

# Wildlife Program

Week of September 19 – September 25, 2016

## **WOLF ACTIVITIES**

### **Region 1 Wolf Activities**

**Profanity Peak Wolf Pack:** Lethal removal activities continued throughout the week in District 1. WDFW coordinated with the Ferry County Sheriff's Department, range riders, and producers all week.

**Calf Depredation Investigation:** Supervisor McCanna, Natural Resource Worker Weatherman, Sergeant Taylor, and a Stevens County sheriff investigated a depredation of a calf in the Smackout wolf territory. The result of the investigation was a confirmed wolf depredation on the calf. McCanna worked with the producer to add additional deterrence measures.

**Cow Depredation Investigation:** WDFW and the Ferry County Sheriff's Department investigated a cow carcass in the Profanity wolf pack territory. The result of the investigation was an unknown cause of death. McCanna and Weatherman checked the carcass the next day to look for any wolf sign and assist with the investigation.

**Injured Dog Investigation:** WDFW and the Ferry County Sheriff's Department investigated an injured dog in the Profanity wolf pack territory. The result of the investigation was an unknown cause of injuries.

**Range Riders:** Supervisor McCanna worked with Olympia and two potential range riders throughout the week. Two additional range riders have been contracted to assist with wolf/livestock interactions in District 1.

**Conference Calls:** Supervisor McCanna participated on multiple conference calls for next steps on the lethal removal of the Profanity Peak wolf pack and field operations.

**Livestock Checklists:** Supervisor McCanna updated seven livestock checklists in District 1 while coordinating with producers.

**OR-38:** Biologist Earl and Conflict Specialist Rasley checked on the location of OR-38 since he made large movements across grazing allotments last week. The collared wolf moved back over to Garfield County this week and is currently hanging around fall calving operations. Earl contacted producers in the area who are having calves born right now to inform them of the wolf activities.

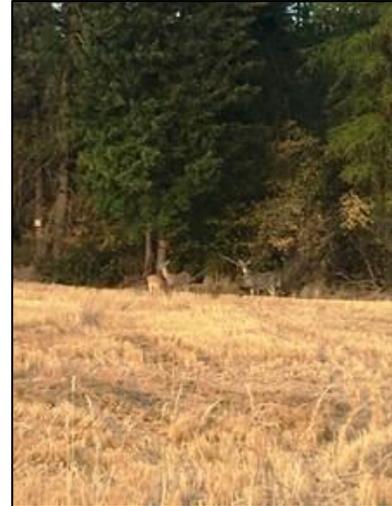
## **REGION 1**

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

**September Deer Surveys:** Deer surveys continued on both traditional and standardized transects this week. They will be completed by September 30. Surveys carried out in September are mainly to assess the ratio of white-tailed deer fawns to does.

***Two white-tailed does and a fawn as observed on the East Colville Standard Transect this week***

**Pre-Season Deer Ground Surveys:** Biologists Atamian and Lowe conducted ground surveys in GMUs 124 and 139. Well over 200 white-tailed deer were observed on the northeast Spokane route, but the highlight of the survey was a bull, cow, and calf moose group.



***Mature bull moose on the northeast Spokane deer route***



***Calf (left) and cow (right) on the northeast Spokane deer route***

**Farm Bill:** Biologist Baarstad and Farm Service Agency staff members completed contracts for the CRP-SAFE program. All acres allocated for SAFE have been obligated, representing an additional 25 contracts and 3,535 acres added in Lincoln County.

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

**Hog Canyon:** Dziekan coordinated with Swanson Lake Manager Juli Anderson to schedule a work party at Hog Canyon Lake Public Access. The outing was to address graffiti and firearm damage caused to the dam. Dziekan met Anderson and Natural Resource Worker Jim Bauer at the Regional HQ and together they drove to the site.



*Bauer getting ready to start painting*



*Dziewan needed waders*



*Mixing mortar to fill bullet holes*



*Now you see it*



*Going, going*



*Gone: graffiti and bullet hole-free*

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

**Livestock Poached:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Rasley received a call from District Biologist Wik regarding a fresh cow carcass he had found on Jasper Mountain. Rasley was able to find the owners of the cow thanks to Wik sending a picture of the brand. After meeting the owners at the scene of the carcass, it was clear the cow just simply dropped dead and rolled down the hill. There were no signs of the cow being attacked by a predator or fed on. Since the carcass was so close to a road, Rasley started with his metal detector and immediately found where the cow was shot several times in the neck. WDFW Enforcement officers were several hours out, so Rasley was able to contact the Columbia County Sheriff's Office and they sent an officer to the scene since it had turned from a depredation to a confirmed crime scene.



*Location of cow carcass from road*



*The beginning of the investigation*

**Sick Deer:** Biologist Earl responded to a call of a sick deer in the Clarkston Heights. The deer appeared to have papilloma growing in front of its eyes, blocking its vision. Earl observed the deer walking and feeding and informed the reporting party that the growths would fall off. Earl left his contact information in case the deer's condition changed.

*Mule deer with papilloma grows in Asotin County*



## **REGION 2**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Okanogan Multi-Carnivore Survey:** Biologist Fitkin continued to pull cameras and compile data from the multi-carnivore project remote cameras. Additional intriguing wildlife detections keep rolling in. The last of the cameras should be pulled in the next two weeks.



***Western gray squirrel in lynx habitat*** – WSU/WDFW remote camera



***Moose on the loose*** – WSU/WDFW remote camera

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Youth Pheasant Hunting:** Biologists Rowan and McPherson and Technician Quayle assisted Biologist Dougherty and Hunter Education Instructor Ray with orchestrating a pheasant youth hunt near Royal City. The event was hosted by the Columbia Basin Chapter of Pheasants Forever and B and G Farms. Twenty-one kids participated, all harvesting at least one pheasant, and one lucky youth won a 20-gauge shotgun.

***Technician Quayle shows kids a live pheasant prior to release*** – Photo by Biologist Rowan



**ADA Blinds:** Biologist Mcpherson, Technician Quayle, and Assistant Manager Cole spent a half day brushing in the two ADA blinds at the Frenchman Regulated Access Area. After a couple of minor repairs, they will be ready for the upcoming waterfowl opener.

