** WDFW Region 4 staff members met to coordinate activities related to the need to secure waterfowl forage and hunting lands in the Skagit delta in order to continue to provide opportunities to hunters while WDFW continues to support estuary restoration projects. Staff members discussed funding opportunities, properties that are currently for sale, and property management details.



*Lands Agent Kye Iris observing snow geese on the Samish Unit during a recent field tour*

**Samish Unit:** Meis and Cosgrove adjusted to water control structures and valves to drain ditches and slowly drain a few of the ponds located on the unit

this week. Snow geese have been observed foraging on the site most of the week. Cosgrove noted heavy snow goose use on the Samish Unit throughout the week, with the birds feeding in mowed grass and barley fields.

Snow geese were also using the Fir Island Farms Unit and the Wylie Farm adjacent to the Headquarters Unit, offering good opportunities for bird watchers and photographers.

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

**Skagit ESA and Migratory Waterfowl Meeting:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard met with other members of the Skagit ESA and Migratory Waterfowl team to discuss progress and planning for current and future restoration projects, replacement land strategies, and wildlife management priorities moving forward.

**Watchable Wildlife Coordination:** Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell coordinated with representatives of the Seattle Audubon Society. A meeting will take place next month to discuss collaborative efforts to identify and provide new and/or improved wildlife viewing opportunities on private lands in and around King County.

**North Cascades Elk Herd Co-Management and Policy Meeting:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell and Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman attended the North Cascades Elk Herd co-management and policy meeting with tribal co-managers. The group was briefed on up-to-date fencing progress and elk damage management efforts. Discussions also involved policy level decisions on future herd management plan language and checks and balances efforts moving forward.

### **Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator**

**Master Hunter:** Coordinator Dazey sent out a welcome letter to master hunter applicants in Region 4. The letter advised them of known challenges faced by applicants each year and gave them tips on getting their service hours and CORT class done in a timely manner. Dazey also answered questions from applicants seeking to get their hours in by becoming hunter education instructors.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Region 4 (D12) Ungulate Damage:** Biologist Smith continued to work with landowners experiencing elk damage to grass crops and fencing. Nonlethal and harvest strategies have been discussed and implemented, and one potential cost share fencing agreement is under discussion

(to use Master Hunter volunteer labor). Smith continued to coordinate with volunteers and landowners involved in ongoing fence repair work.



*Elk moving through an agricultural area during hours of darkness in King County*

**Wildlife Areas**

**Wildlife Area Advisory Committee:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm facilitated the initial 2016

Advisory Committee meeting on February 24. The recently selected eight member committee shared some team building time, reviewed WAAC responsibilities, and discussed the Wildlife Area Management Plan update process.

**Fir Island Farm:** Meis assisted Eco-Studies Institute with point count surveys at the Fir Island Farm Unit as a part of the pre-project monitoring for the restoration project. Manager Rotton participated in a presentation regarding the Fir Island Farm Restoration Project for the Snow Goose festival in Stanwood this weekend.

**Skagit Headquarters:** Rotton, Cosgrove, and Meis, along with Region 4 Lands Agent Kye Iris, toured the Pacific Popular Farm property available for sale in the Samish Valley to evaluate aspects related to acquisition and management. Wildlife Area staff members then attended a Skagit Acquisition team meeting to discuss replacement land issues and options within the region.

**Headquarters Unit Installation:** Natural Resources Technician 2 Curran Cosgrove and Natural Resource Specialist Greg Meis installed anchor bolts and boom logs around the pump house outfall at the Headquarters Unit. Boom logs will help protect the outfall pipes from floating logs and other debris in the intertidal area. Cosgrove and Meis removed multiple large logs from the Wildlife Area moorage facility that washed in during the last high river event last week.

**DeBay's Slough:** Cosgrove continued waterfowl use surveys at the Johnson/DeBay's Slough Unit and Nookachamps Creek area.

**Island Unit:** Cosgrove checked water levels and waterfowl use on the Island Unit. Water levels remain very high due to high river levels and tidegate and dike leaks. The waterfowl aren't complaining though, as Cosgrove noted the highest numbers of ducks and swans on the site since the end of the waterfowl season. Swans were noted in three fields over the past week, and ducks continue using the area in high numbers.

*Skagit Wildlife Area Technician  
Curran Cosgrove noted the highest  
numbers of ducks and swans on the  
Island Unit since the end of the  
waterfowl season*



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

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo continued unit breakdowns throughout Skagit, Whatcom, and Snohomish counties. Water control was conducted on wet sites where technicians were unable to remove signage and blinds. Otto and Deyo were able to get dryer sites disassembled. Private Lands Biologist Wingard completed entering data collected this waterfowl season at Waterfowl Quality Hunt sites.