***Biologist McPherson and Technician Quayle at the Frenchman Regulated Access Area ADA blind constructed with an ALEA grant*** – Photo by B. Cole



**Wildlife Areas**

**Chelan Butte Gates:** Natural Resource Technicians Zabreznik, Vallance, and Galvin finally finished three new gates on Chelan Butte. The new gates will prevent vehicle access to the primary bighorn sheep area and protection to several cultural resource sites.

*New Chelan Butte gate on road leading to the historic "Tin Roof Barn" – Photo by R. Fox*



**Okanogan Complex Fences:** Maintenance Mechanic Wottlin and Assistant Manager Troyer both spent time coordinating with CAMP in regards to the upcoming GPS-mapping of burned fences. Due to FEMA’s request to alter the required documentation, this will be the third time Methow Wildlife Area staff members have collected GPS data from the Big Buck Unit. Troyer and Wottlin are working closely with CAMP to ensure all necessary information and documentation is collected to FEMA’s standards. Wottlin and Troyer also coordinated with CAMP regarding 84 hazard trees felled on the wildlife area. Methow Wildlife Area staff members are now working on Jving that time to a new MI code and rounding up all necessary documentation of time and materials used to accomplish the task.

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Hopkins Ferry Boat Ramp - Big Bend Wildlife Area Field Trip/Meeting:** Private Lands Biologist Braaten spoke to the WDFW wildlife area manager, WDFW field staff members, and CAMP engineers regarding site selection and other items. Information was gathered for the next round of RCO grant applications/presentations coming up this winter. Private Lands Biologist Braaten will be gathering some GIS data for WDFW presentations.



*WDFW staff members discuss new Hopkins Ferry proposed boat access site – Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW*

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

### **Private Lands/Access**

**Highway 97A Wildlife Fence:** The major modification that Washington Department of Transportation (WDOT), Wenatchee Sportsmen’s Association, Washington Sheep Foundation, and WDFW did earlier this year to the Highway 97a wildlife fence has already proved to be a success. There were a few medium sized rocks that came through the fence, and the fence is still standing, so the design worked! We will be able to easily fix



this with hog rings and zip ties, so the cost of the repair will only be \$10 instead of the usual \$5,000!

### **REGION 3**

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

##### **Wildlife Areas**

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Forester Mackey visited a site where the Yakima Construction Shop removed a stream-crossing culvert as part of a road abandonment project. They did a fantastic job and represented the agency well.

*Awesome job on culvert removal and restoration work conducted by the Yakima Construction Shop on the Rock Creek Unit of Oak Creek Wildlife Area*



##### **Wildlife Management**

**Sick Deer:** District Biologist Fidorra received a photo of a deer in Pasco with fibromas on it. The animal has been reported since early in 2016, but someone finally captured a photo to aid in diagnosis. This virus-caused disease can cause indirect fatality if growths impair movement or eating, but generally deer fair well with fibromas, which eventually fall off.



*A deer in Pasco with large fibroma (benign tumors)*

**Cottontail Rabbit:** District Biologist Fidorra responded to a distressed cottontail rabbit in the WDFW Pasco office parking lot. The animal had gotten its teeth stuck on a knot in a strand of string while apparently flossing. It was released alive.

**Hunting Access:** District Biologist Fidorra met with Private Lands Biologist Stutzman to discuss hunting access at a newly acquired Department of Natural Resources (DNR) property. DNR approached WDFW looking for ways to manage access in a fashion similar to our Private Lands Access programs. How WDFW might assist DNR is being discussed.

**Birding Tour:** District Biologist Fidorra led a birding tour of the Mesa Lake Wildlife Area for the local Audubon Society. Five participants tallied 45 species. Fidorra will occasionally be hosting tours of the wildlife area units through the year, including a winter sandhill crane tour to the Windmill Unit and a shrub-steppe bird tour to Thornton in spring.



*Several tour participants scanning for waterfowl on the Mesa Lake Wildlife Area*

**Dead Wildlife Specimens:** District Biologist Fidorra found dead specimens of white-throated sparrow and American pipit, which were both in need by the McNary/Audubon collection. Fidorra transferred the specimens to USFWS.

**Wildlife Program Files:** District Biologist Fidorra began going through old Wildlife

Program files to make space for incoming office staff members. Fidorra will be archiving much of the data, which goes back through the 1970s.

**Site Tour:** District Biologist Fidorra and District 4 staff members met with a Ducks Unlimited (DU) biologist at a property DU had been contacted about purchasing. Staff members toured the site and met with the landowner, who preferred the property remain open to the public and for conservation. The property is on the Yakima River and could be a waterfowl hunting and fishing access site, but habitat value was fairly low.

**Western Gray Squirrel:** Biologist Bernatowicz pulled the last transect for western gray squirrel this year. The transect burned in a USFS prescribed fire and was run an extra month. One tube had a few possible western gray squirrel hairs. The hair was sent to Research Scientist Vanderhaegen for further review.

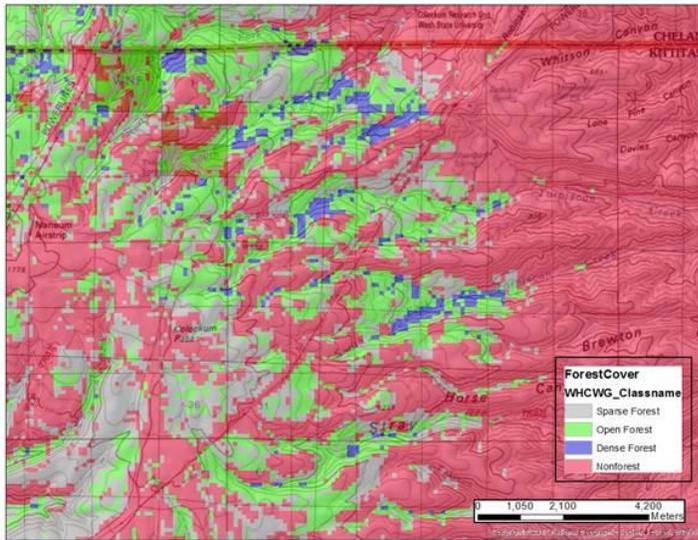
**Grouse Wing Collection:** Biologist Bernatowicz collected wings and maintained barrels with the help of Wildlife area staff members. Only two wings were collected in the southern portion of the district. One hunter called to report few grouse seen this year.

**Bighorn Sheep Survey:** Biologist Bernatowicz participated in the annual survey of the Yakima River Canyon with Biologists Moore, Biologist Oyster, and Section Manager Harris. The goal of the survey was to document lamb recruitment through September. On the Umtanum (west) side of the river, only one lamb was seen with 78 total ewes. Such low recruitment is a strong indication of continued disease issues. In Selah Butte (east) side, 15 lambs were seen with 55 ewes. The strongest recruitment was in the northeast side of the canyon.



*A ram searching for ewes in heat (breeding will begin in about two weeks)*

**Colockum Forestry:** Biologist Bernatowicz reviewed aerial photos of forest stands in the Colockum and consulted with Habitat Biologist Downes. Fires and logging have greatly reduced forest cover. A thinning project is proposed on WDFW lands, but there is concern about the lack of closed stands. Closed stands provide security cover for elk and habitat diversity on the landscape. Habitat Biologist Downes found data from the connectivity project that shows the landscape and lack of cover. The data hasn't been ground checked and was from imagery prior to the Colockum Tarps fire.



*Colockum forest cover in 2013*

**Pheasant Eggs:** Biologist Bernatowicz found four eggs in a crate after releasing roosters for the youth hunt. This was very odd given the birds were roosters and its September. The vendor was contacted and said the crates were used for moving hens prior to being loaded

with roosters. In the wild, pheasant wouldn't be nesting in September. This is an indication that after decades of commercial breeding, penned pheasant maybe becoming more like chickens than wild birds.

*Eggs in a pheasant crate*



**Bighorn Sheep Home Range Analysis:** Biologist Moore had a conference call with Biometrician Ilai Keren to review the analysis methods being applied on this project. Keren had some great advice on the

range comparison using ecological sites data as well as the upcoming habitat use modeling.

The initial stages of a fine scale habitat use modeling effort are underway. Moore formatted GPS data files for the Tieton herd and worked on R code to subset GPS data and produce Brownian Bridge Moment Models (BBMM) more easily. The Tieton GPS data were queried to +/- eight day windows around each NDVI scene, a BBMM was ran for each window, and the 95% contour was taken to produce a 16-day home range. This process will be reiterated for each animal with 2011 GPS data across District 8 and these home range polygons will be used in the subsequent steps of the analysis.



*Tieton bighorn sheep GPS collar data subsetted to a +/- eight day window around Julian Day 41 during 2011 and analyzed for home range using BBMM*



*Tieton bighorn sheep GPS collar data subsetted to a +/- eight day window around Julian Day 89 during 2011 and analyzed for home range using BBMM*

**Grouse Wing Collection:** The wing collection barrels were checked and one wing sample came in from the week.

**Bighorn Sheep Harvest:** Biologist Moore processed a ram harvested from the Quilomene Unit.

**Colockum Bull Study:** All of the collared bulls made it through the first week of archery season.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Sunnyside Wildlife Area:** Wildlife Area Manager Buser, District Wildlife Biologist Fidorra, District Fisheries Biologist Hoffarth, and Ducks Unlimited Representative Tina Blewett met with a landowner on the Yakima River west of Benton City. The landowner wishes to sell the 34-acre parcel and maintain public recreation opportunities on the property. The group evaluated the

property for its recreational, fisheries, and wildlife habitat value. A determination on the landowner's options will be forthcoming.

**Kiosks:** Natural Resource Worker Becker and Natural Resource Technician Medina unloaded kiosk billing materials off the flatbed trailer and put them in the shop. Assistant Manager Sak, Natural Resource Worker Becker, and Natural Resource Technician Medina constructed new kiosks for the wildlife area parking lots.



*A finished kiosk in the shop, complete with signs*



*New kiosks being assembled in the shop*

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Manager Huffman coordinated with DNR and the USFS on the Rock Creek fire. The closure area was reduced to a smaller size with road restrictions remaining in place. Huffman made sure that the Yakima Construction Shop could access through the closed roads for RMAP work. Manager Huffman received a call later in the week from the Incident Commander about a helicopter dip site located on the wildlife area used during the fire. There was interest in improving the site for future use. Huffman approved the planned work, which included moving a couple of logs out of the center of the pond. That work never did occur. Huffman also inspected a road crossing of the right hand fork of Rock Creek that was opened during the fire and coordinated with Habitat Program and USFS on a good solution to maintain access to WDFW land while improving the crossing. While on the Rock Creek Unit, Huffman located several trespass cows and contacted the owner to get them removed. The area has received quite a bit of use this summer. Huffman documented the use on grazing forms and with photos at two locations.

**Safety Closure:** Manager Huffman and Forester Mackey worked on a safety closure in the area of the Oak Creek prescribed fire planned for early October. The closure was implemented and posted by Mackey. Huffman worked with Public Information Officer Luers to get information out on the website and through social media.

**South Fork Cowlitz Creek:** Manager Huffman coordinated with Yakama Nation biologists and the Enforcement Program on implementing a safety zone closure on the South Fork Cowlitz

Creek where crews will be starting a flood plain restoration project. The area is popular for target shooting, where people shoot towards the creek and the work area. Earlier in the week a Yakama Nation biologist was clearly visible along the creek and target shooters arrived and shot in her direction. When contacted, they were aware she was there but still began shooting. The closure should last three weeks. Huffman coordinated with Public Information Officer Luers to get information out on the website and social media. Signs will be posted and Huffman will work with Volunteer Coordinator Garcia for Master Hunter patrols of the area during work hours.