**Wildlife Conflict Monitoring & Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman received an elk depredation complaint in the Day Creek area of Skagit County. The landowner reported that approximately 60 elk had showed up on his property over the prior three days, causing damage and grazing on a grass crop. Witman and Natural Resource Technician Cogdal responded the following day and observed recent elk activity on the property. In response, four motion activated audible alarms were installed on major trails coming onto the property. The elk herd was later located in a nearby forested area and hazed with cracker shells. The identified elk herd was monitored for the remainder of the week. The landowner who reported the elk depredation event agreed to clear some brush found along the boundary of his property so that temporary electric fence could be installed.

Specialist Witman also received several complaints this past week of people feeding wildlife (seagulls) in residential areas. The feeding is creating adverse impacts on neighboring properties by influencing the abundance of birds in the area. Feeding wildlife often causes adverse situations on the surrounding human and wildlife communities. As a result, WDFW staff members will spend time next week talking with people in the identified neighborhood about the pros and cons associated with feeding wildlife. For more information about feeding birds during winter, please visit the WDFW webpage at [http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/winter\\_feeding/](http://wdfw.wa.gov/living/winter_feeding/).

**Elk Population Monitoring, Research and Management Assistance:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and Natural Resource Technician Cogdal assisted District Biologist Yarborough in locating, chemically immobilizing, safely handling, and collaring an elk herd in the Acme/Saxson area. This collaring effort will provide much needed data in an area that was previously void of collar data.



*A successful collaring effort implemented by Region 4 Wildlife Program personnel. Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman was able to get close enough to chemically immobilize a cow elk so that a collar could be placed on the animal by District Biologist Yarborough. The animal and its associated herd were observed returning to the same location two days later.*

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

#### **Hunter Education:**

Coordinator Dazey evaluated the teaching team at the Issaquah Sportsman club. Following the class, Dazey conferenced with the Chief Instructor and discussed recommendations for improvement for one of the presenters. Dazey sent out two instructor applicant packets.



**Hunter Education Instructor Support:** Coordinator Dazey activated 29 new hunter education classes for 2016. Coordinator Dazey assisted a chief instructor on Whidbey Island to post his classes for 2016 on the Kalkomey website.

**Region 4 Hunter Education Instructor In-Service Training:** Coordinator Dazey conducted an In-Service Training for 80 hunter education instructors on Saturday. The IST was well received by those in attendance. This is the first of two ISTs that are being conducted in Region 4. This Saturday's session was held at the Boy Scout Camp Pigott in Snohomish. The second IST will be held in Whatcom County to accommodate the volunteer instructors in the north of Region 4.

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

**Aerial Survey Support:** District 13 staff members provided flight following coverage while primary staff members were away.

**Wildlife Area Management Plan Update:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm continues to coordinate with the Wildlife Area Management Planning Team in preparation for the first stakeholder meeting.

**Training/Performance Development:** Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell coordinated performance development and refresher training needs for Region 4 Private Lands Access staff members. Identified training opportunities included CPR/First Aid, Blood Borne Pathogens, leadership advancement, purchasing and procurement, GIS, Microsoft Office® Suite, and Farm Bill training. Private Lands Biologist Wingard completed training associated with obtaining a purchasing card. Biologist Wingard enrolled in Leadership training in Olympia over the next several months. Biologist Wingard enrolled in GIS training to occur in May in Seattle.

**REGION 5**

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Black-tailed Deer Research Project:** Research Scientist and Chief Investigator Rice, private contractors Northwest Helicopters, and Biologists Holman, Stephens, and Bergh conducted adult doe captures associated with the black-tailed deer research project. The effort took place in both the Coweeman (550) and Washougal (568) Game Management Units (GMUs). The adult females are captured by helicopter net-gunning. Conditions were excellent for the task and per this year's study design, ten adult does were captured in the Coweeman and four does were captured in the Washougal.

Once captured, the does are outfitted with collars that record location every five hours and convey this



information to a satellite. The collars also generate a traditional VHF signal for field location. The does are additionally outfitted with a vaginal implant transmitter (VIT) which communicates with the doe's satellite collar. Upon birth, the VIT lets the collar know that fawns have been born and WDFW staff members are notified by e-mail and text message. Following notification, fawn searches are initiated. Thanks to Northwest Helicopters, primarily pilot Jess Hagerman and net-gunner Brian Greenhaw, for their skill in this challenging capture effort.