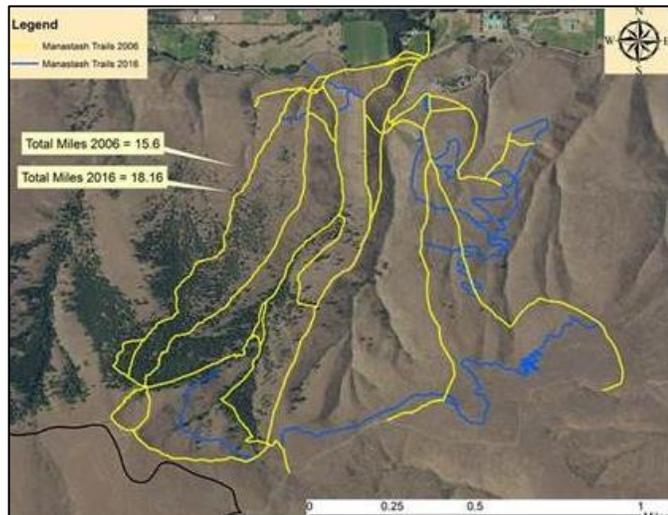
**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Manager Lopushinsky worked with L.T. Murray Manager Mel Babik on ordering road name stickers for green dot road markers. The stickers would go on the white post portion of the green dot road markers to identify the road name, hopefully assisting the public in navigating our extensive wildlife area road systems.

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Natural Resource Technician Hill took GPS points of all the non-toxic shot area signs in the green gate section. He then created a map of the sign locations. Pheasants will be released in the upcoming months and Hill made sure all the signs were up and didn't have too many holes.

*Nontoxic shot area sign in the green gate section of the Whiskey Dick Wildlife Area*



**Wenas Wildlife Area:** Biologist Longoria continued working on the PowerPoint for the first Manastash Ridge Trails public meeting. Manager Confer Morris and Longoria met to review and refine the PowerPoint presentation. Biologist Longoria refined maps for the Manastash Ridge Trails and produced a new map showing the expansion of trails from 2006 to 2016.





## Access

**Sign Placement:** Discover Pass and no camping signs were placed at McCormick after a neighbor complained there were homeless people living on the property. Enforcement was notified.

### *New signs at McCormick*

**Trash Cleanup:** Natural Resource Worker Barbosa and Sunnyside staff members worked at Whitstran picking up trash spread out on this popular Salmon fishing site.

### *Garbage picked up at Whitstran*

**Zillah Bridge:** Access Manager Garcia and Lands Agent Hendrix met with the county project supervisor at Zillah Bridge to discuss extended closure to public access. We were told the bridge replacement project should be completed in November 2017. Garcia will work with Lands Agent Hendrix to complete the PAM form and with the county to have signs made explaining the closure.





*Project view from Zillah Bridge access*



*Project tour with Lands Agent Hendrix*

### **Wildlife Management**

**Land Acquisition:** Private Lands Biologist Stutzman met with DNR about a recent acquisition near Pasco. The property has a high recreational value and DNR is looking for ways to manage what is likely to be a popular site with waterfowl hunters. Stutzman toured the property with DNR and discussed options for managing access on the site. Stutzman spent much of the next few days discussing the situation with private lands and regional management staff members to identify how WDFW may be able to provide assistance to DNR.

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

### **Wildlife Management**

**Rattlesnake Mountain Elk Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand continued to monitor for elk damage and haze deer and elk from irrigated crops along the lower elevations of Rattlesnake Mountain. Liquid propane gas cannons and pyrotechnics are currently being used during the night to minimize nocturnal raids on crops.

**Elk Fence Repair:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand inspected three separate properties in the Silver Dollar area for needed elk fence repair from damages incurred from this summer's Range 12 fire. Fortunately, very little damage occurred due to the protection measures, such as dinking fire strips and vegetative management implemented by the landowners.

**Beaver Damage:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand received and responded to a beaver damage complaint from the Prosser area. An overflow structure on an irrigation return system has been blocked, causing flooding damage to an earthen dam. Several strategies were discussed, including the installation of a "beaver deceiver" and the process for beaver removals, as well as the use of wildlife control operators.

**Injured Raccoon:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand responded to an injured raccoon in the West Richland area from WILDCOM. The raccoon suffered severe injuries from an automobile strike in a highly populated area. The animal was euthanized and removed from the area.

**Elk Damage Claim:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Hand reviewed an elk damage crop claim report from the crop adjuster working a wheat damage claim on Rattlesnake Mountain. Heavy elk damage occurred on this claim, but fortunately the majority of the loss was covered by the producer's Multi-Peril insurance policy.

**Elk Herding:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel herded elk in the Thorp area. A large group of elk started using a newly-seeded hay field and have adopted a nocturnal pattern in the area.

**Elk Hazing:** Reports of elk in or near agriculture areas increased this week. Conflict Specialist Wetzel discussed elk issues with landowners in Cle Elum near Airport Road, west Ellensburg, and the Badger Pocket areas.

**Predator Investigation:** Conflict Specialist Wetzel was contacted by a horse owner west of Cle Elum about a cougar or bear injuring her horses. She specifically mentioned an injury to the vagina of one of her breeding mares, suggesting it was scratched by a cougar. Officer Scherzinger and Conflict Specialist Wetzel investigated the area and the horses and found no indications of wildlife predators. The horse owner has had several other incidents of similar type and an investigation is ongoing, led by Officer Scherzinger.

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

**Wildlife Areas**

**Oak Creek Wildlife Area:** Forester Mackey met with the Yakima Construction Shop in the field to go over RMAP work in the Rock Creek Unit and revisited an unapproved 4x4 trail that was decommissioned earlier this year. The trail is only about 300 feet in length and bypasses about 500 feet of open forest road. Unfortunately, users have been pioneering new trails across and around the decommissioned route.

***Pioneered 4x4 trail to the left of decommissioned trail on the Rock Creek Unit***

**L.T. Murray Wildlife Area:** Natural Resource Technician Hill placed woody debris along the slope of a large culvert removal cut. The wood should provide some erosion control until staff members are able to seed there later this fall.



***Woody debris placed on the culvert removal slopes***

**Hay Stack Tarp:** Natural Resource Technician Hill let workers from Tarp-It into the Watt Barn to tarp the outside hay stack. The hay was dry and Murray staff members wanted to keep it that way before the rains hit.



***Hay tarped at the Watt Barn***

**Colockum Wildlife Area:** Colockum staff members worked to resolve electrical and water issues at the Colockum headquarters this week. After resorting to hiring an electrical contractor, it was determined that the electrical

problems were due to issues with a Chelan County PUD transformer. The PUD was called and responded to fix the problem.

**Fencing:** Colockum staff members continued to work with CAMP and Doherty Fence Company to begin construction on the southern boundary fence damaged in the 2013 Colockum-Tarps fire.

**Marijuana Operation:** Assistant Manager Hagan cleaned up a camp at an illegal marijuana growing operation on WDFW lands in the Stemilt Basin area. Enforcement agencies removed over 500 plants and arrested two individuals associated with this grow.

***Camp set up by growers at illegal marijuana grow operation, Colockum Wildlife Area***



## **REGION 4**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Bears:** Biologist Yarborough responded with Enforcement officers to a bear call at Lake Whatcom. There were three bears spending a lot of time in the reporting party's orchard/backyard. The landowners agreed to pick up fruit in a timely manner and were given a noisemaking hazing device to try and discourage the bears from spending all day on their property.

**Island Marble Butterfly:** District 13 reviewed and provided comments to the draft results for the 2016 field research that has been undertaken by San Juan Islands National Park to preserve and protect this very rare species.

**Marine Waterfowl Molt Survey:** District 13 completed reviewing and cataloging images and data from the molting marine waterfowl survey within the district and forwarded the information to the marine waterfowl specialist. Areas with molting concentrations are being revisited to photo-survey flocks for species, sex, and age determinations.

#### **Wildlife Areas**

**Stillwater Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm reports that seasonal mowing was completed at the Stillwater Unit. Fields, roads, and trails were prepped for the coming pheasant and waterfowl seasons. Manager Boehm also reports that corn was harvested at the Stillwater and Cherry Valley units.

***Corn was harvested at the Stillwater and Cherry Valley units***



**Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project (PSNERP):** Projects Coordinator Brokaw reported that the Spencer Island Estuary Restoration Project may be funded through the Corps Continuing Authorities Program (CAP) Section 544.

**North Fork Skagit Property:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw, Habitat Planner Friebel, and Skagit Wildlife Area staff members Rotton and Meis visited a property along the North Fork of the Skagit River that WDFW is considering acquiring through the Lands 20/20 review process. WDFW is considering acquisition of the property for future floodplain restoration purposes. While on site, the group discussed whether or not the property could provide recreation opportunities, funding for operations and management, and grant timelines.

*Projects Coordinator Loren Brokaw at Leque Island*

**Private Lands/Access Management**

**NRCS Local Working Group Meeting**

**Coordination:** Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell coordinated with regional Private Land Access Program staff members and the Natural Resource Conservation Service about upcoming local working group meetings. So far, agendas and talking points have been created for one meeting. Regional Private Land Access Program staff members will be attending these meetings to represent wildlife interests on behalf of WDFW.



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

**Wildlife Management**

**Private Land Access Cooperation:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman and Natural Resource Technician Cogdal fielded numerous calls from elk hunters participating in the youth, senior, and disabled hunt in Elk Area 4941. During the first three days of the season, all four youth hunters were successful in harvesting a bull elk from the elk area. Several disabled hunters were also successful.



*Successful Elk Area 4941 youth hunter*



*Another successful Elk Area 4941 youth hunter*

## Wildlife Areas

*Manager Boehm was onsite for the senior pheasant opener to greet the hunters at Ebey Island Unit*

**Pheasant Hunting Season:** Manager Kessler monitored the pheasants in the pheasant pens at the Lake Terrell headquarters. He received 375 pheasants for the first releases of the regular pheasant hunting season. Turnout for the regular pheasant hunting season at the Lake Terrell, Intalco, and BP units was very good. Manager Kessler and volunteers performed the releases on Friday and Saturday evenings, with over 300 birds released on the three units.



**Pheasant Season:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with staff members and volunteers to kick off the 2016 general pheasant season. Manager Boehm was on site for the senior pheasant opener to greet the hunters at Ebey Island Unit.

**Pheasant Season:** Manager Kessler mowed hunting paths through reed canary grass in fields on the BP Unit in preparation for the regular pheasant season opener. He checked and reinstalled the safety zone signs in fields hayed earlier in the season and posted new aerial photo maps on the reader boards. He coordinated with environmental workers surveying for a new wetland enhancement project on the BP Unit, which is currently in the design phase.

**Waterfowl Forage and Hunting Property:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw gave a presentation on WDFW's efforts to purchase a property near Leque Island for waterfowl forage and hunting to the Stanwood School District, Police Chief, Fire Chief, and city staff members. If WDFW successfully acquires the site, the school district is interested in developing outdoor learning activities for students on the property.

**Leque Island Vicinity Boat Launch:** Projects Coordinator Brokaw and Lands Agent Iris continued developing a project to submit to RCO's Boating Facilities Program to build a motorized boat launch near Leque Island. The Leque Island Recreation and Access Committee identified that a motorized boat launch in the area is needed, especially considering upcoming estuary restoration projects in the area.



*The City of Stanwood's primitive boat launch on the Hamilton property that is near Leque Island. WDFW is working with the city on a grant application to redevelop the launch and build support facilities such as parking.*

**Island Unit:** Natural Resources Technician Cosgrove monitored vegetation and field conditions on the Island Unit. Later plantings of millet are

developing nicely and corn and fava beans are beginning to harden off. Cosgrove continued to mow dikes with the sidearm mower and field areas with the flail mower on the Island Unit, including low areas of wild millet, marsh bristlegrass, smartweed, cattails, and reed canary grass in the Seattle Pond, #2, and Poleyard fields. Natural Resources Specialist Meis and Cosgrove installed a plywood board on the upstream side of a culvert on the Island Unit to hold water. Cosgrove built a temporary blind in the corn in the Lorenzen field on the Island Unit. Cosgrove posted two informational maps on the Island Unit and maps at the Headquarters to better explain Safety Zones and WDFW ownerships in the area.