**South Cascades Fisher Reintroduction:** Biologist Holman joined Fisher Project Lead Biologist Lewis on a telemetry flight to monitor the fishers introduced into the South Cascades. Twenty-three fishers were introduced during the winter of 2015-16. To date, the project has gone very well, with most animals remaining within roughly 10 miles of the release site and almost all animals accounted for via aerial telemetry. For more information on the fisher re-introduction project, see the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/conservation/fisher/>

**Oregon Spotted Frog Surveys:** Biologist Anderson conducted an early season Oregon spotted frog egg mass survey at the Trout Lake Natural Area Preserve. No egg masses were observed this week. Oregon spotted frogs have initiated egg mass laying in select sites in Puget Sound and at Conboy National Wildlife Refuge this month, representing the earliest known laying dates recorded in Washington. Trout Lake is typically one week later than Conboy. Oregon spotted frogs are state and federally endangered, and are a priority species for annual monitoring in Washington.



*Trout Lake NAP – Oregon spotted frog habitat*

**Treponeme-associated Hoof Disease Prevalence Studies:** In a continued effort to better understand the prevalence of treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) in southwest Washington, over 400 modern firearm special permit hunters, as well as hunters assisting with property damage

mitigation, were contacted before the start of last hunting season to assist in the effort. If a hunter was successful in harvesting an elk, they were asked to assess the condition of their elk's hooves as being normal or abnormal on a scale of one to five, with one being the earliest stages of TAHD and five being the most advanced. They were also asked to collect the hooves and send them in with their scores to be examined again by veterinarians and WDFW staff members for evaluation. A total of 96 samples were received from hunters, allowing for a successful first effort in this pilot. Dr. Mansfield (WDFW), Dr. Han (Colorado State University), two Washington Department of Agriculture veterinarians, Elk Specialist Hoenes, and Biologists Holman, Stephens, and George examined and graded several hundred hooves and compared their scores with the hunter's assessments. Additionally, biologists and WDFW staff members from Regions 4, 5, and 6 also participated in this effort to better understand the scoring process and to become familiar with the many manifestations of TAHD in elk hooves.

Based on the initial results of this effort, it appears as though hunters were successful in determining the presence of TAHD at the time of harvest, however the very earliest stages of the disease are still difficult to determine in the field. Because of these results, the original scoring system will be adapted and an expansion of the pilot may take place in the future.

Due to the scale of TAHD in Washington, public participation is essential in gathering more information on the prevalence of the disease. We would like to congratulate all of those who sent in samples on a successful hunting season, and express a great appreciation to them for making this first pilot an effective effort. Thank you!



### ***Scoring TAHD***

### **Klickitat Wildlife Area**

**Forest Management Planning:** Technician Davis did a walkthrough of Unit 3 to look for potential culturally significant features and also removed unneeded fence in the unit. Technician Davis also removed unneeded fencing from an abandoned road access on the Soda Springs Unit.

### ***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 continued this week. WDFW Biologist Butler traveled throughout Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties to monitor hunting activity in the field on private lands. The late season remained very productive throughout the area with many hunters harvesting their limit of geese. Hunters continued to observe mixed flocks, with one contacted hunter harvesting a snow goose.

As of Sunday, February 28, approximately 63 hunters were contacted and 134 geese were checked during the late season. No dusky Canada geese were known to have been harvested in the area this week. This leaves the total number of dusky Canada geese known to have been

harvested in the area at 16. Hunters need to continue exercising caution to avoid harvesting a dusky Canada goose, as there are currently many throughout the area. The late season goose hunt continues on private lands only until Wednesday, March 9. 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 is available on the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/>

### **Access**

**Mineral Lake:** The fishing dock was vandalized, with the pressure treated lumber unbolted and stolen from the dock. In addition, the toilet paper was lit on fire and burned off the holders in the restroom.

**Vancouver Lake and Lacamas Lake:** Access Staff Spangler and Rhodes removed an abandoned boat from Vancouver Lake and also found the locks missing and gates left open in two locations. Staff members also found a large camping trailer abandoned on site at Lacamas Lake.

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

### **District 10 Wildlife Conflict**

**Elk:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin visited a farm in the Mossy Rock Unit claiming damage from elk. Conklin deployed a Master Hunter to the property and an adjacent dairy having elk damage as well. The Master Hunter was unsuccessful.

**Deer:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin met with several concerned citizens who live by and utilize an airstrip in Curtis. They are reporting large numbers of deer that graze on the airstrip. Conklin gave them advice on nonlethal methods they could use to haze the deer, including using bird bangers and paintball guns. Conklin will meet with them next week and deploy either a propane cannon or fuse rope to assist with the hazing.