***Natural Resources Technician Cosgrove on the Island Unit of the Skagit Wildlife Area***

**Samish Unit:** Manager Rotton released pheasants on the Samish Unit for the youth pheasant hunt and scheduled volunteers for the senior hunt release.

**Samish Unit:** Meis and Cosgrove installed stop-logs and plywood boards and closed valves on culverts to begin holding water at the Samish Unit.

**Skagit Headquarters Unit:** Meis posted safety zone signs at the Headquarters Unit along the dike trail from the wooded gate to the new tidegate area. Meis posted new wildlife area unit maps at the Headquarters Unit on the kiosks and the interpretive center. Natural Resources Technician Cosgrove posted two informational maps on the Island Unit and maps at the Headquarters Unit to better explain safety zones and WDFW ownerships in the area.



***Skagit Wildlife Area Manager Belinda Rotton***

## **Private Lands/Access Management**

**Washington Waterfowl Association Meeting Coordination:** Private Lands Supervisory Biologist Caldwell coordinated with staff members and county representatives from the Washington Waterfowl Association. WDFW Private Lands Access Program staff members will be attending October meetings to discuss waterfowl hunting opportunities and program updates/changes within Region 4.

**Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard continued preparing contracts for waterfowl quality hunt units in the region. Nearly all the contracts for the 2016 waterfowl season are complete. Biologist Wingard spent the majority of the week preparing the Region 4 Private Lands Access site webpages for public view. These sites will go online as they become available to hunt. Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo and Biologist Wingard met with multiple landowners and completed their access agreements for the upcoming season. Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo built Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program sites by installing parking posts, signage, and blinds.

**Acme Big Game Unit:** Natural Resource Technicians Otto and Deyo constructed a big game unit near Acme by installing a parking sign and posting boundaries. This site will offer Feel Free to Hunt opportunity for Big Game in GMU 407.

**Waterfowl Management Meeting:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell met with Waterfowl Section Manager Spragens to discuss Region 4 waterfowl management. The two discussed Migratory Bird Forage Enhancement Projects, the Waterfowl Quality Hunt Program, and other migratory bird related matters.

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

## **Wildlife Management**

**ALEA Grant Work Group:** District 13 reviewed and provided comments to drafts articulating various ideas for improving the ALEA grant process. This group was convened to discuss comments provided by the larger evaluation committees in the past years to see if improvements to the program can be developed.

**Ungulate Conflict Management:** Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman responded to the Rockport area of Skagit County to view elk-related damage to several agricultural properties. The landowners called for individual site tours following their attendance at the Marblemount community meeting that took place last week. Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell communicated with a private landowner and coordinated a site evaluation for elk-related damage in the Snoqualmie area. The landowner is experiencing increased numbers of elk using his tree farm and consequently is now receiving elevated levels of antler rubs and browsing. The landowner has been proactive in utilizing preventative measures and plans to add more fencing

to his property in the future. Future action will be delegated to other district conflict staff members.

Supervisor Caldwell met with a small group of Anacortes citizens who requested a meeting to discuss black-tailed deer-related conflict management. Supervisor Caldwell discussed critical viewpoints regarding deer-related conflict and provided group members with educational resources. Supervisor Caldwell coordinated with Wildlife Conflict Specialist Witman on elk exclusionary fence proposal estimates provided by private citizens. These estimates will be presented as potential proposals at the next North Cascades Technical Working Group meeting or communication regarding elk conflict management and elk exclusionary fence projects.

*Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell addressing a small group of Anacortes, WA citizens about black-tailed deer conflict management*



**Turkey Conflict Management:** Wildlife Conflict Supervisor Caldwell worked with Olympia on new procedures related to wildlife turkey damage prevention cooperative agreements.



*Ungulate antler rubs on young conifer tree. Tree rubs may eventually lead to tree mortality over time due to increased susceptibility to diseases, reduced health, etc.*



*Tree death caused by antler rubs*

### Wildlife Areas

**Ebey Island Unit:** Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager Brian Boehm coordinated with WDFW Enforcement Officer Tony Jaros on a suspicious incident at the Ebey Unit east parking area. Manager Boehm noticed a gate lock was cut, and two vehicles parked in the lot before hours. Officer Jaros arrived at the scene and handled it accordingly. State Patrol was called in to assist due to one individual being wanted on an outstanding felony warrant.

**Fir Island Farm:** Manager Rotton and Fir Island Farm Project Manager Friebel also met with IMCO to discuss signage and bench placement on the public access portion of the dike at Fir Island Farm. The site will reopen to the public the first week of October.



**Hit and Miss Gun Club Meeting:** Manager Rotton and Fir Island Farm Project Manager Jenna Friebel met with the Hit and Miss Gun Club to discuss the restoration project and the game reserve boundaries on the site. The members have questions about how the site will be posted and want to be clear about access and hunting on their property. Rotton will discuss the issues with local Enforcement officers to clarify the concerns and provide information to the club members.

**Skagit Audubon Meeting:** Manager Rotton and Fir Island Farm Project Manager Jenna Friebel attended the Skagit Audubon meeting to present the latest information about the Fir Island Farm project site and game reserve.

**Johnson\DeBay Slough:** Natural Resources Specialist Meis met with a lessee at the Johnson/DeBay's Unit regarding WDFW share left standing (corn) and lessee harvest of corn that will occur later this month. The lessee received a map outlining WDFW share and was informed about the open bid process for next year's agricultural lease process.

**Milltown Island:** Manager Rotton attended the kickoff field tour with Project Manager Friebel and representatives from ESA consulting, which has the contract for the feasibility work to be completed on Milltown Island. The tour examined the previous channel and dike breaching work completed on the site, as well as marsh conditions within and outside of the dike. The company intends to complete an elevation survey and will gather existing river flow and tidal data to develop some design alternatives to consider. Survey work will begin in the near future.

**Skagit Headquarters:** Rotton met with Meis and Cosgrove to examine boat launch plan drawings for the repair of the boat ramp at the Headquarters Unit. The wildlife area is preparing a RCO grant request for project funding.

**Restoration Tour:** Skagit Wildlife Area staff members (Cosgrove, Meis, and Rotton), with the assistance of Restoration Project Coordinator Loren Brokaw and the Western Washington Weed Crew, hosted a tour of the restoration sites on the Skagit Wildlife Area. The tour provided background information on the status of the restoration projects on WDFW land in the Skagit for wildlife program managers. The tour was designed to show the successes and challenges that each project provides and the potential program needs as new projects are implemented and project lands acquired.

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

**418 Elk Hunt:** Private Lands Biologist Wingard fielded several calls from 418 special elk permit holders. Biologist Wingard offered ideas about where to focus hunting efforts. Biologist Wingard met with multiple Nooksack muzzleloader special elk permit holders to distribute keys and tips. Biologist Wingard toured portions of GMU 418 for special permit elk hunters. Biologist Wingard made contact with several hunters who were enjoying their time in the woods.

## Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator

**Hunter Education Instructor Support:** Hunter Education Coordinator Steven Dazey assisted a hunter education instructor to conduct an online field skills evaluation at the Region 4 office. Coordinator Dazey conducted the second of two sessions to certify new instructors at the Black Diamond Gun Club. Both applicants did a good job and will be certified as hunter education instructors. Both applicants have been helping existing teams as volunteers, so now that they are certified they will be able to receive credit as instructors.



*Instructor applicants giving briefing and instruction to students on handling skills*



*Load and unload skills and familiarity with the five action types. Students are studying for the final quiz to pass.*

Dazey sent out two new instructor applicant packets. Dazey attended the class being taught in Gold Bar to evaluate the teaching team. The team is doing a good job. While attending the teaching teams, Dazey has been assisting Jason Harlow in conducting inventory reviews of WDFW items checked out to the teaching teams. Coordinator Dazey picked up supplies for a new teaching team offering classes at the Stillquamish Natural Resources Building.

**Hunter Education:** Hunter Education Coordinator Dazey answered many questions during the week in regards to class availability, the deferral process, and other hunting related topics. Many students wait until close to hunting season to take hunter education classes. Unfortunately, this time of high demand is also the time that many of the volunteer instructors are hunting, so getting into classes can be challenging. In Region 4, through August this year, only 74% of the available seats were reserved. A major challenge is that early in the year, when there is low demand, many classes only go partially full. Add in a 17% no show rate and the challenge is only increased. To answer the challenge, the hunter education division is working with instructors to find strategies to decrease the no show rate. The hunter education division has also added incentives to instructors to teach more online field skills evaluations during the high demand time frame. Dazey has worked with instructors to increase offerings during high demand times in Region 4.

**Community Outreach:** Hunter Education/Volunteer Coordinator Dazey, along with Sergeant Olson, Captain Myers, and Region 4 Fish Program Manager Eleazer, met with representatives from the King County Health Department to explain the volunteer instructor program utilized by the hunter education division. Dazey, as a follow up, provided information and support material to the health department representatives for use to develop their outreach program for immigrant fishers in the Seattle area.

**National Hunting and Fishing Day:** Coordinator Dazey met with Volunteer Program Manager Christine Redmond to plan for the 2017 National Hunting and Fishing Day, which will be held in Region 4 on September 23, 2017. This year's event, which will be held in East Wenatchee, is projected to attract 150 youth. This outreach program was successfully held in southwest Washington last year and is growing each year. With Region 4 having a high population, this outreach should continue to grow, and there is much excitement about the possibilities for 2017.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Uniforms:** District 13 reviewed the draft uniform policy and Wildlife Program uniform survey in preparation for a uniform committee meeting.

**Wildlife Areas**

**Pheasant Release:** The Snoqualmie Wildlife Area Manager recruited, trained, and coordinated two pheasant release teams in preparation for the coming season. As before, Manager Boehm will be running two teams and net pens to support the Duvall and Ebey Island units.

**Wildlife Program Senior Staff Meeting:** Region 4 hosted Wildlife Program senior staff from all over the state for three days of activities. One of the highlights was a tour of Skagit Wildlife Area past and future estuary restoration sites, which included a ride in the weed crew's air boats to visit the Fir Island Farm Estuary Restoration Project and the Island Unit to see waterfowl forage plantings and cattail removal work. Following the water tour, the group visited Wiley Slough and Leque Island.

**REGION 5**

No report submitted this week.

## **REGION 6**

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

#### **Wildlife Management**

**Oregon Spotted Frog:** Biologists Butler and Tirhi, along with volunteers and one USFWS staff member, continued removing reed canary grass within Oregon spotted frog plots at a Salmon Creek spotted frog breeding site. Despite the rainy weather, many plots were cleared and only a few plots remain. The Oregon spotted frog is listed as endangered in Washington, with habitat loss being the most significant factor contributing to its decline. Currently, reed canary grass is being cut and removed from these designated plots to open up Oregon spotted frog breeding areas. This is part of a study examining the effective plot size of reed canary grass removal to enhance Oregon spotted frog breeding.

Biologists Butler and Tirhi spent a second day with volunteers and one USFWS staff member raking and removing cut invasive reed canary grass at a Salmon Creek spotted frog breeding site. A third and final work party will be necessary to complete the 2016 site preparation for the spring 2017 spotted frog breeding season.



*Biologist Butler raking invasive reed canary grass for removal at the Salmon Creek Oregon spotted frog oviposition site*



*Volunteer Blessing raking and piling invasive reed canary grass for removal at the Salmon Creek Oregon spotted frog oviposition site*

**Black-tailed Deer Mortality and Habitat Use Study:** Biologist Butler responded to a possible fawn mortality at the Vail Tree Farm study site. The fawn’s radio collar signal could not be detected anywhere near the last known location. The area was searched for any sign of the fawn without success, but the doe’s radio collar was heard and its movement data downloaded. Further investigation is needed to determine if the fawn died or if the collar failed.