**Damage in the News:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Conklin was approached by David Bunting from the Highway Shopper Newspaper based out of Packwood while she was escorting a youth hunter on agriculture lands in Randle. He said he had been told from members of the community that “WDFW are killing a bunch of the elk”. Conklin took the opportunity to explain to the reporter about the impact of elk on commercial agricultural fields. She also explained how WDFW controls damage by utilizing nonlethal and lethal techniques, including providing Master Hunter, disabled, and youth hunters an opportunity to hunt the elk on the impacted properties. The reporter stated he would be writing an article about the damage program. Conklin gave him her business card and offered to speak with him again and invited him to ride along with her to better understand the role WDFW plays in Wildlife Conflict. The youth hunter was not successful in harvesting an elk.

### **District 9 Wildlife Conflict**

**Elk:** Biologist Meyers and Conflict Specialist Peterson met with landowners along the White Salmon River. Landowners in that area have been reporting large numbers of elk on their lands. This time of year wet fields are particularly susceptible to elk damage. Meyers and Peterson counted four groups totaling roughly 100 elk on one producer's land.

**Damage Hunt:** A Master Hunter was sent to a dairy in Trout Lake in response to elk damage. The dairy has had elk damaging/eating silage and hay on a nightly basis. The Master Hunter was sent to the property on Thursday morning and has reported seeing elk every day. The Master Hunter was successful in taking a cow elk on Saturday morning. The Master Hunter was very appreciative for the opportunity and reported excellent cooperation and support from the landholder.

### **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 3,000 to 6,000 feet during the upcoming week, with temperatures in the valleys ranging into the 50s. The 6-10 and 8-14 day forecasts are for above average temperatures and precipitation.

**Long-Term Forecast:** The March forecast is for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation, and the three month forecast is for above normal temperatures and below normal precipitation.

**Habitat:** Forage is available at middle and lower elevations, with the Wildlife Area being heavily utilized. Green up is slowly starting at the lower elevations on the Wildlife Area.

**Snow Depths:** Lower elevations are currently snow free below about 3,000 feet. 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 remained moderate this past week, with mild and sunny 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 93 percent of normal. The Soda Springs Unit of the Klickitat Wildlife Area has no snow cover and green up has not yet started.

**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 in 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 WILDIFE***

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Oregon Spotted Frog—District 11:** Biologist Tirhi spent much of last week conducting spotted frog surveys at traditional breeding locations. Egg mass numbers were lower than expected at

two sites and normal to high at a third location. Biologists are curious about the effects of 2015 droughts on all species survival, which would be expressed by the number of individuals returning to breed in 2016. Frogs and butterflies are showing reductions in numbers at some locations, although data will be collected throughout the season and compared to norms. Spotted frogs at the Fish Pond Creek oviposition location actually expressed some interesting behaviors, including laying eggs in several new locations not used in previous years. This is an uncommon phenomenon in spotted frogs that have extremely high site fidelity to exact egg laying locations used in previous years. Tirhi and staff members visit all known breeding locations to obtain yearly egg mass totals. Staff members conduct a minimum of two site visits per season at both known and potential breeding sites. Oregon spotted frogs are both a federal and state listed species and are included in the Thurston County Habitat Conservation Plan.



***Oregon spotted frog egg masses, Fish Pond Creek, Thurston County, 2016***



***Male and female Oregon spotted frog in amplexus, Salmon Creek, 2016*** – Photo by Michelle Tirhi

In addition to doing egg mass surveys, Tirhi had an opportunity to gauge the response of reed canary grass control conducted in the fall of 2015 at the Salmon Creek breeding site to water levels during this spring breeding season. Reed canary grass threatens most spotted frog oviposition sites by reducing water levels, reducing oxygen levels in water, shading oviposition sites (spotted frogs need sun exposed breeding locations), and impeding frog movement. Unfortunately, record breaking rainfall in February 2016 has produced higher than desired water levels at several of the specific Salmon Creek egg-laying sites. This results in water levels being higher than preferred by spotted frogs, who then forego egg-laying at the site. Counts across the

site are lower this year, which may be a result of drought conditions in 2015 (and reduced survival of last years spotted frogs) or high water in 2016. Regardless, water levels and microsite conditions (as needed by spotted frogs) were excellent throughout much of the treatment plots.



*Oregon spotted frog reed canary grass control (cut) plot, Salmon Creek, October 2015 (left) vs February 2016 (right) showing shallow water, emergent vegetation conditions preferred by spotted frogs for egg laying*

**Oregon Spotted Frog-District 17:** Biologist Michaelis conducted the first of four surveys for Oregon spotted frogs on the lower Black River. Water levels in the river were several feet higher than normal, but a few shallow sites were surveyed. Surveys ended about a half mile upstream from Highway 12. No frogs or oviposition sites were detected.

**Taylor's Checkerspot Recovery:** Biologists Linders and Randolph put the finishing touches on release plot layouts at Glacial Heritage Preserve and Scatter Creek Wildlife Area in preparation for the release of postdiapause Taylor's checkerspot larvae captive-reared at the Oregon Zoo and Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women. They coordinated with Biologists Hays and Belson to focus on recently treated areas (prescribed fire, herbicide, seed and plug enhancements). They also took advantage of previously collected Rapid Habitat Assessment data to ensure necessary resources were present for all life stages. Identified areas contained dense concentrations of larval host resources within a matrix of adult nectar resources, and open ground needed for basking and oviposition. Release locations were marked with pin flags and

plots were georeferenced. On February 23, about 1,700 larvae were released at Scatter Creek, with assistance from a large crew of volunteers. In addition to WDFW staff members, public, nonprofit, and individual conservation partners were represented, including the Evergreen State College, Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Oregon Zoo, Joint Base Lewis McChord, and the Center for Natural Lands Management, among others. Inmate technicians from the Mission Creek rearing facility participated in a release for the first time ever and a crew from PBS NewsHour, together with public relations staff members from WDFW and Washington Department of Corrections, were on hand to document the event. Weather on release day was sunny and in the mid-50s, albeit cooled by a northerly wind that kicked up midday.

In addition, about 2,000 larvae were released at Glacial Heritage Preserve on February 25 with volunteers from the Evergreen State College, Joint Base Lewis McChord, the Center for Natural Lands Management, and a private partner. Release conditions were ideal, with temperatures in the high 50s, clear skies, and calm winds.



In addition to documenting the release at Scatter Creek, the PBS crew interviewed Biologist Linders to explore Taylor's checkerspot biology, conservation, and

recovery efforts. PBS also interviewed current and former inmate technicians from Mission Creek for an inside look at how the captive rearing program contributes to conservation while also engaging inmates in personal and professional development, and providing access to science

education and research. Additional photo sessions are scheduled for May to capture adult checkerspots in the field and to conduct an in-depth visit to the Mission Creek rearing facility. PBS will produce a six to eight minute piece to be aired at a later date. Communication Consultant Jason Wettstein from WDFW and Videographer Tim Kelly from Department of Corrections were also on board to document the effort and distribute information via social and other media outlets.

**Land Acquisition:** Biologist Tirhi continues to spend significant time on finalizing USFWS Section 6 grant applications for requesting funds for the purchase of two remnant prairie sites in Thurston County. The 2016 application process has been more time consuming than previous years due partly to new staff member involvement in and out of the process. The WDFW internal team will work to streamline this process once applications are complete in hopes of being more efficient in 2017. Tirhi's applications include a second round of funds requested for fee-title acquisition of the 745 acre Port of Tacoma's West Rocky property (also known as Maytown Sand and Gravel) and a 90-acre conservation easement on a working farm near Rochester inhabited by Mazama pocket gophers.

***2016 conservation easement property for Mazama pocket gopher, Rochester, Thurston County (white locations indicate pocket gopher occurrence, 2015)***

**Landowner ESA Assistance:**

Program Manager Calkins, Section Manager Wilkerson, and representatives from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Thurston County met with the owner of a very large property to discuss the landowner's options to develop or conserve his land. The site includes prairie, forest, and wetland habitats. The owner has considered selling, but with current restrictions that has been difficult. The landowner appreciated the discussion and description of a wide range of conservation options available, some of which would allow for the development of portions of their land.



**Snowy Plover:** Biologists Sundstrom and Novack organized the Snowy Plover pre-season meeting. Attendees from USFWS, USDA-Wildlife Services, State Parks, WDFW-Fish Program and the Shoalwater tribe all met with Wildlife Program staff members to discuss ongoing plover management and plan for monitoring during the upcoming nesting season. Overall plover numbers and nesting success is moving toward recovery. Concerns were noted about the potential impacts of human disturbance associated with spring clam digging on nesting plovers.

**Brant Survey:** Biologist Ament conducted a brant survey with Biologist Sue Thomas from the USFWS on February 23, 2016. Biologist Thomas and a refuge volunteer surveyed the Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge and Biologist Ament surveyed saltwater areas visible from Marine Drive to WA Harbor. There were fairly low counts of brant observed on the refuge during the Mid-Winter Waterfowl survey conducted for all Dungeness sites on January 4, 2016. District Biologist McMillan was consulted and agreed that another ground count for brant would be important. The survey team had excellent survey conditions for the morning portion of the survey when the tide was suitable for USFWS staff members to access viewing locations. There was more cloud cover and the winds picked up some in the afternoon. Biologist Thomas reported counting 260 brant during the survey. Biologist Ament did consult with Thomas about some brant groups in Dungeness Bay before finalizing her count numbers. She counted a total of 808 brant during the survey. The highest number (230) was observed along the shoreline of WA Harbor. The total count for the survey was 1068. This is slightly lower than counts conducted in the past few years. Biologist Ament has noted high variability in the location of concentrations of brant during the yearly surveys. No brant were observed at the WDFW Three Crabs property during the survey, but in 2012 there were over 1000 brant there. See survey results and photos below.