**Snowy Plover:** Biologists Sundstrom and Michaelis worked together to complete the second plover sign rack. All signs are now stored at the Montesano office compound.

Biologist Michaelis conducted a survey of adult and juvenile plovers. Only a few adults displaying non-breeding plumage were observed. Biologist Sundstrom reports that the last known chick, observed several weeks ago, fledged.

**Fisher Camera Trapping Project:** Biologist Ament and Point No Point Tribal Biologist Tim Cullinan conducted the third check of all stations within Hex 514 and Hex 515. Both of these hexes were monitored during the 2014 season by the ONP crew and no fishers were detected. All cameras were found to be secure at each station during the check. There were no detections of fishers at any of the stations.

**Hex 514:** All cameras worked properly for all stations during the monitoring period. Station 1 was visited by a bobcat and a bear on two occasions. One bear was at the station one hour and 10 minutes before the team arrived to check. There was no activity at Station 2. The settings were inaccurate at a new camera placed at Station 3, but a bear also visited this station. The setting to capture only “triggered” detections was modified. All stations were resupplied with fresh bait and lure. The stations for this hex will be removed on October 6, 2016.

**Hex 515:** These stations were functional for all monitoring sessions. All gear associated with each station was removed during this third visit. Station 1 was only visited by a spotted skunk during the past two weeks. Station 2 had a robin, an opossum, and three deer on site. Station 3 was visited by an opossum on two different days. It is noteworthy to mention that the opossum detections at this hex are the first time this species has been detected by the District 16 monitoring team in all years of this project.



*Bobcat investigates the cubby*



*Black bear strikes a pose*



***First opossum detections from District 16 team***

**Injured Coyote:** WILDCOMM received a report about an injured coyote in Sequim on September 21, 2016. The reporting party said the coyote was stranded on a cliff side at Port Williams Park. The coyote apparently fell a short distance down the cliff side and landed on a ledge. The reporting party did not think the coyote would be able to get up or down the cliff. Biologist Ament was in the vicinity after checking fisher stations, so she attempted to locate the coyote. Fortunately, the reporting party returned her call as she arrived on site. He explained that the coyote was approximately a half mile down the beach, heading west from the parking area. Biologist Ament hiked to the area. She did not locate the coyote on the ledge and did not find it dead or injured at the base of the cliff. Hopefully it was able to locate an escape route back up the steep bluff.

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Mountain Goat Inspection:** Biologist Tirhi met with a successful mountain goat hunter to inspect the goat and record data. The nanny goat was harvested legally in the Naches Goat Unit (3-6) of GMU 346 and was aged to 8.5 years based on annuli (growth rings) on the horn (note: right horn was broken during the collection of the carcass).

**Grouse Wing Collection:** Biologist Michaelis installed two grouse wing collection barrels fabricated by Biologist Novack and Technician Nunez. Locations were chosen in strategic areas in an effort to maximize samples. Already there seems to be good interest and participation by the public. It has been many years since WDFW has used this technique as a guide to





obtain information on age and sex structure of harvested grouse. One wing has been collected, and as modern firearm deer season approaches there should be considerably more.

*One of two grouse wing collection barrels installed in District 17.*



**Bighorn Sheep Pinning:** Biologist Michaelis marked a California bighorn sheep from a local hunter who harvested the ram from Region 3.

*Hunter Marlin Kimbrel with sheep horns harvested from Region 3*

**Access Areas**

**Access Repair:** The access team repaired boat launches at Pattison Lake, Long Lake, and Chambers Lake in Thurston County. They replaced broken planks, filled voids between planks, and added edge protection

with crushed rock. All three of these projects were accomplished in one day.



*Before (Long Lake)*



*After (Long Lake)*



*Cutting the original bolts connecting the planks (Chambers Lake)*



*Finished product (Chambers Lake)*



*Before (Pattison Lake)*



*After (Pattison Lake)*

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

**Wildlife Management**

**Customer Service:** Biologist Novack answered dozens of customer service questions. Subject items included: What was wrong with this chipmunk that my cat brought in? Where do I bring my grouse wings? Are pheasants being released at Scatter Creek? How can I get information on ESA listed species in the Naselle River? How can someone get a damage tag?

**Dungeness River Festival:** Biologist Ament provided WDFW participation at the Dungeness River Festival September 24-25. She was very pleased to have assistance from Habitat Biologist Michael Blanton, who helped with display booth set-up and worked the booth on Friday. Close to 1,000 Sequim middle school students attended the festival on Friday, and the general public was welcome on Saturday. There were approximately 2,500 visitors to the festival. The WDFW

booth was very well received by all. The students have to answer a question at specific booths to get a stamp in their booklet. Bats were featured as the question at the booth this year. Rachel Blomker from Public Affairs kindly provided bat posters, information brochures about white-nose syndrome, and activities related to bats. She also sent Biologist Ament Washington endangered species wildlife cards, fold-out binoculars, and carabiners, which were distributed. The mounted cougar from the Regional office was quite the attention getter for festival participants and various dogs. A few items for the display booth were borrowed from the Olympic Game Farm and the Audubon Center. Various posters for various topics were on display at the booth. A substantial supply of various agency brochures was available at the booth, including hunting/fishing pamphlets, personalized license plate info, and other information. As always, the wildlife track boards with rubber scat and track samples were popular with the kids. Students and kids on Saturday kept quite busy at the activity table, which provided bat finger puppets, wildlife puzzles, color pages, wolf masks, and butterfly gliders. The weather was pleasant on both days. Attendance for Saturday was slightly lower than past years, but all interactions were very positive. There were numerous individuals who told Biologist Ament that WDFW had the best booth or their favorite booth at the festival.



*Biologist's Blanton and Ament at the WDFW booth*



*Biologist Blanton asks the students the bat question*



*Trying out their first pair of binoculars*



*Inspecting scat/track boards*



*Sharp tooth*



*Intrigued by collected bats*



*General fun at the 17<sup>th</sup> Dungeness River Festival*