Date	2/23/2016	
Weather	50°, calm, Beaufort 0-2	
Observers	S. Ament, S Thomas	
Time	11:00	
Survey Unit/Area		
DNWR- Inner Bay	S Thomas	188
DNWR - Outer Bay	S Thomas	72
DNWR - Strait	S Thomas	0
<b>TOTAL DNWR</b>		<b>260</b>
Marine Drive (west)	S. Ament	221
Marine Drive (across from GY)	S. Ament	27
Marine Drive (east)	S. Ament	0
3 Crabs	S. Ament	0
Les Jones	S. Ament	39
Cooper Creek	S. Ament	75
Jamestown (west)	S. Ament	39
Jamestown (east)	S. Ament	60

Gierin Creek	S. Ament	117
Port Williams	S. Ament	0
Washington Harbor	S. Ament	230
<b>TOTAL OFF REFUGE</b>		<b>808</b>
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>		<b>1068</b>



*Mt Baker with clear brant survey conditions*



*Brant - WA Harbor w/ Protection Island*



*Brant observed along WDFW Three Crabs property (April 2012)*

**Taylor’s Checkerspot Butterfly Survey**

**Transect Flagging:** Biologist Ament continued work on replacing missing flags and re-marking flags for Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly survey routes located at survey sites west of Port Angeles. She selected days when there was no precipitation at the sites in order to mark flags easily. Some of the flag stakes were missing or

damaged. She had to measure 25 meter distances and place new flag stakes on the survey routes. The innovative “pocket gopher mound poker” designed and created by retired Biologist Skriletz proved very useful as a tool to secure the measuring tape. Biologist Ament also put some flagging along vegetation to clearly mark the route. She has completed a total of five survey routes so far. She has two routes that were initiated last week and will need to be finished. While working at one site she observed the disturbance of vegetation along the survey route. The WCC Crew Leader conveyed that this was the sign of someone “raking” for Oregon White Truffles. Fortunately, there was no evidence of this activity on the main open balds at the site. There are concerns about this habitat disturbance. Biologist Ament will discuss this issue with DNR staff members and Biologist Hays. Only a few short routes on very steep slopes remain to be completed. She is hoping to complete the assignment of preparing Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly survey routes this week but will need suitable weather conditions. Active larvae were observed at one of the known survey sites last week.



*Taylor's checkerspot larva (2.5 cm) observed along a survey transect*



*Use of Skirletz "gopher poker" on transect*



*Truffle raking observed on Taylor's checkerspot butterfly transect*

**Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Sites:** Biologist McMillan visited one of the sites west of the Elwha to reflag the transect segments. She worked on the midsection to find a feasible transect route between the two neighboring zones. Biologist McMillan met up with Center for Natural Lands Management (CNLM) staff member Sanders Freed and crew at the site. The crew were chain sawing the small trees and large shrubs along the openings at the site. One larvae, about 1.3 cm long, was observed on the abandoned road on plantago. A CNLM crewmember also observed another larva along the northernmost of the western road segments.

**Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Habitat Improvement**

**Review:** Biologist Ament spent time on February 25 meeting with DNR staff members, along with a WCC crew leader and his crew at a Taylor's checkerspot butterfly site located west of Port Angeles. The crew has been employed for the past few weeks to work on clearing new habitat improvement units at two known sites for Taylor's checkerspot butterflies. The crew worked early last week to finish one unit where trees/brush were cut and piled for future burning. The crew also completed some puling of scotch broom. They also placed tree barriers along a road to protect sensitive habitat from any ORV traffic. Biologist Ament reviewed all work completed and provided comments to the crew leader related to the work completed. She met with the crew at another site to review another unit that would be cut to create a corridor between balds. The crew only has a few more days dedicated for these projects. They have done an excellent job at helping to enhance habitat conditions at the sites. Another crew from the Center of Lands Management worked at one of the sites on February 25 and 26. Biologist Ament discussed their proposed work with the lead of the project and will soon review the work they completed.



*Log barricades installed at known TCB site to minimize ORV impacts*

*Slope at known TCB site after cutting and piling of trees/shrubs*

**Proposed Radio/Cell Tower:** Biologist Ament has been spending time the last few weeks dealing with a proposal for a cell/radio tower at a site in Dungeness near her home office. She has been receiving emails and calls from landowners who strongly oppose the project. She contacted Regional staff members early last month for direction. She was notified by Program Managers Calkins and Kloempken that Habitat would be the lead and Wildlife would serve in a support role. She provided all communications, including recent emails from an attorney and consultant biologist, to Habitat. The opposition group is requesting WDFW comments on the consultant report by March 2 and a letter to the FCC by March 8 to request an EA be completed for the proposal. She is awaiting further direction from Habitat.



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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Sealing of Cougar Pelt:** Biologist Ament sealed a cougar pelt on February 25. The female younger adult cougar was shot by 72 year old Karen Kitchens, who lives alone on 80 acres west of Joyce. She raises goats, cattle, and chickens on her property. She was tending her goats on February 22 when she observed the cougar watching her goats. She retrieved a gun from her house and continued her farm work. Karen is not a hunter, but later went onto the WDFW website and became educated about the requirements for killing cougars in the state. She promptly went to Port Angeles and purchased a hunting license and tag to hunt a cougar. On February 23, the cougar was observed again near her enclosure for goats so she elected to shoot

the inquisitive cat with a .270 rifle. The cougar was not aggressive towards her and had not killed any of her domestic animals or birds. However, she was concerned about the safety of her farm animals and herself. She expressed some remorse for having to kill the cougar, but was basically protecting her livelihood as a rancher. It was a pleasure for Biologist Ament to have the opportunity to meet this very Skookum woman. She commended Karen for her efforts to comply with hunting regulations and enjoyed talking with her regarding various topics. A tooth and tissue sample was taken from the cougar and will be sent to Olympia in the standard envelope. (Special note - Karen gave permission for Biologist Ament to use her name and photo in this Weekly Report).

***Karen Kitchens with cougar she shot on her property to protect her goats***

**Spring Bear:** Biologist Novack communicated with Rayonier Timber Company and HQ staff members regarding the upcoming Spring Bear hunt. A letter to spring bear hunters was drafted for GMU 681 and 684.



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

**Wildlife Management**

**Thurston County Habitat Conservation Plan:** Biologist Tirhi represented District 11 at the WDFW-Thurston County joint meeting on the progress of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP). The HCP will provide federal regulatory relief for 11 species found in Thurston County, including federally listed Mazama pocket gopher, streaked horned lark, Oregon spotted frog, and Taylor's checkerspot butterfly. District 11 staff members have been intimately involved with all aspects of the HCP process and will continue to review products until its completion in 2017 or 2018. More can be found on the HCP online at <http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/planning/hcp/hcp-home.htm>

**Thurston County HCP Stakeholders Meeting:** Program Manager Calkins, Regional Habitat Program Manager Kloempken, and Ecosystems Services Division Manager Windrope attended a stakeholders meeting to review the concepts that will be included in Thurston County's Draft Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) for prairie species. HCPs are a mechanism under the Federal ESA that allows incidental take of listed species in exchange for mitigative measures to offset those impacts. The meeting included a review of the draft HCP provisions and the group discussion focused largely on how the plan might be funded. The stakeholders present represented diverse interests ranging from real estate professionals to representatives of

conservation groups. WDFW is anticipating the opportunity to review a full draft of the plan in the near future.

### **Private Lands /Conflict**

**Grayland Cranberries:** The remote camera system has proven highly effective at notifying producers of elk activity. Lately there have been several late night incursions. The elk have been getting used to hazing. Last week, the producers opted not to haze and instead contacted a Damage Prevention permit holder. Arrangements were made to meet with the permit holder at first light with the intention of reminding the elk that bad things happen when they go on a cranberry munching spree. Surprisingly, the elk did not go far after leaving the bogs before daylight. The permit holder was able to harvest and a producer used a kill permit to harvest. The producer donated the elk to the Union Gospel Mission in Aberdeen. With the warm weather, some buds are starting to show on the berries, as well as some nummy weeds. The result is the remote camera system is showing some increased deer activity.

**Long Beach Cranberries:** A group of cows have been making themselves unwelcome on bogs in the center of the peninsula. Last week, a bull group decided they would join in the fun. This is a very tough area to hunt because of the dense crab apple thickets and numerous small properties surrounding the bogs. Permits are issued. Master Hunters have not been deployed because of the distance they would have to travel and limited area to hunt.

**Grays Harbor Cranberries:** This is a new one. Biologist Harris was contacted by a grower in a small bog complex on the north side of the harbor regarding deer problems. He will try and meet with them next week.

**Statsop Elk:** With fingers crossed, Biologist Harris reports that elk have not set a hoof on the bulb farm this year. We have not had to herd elk across the freeway or deal with the numerous safety and damage issues. The elk have remained split into smaller groups. One group has made itself unwelcome on a cattle operation in the upper Satsop drainage. Biologist Harris will attempt to meet with the producer next week to start reducing the problems he is incurring. With the big group now busted into several smaller groups, the elk are spreading themselves out more. Currently only two producers are receiving unacceptable use.

**Willapa Elk:** What once was a busy area for elk problems has been pretty slow this year. While elk are around, producers in the Willapa Valley are not seeing the use they were a few years ago. Currently, only one Master Hunter is deployed to three hunter areas. That is a significant change, considering Biologist Harris used to deploy multiple hunters per hunt area. Damage Prevention permits are also in use, with similar results overall. Biologist Harris spent an evening and morning visiting landowners and only found sign of recent activity on two properties. One of the properties is a new producer who joined the ranks of producers working with WDFW this year. It is a small family operation. The elk have a very impressive trail they have been using to access a newly seeded field. Unfortunately, Biologist Harris has been unable to get access for Master Hunters to pursue to their daytime bedding areas.

**Wynoochee Elk:** Because of the numerous ownerships, safety concerns, and time constraints, Biologist Harris has been unable to deploy as many Master Hunters as he would like here even though there have been plenty of elk issues. Interestingly, the lower groups have remained broken up into smaller groups, with one of the groups staying more in the center of the agricultural area where elk use was lower in the past. The upper group is still fairly large, but far less than the 100 plus there last year. It appears the pressure has caused this group to split a little. The main group is running about 40 elk this year, with an occasional increase of about 20.

**North River Elk:** Two of three Master Hunters assigned to two hunt areas in the valley harvested elk last week. The hunters were able to locate one of several groups of elk using the eastern hunt area. Both Master Hunters opted to harvest limpers. Both animals were healthy except for some bad hooves. Needless to say, the two Master Hunters had a little fun telling the third Master Hunter he should have been there.



*Two happy Master Hunters*

**Forks Elk:** Biologist Harris received a report of a sick elk in downtown Forks. The next report was of the elk dying in the front yard of a B&B. Because of the distance, he was unable to assist. However, he was able to contact the Quileute Tribe for

assistance. Thankfully the tribe was willing and acted quickly to assist the landowner. While the meat was not edible, they removed and disposed of the elk. Biologist Harris is very thankful for the assistance that the tribe provided.

**Neighborhood Crime Watch:** Biologist Harris attended the regular meeting of the Winkleman/Evergreen road area neighborhood crime watch group. The neighborhood has abundant wildlife and recent cougar sightings caused the group to request some advice. Deer, bear, raccoon, opossums, and eastern gray squirrels are frequent visitors. Advice was given. Luckily for the wildlife, the Neighborhood Watch is much more tolerant of wildlife than they are of thieves. The sheriff department's report indicates a steep decline in criminal activity in the area.

**Master Hunter Designated Permit Stats:** Unfortunately or fortunately, depending how one looks at it, Region 6 has not been deploying as many Master Hunters this year. This is partially due to the Master Hunters success in discouraging elk use. Another issue is time constraints and staffing shortage limiting the ability of staff members to deploy the hunters effectively. The area where many of the hunters were deployed over the past few years has seen a reduction in elk use. The hunters have reduced elk use through nonlethal and lethal actions. Increased antlerless elk permits during general and permit seasons have also helped. However, the focused effort by Master Hunters has proven very effective.

Master Hunter - Region 6 Designated Permits		
Deployed	9	15%
On Call	3	5%
Pass	3	5%
Waiting	24	40%
Harvested	21	35%
Permits	60	100%

Deployed = hunter currently hunting

On Call = hunters who are on call for staff or a landowner

Pass = hunter who have chosen not to hunt or hunters who have not responded to staff.

Waiting = hunters who are waiting to hunt

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Red Knot Presentation:** Biologist Michaelis provided a PowerPoint presentation to around thirty employees. Red Knot research and Willapa Bay waterfowl survey flight data were presented. Both projects involve many different agencies, and the red knot work involves two other countries with the potential to involve more. The presentation was well received and appreciated by staff members.

**Other**

**Morse Buildings to be Demolished:** Biologist McMillan was informed that a couple of the buildings on WDFW Morse Creek ownership are going to be demolished. Biologist Ament had made a list of the items inside of the buildings and it was reviewed to determine what items should be removed before the demolition. Other WDFW employees in the Port Angeles area were encouraged to review the list for items they may be able to use.